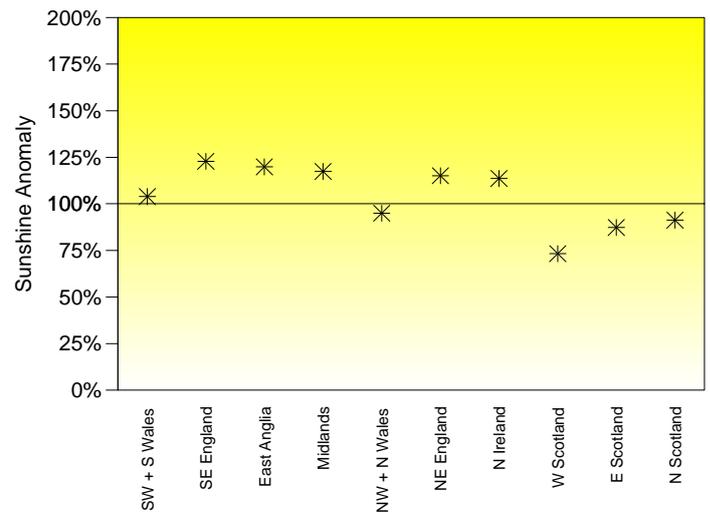
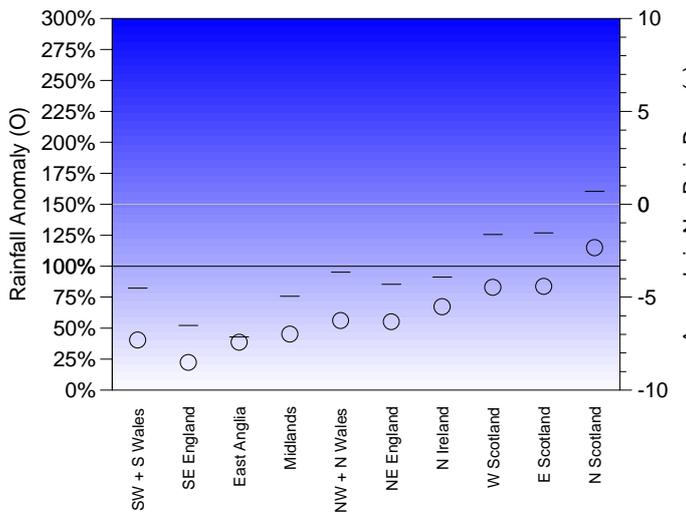


Extremes for December 2016	
Hottest:	17.0°C Hawarden, Clwyd, 7th
Coldest:	-9.2°C Aviemore, Highland, 6th
Most Rain:	87.2mm Achnagart, Highland, 31st
Most Sun:	8.0hrs Jersey St Helier, Channel Islands, 29th
Windiest:	89mph Fair Isle, Shetland, 26th
Warmest:	10.6°C Scilly St. Mary's SAWS, Cornwall
Coolest:	4.3°C Fyvie Castle, Grampian
Wettest:	477.0mm Achnagart, Highland
Driest:	8.8mm Wisley, Surrey
Sunniest:	81.0hrs Jersey Airport, Channel Islands
Dullest:	9.5hrs Loch Glascarnoch, Highland



In December the sun is at its nadir and the days shortest. The year's latest sunrise coincides with month end, but the earliest sunset occurs nearly three weeks before. The two are closest around the 21st - which marks the winter solstice. Despite the low and fleeting sun, December is rarely as chilly as January (or indeed February) and is the coldest month only about 1 year in 5. Reputedly December starts and ends stormy - with a quieter interlude between. Do not rely upon it!

December 2016 started where November left off on a very anticyclonic note. There were frosts throughout the first week and frequent overnight fog which often proved reluctant to clear. A minimum temperature of -11.0°C (12.2°F) at Cromdale (Morayshire) on the 5th proved to be the coldest night of the entire month. It became rather milder after the 6th, when high pressure moved east and ushered in a southerly airflow that persisted to the 20th. A foehn wind blowing down from the Snowdonian mountains lifted the temperature at Hawarden (Flintshire) to 17.0°C (62.6°F) on the 7th. There was a little rain, but generally it remained remarkably quiet and fog continued to cause problems especially 11th-12th and 17th-19th. It turned cyclonic from the 21st over the North of Scotland - and the arrival of Storm 'Barbara' on the 23rd brought severe gales to the Northern and Western Isles of Scotland. There were power cuts on the Islands of Lewis and Harris, and indeed further south across Wales and the Midlands. Storm 'Conor' followed on Christmas Day and Boxing Day. Cairngorm summit recorded a mean wind of 99mph around noon on the 25th and a gust of 148mph! The Northern Isles endured a period of 36 hours of continuous severe gales, and there was a gust of 94mph at Sella Ness (Shetland) on the 26th. Ferry services and island flights were widely disrupted and there were more power cuts. The storm also introduced cold air which gave parts of the Highlands a late White Christmas, with 3cm of lying snow reported at both Cromdale (Moray) and Aviemore (Inverness-shire) by the morning of the 26th. Further south, Christmas Day was exceptionally mild - with temperatures only just shy of last year - the warmest ever. From the 27th, high pressure reasserted itself across southern Britain. Fog once more became a problem and was responsible for a spate of road accidents and considerable disruption. A woman died and several others were injured in four separate crashes on the A40 in Oxfordshire on the 28th. Fog caused delays to flights at Heathrow and Luton Airports on the 29th and several football matches were postponed or abandoned due to insufficient visibility. Further north the final few days of the year were wet, mild and very windy at times. Kinlochewe (Western Ross) recorded 109.6 mm of rain in the 24 hours ending 0900 on New Years Eve.

Persistent high pressure over the near continent, made December a remarkably calm and dry month for England and Wales. The southeast received less than one quarter of its normal rainfall and London had its driest December since 1926. In contrast, and thanks to a very wet final week, rainfall was close to normal over Scotland - and a little above for the far north. It was a mild month nationwide by night and by day and average temperatures everywhere easily exceeded those of November. Scotland enjoyed unprecedented daytime warmth and in the north and west temperatures were 3°C or more above normal. Despite frequent early morning fog, it was a sunny month everywhere except for Scotland and some places in eastern England saw 50% more sunshine than usual.

Across the Atlantic during December, Galveston, Texas, received 161mm of rain on the 3rd - its heaviest ever December rainfall. Severe cold and continuous lake-effect snow affected Midwestern and north-eastern states for several days around the 11th. Perrysburg, to the east of Lake Erie, received 43cm of snow. On the 18th Aberdeen, South Dakota, recorded -38°C (-37°F) and Chicago, Illinois, -25°C (-13°F) - just 1°C short of the December record set in 1983. A further bout of wintery weather swept the USA during Christmas week. On the 25th, the Dakotas and south-west Minnesota were struck by ice storms, and 29th-30th a blizzard blanketed New England with 2 feet of snow whilst spectacular 'thundersnow' lit up Boston and Portland, Maine.

In Asia on the 12th, the first tropical cyclone of this season, 'Vardah', struck the coastal Indian city of Chennai. 90mph winds uprooted trees, overturned cars and caused extensive property damage. On the 25th-26th typhoon 'Nock-ten' lashed the northern Philippines, killing at least six people and forcing 380,000 residents to abandon Christmas celebrations - and move to safer ground. Sustained winds of 74mph and gusts of 111mph toppled electric posts, felled trees and cut power to five provinces - dimming the festivities in Asia's largest Catholic country. 300 flights were delayed or cancelled and ferries were halted, stranding more than 12,000 holidaymakers.

In northern China on the 19th a national smog red alert, forced factories to shut and transport to be halted. The same day, 1000's of miles further west, there was the extremely rare spectacle of snow falling in the Sahara Desert. Sand dunes were turned white near the desert town of Ain Sefra, Algeria - the first time snow has been recorded there since 1979. Meanwhile in Arctic Russia, even by local standards, the cold in western Siberia was extraordinary during the third week. At Bolshoe Olkhovskoe oilfield, the temperature dropped to a numbing -62°C (-80°F) establishing a new record low for the region.