

**JANUARY STATISTICS RECORDED
AT LERWICK OBSERVATORY**

	January 2008	Averages 1971-2000
Mean maximum temperature	5.7°C	5.6°C
Mean minimum temperature	2.6°C	1.5°C
Daily mean temperature	4.1°C	3.6°C
Mean sea-level pressure	998.1 hPa (mb)	1006.7 hPa (mb)
Total rainfall	219.0 mm	135.4 mm
Wet days => 1 mm	27 days	21.3 days
Sunshine	29.8 hours	22.6 hours
Air frosts	2 days	8.4 days
Ground frosts	13 days	15.0 days
Snow/sleet	16 days	12.9 days
Days with gale	10 days	9 days
Maximum daily mean temp.	8.5°C on 28th	
Minimum daily mean temp.	1.8°C on 16th	
Highest maximum	9.1°C on 28th	
Lowest day maximum	2.9°C on 16 th , 21 st	
Highest night minimum	9.0°C on 28th	
Lowest minimum	-0.7°C on 17th	
Lowest grass minimum	-5.9°C on 17th	
Wettest day	24.2 mm on 4th	
Sunniest day	5.3 hours on 21 st	
Highest mean hourly wind	47 knots on 24th	
Highest gust	67 knots on 25th	

VERY WET BUT SUNNY

Apart from the first few days, when an intense anticyclone over northwest Russia extended a ridge southwest across Scandinavia into the North Sea, January was a very cyclonic month. Until mid-month depressions regularly tracked northeast close to – or over – Shetland. During the latter part of the month, as high pressure edged north towards southern Britain, depressions tended to follow a more northerly track east through the Iceland region, resulting in a W'y airflow over Shetland. On the last day of January an intense depression tracked northeast across Shetland.

It was a very wet month, with parts of eastern Scotland experiencing their wettest January on record. For Shetland 1993 (226.6 mm) and 1994 (241.0 mm) were wetter. Our wettest month was December 1999 with 274.2 mm.

With sunshine generally a rare commodity during January, just one sunny day can make a large percentage difference to the overall total. In fact this was the third sunniest January since 1930 (31.2 hrs 2001 and 40.9 hrs 1996).

Though temperatures were still above the average, this was the coolest January since that of 2001.

With pressure high to the northeast and low to the west of the British Isles and a front slow-moving near Shetland - marking the boundary between moister Atlantic air and cooler, drier continental air - the month began generally cloudy with outbreaks of rain and SE'y winds close to gale force.

As an anticyclone over northwest Russia intensified to 1063 hPa, the front was pushed back into the Atlantic on the 3rd and precipitation turned wintry as strong to gale ESE'y winds carried in colder continental air. The 4th was cloudy with periods of heavy rain as the ESE'y gale – gusting to 69 mph on Fair Isle – continued. The prolonged spell of SE to E'y gales - gusting to 77 mph at Lerwick and 80 mph on Foula early on the 5th - raised some of the highest seas of the winter.

The gales eventually subsided as the high declined eastwards and the 6th was mainly dry with some sunshine. Wintry showers and, with light N or NE'y winds, night-time frosts followed for the 7th.

After a frosty start, the 8th was again mostly dry and sunny. Heavy rain, accompanied by strong to gale SE to E'ly winds, spread from the southwest overnight, as a very deep Atlantic depression tracked towards northwest Scotland. While this brought a fairly stormy day to much of Scotland on the 9th, Shetland - in the 'eye of the storm' as the filling low passed overhead - enjoyed reasonably pleasant conditions with scattered showers and moderate SW'ly winds.

Early showers died out on the 10th and winds fell light as a weak ridge crossed the area. A frosty start was followed by wintry showers and light W'ly winds on the 11th, as low pressure transferred east across the Northern Isles. A ridge following brought another cool and frosty night, with the 12th mainly dry and sunny with light N'ly winds.

After another cool night with a local air frost, the 13th was cloudy and misty with heavy rain accompanied by fresh E'ly winds, as another depression pushed fronts northwards. The 14th saw fresh S to SW'ly winds and further bands of rain, with some drier, brighter weather in between, as the filling low moved north across Shetland. Rain cleared early on the 15th to leave sunny spells, scattered showers and strong N'ly winds as the next depression tracked east over the UK.

The 16th brought sunny spells and showers of snow and hail, with cold N'ly winds easing as the low moved across the North Sea. As pressure built across Shetland, the showers gradually died out, winds fell light and a widespread grass frost with a local air frost developed.

After a cold, bright start temperatures rose on the 17th, with SE to E'ly winds strengthening later in the day as the next Atlantic depression drove fronts ahead of it. Associated rain cleared to showers early on the 18th as the low continued northeast across Shetland and winds became cyclonic. Showers turned wintry on the 19th as winds became strong W'ly.

Showers continued through the 20th, turning progressively more to snow as strong W'ly winds veered N'ly as a low centre moved east to the north of Shetland. The 21st was a sunny day as showers died out and winds fell light as a ridge built across the area. After a fine start, an intense depression southwest of Iceland pushed heavy frontal rain east across Shetland on the 22nd as SW'ly winds freshened. Though this depression soon filled and lost its identity within a complex area of low pressure between Scotland and Iceland, further periods of rain continued to affect Shetland through the 23rd, as a mild SW'ly wind increased gale-force later.

The 24th was colder with sunshine and wintry – locally thundery – showers accompanied by gale or severe gale-force WSW'ly winds, gusting to 77 mph at Lerwick. Early rain cleared to showers on the 25th. Showers of snow and hail continued through the 26th as winds became strong to gale WNW'ly. With pressure low to the north and high to the south gales, were severe for a time with gusts to 86 mph at Sella Ness. The 27th was cloudy with overnight rain turning patchy as winds, backing SW'ly, eased fresh to strong.

The 28th was rather cloudy with patchy rain or drizzle, W'ly winds again increasing gale-force at times. The 29th was bright and - apart from a few showers - mostly dry with a strong, locally gale-force SW to W'ly wind.

Frequent, heavy and prolonged showers – some wintry with hail - and brief sunny or clear spells followed on the 30th. Strong W'ly winds backed SW'ly and increased locally gale-force later. Heavy rain and gale or severe gale-force SE to E'ly winds, spreading north early on the 31st persisted for much of the day, as an intense depression tracked east-northeast across Shetland.

Dave Wheeler

Initial Statistical details for Scotland as a whole (1961-1990 average) for January:

Mean Temperature – 3.5°C (1.4°C above average)

Rainfall – 284.7 mm (183% of average). **3rd wettest January in series and wettest since 1993.**

Wettest January in series is 1993, when 292.6 mm was recorded.

Sunshine – 26.3 hours (76% of average). **Dullest January across Scotland as a whole since 1996.**

Data from the UK Met Office