COLD SNAP PRODUCES WIDESPREAD SNOWFALLS

The Atlantic influence dominated the weather for the first nine days of the month but on Saturday the 16th a depression centered near Belmullet slipped southeastwards and allowed a bitterly cold easterly airflow to prevail between the 11th and the 16th. This airflow was the cause of the blizzard conditions experienced during that week. However temperatures rose above freezing on Thursday 15th and the snow thawed over the next few days due to a mild southerly airflow reassuming the Atlantic influence. From the 20th on it was dry with some fog and frost, weather typical of the ridge of high pressure which dominated during that period.

COLD SPELL

Mild southerlies alternated with cool northwesterlies during the first nine days of the month but the strengthening of the continental high pressure area to the east of Ireland deflected the Atlantic weather systems southwards during 10th. A bitterly cold easterly airflow developed on the 11th and temperatures fell below zero for a three day period. There were widespread snowfalls (in all but some western areas) between 11th and 14th, the heaviest falls occurring on the 14th. Quite a number of places in the east, south and midlands recorded over 10 centimetres of snow and there was drifting of over 1-5 metres. There were severe frosts and Rocha's Point had a temperature of -7.9°C its lowest temperature in over a hundred years recording. The heavy snow caused transport hold-ups as major roads were closed. Dublin Airport was closed for a time and it also forced the closure of dozens of schools.

However across mainland Europe conditions were much worse. Temperatures of less than -30°C were recorded in parts of Russia, snow was 77 centimetres thick in the Polish port of Gdansk and a layer of ice two feet thick covered parts of the Baltic sea coast. Many European countries suffered their worst cold spell ever with thousands of villages cut-off and hundreds of people dead.

As winds became more northeasterly late on Wednesday the 14th temperatures rose and remained above or about freezing during 15th and 16th, so that with little or no fresh snow falling, conditions on main roads improved. The thaw continued with a rise in temperatures on 17th and 18th when temperatures reached normal or above (7°C to 9°C), at this stage most of the snow had

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Tuesday 13th, Snowing over most of Ireland

The satellite was taken by the European METEOSAT at 1230 GMT on Tuesday the 13th of January. The synoptic chart shows the weather situation at noon that day as parts of Ireland suffered near blizzard conditions under the influence of a bitterly cold easterly airflow. Air temperatures remained several degrees below zero for the entire day and snow showers were frequent in the southeast, east and north.
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gone and only isolated traces remained.

PRECIPITATION

Despite the snowfalls it was a relatively dry month. Rainfall, which includes the rain equivalent of snow, was well below normal everywhere and many parts of the country had the driest January since 1963. Snow affected all areas between 11th and 15th with some light flurries on 10th, 16th and 17th. Thunder was recorded only at Dublin Airport on 12th. Wettest days were Sunday the 4th and the period 17th/18th as the cold snap ended.

TEMPERATURES

Mean maximum temperature was almost 2°C below normal in parts of the south due to the cold spell of the 11th to the 16th and the particularly low maxima of 12th/13th when values were below freezing almost everywhere. Minimum values of -4°C to -9°C during the snow, fairly widespread frosts on 7th and on the last three days of the month were offset by the high minima immediately following the cold spell (see temperature graphs). Only at Belmullet were minimum temperatures well below normal.

The resultant mean temperature for the month varied between -0.4°C below normal at Shannon Airport and -1.6°C below at Belmullet, but was generally around 1°C below normal. The lowest air temperature was -8.9°C read at Birr on the 14th and the highest was 12.0°C recorded at Roches Point on the 4th.

EXREMELY DULL IN THE SOUTH

Monthly totals of sunshine ranged from 30.6 hours at Cork Airport to 69.8 hours at Belmullet. It was fairly sunny in the period 5th to 7th and at the end of the month but the period 15th to 25th had virtually no sun at all. Percentages of normal ranged from 144% at Belmullet to just over 50% on the south coast, and were generally below normal.

The day with the most sunshine was Friday the 30th when Casement Aerodrome (8.1 hours), Dublin Airport (8.0 hours) and Shannon Airport (7.8 hours) all had their sunniest January day ever.

FOG

On 26th/25th and on 28th there was patchy but persistent fog in some areas while in the period 17th to 21st there was some hill and coastal fog chiefly on the south coast.

WIND

Winds were strong during the cold spell in many coastal areas and the wind-chill factor made the temperature feel much lower. The highest gust of the month 65 knots was recorded at Cahirciveen on the 12th while a gust of 61 knots occurred at Melin Head on the 5th.