

Weather during the Atlas period

The most significant weather events during the Atlas period were the cold spells of January–February 2009, December 2009 to February 2010, and December 2010. A summary for each year follows. The monthly average rainfall, temperature and sunshine hours are shown in Figures 1–6 on the previous pages, where they are compared with the 1961–1990 averages.

Atlas recording began on 1 November 2007. Both November and December temperatures were close to average, although there was a cold spell in mid-November. Early December was rainy and windy but settled conditions returned with cold easterly winds, to be replaced by duller, warmer and wetter weather late in the month.

2008 was a wet year. Late winter and spring were mild with average rainfall. After a dry June, July and August were both very wet. An average September gave way to a wet October but a somewhat drier and cooler spell in November and December. December was cooler than average, giving some indication of the cold to come.

2009 was a very mixed year. An unwise interpretation of the Met Office's prediction of a warmer than average summer as a 'barbecue summer' led to much disappointment when the summer months were changeable and often wet, and with around average temperatures. Spring and autumn were dry and November was stormy, but the striking features of the year were the cold spells in early January, early February and on and off through December.

2010 was a generally cool and dry year. January saw great cold with significant snowfall, and this continued through February and into the first half of March. Summer was changeable with good spells of

warm sunny weather, and these continued into October. By mid-November cold had set in and December was the coldest for 100 years, with snow and frost widespread.

2011 was a changeable year without great extremes. The cold of December 2010 continued into the first week of January but then gave way to milder weather followed by a warm dry March and April. After an average summer, the first few days of October were exceptionally warm. November and December were very changeable with short cold spells lasting for a day or two but nothing to match the previous winter.

2012 began with a very dry spell, January, February and March all being dry and warm; it was the warmest spring on record in southern England. April, however, was cool and wet with repeated depressions sweeping in from the south-west. After a relatively warm and sunny May, both June and July were wet, with exceptional rainfall and flooding in East Devon in early July. August was also wet, but September and October were mild with near-average rainfall. November and December were both very wet with much river flooding and strong winds. In spite of the dry start, rainfall for the year was well above average.

The first half of 2013 had one main feature – a cold dry spring. Cold east winds dominated February and March and continued until early April. May, June and July were all similar in that the early part of each was warm and settled and the latter part wet and often windy. Atlas recording finished at the end of July, the dramatic storms of the late autumn falling outside the recording period.

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