

# Weather Report

1881

January commenced with a thaw and comparatively mild weather which however only lasted for three or four days. Frost set in on the 4<sup>th</sup> slightly, by the 7<sup>th</sup> 10° were registered of frost; on the 13<sup>th</sup> 15° of frost was registered, on the 17<sup>th</sup> 19° this was the greatest frost registered. There were 25 frosty nights registered during the month. The ground was clear of snow for a few days after the new year but by the 11<sup>th</sup> snow set in again, frost and snow continuing the remainder of the month with the exception of a partial thaw for a few days at the end of the month. The rainfall or melted snow for the month was 1 2/10<sup>th</sup> inch with 10 days on which snow or rain fell. Railway traffic was blocked in the north at Georgeburg and Hay on the 19<sup>th</sup> outdoor work was suspended over the north. The prevailing winds were northerly, being from N. N.E. & N.W. on 23 days. February like its predecessor opened with a thaw which lasted till the evening of the 5<sup>th</sup> on the 3<sup>rd</sup> occurred the heaviest rainfall of the year in one day viz 1 4/10<sup>th</sup> inches. About half an inch of snow fell on the 6<sup>th</sup> 3 inches on the 7<sup>th</sup> on the 10<sup>th</sup> a storm of wind and sleet blew steadily from the east in a blinding driving gale, I should have said that the snow on the 7<sup>th</sup> came with a driving gale from the east also, it was reported to me by an observer in the neighbourhood

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That the fall of the 10<sup>th</sup> was accompanied by heavier snow than that of the 7<sup>th</sup> there only being ~~6~~ inches clear space between the flakes on the 10<sup>th</sup> while on the 7<sup>th</sup> according to calculations there would be fully 7½ inches. Whether the observer was mathematically correct in his calculation I cannot say, but there is no doubt the blinding snow and storm of these two days was such that men who were caught in them in exposed places, had a hard battle to make their way to a place of safety. Snow or rain fell on 15 days, the total rain and snow fall for the month was 3 3/10 inches. The prevailing winds during the month were northerly and easterly. The lowest temperature occurred on the 10<sup>th</sup> with 10° of frost. There were 18 frosty nights during the month.

The storms of the 7<sup>th</sup> interrupted telegraphic communication very much, and the roads were blocked in places.

Railway traffic was blocked in the Sutherland hills on the 10<sup>th</sup> for several days till the 14<sup>th</sup>. Turnips were much injured this month by frost and in some districts there was considerable loss in potato pits from the same cause.

March commenced with frost ranging from 8° to 9° the first three nights, snow lying on the ground at the beginning of the month from 8 to 10 inches in depth. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> 4<sup>th</sup> 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Easterly winds increasing

to a gale, with driving snow and drift blocked the highways and stopped communication with the south. on Thursday the 3<sup>rd</sup> we had the last mail from the south till Tuesday the 8<sup>th</sup>. Letters were sent by Aberdeen on the 8<sup>th</sup>. Papers arrived via Aberdeen on the 9<sup>th</sup>. The railway blocks of this month were probably the most protracted on record since the opening of railways in the north. Caithness was cut off from communication with the south by this storm for 15 days. during which time the mails were sent by the road as in the old coaching days. This month from beginning to end was stormy in character. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> there was 11" of frost and on the 29<sup>th</sup> 9" of frost. The thermometer being below freezing point on 17 occasions. Sun or rain fell on 17 days. The rainfall or melted snow for the month was 2½ inches. The ground was covered with snow most of the month. The prevailing winds were Easterly and North Easterly.

April came in with dry Easterly winds and frosty nights, 8° being registered on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Easterly dry winds lasted till the 11<sup>th</sup> when with rain a milder period set in and during the remainder of the month vegetation put on a spring like appearance - The last 10 days of the month was dull and slivery with a temperature ranging from 5-0° to 5-7° during the day. Rain fell on 11 days the total for the month being 1½ inches.

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The lowest temperature was  $24^{\circ}$  on the  $3^{\text{rd}}$ , the highest  $57^{\circ}$  on the  $28^{\text{th}}$ . During the first half of the month the prevalent winds were east and north east and during the latter half west and north westerly.

May was on the whole a fairly favorable month, a good deal of rain fell during the first and third weeks, the remainder being fine. The rainfall for the month was  $2\frac{6}{10}$  inches, rain falling on 13 days. The highest temperature was  $70$  on the  $31^{\text{st}}$  and the lowest  $32$  on the  $3^{\text{rd}}$ . The high temperature experienced on the  $31^{\text{st}}$  was altogether unusual. Such a high temperature in May had not previously occurred for at least 20 years.

June opened with the unusually high maximum temperature on the first two days of  $71\frac{1}{2}$  and  $74^{\circ}$  respectively, great hopes were entertained of a fine summer with high temperatures. These hopes were not destined to be fulfilled for May 31 and June 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> were the only 3 days during 1881 that the maximum temperature of  $70^{\circ}$  or more was reached. After the  $3^{\text{rd}}$  the temperature came down rapidly till on the 7<sup>th</sup> the maximum only reached  $49\frac{1}{2}$ . The remainder of the month ranged from  $50^{\circ}$  to  $58^{\circ}$  a few days ranging between  $57^{\circ}$  and  $66^{\circ}$ . There were 17 rainy days during the month with a total of  $3\frac{3}{10}$  inches being considerably more than the average.

July was throughout unusually wet and cold - on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> the highest maximum temperature was  $54\frac{1}{2}$  the average temperature during the day for most of the month ranging from  $60^{\circ}$  to  $65^{\circ}$ , only on a few occasions ranging between  $65^{\circ}$  and  $69^{\circ}$ . The night-temperatures were lower than the average being below  $50^{\circ}$  on 16 nights and between  $50^{\circ}$  and  $53^{\circ}$  the remainder, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of the month the night temperature fell to  $39^{\circ}$ .

Rain fell on 20 days, over 1 inch falling on the 6<sup>th</sup>. The total fall for the month was  $4\frac{1}{10}$  inches, very much over the average - The month was very unfavourable for hay making, and the low temperatures and wet-weather were much against the grain crops.

August was on the whole a more favourable month than July, there being less rainfall, with occasional fine days, the weather was <sup>more</sup> unsettled and broken, and great difficulty was experienced in getting hay secured in good condition. There were 15 wet-days, the total rainfall was  $1.8\frac{1}{10}$  inches - The day temperatures for the month were very low for August,  $53^{\circ}$  to  $63$ , being the usual range - on 2 occasions registering  $65^{\circ}$  and once  $69^{\circ}$ . Harvest was very late owing to the cold, wet, sunless season.

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September opened with tolerably fine weather, heavy rains fell between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> 2 1/2 inches falling during the four days. From the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> the weather was fairly good but dull. rain fell again on the 21<sup>st</sup> 22<sup>nd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>. the remainder of the month with the exception of the 29<sup>th</sup> was fine. The amount of rainfall for the month was 3 9/10 inches and rain fell on 9 days.

October was fine for the first week, wet, dull, and occasionally stormy from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup>. the remainder of the month being fair, and some of the days moderately fine though dull with low temperatures. There were 15 rainy days, the total rainfall for the month being 3. 2/10 inches.

Much of the grain was got into the stackyards in bad condition, Farmers in many cases taking it in in bad condition, being afraid owing to the lateness of the harvest to leave the grain out for the chance of better weather. As it turned out those who had most patience in waiting for suitable weather secured their harvest in best condition as the weather at the end of the harvest time was better than at the beginning.

November. Was mostly dull but fine for the first fortnight, from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 28<sup>th</sup> was dull and wet, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> we had high wind and rain.

with a storm of thunder and lightning, on the morning of the 22<sup>nd</sup>, several sheep being killed by lightning on the farm of Inverbrora. From the 24<sup>th</sup> to the end of the month the weather was fine with the exception of one or two days. There were 14 wet days in the month and the total rainfall was  $2 \frac{9}{10}$  inches.

The temperature during November was mild, the thermometer being below  $32^{\circ}$  only on one occasion.

December brought with it a considerable fall of night temperatures and a good deal of frost, the thermometer being below  $32^{\circ}$  on 18 occasions during the first three weeks, the last week of the month being milder, the minimum night temperatures from the 25<sup>th</sup> to the 29<sup>th</sup> ranging from  $40^{\circ}$  to  $41^{\circ}$ . The lowest temperature occurred on the night of the 23<sup>rd</sup> with  $6^{\circ}$  for

The temperature fell below freezing point on 18 occasions. Rain or snow fell on 11 days, the total rainfall for the month being  $2 \frac{1}{2}$  inches.

The Total Rainfall for the year was  $32 \frac{1}{10}$  inches being nearly 1 inch over the average rainfall of the last 10 years.

The wettest year since 1870 was 1877 with a rainfall of  $41 \frac{1}{2}$  inches.

The driest year during the same period was 1870 with a rainfall of  $23 \frac{9}{10}$  inches. And the average rainfall since 1870 is  $31 \frac{7}{10}$  inches. It may be here mentioned that the driest part of Scotland of late years is the coast-line from Brora southward by Cromarty and Skaine then

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eastward by Elgin to the mouth of the Spey, and inland for  
some distance from the mouth of the river.

1881 will be remembered as a disastrous year for the sheep farmer  
and a bad year for farming generally in the north. It is  
worthy of noting here that while 1881 was unfavourable for  
agriculturists generally north of the Tweed, that over the  
greater part of England and the south it was a  
fairly good farmers year. The previous year 1880  
being the reverse, or much more favourable in the north  
than in the south.