

Burns' Day Storm - 25 January 1990

During daylight hours on 25 January 1990 an intense depression tracked across southern Scotland bringing severe gales and storm force winds to much of England and Wales evoking memories of the storm of 15/16 October 1987.

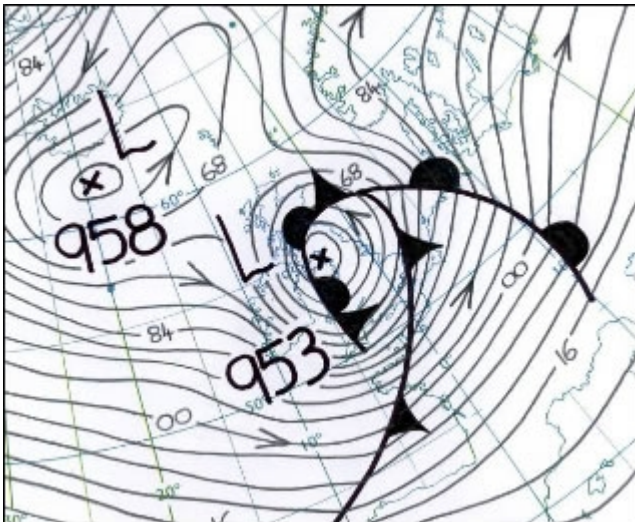
However, in many places wind speeds were comparable to or higher than October 1987. January 25th is the day when many Scots remember the birthday of their national poet Robert Burns.

Impacts

The strong winds affected a much larger area than in October 1987 and they struck during the day so consequently there were more deaths and injuries, with 47 lives lost. The wind speeds were comparable to those in 1987, but higher over parts of southern England and Wales. Once again there were disruptions to power supplies and to transport, particularly to road transport because of fallen trees and overturned vehicles. There was also considerable damage to buildings, particularly to housing and to the south of a line from west Wales to Suffolk. The loss of trees was less than in October 1987 since the strongest winds occurred in less wooded areas and deciduous trees were bare of leaves.

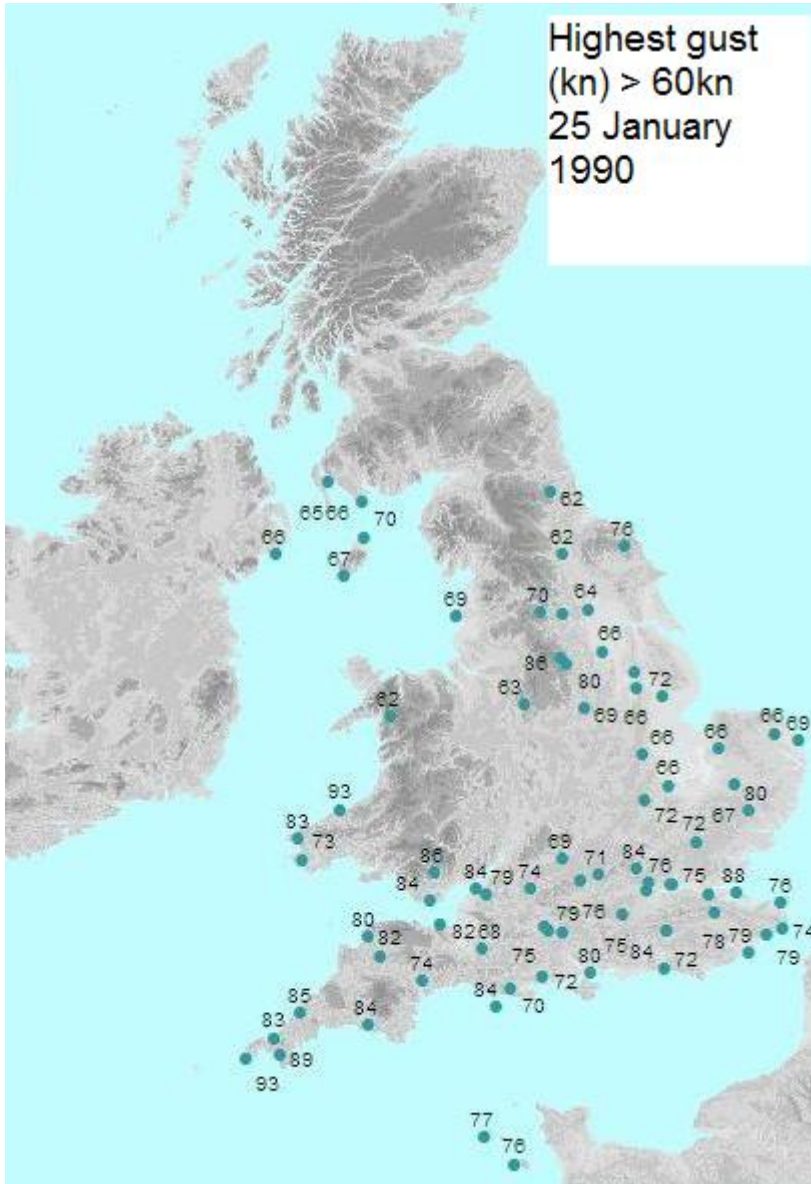
Weather Data

The synoptic chart for 12 GMT, 25 January 1990.



The strongest winds were in the late morning and afternoon, with hourly mean speeds in excess of 40 kn (46 mph) across a large part of southern England and Wales and over 50 kn (58 m.p.h.) at exposed places along the coast. Gusts of over 80 kn (92 m.p.h.) were reported along coasts in west Wales and from Cornwall to Kent. The highest gusts recorded were 93 kn (107 m.p.h.) at Aberporth in west Wales and at Gwennap Head in Cornwall. The return period (average frequency of occurrence) of the maximum gusts was estimated at more than 100 years at places from Dorset to west London.

Highest gusts of over 60 knots (69 m.p.h.) recorded on 25 January 1990.



A selection of the highest gusts and mean hourly wind speeds on 25 January 1990. Many records were set which still stand.

Highest gusts and mean hourly wind speeds on 25th January 1990

Station	County	Gust (knots)	Mean hourly (knots)	Comments #
Aberporth	Ceredigion	93	63	Highest gust and mean hourly wind, 1973-2009
Gwennap Head	Cornwall	93	56	5th highest gust [highest 103kn 15 Dec 1979] 4th highest mean hourly wind, 1972-1991
Culdrose	Cornwall	89	60	Highest gust and mean hourly wind, 1977-2009
Sheerness	Kent	88	64	Highest gust and mean hourly wind January 1989-Dec 1992
Avonmouth	South Gloucestershire	84	60	Highest gust and mean hourly wind 1973-2009
Plymouth (Mount Batten)	Devon	84	60	Highest mean hourly wind, 1970-2009 [Gust of 86kn December 1999]
Shoreham-by-Sea	West Sussex	84	56	2nd highest gust and mean hourly wind, 1980-1992 [Highest mean 72kn, gust 100kn 16th October 1987]
Isle of Portland	Dorset	84	56	3rd highest gust, 1974-2009 [91kn 4th January 1998, 88 kn 28th October 1998] 2nd equal highest mean hourly wind [62kn 4th January 1998, 56kn 3rd January 1999]
Brawdy	Pembrokeshire	83	50	Highest gust and mean hourly wind, 1974-92
Camborne	Cornwall	83	52	Highest mean hourly wind, 1979-2009 [Gust of 84kn December 1993]
Chivenor	Devon	80	52	2nd highest mean hourly and gust. 1981-2009 [Gust of 81kn and mean hourly of 54kn 4th January 1998]
Solent	Hampshire	80	62	Highest gust and mean hourly wind, 1980-2009 (April 1987-June 1988 missing)
Boscombe Down	Wiltshire	79	47	Highest gust and mean hourly wind, 1973-2009
Heathrow	Greater London	76	33	Highest gust, 1973-2009 [Hourly mean 36kn 16 October 1987]
South Farnborough	Hampshire	75	34	Highest gust, 1973-2009 [Mean hourly wind of 35kn, 13 January 1993]
Hurn, Bournemouth	Dorset	72	46	Highest mean hourly wind, 1981-2009

Dates show the period of digitised record available.

Additional information

McCallum, E., 1990: The Burns' Day Storm, 25 January 1990. *Weather*, 45.

Last updated: 15 April 2016