



Viewpoint

Record breaker



Time: 15 mins

Region: Scotland

Landscape: rural



Location: Bridge over Clunie Water, Invercauld Road, Braemar, Aberdeenshire, AB35 5YP

Grid reference: NO 15103 91384

Keep an eye out for: Snow on the hills above – it should be visible from late October until early May with the right weather conditions

With a population of less than a thousand, the small village of Braemar on the edge of the Scottish Highlands in rural Aberdeenshire isn't the sort of place you would imagine making too many headlines or breaking many records.

But every few years, Braemar finds itself front-page news in several national newspapers.

What makes Braemar in Aberdeenshire such a record breaker?



The answer is that great British obsession - the weather.

Braemar holds the record for the lowest ever UK temperature – it has reached - 27.2 °C twice, in 1895 and 1982. Whenever cold weather is predicted, meteorologists turn their attention to the weather station here at Braemar, as it's usually colder than any other lowland station.

But it's not just cold temperatures that have made Braemar a record breaker. On 30th September 2015 it registered as one of the warmest places in the UK recording an unseasonably warm temperature of 24.0 °C. Yet the same day it was also the coldest place in the UK at -1.3 °C. The very next day (October 1st) it was again the coldest and warmest place meaning that for the two months in a row, Braemar recorded the warmest AND coldest monthly temperatures for the UK!

So how can we explain this strange phenomenon?

The reason is down to its geography. Braemar is relatively high at 339m above sea level (just 128m shy of being the highest village in the UK), and is flanked on four sides by mountains. The village is overlooked by Carn na Drochaide (818 m), Creag Choinneach (538 m), Carn na Sgliat (690 m), and Morrone (859 m). So, no matter which way the wind is blowing, cold air from the mountaintops gets funnelled down the mountainsides into the heart of the village vastly reducing the temperature there.

As Braemar is effectively at the center of a large bowl, a cumulative temperature effect occurs whereby cold dense air masses roll into the village and unable to escape over the surrounding mountains, keep the temperature artificially lower than it otherwise would be.

But, when the air is still and the sun is shining, the opposite effect occurs. Heat gets concentrated into a small space by the surrounding mountains as if a giant magnifying glass has been placed over the village, warming it beyond what temperatures would otherwise be reached in this Alpine-esque place.

When the stars align and the two phenomenon occur in the same day, Braemar can be both very warm and very cold in the same 24 hours.

And when this phenomenon occurs twice in two days, as was the case in September and October 2015, Braemar gets to bag four monthly temperature records in the space of just two days!

It's hardly any wonder then that meteorologists and reporters always have one eye on Braemar when Britain is exceptionally warm or especially cold.



Braemar sits in a bowl surrounded by higher mountains