

Monthly Weather Report

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SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS COMPILED FROM RETURNS OF OFFICIAL STATIONS AND VOLUNTEER OBSERVERS

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March 1947 - Very cold first half, with heavy snowstorms; unprecedented floods in England and Wales later.

The weather of the month was distinguished by extreme cold during the first half of the month, with heavy snowstorms and deep drifts. The second half was milder but the weather continued unsettled with frequent precipitation. The thawing of the snow accompanied by frequent rain in the second half of the month caused unprecedented floods over large areas of England and Wales.

Pressure was high over Greenland throughout the month, while depressions passed east or north-east across the southern half of the British Isles (see chart 2). From the 1st-3rd a belt of high pressure extended south-east across Britain and severely cold, sunny, mainly dry weather prevailed. On the 4th a deep depression approached our south-west coasts and subsequently moved along the English Channel. Heavy snow with deep drifts occurred over much of England and Wales on the 4th and 5th and heavy rain in the extreme south with glazed frost at a number of places. On the 10th and 11th a depression moved rapidly east across southern England causing heavy precipitation in the south. On the 12th a trough of low pressure initially over south Ireland and south-west England moved north-east and this was followed on the 13th by a depression which moved quickly east across England. Heavy snow, accompanied by strong winds which caused deep drifts, occurred in northern England and southern Scotland and sleet or snow turning to rain in the south. On the 16th a disturbance developed off our south-west coasts and moved rather rapidly north-east, deepening as it moved; widespread, severe gales were reported with rain, and, in northern districts, some sleet or snow. A depression over Ireland moved slowly north-east on the 19th and on the 20th a trough of low pressure moved north-east over the British Isles giving further rain. This was followed on the 21st by another trough which was associated with strong winds and still more rain. On the 23rd a shallow depression moved east-north-east across Ireland and northern England and later turned north over the North Sea; showers occurred on the 23rd and some wintry precipitation on the 24th. In the rear of this depression a wedge of high pressure moved in over the country giving a fair day over eastern districts of Britain. On the 28th a new complex depression approached our south-west coasts and subsequently moved slowly north-east over England to the North Sea. Rain fell fairly generally on the 28th-30th.

Pressure and Wind—Mean pressure was below the average, the deficiency being greatest in the south; the deviation at 9 h. ranged from -3.9 mb. at Lerwick to -14.3 mb. at the Scilly Isles. Consequently the lowest pressure was found westward of Ireland and the highest over the Thames Estuary and north-east Scotland. In Scotland there was a seven day's excess of winds between north-east and south-east. The month was windier than the average in the south of England but in the northern half of the country it was less windy than usual. Gales occurred frequently in extreme south-west England, notably from the 3rd-5th, 11th, 16th, 18th and 21st-26th. In Scotland the stormiest days were the 13th-16th, 18th and 24th. A widespread and severe gale occurred in England and Wales on the 16th. Among the highest speeds registered in gusts were 98 m.p.h. at Mildenhall, 93 m.p.h. at Cardington, 86 m.p.h. at Boscombe Down and 85 m.p.h. at Aberporth, all on the 16th.

Temperature—Mean Temperature was 3.5°F. below the average in England and Wales, 5.7°F. below in Scotland and 4.5°F. below in Northern Ireland. As far as can be estimated it was the coldest March over Scotland as a whole since before 1901. The first 15 days were severely cold; in the south, milder conditions set in on the 16th and gradually spread northward. Screen minima of 10°F. or below were recorded locally almost daily from the 1st-10th and again on the 15th. At stations as far apart as Braemar, Garvagh and Oxford the absolute screen minimum was a record for March.

The extremes for the month were:—(England and Wales) 60°F. at Croydon, Bromley, Goudhurst and Whitstable on the 28th and Bath on the 29th, -6°F. at Houghall on the 4th; (Scotland) 59°F. at Fort Augustus on the 27th, -6°F. at Peebles and Braemar on the 4th and at Braemar on the 8th; (Northern Ireland) 59°F. at Ballykelly, Castlerock and Armagh on the 26th, 5°F. at Ballykelly on the 4th.

Precipitation—The general precipitation expressed as a percentage of the average for the period 1881-1915 was 254 over England and Wales, 108 over Scotland and 156 over Northern Ireland. Over England and Wales it was the wettest March in the long record going back to 1869. More than 300 per cent. of the average occurred over part of the Fen district and much of the south of England and the southern Midlands. In Scotland, more than the average was received in the east and south and more than twice the average in the neighbourhood of the Solway Firth and in a coastal belt from St. Andrews to Berwick. In strong contrast less than half the average occurred in the north-west and less than a quarter in the neighbourhood of Achnashellach, Ross and Cromarty.

Among the heaviest falls in 24 hours were:—

4th	2.09 in. at Paignton.
12th	3.24 in. at Oakeley Quarries near Blaenau Festiniog and 2.57 in. at Princetown, S. Devon.
16th	3.12 in. at Broughshane, Co. Down.

Rainfall occurred very frequently, the number of rain-days over England and Wales being seven in excess of the average.

Snow. Some heavy snowstorms occurred during the first half of the month. There was heavy snow over much of England and Wales on the 4th and 5th and in north England and south Scotland on the 12th and 13th. Snow lay 36 in. deep at Lake Vyrnwy, 22 in. at Crickhowell, 21 in. at Wrexham and 16 in. at Birmingham on the 6th, 17½ in. at Harrogate on the 10th, 34 in. at Ushaw, 28 in. at Chopwellwood, and 17 in. at Durham on the 14th. Drifts up to 16 ft. occurred in mining towns on high ground near Crickhowell and up to 9 ft. at Whipsnade on the 6th. In east, central and south Scotland the heavy snowstorms of the second week were said to be among the worst in recent years; heavy drifts up to 25 ft. in places isolated farms and villages and road and rail traffic was seriously interrupted.

Thunder occurred locally at times namely on the 16th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 27th and 29th.

Sunshine—Except in the north of Scotland and locally in Fife and Angus, sunshine was generally poor. In England and Wales the deficiency was universal and great; the percentage of the average was only 62. At a number of stations in south-east and east England it was the dullest March on record. At Kew Observatory, in a record going back to 1880, the total equalled the previous low record of 1888 and 1916. Less than 2 hours per day was registered over large, mainly inland areas of Wales and England compared with 4 hours or more in the neighbourhood of the Moray Firth and the Firth of Tay.

Fog—Fog occurred fairly frequently, particularly in the neighbourhood of large towns. It was reported at 9 h. on 18 days at Huddersfield, 13 days at Pontefract and 12 days at Durham, Harrogate and Princetown.

Miscellaneous Phenomena—The aurora was observed in Scotland on 13 nights. Solar halos were noted at Oxford on nine days. The zodiacal light was seen at Oxford on the evening of the 18th.