

Monthly Weather Report

OF THE METEOROLOGICAL OFFICE

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Summary of observations compiled from returns of official stations and voluntary observers

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March 1959—*Mostly mild*

For much of the first week the weather over the country was dominated by two vigorous depressions, one in the South-west Approaches, and two days later, another to the west of Ireland. Both moved east and filled rapidly. From 9th to 16th fronts from the Atlantic moved eastward rather slowly across the country, but during the third week a ridge of high pressure extended across the British Isles from an anticyclone over Russia. Thereafter disturbances from the Atlantic maintained changeable weather over the country until the end of the month.

During the first two days of the month an anticyclone near the southern Baltic maintained a southerly airstream, from the region of north Africa, over much of eastern and southern England and weather was generally warm and sunny after the clearance of fairly extensive early morning fog. On both days temperature rose to 64°F. locally and parts of south-east England had between eight and nine hours sunshine. Rain in western districts moved to Scotland. The upper ridge over eastern Europe weakened and moved slowly south-east during the next few days and depressions from the Atlantic affected the British Isles. There was fairly widespread rain on the 2nd and 3rd as a vigorous depression moved north-east from our South-west Approaches to Lincolnshire and rapidly filled. On the 4th an exceptionally deep depression became situated off western Ireland and there were severe gales to the south-west of the British Isles, but the depression filled rapidly as it moved slowly east across southern England. Winds, however, reached gale force along our western seaboard on the 5th, and weather was showery over most of the country with scattered thunderstorms.

Winds moderated on the 7th as a ridge of high pressure spread quickly south-east from Greenland and intensified to form an anticyclone north of Scotland where associated northerly winds brought snow showers to the higher ground. The next day the anticyclone moved to southern Scandinavia. Winds veered from north to east and weather became dull over much of the country with snow showers over the higher ground in north-east England and eastern Scotland although in many western districts there were prolonged periods of sunshine.

On the 10th the anticyclone moved further east to Russia and south-westerly winds penetrated into Ireland. During the next three or four days troughs and ridges from the Atlantic moved eastward across the country and weather was changeable with scattered thunderstorms. There was rain in most places on the 11th and 14th and scattered showers and long sunny periods on the 12th and 13th.

Weather became more settled on the 15th as an anticyclone to the south-west of Ireland spread north-eastwards to form a ridge of high pressure across the British Isles linking with the European high pressure system. The renewal of easterly winds over southern and central England on the 16th brought a marked fall of temperature and light snow showers to some Midland and eastern districts, although weather was predominantly dry with variable cloud and good sunny intervals. Ground frost was fairly widespread with air frost locally, and mist and fog patches also occurred quite widely. This régime persisted until the 20th with the easterlies extending gradually north to Scotland as a shallow depression formed over northern France, bringing slight occasional rain to some south-eastern districts of England.

On the 22nd the European upper high moved south-east and a milder south-westerly airstream spread over the British Isles from the Atlantic bringing fairly general rain and drizzle. Fog became widespread during the night in England, South Wales, south and central Scotland and parts of the North Sea and English Channel; it cleared from most inland areas during the following morning but persisted throughout the day in southern coastal districts and locally in south-east England. Wind freshened again on the 24th, and from then until the end of the month a

series of troughs and ridges moved across the country and weather was changeable with periods of rain alternating with thundery showers and sunny periods.

Pressure and wind. Mean pressure was mostly below the 1921–50 average, the deviation at 9h. ranging from +0.3 mb. at Lerwick to –4.7 mb. at Aldergrove. A depression about 400 miles to the west of Ireland at mid-day on the 4th had the unusually low central pressure of 944 mb. Wind direction was mainly south to south-west until the 6th becoming easterly on the 7th and 8th and predominantly south-easterly on the 9th and 10th, while westerlies predominated on the 11th, 12th and 15th and southerlies on the 13th and 14th. Thereafter winds were mainly easterly from 16th–21st and between south and south-west from 22nd–31st. Wind reached gale force on 11 days in Scotland and on 14 days in England and Wales where gales were fairly widespread on the 4th and 5th. On the 4th a gust of 62 kt. was recorded at Lerwick and one of 60 kt. at Plymouth.

Temperature. Mean temperature was everywhere above the 1921–50 average, the excess being 2.4°F. in England and Wales, 2.4°F. in Scotland and 2.5°F. in Northern Ireland. In Scotland the mildest days were the 17th, 21st–26th and 30th–31st, and temperature rose above 60°F. locally on the 17th and 23rd. In England and Wales temperatures above 60°F. were recorded on several days and rose to 64°F. locally in south-east England on both the 1st and 2nd.

Extremes included: (England and Wales) 66°F. at Greenwich on the 1st, 19°F. at Corwen on the 13th; (Scotland) 63°F. at Fyvie Castle on the 23rd, 16°F. at Kincaig on the 21st; (Northern Ireland) 61°F. at Hillsborough on the 29th, 27°F. at Loughgall on the 13th.

Precipitation. The general precipitation expressed as a percentage of the 1916–50 average was 115 in England and Wales, 89 in Scotland, where at Edinburgh it was the driest March since 1929, and 123 in Northern Ireland. Less than half the average occurred over eastern Britain from Tees-side to the Firth of Forth and in the Spey Valley. Twice the average was exceeded in the Vale of Taunton and over much of the Upper Thames Valley.

Most daily falls exceeding 2 in. occurred on the 6th, among these were: 2.58 in. at Treherbert and 2.43 in. at Rhondda W.W., both in Glamorgan, 2.25 in. at Cardiff W.W. and 2.16 in. at Ebbw Vale W.W., both in Brecknockshire.

Snow and sleet showers were fairly widespread in eastern and central districts on the 18th and 19th and also occurred on the 4th, 5th, 18th and 20th.

Thunder was heard in Scotland on the 10th, 27th and 28th and in England and Wales on the 2nd, 4th–7th, 11th, 12th, 23rd, 25th, 26th, 28th and 30th; it was fairly widespread on the 5th.

Sunshine. The general sunshine expressed as a percentage of the 1921–50 average was 82 in England and Wales, 91 in Scotland and 109 in Northern Ireland. Sunshine was above the average in parts of the London Area, in the extreme south-west of Cornwall and in North Wales; at Aber it was 143 per cent. of the average.

Fog. Fog occurred at one place or another on 19 days in Scotland and was most widespread about the 2nd and around the middle of the second week. In England and Wales it occurred every day except the 5th, 19th and 28th and persisted into the afternoon at many places on the 22nd and 23rd.

Miscellaneous Phenomena. The aurora was visible in Scotland on 16 nights; it was seen as far south as Exeter on the night of the 27th/28th and at Hartland Point the following night.