

MONTHLY WEATHER REPORT

COMPILED FROM RETURNS OF OFFICIAL AND VOLUNTARY OBSERVERS

MARCH**1985**

VOLUME 102

NUMBER 3

Rather cold and unsettled

The month began with a succession of low-pressure systems crossing the British Isles until the 5th, when the Azores anticyclone built a ridge north-eastwards to take in southern areas of Great Britain. For a while on the 11th an anticyclone was centred over the British Isles, then, as low pressure affecting western and northern parts moved away eastwards, the anticyclone transferred westwards over the Atlantic, leaving the United Kingdom in a north-westerly airstream. Between the 16th and 18th there was a temporary return to high pressure, but by the 20th a depression moved in from the Atlantic followed by a complex low-pressure system. During the 25th and 26th depressions moved eastwards along the English Channel and on the 27th a weak ridge of high pressure affected northern and western areas, followed by a further deep depression which dominated the weather over the British Isles for the rest of the month.

Weather

After a cold, unsettled first week, with gales and outbreaks of rain in western areas of England and Wales, the second week was quiet, with fog. However, a cold north-westerly airstream brought strong winds and widespread snow showers, heavy over hills, to all areas on the 13th. This cold weather continued until the 25th, when milder air reached the south-west and gradually spread to all parts of the United Kingdom. Northern Scotland remained cold until the 30th, when mild air finally reached all of Scotland except the northern isles. Isolated thunderstorms occurred on several days, notably in the afternoon of the 24th over southern and eastern England and North Wales. Hail occurred frequently throughout the month, mainly in the north and east. Hailstones between 10 mm and 20 mm in diameter were reported at Cheltenham, Gloucestershire on the 14th and 24th, Stornoway, Western Isles and Lough Navar Forest, Co. Fermanagh on the 15th, Coventry, West Midlands on the 16th and Murlough, Co. Down on the 30th.

Wind

Winds were mainly moderate to fresh, but strong on the 1st to 3rd, 6th, 19th, 20th and the 29th to 31st. Gales occurred at the beginning and end of the month and at mid-month, mainly in the west. On the 30th and 31st a number of stations in the south and east recorded maximum gusts for the month of from 35 kn to 45 kn. The highest gust at a low-level station during the month was 63 kn at Gwennap Head, Cornwall on the 20th; the mean wind during the hour of occurrence was 44 kn. Wind directions at the beginning of the month were easterly, became mainly westerly from the 4th to 16th, then easterly until the 21st, variable until the 26th, then westerly for the rest of the month.

Temperature

March was a rather cold month everywhere in the United Kingdom with mean temperatures ranging from 1 °C below normal in northern and western areas to 1.5 °C below normal in southern and eastern areas. In England and Wales highest temperatures were reached at the end of the month, the highest being 17.1 °C at Finningley, South Yorkshire on the 30th. The warmest day over a wide area, mostly in eastern districts, was the

31st, when several stations reported maxima of more than 16 °C. Around the 16th it was very cold with only south-west England having temperatures near to 10 °C; at Upavon, Wiltshire it was only 1 °C. The lowest temperature reached in England and Wales was -11.0 °C at Alwen, Clwyd on the 20th. In Scotland, Grantown-on-Spey, Highland Region had a minimum of -16.7 °C on the 18th. In Northern Ireland the warmest day generally was the 31st, although the highest single value of 15.4 °C was measured on the 9th at Helen's Bay, Co. Down. The minimum was -7.1 °C at Aldergrove Co. Antrim on the 17th.

Rainfall

Amounts were very variable, with parts of the Midlands, North Wales, the Isle of Man and western Scotland being rather dry with under 70 per cent of the monthly normal, while north-east England, eastern Scotland and the Channel Islands had over 150 per cent of average: Jersey Airport had 191 per cent. The Edinburgh area had more than double the monthly normal.

In the first days of the month Wales and south-west England had some moderate falls of rain. Some high values of rainfall on the 3rd were 63.5 mm at Beddgelert, 49 mm at Trawsfynydd and 41 mm at Nantmor, all in Gwynedd. The next notable rainfall was on the 20th in south-west England with 34 mm at Bastreet, Cornwall and 29 mm at Exeter, Devon. From the 29th a series of fronts crossed all areas of the United Kingdom, giving showers or longer outbreaks of rain every day. A number of places in Wales had falls of over 50 mm including Capel Curig, Gwynedd with 52.2 mm and Treherbert, Mid Glamorgan with 54.8 mm on the 29th. Cifffynydd, Mid Glamorgan recorded 39 mm on the 29th and a further 35 mm on the 31st.

Snow

Following a belt of rain, a cold north-westerly airstream gave widespread snow showers on the 13th, heavy over hills and persistent overnight in many places, especially near coasts. By the morning of the 15th snow cover was reported over Scotland and the higher ground of England and

Wales, with depths less than 5 cm. More continuous snow affected parts of Wales the Midlands and central southern England on the following morning and Humberside and Lincolnshire that night. On the 17th snow showers became limited to eastern areas. A belt of heavy snow affected Scotland on the 29th. There were considerable accumulations in the Edinburgh and Tayside areas with Turnhouse reporting 12 cm by the morning of the 30th. The snow gradually melted during the following 24 hours as milder air reached all but the northern isles.

Sunshine

Sunshine amounts were generally near the monthly normal. The dullest areas were the far north-west and south-east of Great Britain where amounts were about 90 per cent of normal. The brightest areas were south-west Scotland and north-east England where there was more than 120 per cent of average sunshine: Glasgow had 125 per cent and Newcastle 126 per cent.

On the 16th and 17th western areas had a bright day with 10 to 11 hours of sunshine in places. The most on the 17th was 11.1 hours at Prestwick, Strathclyde. The 22nd and 23rd were very dull days with only a glimpse of the sun at stations on the Atlantic coast, but from the 25th to 27th the days were sunny along the Irish Sea coasts; Douglas, Isle of Man had 11.2 hours on the 25th. The 29th was a dull day everywhere except in the far north of Scotland.

Fog

Overnight fog formed frequently in the first half of the month, mostly in southern and eastern areas. Central England and East Anglia had further fog patches between the 17th and 19th and on the 26th. Fog occurred over high ground mainly in central and western areas. Southern coasts were affected by sea fog patches between the 5th and 10th and again in the last week of the month; on the 6th in southern Kent and East Sussex they were persistent.

Miscellaneous Phenomena

None reported.

Table 1 District values

| District | Air temperature °C | | | | | Mean 30 cm soil temp °C | Rain-days | Rainfall | Sunshine |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|------|------|------|-------------------------|-----------|----------|----------|
| | Highest Max* | Lowest Min* | Max. | Min. | Mean | | | | |
| | Difference from average | | | | | % of average | | | |
| 0 Scotland N | 15.0 | -14.5 | -0.9 | -0.8 | -0.9 | -0.2 | +3 | 86 | 99 |
| 1 Scotland E | 15.2 | -12.8 | -0.9 | -0.7 | -0.8 | +0.1 | +1 | 120 | 93 |
| 2 England E & NE | 16.2 | -8.6 | -0.5 | -0.8 | -0.7 | -0.4 | +3 | 118 | 113 |
| 3 East Anglia | 15.7 | -6.1 | -0.9 | -1.0 | -1.0 | -0.7 | +5 | 93 | 90 |
| 4 Midland Counties | 15.9 | -8.2 | -0.5 | -1.1 | -0.8 | -0.6 | +4 | 84 | 103 |
| 5 England SE & Central S | 16.0 | -6.3 | -0.9 | -1.2 | -1.1 | -0.7 | +4 | 100 | 97 |
| 6 Scotland W | 13.0 | -10.1 | -0.9 | -1.0 | -1.0 | -0.3 | 0 | 83 | 113 |
| 7 England NW & Wales N | 15.7 | -6.5 | -0.8 | -0.5 | -0.7 | -0.3 | +3 | 105 | 110 |
| 8 England SW & Wales S | 14.7 | -7.9 | -0.5 | -0.8 | -0.8 | -0.4 | +4 | 109 | 108 |
| N Ireland | 15.5 | -7.1 | -0.8 | -0.6 | -0.7 | -0.4 | +4 | 117 | 86 |
| Scotland | 15.2 | -14.5 | -0.9 | -0.8 | -0.9 | -0.1 | +1 | 96 | 102 |
| England & Wales | 16.2 | -8.6 | -0.7 | -0.9 | -0.9 | -0.5 | +4 | 103 | 103 |

*Highest maximum and lowest minimum of District Value Stations