

April 2006

The averaging period used for the following assessment was 1961-1990.

UK overview

Mean temperatures close to average across Scotland and Northern Ireland, but above average across England and Wales. Rainfall ranging from well above average across NW Scotland to well below average across SW England. Sunshine above average across almost all of the UK, with the E of Scotland experiencing well above average sunshine.

Herstmonceux (East Sussex) recorded a temperature of 19.7 °C on 21st, with Saunton Sands (Devon) recording 19.6 °C on 20th. Tulloch Bridge (Highland) recorded a temperature of -6.9 °C on 10th.

England and Wales diary of highlights

It was quite a changeable month with Atlantic depressions crossing the north of the UK and sinking south-east across the North Sea bringing some unsettled spells of weather with rain, sleet and at times hail and snow. This unsettled weather was interspersed with more benign periods, under the influence of high-pressure ridges. The mean rainfall total for the month was below average but with a range from close to normal across north Wales and north-west England to significantly below normal in parts of the south-west. There were some colder spells, hence the snow, but this was offset by some warm periods, which brought temperatures above normal overall.

1st and 2nd: April started on an unsettled note. Initially there was low pressure to the north-west of Ireland. Weather fronts and troughs, associated with this low, swept eastward across England and Wales with the rain enhanced across southern districts overnight into the 2nd as a frontal wave ran eastwards. During the 2nd the low centre meandered eastwards across northern England maintaining showery conditions, with some of the showers heavy and thundery. Despite the rain and showers it was locally warm or rather warm with Margate (Kent) reaching 16.1 °C on the 1st and Pershore (Worcestershire) 14.7 °C on the 2nd.

3rd and 4th: Overnight into the 3rd the low drifted eastwards into the North Sea. As a result a northerly flow developed with this enhanced further by a build of pressure to the west of the UK. Showers developed and drifted southwards in this flow with some of the showers heavy and of hail, sleet and locally snow. Northern and eastern parts of England bore the brunt of these showers with many southern and western areas remaining dry and sunny (Weymouth 11.5 hours on the 3rd and Anglesey 11.6 hrs on the 4th). Another consequence of the northerly flow was to introduce cooler conditions with particularly northern and eastern parts rather cold.

5th: A ridge of high pressure built from the west leaving most with dry and fairly sunny conditions. Both Woburn (Bedfordshire) and Fishguard (Pembrokeshire) recorded 12.5 hours of sunshine. Despite the sunshine temperatures were only around normal. It was also a frosty start in rural parts with both Sennybridge (Powys) and Shap Fell recording minima of -5.7 °C. It became frosty again in some country areas on the night of the 5th with Benson (Oxfordshire) falling to -4.5 °C.

6th to 9th: The ridge of high-pressure gave way early on the 6th, allowing a weather front to sink south. A more unsettled period of weather followed with low pressure dominating. The low, initially to the north of the UK, drifted south-east with showers feeding across the country. As the low drifted across the North Sea and the

flow became northerly the showers turned increasingly wintry. Large hail was reported in Manchester on the 7th while heavy snow showers on the 8th resulted in the Premiership football match at Sunderland being abandoned. There were further wintry showers on the 9th, mainly in the north and east. Heavy snow showers resulted in the closure of the M62 for a few hours and there was a covering of snow in other parts. Showers became more active across south-east England during the early hours of the 10th and locally intense, with 15 cm of snow reported from Tunbridge Wells.

10th to 15th: As the low drifted away a ridge of high pressure built across England and Wales. However, this was only a transient feature, soon supplanted by an active weather system which brought rain then showers across all areas on the 11th. The rain/showers were heavy in places with Capel Curig (Gwynedd) recording 42.8 mm (1.69 inches) in the 24 hours ending at 1800 on the 11th. There were also reports of thunder. Further frontal systems pushed across from the west on the 12th and 13th bringing rain accompanied by strong winds. Capel Curig (Gwynedd) recorded a gust of 51 knots on the 13th. Despite the breeze and spells of rain, it was locally warm with Margate (Kent) reaching 17 °C on the 13th. A weak, slow-moving weather front straddled southern counties on the 14th leaving many other parts dry and fairly sunny. Indeed Cromer recorded 12.7 hours of sunshine. It was cloudier on the 15th with some rain in the south but Preston Town Hall reached 17.1 °C.

16th to 21st: Slow moving weather fronts and showers affected northern parts through this period while amounts of rain in the south were small. There was also some warm, hazy sunshine in places with Eastbourne recording 12.5 hours on the 18th. On the 21st, showery rain across north-east England pushed south into the Midlands, Lincolnshire and East Anglia, with the showers locally heavy and thundery.

22nd to 24th: A build of pressure brought drier conditions to most parts on the 22nd. It was also locally very warm away from the east coast with Saunton Sands (Devon) reaching 19.6 °C. However, during the night a weather front sank south, grinding to a halt across southern England during the 23rd. This made for a cloud and damp London Marathon with outbreaks of rain. A ridge of high pressure built in the wake of the front but it remained rather cloudy with fog patches developing in the north on the morning of the 24th. Further fog developed on the night of the 24th with some particularly dense patches around the Thames Estuary.

25th to 30th: The ridge of high pressure collapsed allowing Atlantic fronts to cross from the west on the 25th but these fronts weakened considerably with the rain bands fragmenting as they pushed across the country. It became warm as sunny spells developed ahead of these fronts with a number of places in Lincolnshire passing 18 °C. High pressure reasserted itself from the west over the 26th and 27th bringing drier conditions across most parts. Initially it was rather cloudy, particularly in the east, but sunshine amounts increased. There was 13 hours of sunshine recorded at Tenby (Pembrokeshire), Falmouth (Cornwall) and Cromer (Norfolk) on the 28th, 29th and 30th respectively. Generally it was warm or rather warm but as winds veered north-east it became rather cold near the North Sea. Later on the 30th the high cell began to decline allowing further weather fronts to push in from the west.

Scotland diary of highlights

Showery, bright and breezy..

West or north-westerly winds circulating around low pressure near the Norwegian Sea was the main feature of April's weather. Conditions were generally unsettled, but mostly showery, and the absence of slow moving fronts and warm and humid air masses meant that sunshine totals in the east and south-east were well above average. The first third of the month was particularly cold by recent standards, with snow falling to low altitudes.

A complex area of low pressure moved east across Scotland at the start of the month. Rain cleared to the north on the 1st with further outbreaks of rain the next day.

As the low pressure moved to the east, cold winds from between west and north brought sunny spells and wintry showers for the next few days. A ridge of high pressure brought a fine day to the south on the 4th, with the temperature falling to -5 °C at Tulloch Bridge. This was followed by another depression that moved from Iceland to Denmark, with its fronts pushing a band of rain south-east on the 5th. The next few days were the coldest of the month with the temperature reaching only 3 °C at Loch Glascarnoch on the 7th and 4 °C at Tulloch Bridge on the 9th. The cold was emphasised by strong winds at times with gusts reaching 64 m.p.h. at Stornoway on the 6th. Snow lay on the hills, reaching down to Eskdalemuir and Glenlivet on the 8th and 9th respectively. A ridge of high pressure brought fine weather on the night of 9th/10th, with the temperature falling to -7 °C at Tulloch Bridge.

From the 11th to the 19th the showery theme continued with winds blowing from just north of west, but it was not as cold as before and snow was confined to the hills. Fronts pushed a band of rain across the country during the early hours of the 11th with 28 mm recorded at Broadford. Further fronts on the 12th meant that Loch Glascarnoch received 21 mm of rain and experienced gusts of up to 58 m.p.h. Heavy showers on the 13th gave 22 mm of rain at Tulloch Bridge. After this the weather settled down somewhat so that although showers continued, eastern districts saw plenty of sun on most days.

Alternations of damp and fine conditions were experienced from the 20th to the 24th as troughs (20th, 22nd and 24th) and ridges (21st and 23rd) crossed the country. It was warmer than before with the temperature rising to 15 °C on the sunny days.

Cool, bright and showery westerly weather returned on the 25th but soon an anticyclone built to the west of Ireland and extended a strong ridge to Scotland. Consequently the showers died out and many districts enjoyed a few fine days weather towards the end of the month. Fronts moving in from the Atlantic pushed a band of rain across the west of Scotland on the 30th.

Northern Ireland diary of highlights

Rainfall and temperature close to average.

The first ten days of the month saw a continuation of the decidedly cold and wintry theme of the spring thus far. The first three days were bright but cold with sunshine and occasional heavy showers, some falling as hail and accompanied by localised thunderstorms. Blustery north-west winds accentuated the chill in many areas.

Frost became more widespread by the morning of the 4th and 5th with many inland areas seeing dawn temperatures between -3 and -6 °C. Cloud increased to give some light showery rain on the afternoon of the 5th and a cold front gave 5-10 mm on the morning of the 6th. The 7th started bright and dry with some early ground frost but cloud built to give heavy showers in the afternoon with hail and thunder observed locally. The showers fell as a wintry mix of sleet and snow on the hills. The 8th was little different with further heavy hail showers and cold, blustery winds. The 9th started cold with ground frost but cloud increased to give rain, sleet and hill snow in the afternoon when temperatures in many areas struggled between 3 and 5 °C. Skies cleared during Sunday evening and by the morning of the 10th another hard frost for mid-April was occurring with daybreak temperatures again down to between -4 and -6 °C.

The days in the run up to Easter were changeable with some rain at times through temperatures staged a modest recovery. The Easter holiday started sunny on Good Friday, and with light winds and temperatures of 14 °C, it felt pleasantly warm in many areas. Although there was some further sunshine through the remainder of the long holiday weekend, skies were often cloudy and showers or showery rain became increasingly more widespread by the 18th though never in any great amounts.

The days between the 19th and 21st were more settled with some sunshine and temperatures reached 18 °C in some areas on the 21st in prolonged sunshine. The remainder of the month maintained a rather changeable weather pattern with some sunny and pleasantly warm days interspersed with cloudy interludes with some showery rain. The wettest period was on the evening of the 30th with up to 10 mm or more in many places.

