

MONTHLY WEATHER REPORT

COMPILED FROM RETURNS OF OFFICIAL AND VOLUNTARY OBSERVERS

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Mainly wet and mild, but a cold and mostly dry last week

A ridge of high pressure extended northwards to cover all parts of the United Kingdom on the 1st, but declined early on the next day as a frontal system moved rapidly eastwards. The fronts finally cleared north-eastern Scotland by midday on the 3rd and all parts of Great Britain came once more under the influence of a ridge of high pressure. However, a further frontal system advanced north-eastwards across western areas, the warm front clearing eastern Scotland late on the 12th, while the cold front gradually became slow moving over western areas of Great Britain. The northern part of the front then turned southwards, and cleared the far south-east early on the 15th. Further fronts crossed all parts during the next few days. On the 20th a warm front lay across southern Scotland and a shallow wave depression was centred to the south-west of Cornwall, with its associated front along the English Channel. Both fronts moved northwards during the day as the depression deepened and moved northwards over the Irish Sea and then north-eastwards to the North Sea by the early hours of the 21st. A cold front moved southwards during the 21st, clearing southern England early on the 22nd, leaving the United Kingdom in a northerly airstream, with minor troughs running southwards. As the low pressure area transferred to the east, a ridge of high pressure built from the west; the high pressure intensified and during the next few days became centred over north-east of England, leaving southern England temporarily in a strong easterly airstream. For the rest of the month pressure remained high with weak fronts occasionally affecting northern and eastern areas.

Weather

The first three weeks were wet, although rainfall amounts were greater in western areas, and some parts of the east and south-east had less than the normal amounts. North-eastern coastal areas had cold and foggy weather between the 6th and 9th. An area of thundery activity extended from Lincolnshire to East Sussex on the 16th. Thunder was reported in Surrey and Berkshire on 21st; the Thames Valley, the Cotswolds and Cornwall on the 22nd and on 23rd there was an isolated thunderstorm in the Thames Valley.

Wind

Winds reached gale force for a time at a number of places in western areas on the 4th, more generally between the 19th and 21st and locally over Kent on the 25th. The highest mean wind speed was 43 kn at Forth Road Bridge on the 19th, with a gust to 65 kn. A mean wind of 41 kn was measured at Sheerness, Kent on the 25th with a gust to 51 kn. Around midnight on the 20th/21st Leeds Weather Centre, West Yorkshire measured two gusts of 61 kn. Directions were mainly southerly or variable.

Temperature

March was a warm month especially over central and eastern England, although not generally as warm as March 1990. Mean monthly temperatures were above normal over the whole United Kingdom

and ranged from 0.9 °C above normal at St Mary's, Isles of Scilly to 3.1 °C above normal at Cromer, Norfolk.

Except for parts of Scotland little frost occurred after the first two days until the end of the month. On the 6th the temperature rose to nearly 15 °C in south-east England, reaching 17 °C in Devon on the 17th and to nearly 20 °C in many places on the 13th, becoming generally colder after the 21st. The highest temperature during the month was 20.8 °C recorded at Barbourne, Hereford & Worcester on the 13th and the lowest was -8.0 °C at Carnwath, Strathclyde Region on the 29th.

Rainfall

Monthly rainfall totals were above normal nearly everywhere, the exceptions being parts of central and eastern England and the northernmost part of the Western Isles where rainfall was below normal, and ranged from 178% at Tynemouth, Tyne & Wear to as little as 40% at Manston, Kent.

Rain fell in most areas on most days between the 6th and 20th, although some places in East Anglia had 5 or 6 days with little or no rain early in the period, and amounts of rain in other parts of the east and south-east were small. Amounts were generally greater in western and northern areas. Rain, heavy in places, fell in most areas between the 20th and 22nd. Among heavy falls were: 62.2 mm at Great Dun Fell, Cumbria on the 4th, 61.5 mm at Eskdalemuir, Dumfries & Galloway on the 18th, 51.8 mm at Fort William, Highland Region on the 18th and 50.1 mm at Nantmor, Gwynedd on the 20th.

Snow

Unusually for March, snowy weather was only reported on the 22nd and 23rd, when isolated outbreaks of sleet or snow occurred over eastern coastal areas from the Humber northwards.

Sunshine

Monthly sunshine amounts were below average nearly everywhere apart from a few places in East Anglia and along the south coast, where temperatures were average or just above average, ranging

from 104% of average at Falmouth, Cornwall to as little as 39% of average at Bradford, West Yorkshire.

It was a generally dull month, although with some sunny intervals, mainly in the south. The 25th was a sunny day generally, with 10 or 11 hours measured over much of Northern Ireland and Scotland, and 8 to 11 hours over a large part of southern England and South Wales, but with less than 3 hours sunshine over much of the north Midlands and north-east England. The most sunshine in a day was 11.5 hours at Craibstone, Grampian Region on the 25th and the most sunshine in the month was 131 hours measured at Plymouth, Devon.

Fog

Fog patches affected parts of England and Wales on the 1st, many eastern parts of England and Scotland on the 2nd, East Anglia and parts of the Midlands on the 5th and 6th, east and north-east Scotland on the 9th, and southern Scotland during the night of 10th/11th. Fog was persistent on the 12th especially over eastern Scotland and north-east England. Southern parts of England had patches of thick fog by dawn on the 13th. Patchy fog formed on the 14th over south-eastern England, on the 15th over central and north-east Scotland, early on the 22nd over East Anglia, and on the 25th over Scotland. Further overnight fog in eastern England on the 29th became thick and extensive on the 30th. Fog was thick in south-west England and South Wales on the 31st. Hill fog and coastal fog occurred frequently during the month.

Miscellaneous Phenomena

A tornado hit part of south-west Wales early on the 3rd, causing considerable structural damage and uprooting trees. On the 7th deposits of dust or sand in rainfall were reported at a number of places in the west Midlands, including Malvern, Bromsgrove and Solihull. On the 11th deposits of red dust were reported in rain at Northwood, Greater London and Cavendish, Suffolk. During the early hours of the 26th brown rain was reported at Towy Castle, Dyfed and Slimbridge, Gloucestershire.

Table 1 District values

District	Air temperature °C					Mean 30 cm soil temp°C	Rain- days	Rainfall	Sun- shin
	Highest Max*	Lowest Min*	Max.	Min.	Mean				
			Difference from average					% of average	
0 Scotland N	18.3	-6.2	+1.7	+1.4	+1.6	+1.3	+3	111	81
1 Scotland E	14.7	-5.0	+2.0	+1.1	+1.5	+1.6	+1	132	76
2 England E & NE	17.7	-3.5	+2.3	+2.5	+2.4	+2.1	+3	112	66
3 East Anglia	18.4	-4.4	+2.5	+2.4	+2.4	+2.1	-2	66	92
4 Midland Counties	18.3	-3.1	+2.2	+2.7	+2.4	+2.1	+1	98	71
5 England SE & Central S	18.7	-3.3	+2.1	+2.4	+2.2	+1.9	+1	101	85
6 Scotland W	14.6	-8.0	+1.6	+1.5	+1.6	+1.4	+3	137	83
7 England NW & Wales N	19.2	-4.0	+1.9	+2.0	+1.9	+1.7	+2	141	69
8 England SW & Wales S	18.4	-3.5	+1.7	+2.2	+1.8	+1.5	+5	138	90
N Ireland	14.7	-3.6	+1.5	+1.9	+1.7	+1.2	+3	148	85
Scotland	18.3	-8.0	+1.8	+1.3	+1.6	+1.4	+2	128	80
England & Wales	19.2	-4.4	+2.1	+2.4	+2.2	+1.9	+2	118	79

* Highest maximum and lowest minimum of District Value Stations