

Monthly Weather Report

OF THE METEOROLOGICAL OFFICE

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

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March 1962 — Unusually Cold.

Weather until the 25th was predominantly anticyclonic in character with high pressure over Greenland during the first two weeks and thereafter in the region of Iceland, maintaining, apart from temporary interruptions, a generally cold northerly airstream over the British Isles. The last six days of the month were milder and cyclonic with depressions from the Atlantic crossing the country.

On the 1st a cold front associated with a shallow depression in the North Sea brought considerable snowfall to Scotland, and snow spread to much of England and Wales the following day as the front moved south; it became slow-moving along the English Channel on the 3rd giving heavy falls in parts of southern England. There were long sunny periods in the west but snow showers continued behind the front in the north and east with moderate falls in places. On the 3rd and 4th snow lay up to 4 in. deep in parts of England, Wales and the Channel Islands, and up to 2 ft deep in the Cairngorms. Winds fell light on the 5th and during that and the following night there was air-frost in most parts of the country with temperatures as low as -12°C locally in Scotland. Fog developed widely on the morning of the 6th becoming dense in places.

On the 7th a ridge extended from the Greenland anticyclone to another anticyclone over Germany, but a depression moving northward off the west of Ireland brought rain, sleet and snow into south-west England and south-easterly gales to most of southern England and to Wales. Gales became severe in the south-west and these coupled with the high seas caused serious damage to sea walls and disastrous flooding. Rain was heavy locally, many places in Devon and Cornwall recording more than an inch in 24 hours. Milder weather, with rain and sleet spread from the south-west slowly north across the country reaching most areas, except northern Scotland, during the next two days. On the 10th and 11th, however, cold north-easterly winds spread back over the whole country as a ridge of high pressure extended southward from the Greenland anticyclone over the British Isles; rain was widespread on the 10th and there was sleet and snow in many places on the 11th. The next three days were generally fine and sunny apart from scattered snow showers; weather remained cold with widespread frost at night.

On the 15th a depression formed off the west of Ireland and winds again backed to south-east in western districts where there was some frontal rain, sleet or snow, the rain being heavy at times in Cornwall and west Devon. In the east, however, the weather remained bright and cold. The rain in the west quickly died out the next day as pressure rose, and the 16th and 17th were generally fine sunny days. The ridge of high pressure over the North Sea moved westwards to cover the British Isles on the 18th, re-establishing north-easterly winds which brought a return of snow showers to East Anglia. The next three days were also bright and cold with light wintry showers.

A depression from the Atlantic moved south-east across Scotland late on the 25th and associated fronts brought widespread rain, the first rain for some time in many places; it was heavy at times and preceded by snow in the north. The depression marked a change in the general weather pattern and the beginning of a milder westerly regime. North-westerly winds with occasional thundery showers became

general on the 26th and 27th, but rain again became widespread and locally heavy on the 28th and 29th as another depression from the Atlantic moved across the British Isles. Showery weather followed the depression during the last two days of the month.

Pressure and Wind — Mean pressure was generally below the average except in the extreme west of Scotland, the deviation at 9 hr ranging from $+1.4$ mb at Stornoway to -4.2 mb at Shoeburyness. Surface winds were predominantly from between north and north-east until the 24th apart from periods of south-easterly winds on the 6th-9th and 15th-17th, these periods being preceded and followed by days of rather variable winds. From the 25th until the end of the month winds were mainly between south-west and west. Winds reached gale force, mainly during the second and last weeks, on 12 days in Scotland and on the 6th-8th, 19th, 25th, 26th, 28th and 31st (8 days) in England and Wales. Gales were widespread on the 7th and severe in south-west England where a gust of 81 kt was recorded at Scilly.

Temperature — Mean temperature was considerably below the 1921-50 average, the deficit being 3.1°C in England and Wales, 2.7°C in Scotland and 3.0°C in Northern Ireland. At many places it was the coldest March this century and at Ross-on-Wye it was the coldest since 1883.

Extremes included: (England and Wales) 15.6°C at Hoddesdon on the 29th, -15.0°C at Alwen on the 6th and at Kielder Castle on the 7th; (Scotland) 12.8°C at Onich on the 20th, -17.2°C at Grantown-on-Spey on the 6th; (Northern Ireland) 12.8°C at Armagh on the 26th, -11.7°C at Newry on the 4th.

Precipitation — The general precipitation expressed as a percentage of the 1916-50 average was 81 over England and Wales, 72 over Scotland and 88 over Northern Ireland. Rainfall was greater than the average in Essex and parts of Kent, in Cornwall and parts of Devon, and in parts of South Wales and northern Scotland; it was more than twice the average in west Aberdeenshire.

Thunder was heard in Scotland on 3 days and in England and Wales on the 26th, 27th, 29th and 31st; on the 31st thunderstorms were widespread.

Snow or sleet was reported falling at one place or another in Scotland every day of the month, the ground being snow-covered on 29 days; snow lay 2 feet deep in the Cairngorms during the first week. In England and Wales it fell every day somewhere or other except on the 9th and 10th. During the first week snow lay up to 4 in. deep in many parts of central and northern England and in the extreme south-west.

Sunshine — The general sunshine expressed as a percentage of the 1921-50 average was 105 over England and Wales, 107 over Scotland and 111 over Northern Ireland. Sunshine was slightly below average in eastern and southern England but as much as 20 per cent above average in the north-west.

Fog — Morning fog was reported on 18 days in Scotland; in England and Wales it occurred at one place or another on the 1st-12th, 15th, 17th, 18th, 20th, 22nd, 28th-30th (20 days).

Miscellaneous Phenomena — The aurora was visible in Scotland on 12 nights.