

MONTHLY WEATHER REPORT

MARCH

1974

COMPILED FROM RETURNS OF OFFICIAL AND VOLUNTARY OBSERVERS

VOLUME 91

NUMBER 3

Rather dull and quiet; short interludes of changeable weather.

A large anticyclone was centred over northern Europe for most of the month. Over the United Kingdom, low-pressure systems on the periphery of the anticyclone were usually shallow and slow-moving but occasionally during the first two weeks and more frequently during the third week more active depressions and fronts crossed the country from the Atlantic.

Weather

The first half of the month was rather cold but it became milder later. Although rainfall was mainly slight there were heavy falls at times with occasional thunder, especially during the third week. Hail, snow or sleet (snow mixed with rain or drizzle) also occurred but mostly during the first three weeks. Eastern and southern districts of Great Britain were the most affected by fog which was reported more often after the 21st than before.

Wind

Although mostly light or moderate, winds were often fresh or strong on exposed coasts but the frequency of gales was below average in most places. Easterly winds predominated but there were occasional westerlies, especially during the third week which was the windiest period of the month. Gusts of 50 kt or more were recorded at a number of places and the high-level station at Snaefell (Isle of Man) had a gust of 74 kt on the 17th.

Temperature

Mean monthly temperatures were generally within 1 degC of average. They were above average in northern Scotland, in north-western England and in parts of eastern and south-eastern England, but near or below average in other districts. The first two weeks were mostly rather cold and frost often occurred at night. The 9th to 11th was a particularly cold period in parts of the Midlands and southern England where temperatures rose no higher than 3°C at a number of places. The second half of the month was milder generally but frost still occurred frequently in Scotland, in the Midlands and in eastern and southern England. The last few days were mild and in many places temperatures reached 15°C to 19°C, the maximum temperature of 19.8°C on 31st at Kinlochewe (Ross and Cromarty) being the highest March temperature recorded in Scotland since 1965.

Rainfall (including melted snow)

Monthly rainfall exceeded the average in the west of Northern Ireland, in parts of northern England and in a few small areas of southern England. Eastern Scotland and part of the northern Welsh coast were also wetter than normal and a few places had over 50 per cent of their average rainfall. By

contrast, in parts of South Wales, in other small areas of southern England and in much of north-western Scotland, rainfall was less than half of average. Cape Wrath (Sutherland) had a total of 12 mm of rainfall representing only 16 per cent of the average for that station. In other districts rainfall totals ranged from 50 to 100 per cent of average. Until the 21st showers or more prolonged periods of rain occurred frequently and snow, sleet and hail also fell at times. The precipitation was mainly slight but there were some heavy falls especially during the third week and these were occasionally accompanied by thunder. In the 24 hours from 09 GMT on the 15th, a fall of 77.0 mm was recorded at Honister Pass (Cumbria) and two days later 70.1 mm of rain fell in 24 hours at Loch Thom (Renfrewshire). During the last ten days rain or drizzle was well-scattered and mainly slight but one or two outbreaks of heavy rain occurred in central and southern Scotland and a few thunderstorms were reported in southern districts of England and Wales.

Snow

Falls of snow or sleet occurred almost entirely during the first three weeks. They were usually slight and scattered but occasionally in Great Britain falls were heavier and more widespread. However, the snow did not lie for long except on the higher slopes of the Scottish mountains. On the 1st central and eastern Scotland and parts of northern England had 10 to 20 cm of snow and an undrifted depth of 23 cm was measured at Ashintully Castle (Perthshire). Between the 9th and 12th snow fell in the southern half of England and Wales and for a short time there were 8 to 16 cm at some places on high ground.

Sunshine

Northern Scotland was sunnier than normal and monthly totals reached 130 to 150 per cent of average in northernmost districts. Baltasound (Shetland), with a total of nearly 121 hours, had its sunniest March since records began in 1907 although this total was equalled in March 1937. In south-western Scotland, Northern Ireland and in some western and southern districts of England and Wales sunshine amounts were near or a little above average but elsewhere they were mostly between 60 and 90 per cent of average. There were no prolonged sunny spells but many places, especially in the west and north, had some sunny days.

Fog

Eastern and southern districts of Great Britain were the most frequently affected by overnight fog which occurred more often after the 21st than before. There were occasional patches of freezing fog and in some places dense fog persisted throughout the daytime. Fog enshrouded hills in the west and north on a few days and patches of sea fog were reported on coasts bordering the North Sea and the English Channel at times during the second half of the month.

Miscellaneous Phenomena

The aurora was observed on 10 nights in Scotland.

Table 1 District values

District	air temperature °C					mean 30-cm earth temp °C	rain- days	rainfall	sun- shine
	Highest Max. *	Lowest Min. *	max.	min.	mean				
			difference from average						
0 Scotland N	17.0	-2.6	+0.2	+0.1	+0.2	+0.4	-5	63	110
1 Scotland E	17.0	-3.0	-0.6	+0.2	-0.2	+0.9	+2	112	87
2 England E & NE	14.3	-7.2	-0.6	+0.2	-0.2	+0.7	+4	98	89
3 East Anglia	17.4	-5.5	-0.3	+0.6	+0.2	+0.8	-1	72	90
4 Midland Counties	16.7	-3.9	-0.4	+0.1	-0.1	+0.5	0	80	94
5 England SE & Central S	16.7	-3.0	0.0	+0.2	+0.1	+0.4	0	71	97
6 Scotland W	16.4	-4.6	-0.2	0.0	-0.1	+0.4	-1	77	94
7 Eng NW & Wales N	17.9	-3.6	+0.2	+0.3	+0.3	+0.6	-1	85	100
8 Eng SW & Wales S	16.9	-5.0	-0.5	-0.5	-0.5	+0.2	+1	73	89
N Ireland	15.5	-4.6	-0.4	-0.4	-0.4	0.0	-4	68	100
Scotland	17.0	-4.6	-0.2	+0.1	0.0	+0.6	-1	84	97
England & Wales	17.9	-7.2	-0.3	+0.1	0.0	+0.5	+1	80	93

*Highest maximum and Lowest Minimum of District Value Stations