

MONTHLY WEATHER REPORT

COMPILED FROM RETURNS OF OFFICIAL AND VOLUNTARY OBSERVERS

MARCH**1978**

VOLUME 95

NUMBER 3

Changeable: mild first two weeks, windy second half of month.

Fronts and depressions associated with a low-pressure area over the Atlantic affected the British Isles at the beginning of the month, but an anticyclone which developed to the west of Ireland on the 3rd drifted east, then south-east, across Britain between the 4th and the 7th. Alternating fronts and ridges then moved eastwards across all areas. A deep depression crossed Scotland between the 14th and the 16th, while frontal troughs affected parts of England and Wales, but the low-pressure area over the British Isles was displaced by a ridge of high pressure from the west on the 17th. The ridge was short-lived, however, as vigorous Atlantic depressions maintained a succession of fronts, which crossed all areas between the 19th and the end of the month.

Weather

The first half of March was mostly mild. There were outbreaks of rain, but also sunny periods, and scattered snow and sleet showers were confined to northern areas. Fog became widespread in England and Wales on the night of the 3rd/4th and affected the coasts and hills of western and northern Britain at times between the 7th and the 10th. Many areas had very mild weather during the second week, but it became colder around mid-month and snow or sleet fell in most districts on the night of the 15th/16th. The second half of the month was windy, with further outbreaks of rain, wintry showers and occasional thunderstorms. There were also sunny intervals and it became milder during the last few days.

Wind

Wind speeds were very variable during the first half of the month; they were light at times, but occasionally reached gale force on exposed northern and western coasts. Directions also were rather variable during the first week, but were mostly south to south-west in the second. The latter half of the month was generally windier, and gales became more frequent, particularly in the west and north. The gales were severe in places and most stations recorded their maximum gusts for the month during the last two weeks. Gusts of at least 60 kt were reported on several days and the high-level station at Snaefell (Isle of Man) had a gust of 98 kt on the 15th. Directions were mostly west to north-west from around mid-month until the 26th, and then became mainly south-west.

Temperature

Monthly mean temperatures were generally near to or above average. Values were mostly between 1.0 and 1.5 °C above the normal over the central and north Midlands, in eastern England from north Kent and the lower Thames Valley to the Tyne, and in places in eastern Scotland, and were between around 0 and 1.0 °C above average in most remaining districts. The first half of the month was mainly mild, although the night of the 4th/5th was very cold in some areas, temperatures falling to around -7 °C at a few places in southern Scotland and North Wales and to -7 °C at Moor House in the northern Pennines. Many parts became very mild during the second week, particularly on the 10th,

when the temperature reached 18.3 °C at Hope (Powys) near the Welsh border: maxima also exceeded 18 °C at one or two places in central England. Colder weather reached most areas by the 16th, but it became milder towards the end of the month.

Rainfall (including melted snow)

Rainfall was below average along the coastal strip of Cardigan Bay, in parts of North Wales and north-east England, in extreme south-east England and over much of the central Midlands. Monthly totals were above average in all other areas, exceeding 200 per cent of the normal in Jersey, on Bodmin Moor in Cornwall, in parts of north-west England, Northern Ireland and the Central Highlands of Scotland, and over a large part of western Scotland. A number of places in Scotland had their wettest March on record, although daily totals were not exceptional there. Rain or showers fell in many areas during the first few days, but the weather then became dry over most of England and Wales, while Scotland and Northern Ireland had rain at times. Rain reached all districts on the 8th and the second week was generally unsettled. Further outbreaks of rain or showers occurred during the latter half of the month; some of the showers were wintry and there were thunderstorms in places.

Snow

Scattered showers of snow or sleet fell in parts of Scotland during the first week, but snowfall became more widespread around mid-month. A belt of snow spread across South Wales and central and southern England on the 15th/16th and several road accidents occurred, one in the Midlands resulting in loss of life. Roads in northern areas were also affected by snow for a time. Snow and sleet showers continued to occur during the second half of the month, mostly in northern districts, but occasionally in the south. Wintry showers became less frequent

during the last few days. The snow did not lie for long on low ground, but the upper slopes of the Scottish mountains were snow-covered throughout the month. Deep drifts were observed at the high-level station at Snaefell (Isle of Man) on the 21st and during the next few days.

Sunshine

Sunshine totals were above average in south-eastern parts of Northern Ireland, in Shetland and Orkney, along eastern coasts of Great Britain from the north of Scotland to East Anglia, over central England, and in parts of southern England and North Wales. Monthly totals exceeded 125 per cent of the normal in parts of the Midlands and north-east England. Sunshine was mostly below average elsewhere, with totals generally near the normal, although not much more than half the average was recorded at the western end of the Great Glen in Scotland. Sunny periods occurred in most areas from time to time throughout the month and sunshine was prolonged in the west and north on the 4th, in England and Wales over the next few days, and in some districts during the last week.

Fog

Patches of overnight fog in inland areas mostly occurred during the first half of the month and generally cleared quickly, but fog developed widely over England and Wales on the night of the 3rd/4th. The fog became dense in eastern areas and was slow to clear in places. Fog formed extensively at times on coasts and hills in the west and north between the 7th and the 10th and also affected the English Channel area. Patches of fog occasionally formed over hills during the second half of the month and coastal fog continued to develop from time to time in the south-west.

Miscellaneous Phenomena

Nil

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	13.2	−3.4	0.0	+0.2	+0.2	−0.2	+7	185	97
1 Scotland E	14.5	−7.0	+0.8	+1.0	+0.9	+0.7	+6	155	107
2 England E & NE	16.7	−5.0	+1.4	+1.1	+1.2	+1.0	+7	115	113
3 East Anglia	18.1	−2.7	+1.5	+1.1	+1.3	+0.9	+7	141	105
4 Midland Counties	18.1	−4.8	+1.2	+1.1	+1.2	+0.8	+6	120	120
5 England SE & Central S	17.5	−3.0	+0.9	+1.0	+0.9	+0.8	+6	124	95
6 Scotland W	13.4	−7.0	0.0	+1.0	+0.5	+0.5	+9	210	79
7 England NW & Wales N	15.2	−4.0	+0.2	+1.3	+0.8	+0.2	+6	158	99
8 England SW & Wales S	16.5	−2.7	+0.4	+0.8	+0.6	+0.6	+9	160	92
N Ireland	13.6	−3.4	−0.2	+0.4	+0.1	+0.3	+8	163	98
Scotland	14.5	−7.0	+0.3	+0.7	+0.5	+0.3	+7	183	94
England & Wales	18.1	−5.0	+0.9	+1.1	+1.0	+0.7	+7	136	104

*Highest maximum and lowest minimum of District Value Stations.