

MONTHLY WEATHER REPORT

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Mostly cold, wet and windy, with heavy snowfall in the third week.

A westerly airstream predominated during the early part of the month, with a succession of fronts associated with depressions to the north crossing all parts of Britain. A deep depression moved south-eastwards to Denmark on the 12th, however, marking a change in the pressure distribution. Another depression then moved eastwards up the English Channel and the low-pressure area which developed over northern France and southern and eastern England gave rise to a north-easterly airstream between the 14th and the 18th.

The pressure gradient slackened on the 19th and a cold front then moved south-eastwards across all districts on the 20th and 21st. A wave-depression had developed over eastern Scotland, however, and this became slow-moving over the North Sea, bringing a north-westerly flow to many areas. A ridge of high pressure then moved eastwards over central and southern Britain on the 23rd and 24th, and this was followed by a complex low-pressure system. A deep depression became almost stationary off eastern England on the 28th and a strong northerly airflow was maintained until the 30th, when a weak ridge, followed by further fronts, crossed all parts from the north-west.

Weather

This was a windy month, with frequent local gales. It was rather mild at first, but became very cold around mid-month. Wintry showers fell mainly in northern districts during the first two weeks, but then spread to all areas. Heavy snowfall particularly affected north-eastern England and eastern Scotland during the third week. Monthly rainfall totals were well above average in most parts.

Wind

Gales were frequently reported in the north and west of Scotland and also occurred along the coasts of England and Wales from time to time. The gales were occasionally severe. Inland areas also experienced strong winds, particularly during the last week. Wind directions were mainly south-westerly until the 12th, but became north-easterly between the 14th and the 18th. South-west to north-west winds then predominated, although directions were south-easterly on the 24th and 25th and northerly between the 28th and 30th.

Temperature

Although the early part of the month was comparatively mild, the much colder conditions which followed resulted in below-average monthly mean temperatures in all districts. Both Scotland and Northern Ireland had their coldest March since 1969, with mean values mainly between 1.5 and 2.5 °C below average. Over England and Wales mean temperatures ranged from 1.5 °C below average in parts of the north and west to only a little below normal along the East Anglian coast.

Monthly maxima in Northern Ireland and Scotland mostly occurred on the 2nd, when the temperature rose to 15.7 °C at Achany (Highland Region). Much of England had a mild day on the 11th, but the weather became much colder generally around mid-month. The night of the 18th/19th was very cold in the Scottish Highlands, the temperature falling to -16.5 °C at Braemar. The rest of the month was mostly

rather cold, but southern areas had a brief mild spell during the last week, maxima of at least 15 °C occurring in East Anglia and southern England on the 25th.

Rainfall

Rainfall was above average in all areas and this was the wettest March over England and Wales, taken together, since 1947. Monthly rainfall values exceeded 200 per cent of average in Shetland, over a large part of the Scottish Highlands and the Southern Uplands, in many central and eastern districts of England, in parts of Wales and on Bodmin Moor in Cornwall. Over 300 per cent of the average was recorded in places, particularly in north-eastern England, where the heavy rainfall caused flooding, and more than 400 per cent of the normal fell in the area between the Rivers Tees and Wear. Rainfall in remaining parts of the United Kingdom was between 100 and 200 per cent of average.

Periods of rain or showers, which became increasingly wintry, occurred throughout the month and the totals in some northern areas include the water equivalent of heavy snowfall. Thunderstorms occasionally occurred, mostly during the third week in southern England. A number of daily rainfalls exceeded 50 mm in northern districts and in Wales during the month, and 176.2 mm fell at Honister Pass (Cumbria) in the 24 hours starting at 09 GMT on the 8th.

Snow

Wintry showers were mainly confined to northern areas during the first two weeks, but began to affect all parts around mid-month. Sleet and snow spread to most of England and Wales on the 16th, and although the snow did not lie for long in southern counties, the combination of heavy snowfall and gale force north-easterly winds in northern England and southern Scotland led to considerable drifting, particularly over the northern Pennines, where drifts up to about 5 m were observed. Snow fell continuously in the Newcastle area between the 16th and the morning of the 19th, level snow accumulating to a depth of 45

cm at Gosforth. Over 200 passengers were reported to be stranded at Newcastle Airport, several villages in the Yorkshire Wolds were isolated, and snowdrifts blocked roads as far south as Derbyshire. Undrifting depths of at least 10 cm occurred widely in central England and depths of 30 cm were measured in level snow in Shropshire. Eastern and southern Scotland were affected by a belt of snow moving southwards on the 20th and 21st, when level snow lay to depths of over 20 cm on low ground. Wintry showers continued to occur during the last week, but became less frequent by the end of the month.

Sunshine

Sunshine was above average in Northern Ireland, eastern Scotland, in parts of central Scotland and in the Western Isles, where Tiree, with 152 per cent of the average there, had its sunniest March since 1937. Extreme south-east and south-west England also had above-average sunshine. Totals were below normal in almost all remaining parts of the United Kingdom, and although values were within 10 per cent of average in south-eastern counties of England, less than 70 per cent of the normal sunshine was recorded over much of Wales and the west Midlands. Most areas had sunny periods from time to time throughout the month, however, and almost all parts had a very sunny day on the 23rd.

Fog

In general, the month was too windy for the formation of fog, and the isolated fog patches which sometimes developed in inland areas were mostly associated with precipitation. Hill fog occurred from time to time and patches of coastal fog occasionally affected south-western Britain.

Miscellaneous Phenomena

Lightning and an exceptionally loud clap of thunder caused damage in Marlborough (Wiltshire) on the afternoon of the 18th. A tree was struck by lightning, windows were broken and slates were ripped off roofs.

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	13.1	-8.5	-2.1	-1.9	-2.0	-1.3	+8	228	102
1 Scotland E	14.0	-16.5	-2.1	-1.1	-1.6	-1.4	+8	173	105
2 England E & NE	14.9	-4.5	-1.3	-0.5	-0.9	-0.9	+8	271	81
3 East Anglia	14.5	-3.6	-1.1	-0.1	-0.6	-0.9	+10	220	84
4 Midland Counties	14.5	-4.8	-1.8	-0.3	-1.0	-1.1	+9	222	78
5 England SE & Central S	15.0	-4.4	-1.2	-0.3	-0.8	-0.8	+10	223	90
6 Scotland W	11.6	-11.6	-2.2	-1.4	-1.8	-1.3	+7	187	99
7 England NW & Wales N	13.1	-4.8	-2.1	-0.4	-1.2	-1.4	+7	203	72
8 England SW & Wales S	14.2	-4.0	-1.6	-0.7	-1.1	-0.8	+10	195	77
N Ireland	12.2	-5.2	-2.2	-1.7	-1.9	-1.3	+5	130	106
Scotland	14.0	-16.5	-2.1	-1.5	-1.8	-1.3	+8	196	102
England & Wales	15.0	-4.8	-1.5	-0.4	-0.9	-1.0	+9	222	80

*Highest maximum and lowest minimum of District Value Stations