

MONTHLY WEATHER REPORT

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Mild at first, becoming colder. Dry in north: wet in south.

Until about the 10th, the weather over the United Kingdom was dominated by low-pressure systems in the Atlantic and their associated fronts. During the second week, however, high pressure to the north began to influence the weather and the south-westerly airstream was gradually replaced by a mainly north-easterly flow. A continental front affected east and south-east England on the 19th and 20th and a frontal trough from the Atlantic then crossed the British Isles, bringing a brief southerly airstream. Behind this, a generally north-westerly flow became established for the rest of the month.

Weather

The first week of the month was mild with overnight fog and occasional rain, which became heavy and thundery for a few days in south and east England. Colder weather brought snow showers to many areas by mid month, though sunshine was often prolonged between the 9th and the 20th in the west and north-west of the country. Wet weather at the end of the third week in south-eastern England, and more generally during the next few days, was followed by showers of snow, sleet (snow mixed with rain or drizzle) or hail for the remainder of the month.

Wind

Winds were usually light or moderate, but were sometimes fresh or strong in coastal districts. Although northerly winds predominated, there were occasional southerlies, mostly during the first week. A few local gales occurred on exposed coasts, particularly on the 19th and 20th, and a man was killed at Rochford (Essex) on the 20th, when his moped was blown into the path of a car. On the same day a ferry-boat sank at her moorings during a gale, putting the Portsmouth - Hayling Island ferry service out of action. Rough weather also halted cross-channel services in and out of Folkestone (Kent), and at Lowestoft (Suffolk) a 15-metre stretch of sea wall collapsed after being pounded by heavy seas and strong winds.

Temperature

Monthly mean temperatures were mostly between about 0.5 and 1.5 degC below average. Unusually, for a month when temperatures normally rise progressively, the end of March was generally colder than the beginning. Maxima of 14°C or more were recorded during the first week at several places in England, Wales and the Channel Islands, and at Hadlow College (Kent) the temperature reached 14.7°C on the 4th. By contrast, the Easter period (28-31 March) was cold and the highest temperature reached on Good Friday (28 March) was only 9°C. It was also cold around mid month, and during the night of the 13th/14th the temperature fell to -11.0°C at Lagganlia (Highland Region), while in London the 14th was the coldest day since 9 March, 1974. Away from coasts, ground frosts

occurred frequently, particularly in Scotland. Air frost was also reported and was fairly widespread in parts of Scotland and northern England.

Rainfall

Monthly rainfall totals were generally below average in Scotland, particularly in a wide belt extending from the Firth of Clyde to the Firth of Tay and also in some districts in the east and the south-west, where many places had less than half their normal amount. Much of England was, however, considerably wetter, and the east Midlands and parts of central southern, south-east and eastern England had more than twice their average rainfall. A few places in south-east Kent were very wet, with over 300 per cent of the normal, but in western districts of Wales, north-west England and Northern Ireland rainfall totals were generally between 50 and 100 per cent of average. Rain or drizzle affected many areas at the beginning of the month and became more general between the 4th and the 8th. Northern Ireland had a substantially dry spell between the 8th and the 20th, when little or no rain fell, but in south and east England rain became persistent and heavy at times on the 8th and 9th, with occasional thunderstorms. There were reports of widespread flooding in eastern England and the Midlands on the 10th, when rain caused rivers and dykes to overflow, and the floods in the west Midlands were said to be the worst for 10 years. Showers of snow, sleet or hail occurred in the second half of the month, but south-east England had heavy rain on the 20th and many areas had rain during the next two days. Wintry showers became more general towards the end of the month and there were a few thunderstorms. Except for a fall of 58.0 mm at Lower Standen (Kent) during the 24 hours from 09 GMT on the 19th (the 'rainfall day' of the 19th), no falls exceeding 50 mm in a day were reported anywhere.

Snow

Showers of snow or sleet (snow mixed with rain or drizzle) occurred in most parts of the United Kingdom around mid month and also in the last week, particularly during the Easter period (28-31 March). Undrifted depths of 19 to 25 cm were measured in the central highlands of Scotland from the 27th to the 29th, but depths were considerably less in other parts of the country. The snow did not lie for long, except on the higher slopes of the Scottish mountains.

Sunshine

Northern Ireland had the most sunshine with about 140 per cent of average and it was the sunniest March there since 1955 and one of the sunniest this century at many places in the Province. Sunshine was also above average in most of Scotland, particularly in western districts, and in Cornwall and much of northern England. In remaining districts of England and Wales, except Anglesey, sunshine was below average almost everywhere and many places in south-east England and East Anglia had only about half their normal sunshine.

Fog

Although March was not a foggy month, fog occasionally formed overnight during the first 10 days and also occurred in one or two places at the end of the month. There were reports of fog on high ground and on coasts during the first week, and dense and freezing fog became widespread in central, eastern and northern England and in southern Scotland on the 1st, 4th and 5th. Fog was also reported in the Channel Islands on the 6th and 7th.

Miscellaneous Phenomena

A funnel cloud was reported near Honington (Norfolk) at 1508 GMT on the 9th. The aurora was observed in Scotland on 13 nights.

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 | 11.5 | -4.0 | -0.8 | -1.0 | -0.9 | 0.0 | +1 | 69 | 110 |
| 1 Scotland E | 12.5 | -4.7 | -0.9 | -0.7 | -0.9 | +0.3 | -1 | 63 | 101 |
| 2 England E & NE | 12.5 | -4.1 | -1.4 | -0.3 | -0.9 | +0.7 | +6 | 157 | 89 |
| 3 East Anglia | 13.4 | -2.2 | -1.9 | +0.5 | -0.7 | +0.5 | +13 | 210 | 59 |
| 4 Midland Counties | 12.8 | -2.4 | -1.7 | 0.0 | -0.9 | +0.3 | +7 | 150 | 79 |
| 5 England SE & Central S | 13.6 | -4.0 | -1.7 | +0.3 | -0.7 | +0.2 | +9 | 195 | 59 |
| 6 Scotland W | 11.4 | -5.7 | -0.7 | -1.2 | -0.9 | 0.0 | -2 | 53 | 131 |
| 7 England NW & Wales N | 12.0 | -5.8 | -1.1 | -0.7 | -0.9 | +0.2 | -1 | 84 | 105 |
| 8 England SW & Wales S | 12.0 | -4.4 | -1.4 | -0.6 | -1.0 | +0.2 | +4 | 116 | 97 |
| N Ireland | 12.1 | -4.4 | -0.9 | -1.0 | -0.9 | +0.1 | -1 | 81 | 138 |
| Scotland | 12.5 | -5.7 | -0.8 | -1.0 | -0.9 | +0.1 | -1 | 62 | 114 |
| England & Wales | 13.6 | -5.8 | -1.5 | -0.1 | -0.9 | +0.3 | +6 | 152 | 81 |

*Highest maximum and lowest minimum of District Value Stations.