

Monthly Weather Report

OF THE METEOROLOGICAL OFFICE

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

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March 1957—*Very mild and rather dull*

Almost the entire month was characterised by high pressure to the east of the British Isles and low pressure on the Atlantic with a pronounced thermal ridge over the country at 500 mb. Unusually mild weather was maintained throughout the month by a persistent south-westerly airstream which brought a number of fronts of varying intensity over the country from the Atlantic, but the associated depressions kept mainly to the west and north of the British Isles.

The opening days of the month were rather cool in Scotland and Northern Ireland, where there was some occasional light snow, but were mainly mild, dry and rather foggy in England and Wales except in eastern coastal districts. Afternoon temperatures on the 3rd reached 60°F. in places although there was fairly widespread frost at night—at Cardington temperature fell to 25°F. in the screen and to 18°F. on the grass during the early hours of the 4th. Fog was extensive and locally dense on the 4th and 5th, especially in the Midlands, where it persisted throughout the day in many places. From the 5th to the 9th, weather was generally cloudy with rain at times, which was locally heavy. During this period Eskdalemuir recorded a fall of 0.83 in. in 12 hr. on the 8th, but the area of greatest rainfall was in South Wales and south-west England where several stations measured for the 9th a 24 hr. fall of over 1 in. An influx of warm dry air from Spain the following day began a period of summer-like weather which lasted until about the 13th. Temperatures rose sharply into the sixties on the 11th. The 12th was warmer still with afternoon temperatures exceeding 70°F. at a number of places in both England and Scotland and reaching 74°F. at Haydon Bridge in the upper Tyne Valley. The unusually high March temperature of 69°F. was recorded at Cape Wrath. During the two days 12th and 13th parts of England enjoyed 15 hr. of sunshine. A marked change occurred on the 14th as a warm front, associated with a complex Atlantic depression, spread across the country accompanied by widespread, locally heavy, rain. Several stations in Scotland, in Wales, and also in the Midlands, recorded more than 1 in. of rain in 24 hr. for the 15th and more than 2 in. fell in this time at Achnashellach and Glenbranter, while Cape Wrath registered the exceptional total of 3.27 in. in 36 hr. from the evening of the 14th to the morning of the 16th. A quasi-stationary depression to the south of Iceland, associated with a pronounced cold trough, deepened considerably on the 20th and gave rise to a temporary influx of cooler air into the British Isles. Winds reached gale force in many places and there were local thunderstorms with showers in all areas which were heavy in the north and west and of snow over high ground in Scotland. By the 23rd an anticyclone again became established over Scandinavia and there was an increasing tendency for thundery rain as a depression moved towards the Bay of Biscay. Thunderstorms developed fairly widely in a westerly airflow as a cold front crossed the country on the 26th, and on the 27th and 28th rain areas, associated with waves on a quasi-stationary front, moved across southern England. Warm air from Spain spread temporarily northwards over the country, but as an anticyclone moved southwards from Scandinavia a cool south-easterly airstream spread to all but south-western districts of the British Isles during the last two days of the month.

Pressure and Wind. Pressure was everywhere below the average; the deficit at 9 h. ranged from 2.7 mb. at Gorleston to 7.8 mb. at Aldergrove. Winds were generally light and mainly between south and south-east until the 12th (except for a short period of south-westerly winds around the 8th). South-westerly and somewhat fresher winds predominated from 13th to 21st, becoming rather variable, but mainly southerly, until

the 28th, while south-easterlies prevailed during the last three days of the month. In Scotland wind reached gale force locally in the east and south on the 14th, 17th and 20th, and on the 16th, 21st, 23rd and 24th in the extreme north. In England and Wales gales occurred on the 13th, 16th–21st inclusive and on the 31st; they were widespread on the 20th when wind reached 65 kt. in gusts at Bidston Observatory.

Temperature. Mean temperature was unusually high and differed from the 1921–50 average by +5.6°F. in England and Wales, +4.5°F. in Scotland and +5.3°F. in Northern Ireland. It was the third mildest March in Scotland since systematic recordings began in 1856, and the mildest in England and Wales this century, while at Kew it was the mildest March since records began in 1871.

Extreme temperatures for the month included:—(England and Wales) 74°F. at Haydon Bridge on the 12th, 22°F. at Kielder Castle on the 1st; (Scotland) 72°F. at Elgin and Gordon Castle on the 12th, 19°F. at Halkirk on the 4th; (Northern Ireland) 64°F. at Hillsborough on the 12th, 28°F. at Ballykelly on the 27th and 28th.

Precipitation. The general precipitation expressed as a percentage of the 1881–1915 average was 102 over England and Wales, 115 over Scotland and 109 over Northern Ireland. More than 150 per cent. of the average was recorded over Devon and Cornwall, over South Wales including the Brecon Beacons, over Ayrshire south of the Möray Firth and over the south-eastern part of Co. Down (Ireland). Less than the average was recorded over much of southern England south of a line from Bristol Channel to Lowestoft, over a narrow belt from Hereford to Merseyside, over much of northern and north-eastern England including the Lake District and the eastern Pennines, over eastern Scotland and over the northern part of Northern Ireland. Less than half the average occurred locally in south-east England.

Among the falls of 2 in. or more in 24 hr. were:—

9th 2.24 in. at Maesteg (Welfare Park), Glamorganshire.

15th 2.50 in. at Loch Hourn (Kinlochourn), Inverness-shire.

19th 2.67 in. at Swansea Waterworks (Cray Reservoir No. 1), Brecknockshire.

There was practically no thunder in Scotland, but thunderstorms occurred over a wide area in England and Wales on the 20th, and fairly extensively on the 26th and thunder was heard locally on the 17th, 23rd and 25th.

Snow and sleet occurred in Scotland on the 3rd and 4th and locally around the 16th, 21st and 26th.

Sunshine. The general sunshine expressed as a percentage of the 1921–50 average was 82 over England and Wales, 62 over Scotland and 57 over Northern Ireland. The month was very cloudy, many places having a deficiency of 40–50 hr. At Kilmarnock it was the dulllest March since before 1908.

Fog. Fog was reported on 17 days in Scotland and every day somewhere or other in England and Wales except on the 21st. It persisted throughout the day at many places on the 4th and 5th. At Huddersfield fog was reported on 14 days and persisted during the afternoon on 10.

Miscellaneous Phenomena. The aurora was observed on 13 nights in Scotland. A very bright display was seen from Exeter early on the 3rd and on the night of the 27/28th it was seen extensively in Northern Ireland and in England as far south as Marham and Defford.