

Monthly Weather Report

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March, 1948—Warm and sunny; dry except in the north-west

The month was distinguished by unusual warmth and an excess of sunshine. It was dry in the east and south but rainfall exceeded the average over considerable areas in the north-west.

During the first six days a large anticyclone covering Europe governed weather conditions in the British Isles, though slight rain, mainly in the west, on the 2nd, 3rd and 6th was associated with weak troughs of low pressure moving north-east over the country. Considerable fog developed at times during this period. On the 7th and 8th an intense depression in mid-Atlantic moved north to the west of Iceland, while troughs of low pressure crossed the British Isles. Heavy rain occurred in the north-west on the 7th and wind increased to gale force locally in the north on the 8th–10th.

By the 11th an anticyclone was centred over the Irish Sea; subsequently it moved eastward, while another high pressure system off north-west Scotland, in turn, moved south-east. Anticyclonic conditions prevailed over the British Isles for several days, with fair weather, apart from some fog in the morning and evening.

On the 14th a trough of low pressure associated with a deep depression south-east of Greenland moved eastward over the British Isles and a period of somewhat unsettled weather ensued which lasted until the 21st. On the 16th–17th a depression moved across south Ireland and south England, and on the 17th another moved across north Ireland and north England to the Netherlands. Rain fell in most areas and a gale was recorded locally on the 15th and 16th. On the 18th and 19th a trough of low pressure associated with an intense depression west of Iceland moved quickly east over the British Isles giving rain in the west and strong winds locally and on the 20th a secondary depression moved quickly east over north Scotland giving further rain in northern districts.

A change of type set in on the 22nd, when a wedge of high pressure moved over the British Isles. Subsequently anticyclonic conditions were re-established and fair, warm weather with abundant sunshine prevailed until the 28th. On that day a trough of low pressure approached our western seaboard and moved north-east. On the 29th a secondary depression approached our south-west coasts and subsequently moved north up the Irish Sea to the north-west of Scotland. Rain occurred generally in the British Isles on the 29th and, chiefly in western districts, on the 30th. Gales were reported on the south-west coasts on the 29th and 30th. Finally, on the 31st, an intense depression off north-west Ireland moved north-east to the west of Scotland; rainfall was general and heavy while widespread, severe gales were reported.

Pressure and Wind.—Mean pressure substantially exceeded the average throughout the country, the excess being greatest in the south-east. At Oxford the mean was only very slightly below the previous record for March, which occurred in 1929. The total run of the wind was below the average over much of England but exceeded the average in the Shetland Isles. A widespread severe gale occurred on the 31st, while local gales were reported on a number of other days, chiefly in the west and north (see Table II). Among the highest speeds registered in gusts were 73 m.p.h. at Bell Rock Lighthouse on the 20th, 77 m.p.h. at Scilly on the 29th and 72 m.p.h. at St. Ann's Head on the 30th and at Renfrew on the 31st.

Temperature.—Mean temperature was exceptionally high; it exceeded the average by 4.7°F. in England and Wales, 4.6°F. in

Scotland and 5.5°F. in Northern Ireland. In England and Wales, apart from 1938, it was the highest mean temperature for March since before 1901; in Scotland and Northern Ireland there were two higher means, namely in 1938 and 1945. In England and Wales it was very warm on the 9th, when day temperature rose to 70°F. or above at numerous stations; at Oxford it was the earliest day in the year on record for a maximum of 70°F. to be registered, while at Kew Observatory the maximum, 71°F., was the highest on record for March. Some low night minima were registered at times, notably on the 1st, 6th, 18th and 25th–27th. The extremes for the month were:— (England and Wales) 75°F. at Wealdstone, Middlesex; on the 9th, 22°F. at Chopwellwood on the 6th and Santon Downham on the 25th; (Scotland) 71°F. at Strathy and Ruthwell on the 26th, 20°F. at Balmoral on the 1st; (Northern Ireland) 67°F. at Castlerock on the 26th, 26°F. at Armagh on the 6th.

Precipitation.—The general precipitation expressed as a percentage of the average for the period 1881–1915 was 54 over England and Wales, 88 over Scotland and 91 over Northern Ireland. Rainfall exceeded the average over much of the western half of the Scottish mainland, over part of Northern Ireland and locally in Cumberland and Snowdonia. On the other hand less than 25 per cent. of the average was received in a coastal belt from North Berwick to Cockle Park, Northumberland, and from Gordon Castle, Morayshire, to the northern tip of Aberdeenshire. The variation from east to west of Scotland appears even more marked when the actual rainfall is considered; the total rainfall was less than 1 in. at most places along the coastal fringe from Nairn to the Tweed, whereas some totals in the wettest parts of the Western Highlands exceeded 12 in.

Among the heavier falls in 24 hours were:—

7th	3.36 in. at Blaenau Festiniog (Merioneth), 2.80 in. at Cwm Dyli, Snowdon, and 2.58 in. at Ardgour (Argyllshire).
20th	2.58 in. at Glenquoich (Inverness-shire).
31st	4.28 in. at Thirlmere (Cumberland), 4.24 in. at Hawes Water (Westmorland), 2.76 in. at Lochearnhead (Perthshire) and 2.57 in. at Treherbert (Glamorgan).

Thunderstorms were infrequent and were only reported locally; they were reported locally in Scotland on the 14th, 21st, 22nd and 29th and at Whitby on the 29th.

Snow showers, often with hail, were reported in Scotland in the third week, but there were no heavy falls of snow.

Sunshine.—The duration of bright sunshine expressed as a percentage of the average for the period 1906–1935 was 136 in England and Wales, 114 in Scotland and 119 in Northern Ireland. The excess was general in England and Wales and Northern Ireland. In Scotland, it was notably sunny in the north-east from Wick round to Banff but at a few places, chiefly in the west, it was duller than usual.

Fog.—Fog was reported rather frequently, particularly from the 1st–16th and 26th–27th. The period 1st–6th was exceptionally foggy for March.

Miscellaneous Phenomena.—The aurora was observed at northern stations in Scotland on ten nights. Solar halos were noted at Oxford on eight days. The zodiacal light was seen at Oxford on the evening of the 10th.