

MONTHLY WEATHER REPORT OF THE METEOROLOGICAL OFFICE

SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS COMPILED FROM RETURNS OF OFFICIAL STATIONS AND VOLUNTEER OBSERVERS

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MARCH, 1944.—Exceptionally dry.

The weather of March was distinguished by an unusual deficiency of rainfall; it was only in the extreme north-west and north of Scotland that totals slightly exceeded the average. Severe snowstorms occurred in Scotland, however, during the first few days, particularly in the north.

The month opened with a deep depression centred off the north-west coast of Norway, while associated troughs moved south-east over the northern districts of the British Isles: there were strong north-westerly or northerly winds and local gales in the northern half of the country and widespread snow showers. In parts of Scotland the snowfall was considerable, with deep drifts. On the 4th an anticyclone off our north-west coasts moved south-east and a trough off the north of Scotland moved rather rapidly south, causing some further wintry precipitation. From the 5th-8th mainly anticyclonic conditions prevailed, the high pressure system first drifting north-east across the British Isles and subsequently withdrawing west-south-west. During the following days the anticyclone was situated west or south-west of the British Isles, while weak troughs moved across the country and were associated with mainly slight, local precipitation. On the 12th a depression over Jan Mayn moved east, and a secondary developing near the Faeroes also moved slowly east, while troughs moved south-east over the British Isles. In the rear of these depressions strong north-westerly winds and widespread gales prevailed on the 13th. Rain occurred in many areas on the 12th although numerous places in southern England had little or none and some rain or wintry showers occurred on the 13th. On the 14th a secondary depression over north-east Ireland moved quickly south-east and was associated with local rain. On the following day a small anticyclone over southern England moved south-east and for a period pressure was high southward of the British Isles, while depressions in the far north moved east-north-east: some scattered rain occurred in the west and north. On the 18th a depression off north-west Scotland moved quickly east-north-east, while a trough moved south-east over the British Isles and was associated with rain in the north and west. Behind this depression there were showers, chiefly in the north.

Subsequently an anticyclone off south-west Ireland moved slowly east and anticyclonic conditions prevailed for the most part until the 28th, though weak troughs of low pressure caused occasional rain or showers. An exceptionally warm spell was experienced from the 25th-28th. A shallow trough of low pressure moved slowly south-west over the British Isles on the 28th and 29th and the cold, northerly winds behind it caused a considerable fall of temperature. There was some precipitation and thunder was reported locally in Scotland on the 29th. During the closing days a wedge of high pressure extended southward over the British Isles from an anticyclone situated northward of Iceland. Cold weather prevailed with mainly northerly winds and some precipitation but fairly good records of bright sunshine on the whole.

Pressure and Wind.—Mean pressure everywhere exceeded the average, the excess ranging from 6.4 mb. at Sumburgh, in the Shetlands, to 11.6 mb. at Tiree. Pressure was highest over Ireland and lowest over the Shetlands and winds from between west and north were more frequent than usual in most parts of Britain. Gales occurred locally in the north from the 1st-3rd, 9th-13th and 17th-19th. The most widespread gale was on the 13th. Among the highest speeds registered in gusts were 83 m.p.h. at Lerwick and 77 m.p.h. at Manchester (Ringway) on the 13th and 71 m.p.h. at Tiree on the 1st.

Temperature.—Broadly speaking mean temperature somewhat exceeded the average in the northern half of the country and was below the average in the southern half, particularly the south-east. The deviations for the districts ranged from +0.9°F. in Scotland, E. to -1.7°F. in England, S.E. The first four days were cold and it remained cold over much of England until the 10th: other cold spells occurred around the 14th-15th and 29th-31st. The remainder of the month was milder, a particularly warm spell occurring from the 24th-28th: temperature rose to 70°F. or above at numerous places in the southern half of England on the 26th. Temperature in the screen fell to 20°F. or below locally in Britain from the 1st-6th, 8th, 15th and 31st.

The extremes for the month were:—(England and Wales) 72°F. at Prestwood, Wealdstone, Milford and Cullompton on the 26th, 10°F. at Wallsall on the 1st; (Scotland) 63°F. at Errol on the 26th and at Dalwhinnie on the 27th, 13°F. at Penicuik on the 3rd and at Dalwhinnie on the 15th; (Northern Ireland) 67°F. at Castle Archdale on the 28th and 24°F. at Aldergrove on the 15th and at Garvagh on the 7th, 9th and 15th.

Precipitation.—The general precipitation expressed as a percentage of the average for the period 1881-1915 was 19 over England and Wales, 46 over Scotland and 32 over Northern Ireland. The deficiency was general except in the extreme north of Scotland, where there was a slight excess. Less than 10 per cent. occurred over much of south-east England, part of east England, locally in Monmouth, over south Devon and the neighbouring part of Dorset and also in small areas in south and south-east Scotland. The continued deficiency of rainfall was serious over much of southern England and the Midlands: for example, at Ross-on-Wye, the total for the six winter months was only 8.09 in., or 53 per cent. of the standard average.

Among the heavier falls in 24 hours were:—

1st 1.23 in. at Balerno and 1.01 in. at Dunoon (Benmore).
18th 1.50 in. at Kinlochourn (Inverness-shire).
25th 2.64 in. at Grula, near Carbost, Skye.

Thunder was infrequent generally, but it was reported locally on the 1st, 3rd, 12th-13th, 29th and 31st.

Snow showers occurred frequently. Widespread and severe snowstorms occurred in Scotland on the 1st. Districts in the centre of Caithness were cut off for about a week. At Lairg the fall on the 1st was so heavy that all traffic was blocked by evening and snow drifts in places were about 30 ft. deep. At Tiree, in the Western Isles, roads were blocked until the 4th and drifting was heavy. An accumulated level fall of about 12 inches was reported in the Pentlands area south of Edinburgh.

Sunshine.—In Scotland sunshine was considerably below the average north of a line drawn from Montrose to the Clyde and above the average to the south of this line: the highest percentages of the average occurred in the south-west, for example, 125 at Abbotsinch and 123 at Turnberry. Sunshine was below the average in England, E. and at numerous stations in England, S.E., but over England and Wales as a whole there was an appreciable excess. The excess was most marked in England, S.W. and S. Wales, the percentage of the average for this district being 128.

Fog.—Fog developed on numerous occasions, mainly the 6th-10th, 15th-18th, 23rd, 25th-29th and 31st.

Miscellaneous Phenomena.—The aurora was seen locally in Scotland on 14 nights. Solar halos were noted at Oxford on seven days.

† See FOOTNOTE TO TABLE III