

March 2010

The averaging period used for the following assessment was 1971-2000.

UK overview

March was a month of two halves, weather-wise. The first two weeks were generally dry and fine, although it was rather cold with some night frosts. The second half saw more changeable weather with rain at times, ending with strong winds and snowfalls in the north. From mid-month temperatures rose so that, overall, mean temperatures were close to the 1971-2000 average. Rainfall totals reached normal across much of Northern Ireland, southern Scotland and northern England, and were well above normal in a few places here. Elsewhere, rainfall was somewhat below average and well below normal in parts of western Scotland. It was generally a sunny month, particularly across Wales, Northern Ireland and central England, with 130% to 150% of normal being recorded.

A maximum temperature of 18.0 °C was recorded on 18th at Weybourne (Norfolk). A minimum temperature of -18.6 °C was recorded on 4th at Braemar (Aberdeenshire). In the 24 hours ending at 0900 on 31st, 77.4 mm of rainfall was measured at Glenrinnies, Knowe (Banffshire). 45 cm of lying snow was reported from Aviemore (Highland) at 2300 on 31st. Wind gusts of 75 mph were recorded on 31st at Orlock Head (County Down) and Needles Old Battery (Isle of Wight).

England diary of highlights

Mostly fine and dry until mid-month, with some overnight frosts, then becoming more changeable with wind and rain at times. The monthly mean temperatures were close to the 1971-2000 normals across almost all areas. Rainfall was somewhat below average in most places, the main exception being Northumberland where it was wetter than normal. Sunshine totals were generally somewhat above average, with about 130% of normal across much of central and northern England.

1st to 11th: The month started with generally fine, dry weather. Daytime temperatures were below normal but reached 10 °C in many southern areas, with 11.5 °C at Herstmonceux (Sussex) on 2nd. However, temperatures fell sharply overnight, with -5.7 °C at Shawbury (Shropshire) early on 2nd. Most places stayed dry on 3rd and 4th but it became windy along English Channel coasts, with gusts to over 40 m.p.h. A large area of high pressure kept the weather mostly dry and sunny from 5th to 11th with clear skies and overnight frost. Some patchy light rain did affect northern areas on 6th for a time.

12th to 16th: As the area of high pressure retreated westwards on 12th, some rain and heavy showers moved down from the north. Thunderstorms occurred to the west of London during the afternoon. Temperatures were near normal, reaching 11.0 °C at Exeter airport (Devon). A ridge of high pressure and a cool north-westerly airstream became established on 14th with some showers along North Sea coasts on 15th. Other areas remained dry with some sunshine, daytime temperatures reaching 14.1°C at Pershore (Worcs) and Solent (Hampshire) on 14th and at St James's Park (London) and East Malling (Kent) on 15th. Frost occurred overnight 15th to 16th with -4.3 °C at Benson (Oxfordshire).

17th to 31st: The weather became more unsettled with bands of rain moving eastwards, but with drier and brighter spells between. On 17th most places stayed dry and bright although a few showers broke out to the west of London. A band of rain moved across most areas on 18th but the far east stayed dry and Weybourne (Norfolk) reached 18.0 °C. After a fine start on 19th further rain spread in, with 21.2 mm at Cardinham (Cornwall). Temperatures were still above normal in eastern parts. A drier interlude followed on 21st. Further

bands of rain moved in from the Atlantic over the next few days, especially to western parts. By 24th these areas were dull and damp but, under sunny skies, temperatures rose to over 16 °C in many eastern areas. Some heavy and thundery rain occurred near the Isle of Wight and Southampton on 25th and it then became very windy on 26th. Further heavy and thundery showers broke out on 27th and 28th with colder weather bringing snow over hills by 30th. The month ended with gales along the English Channel and heavy showers in most places, these falling as snow over the high ground of the west and north.

Wales diary of highlights

The first half of the month was generally fine, dry and cold, before it became increasingly unsettled with a stormy end. Overall, mean temperatures were somewhat below the 1971-2000 normals, partly due to colder-than-normal nights in the first half of the month. Rainfall was close to, or somewhat below, average and sunshine totals were somewhat above average.

1st to 11th: High pressure persisted over or close to the UK for much of this period and the air flow originated from either the Polar regions or the near Continent. It was therefore quite cold with widespread night frosts, the temperature falling to -6.7 °C at Sennybridge (Powys) early on 2nd. The days were often sunny and, with light winds, it felt pleasantly warm with daytime temperatures occasionally recovering to normal values for early March. The 6th became cloudier as a weak front moved westwards bringing a little rain to the north and east but most places stayed dry. Sunny skies returned from 7th to 11th although 9th was rather cloudy for a time.

12th to 16th: The area of high pressure slowly declined, with a change to less settled conditions. Rain moved quickly southwards during the early hours of 12th followed by showers, these mostly affecting the east. Dry weather predominated from 13th to 16th with some sunshine by day and just a few light showers. Temperatures were close to the mid-March average although with some frost and patchy fog at night.

17th to 28th: Much milder but increasingly unsettled with south-westerly winds bringing a succession of fronts across Wales. Following light rain on 17th and 18th, heavy rain moved north-eastwards later on 19th and continued into 20th; 24.8 mm was recorded at Capel Curig (Conwy) in the 24 hours to 0900 on 20th. Although the 21st was generally dry, rain or showers affected all areas from 22nd to 26th. Showers were mostly confined to the south on 27th with rain arriving later on 28th.

29th to 31st: Heavy rain affected most parts on 29th although it was quite mild. It turned much colder and became windy on 30th with further rain or blustery showers. There was hail at times with snow over the higher ground. The month ended on a very stormy note with strong to gale force north-westerly winds which combined with high spring tides to cause some coastal flooding in the north. There were widespread heavy showers and several centimetres of snow fell in upland areas, particularly in the north.

Scotland diary of highlights

The first ten days were mostly fine and settled, but rather cold with some sharp night frosts. Thereafter the weather turned more unsettled with rain and strong winds at times, and the month ended on a very stormy note with significant snowfalls. Overall, despite the cold start, mean temperatures were close to the 1971-2000 normals. It was a relatively dry month in most parts, particularly in the Western Isles and other western areas. In contrast, some coastal areas in south-east Scotland were wetter than normal. Sunshine totals were close to, or somewhat above, average.

1st to 10th: High pressure brought dry, settled weather to much of Scotland with sunshine by day and frosts where skies remained clear at night. A snow cover persisted in the Highlands, following the heavy snowfalls of late February. Some severe frosts occurred with -12.6 °C on 1st at Dalwhinnie and Tulloch Bridge (both Highland) and -17.1 °C on 3rd and -18.6 °C on 4th at Braemar (Aberdeenshire). In the sunshine on 6th,

Dunstaffnage (Argyll and Bute) recorded an above-average 11.6 °C. However, fronts did bring occasional rain or snow to the south-west on 2nd and to the north and north-east through 4th, 5th and 6th.

11th to 31st: The remainder of the month was unsettled as low pressure brought showers or longer spells of rain interspersed by drier spells. This period saw some above-average temperatures, reaching 12.6 °C at Edinburgh on 14th, over 13 °C in sunnier spots in the east on 17th and 18th and 12.5 °C at Fyvie (Aberdeenshire) on 21st. However, overnight frosts affected the glens on 23rd and 24th. It was windy on 19th with gales or severe gales. Thundery showers broke out during the afternoon of 22nd. The rain was particularly heavy at Eskdalemuir (Dumfries and Galloway) on 26th when 36.2 mm was recorded up to 2100. It turned colder through 28th and by 29th wintry showers were falling across the north, whereas rain spread into the south with snow on high ground. The far north and north-west remained dry on 30th, otherwise the last two days of the month saw heavy rain and hill snow, which affected lower levels through 31st. By the end of the day, 45 cm of lying snow was reported from Aviemore (Highland). This snow drifted in the strong to gale force winds, causing widespread disruption to transport and power supplies.

Northern Ireland diary of highlights

The first half of March was dry with long sunny spells, but rather cold with overnight frosts under clear skies. From mid-month the weather reverted to a more westerly type, becoming milder with wind and rain at times, but with some brighter interludes. The last few days saw gales, with heavy rain and snow across high ground. Monthly mean temperatures were somewhat below the 1971-2000 normals. The number of days with air frost across Northern Ireland was the highest in March since 1979. Rainfall totals were close to normal in the west, but it was wet close to the east coast. A sunny month with totals approaching around 140% of normal.

1st to 10th: After early fog and frost, the 1st and 2nd were dry with sunny spells. It was cloudier at first on 3rd but brighter later. After another frosty start, the 4th was a dry, bright day with plenty of sunshine. It was dry on 5th with 10.7 °C at Helens Bay (County Down). All parts stayed dry on 6th with the cloud breaking to give some sunshine, and temperatures reaching 11 °C in many places. The 7th and 8th were also dry with little cloud and, after an early frost and some fog, 9th and 10th remained dry, sunny and settled.

11th to 15th: The 11th was cloudy but mostly dry with showers in the evening. Dry and bright with isolated showers on 12th and 13th. Bright with some sunshine on 14th but some showers too, mainly over County Londonderry and western County Tyrone. The 15th was again mainly dry with some bright or sunny spells and just a few showers in the west. Temperatures reached 12.6 °C at Murlough (County Down).

16th to 20th: The 16th was rather cloudy but mostly dry and mild. The 17th was milder still, with 13.8 °C at Ballykelly (County Londonderry). The 18th was mild but windy with some light rain. The 19th was dry into the evening, then rain spread to most parts. A dry day on 20th with sunny spells.

21st to 28th: Cloudy at first on 21st with a few light showers, then dry, bright and mild with Ballykelly (County Londonderry) reaching 14.1 °C. Rain in the evening cleared on the morning of 22nd to leave sunny spells and thundery, heavy showers. A bright start on 23rd, but rain followed from the west, clearing through 24th with bright, sunny then clear spells following from the west. Misty with some frost overnight before more rain spread northwards during 25th, but it was brighter again later. The 26th was overcast and wet for much of the day, but rain cleared southwards through the evening. The 27th and 28th were mild, bright and breezy with isolated showers.

29th to 31st: The last few days were very unsettled. Rain spread north on 29th, turning heavy with snow over high ground. The 30th saw gales and further heavy rain, with 54.2 mm recorded at Helens Bay (County Down) in the 24 hours to 0900 on 31st and 48-hour totals for 29th and 30th around 90 mm near eastern coasts. Rain continued through 31st, again turning to snow even at lower levels at times, with strong winds and gales or severe gales through the North Channel.

