

Monthly Weather Report

OF THE METEOROLOGICAL OFFICE

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

Vol. 66 No. 3

ISSUED BY THE AUTHORITY OF THE METEOROLOGICAL COMMITTEE
PUBLISHED BY HIS MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE

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March, 1949—Dry on the whole; sunny in the west; cold and rather dull eastern England.

The weather of the month was dry over most of the country, particularly the last ten days. It was considerably sunnier than the average in the west, but cold and rather dull in the eastern half of England.

On the 1st a deep depression over Denmark moved away eastwards; in its rear the northerly gradient was steep, and northerly gales in the North Sea caused exceptionally high tides in the Thames estuary and consequent severe flooding. Fair weather with long bright periods and scattered wintry showers prevailed on the 1st and 2nd. On the 3rd a trough of low pressure moving north-east caused rain in many districts, but the rain did not reach most of England until night. An unsettled cold spell ensued with troughs from Atlantic depressions moving east over the country; precipitation, often in the form of sleet or snow, occurred at times, rainfall amounting to more than 1 in. locally on each day from the 3rd–7th. On the 8th and 9th a depression off south-west Ireland moved slowly south; snow occurred rather widely in the British Isles. In the rear of this depression a belt of high pressure developed to the north of Scotland and moved south, giving a mainly fair day in most parts on the 10th, but a trough off our north-west coasts moving south-east caused rain generally and gales at a few exposed stations in Scotland on the 11th and 12th. Subsequently a deep depression over Thorshaven moved east to the Baltic, while secondaries moved rapidly east or south-east over the British Isles causing local gales and some precipitation on the 13th and 14th. Thereafter pressure was high on the Atlantic, and on the 17th a depression south-west of Iceland moved south-east to Denmark and thence to Central Europe; showery weather prevailed in the British Isles, with local gales but long bright periods. On the 20th and 21st troughs of low pressure moving east over the country were associated with fairly general rain.

A change of type occurred on the 22nd when the anticyclone off our south-west coasts moved north-east and subsequently east to central Europe. Dry, mild, mainly fair weather prevailed, apart from fog, until the 26th. On the 26th and following days a new anticyclone south of Iceland moved east to Russia; weather continued dry, though dull and cold with considerable fog in eastern and central districts but warm and very sunny locally in the west.

Pressure and Wind.—Mean pressure exceeded the average by between 8 and 12 mb.; at 9 h. the deviation from the average ranged from +8.5 mb. at Lympne to +11.6 mb. at Tiree. A closed area of high pressure is shown over south-western districts of England (see Chart I). Gales occurred rather frequently in the extreme north-east of Scotland, for example, on 11 days at Lerwick. Gales were reported locally, mainly on the 1st–2nd, 8th–9th, 11th–14th, 17th and 22nd–23rd. The northerly gale on the 1st was widespread and severe. Among the highest gusts registered in knots were 76 at Bell Rock Lighthouse, 73 at Point of Ayre, 71 at Mildenhall, 69 at Fleetwood, Speke and Shoeburyness, and 67 at Spurn and Durham on the 1st and 67 at Stornoway on the 13th. The total run of the wind was, however, below the average in most areas. Winds from between north and east were rather frequent, particularly during the last ten days.

Temperature.—Mean temperature was somewhat below the average in eastern and central districts and slightly above the average in the west; the deviation for the districts ranged from +1.4°F. in Northern Ireland to -1.7°F. in England, E. (see Table I). Broadly speaking, the first 12 days were cold, while the week ending on the

26th was warm. The closing days were unusually warm in the west, but rather cold in the east and the Midlands. Low screen minima were registered on the 1st–3rd, 8th–12th, 20th and, in the north, on the 31st.

The extreme air temperatures for the month were:—(England and Wales) 69°F. at Abingdon on the 26th, 18°F. at Droitwich on the 3rd; (Scotland) 67°F. at Kilmarnock on the 30th, 15°F. at Balmoral on the 11th; (Northern Ireland) 64°F. at Ballykelly on the 30th, 24°F. at Garvagh on the 10th.

Precipitation.—The general precipitation expressed as a percentage of the average for the period 1881–1915 was 65 over England and Wales, 76 over Scotland and 85 over Northern Ireland. More than the average occurred in north-east Scotland, around Londonderry, in the Isle of Man, in a narrow strip extending from Liverpool across south Staffordshire to Strelley, Nottinghamshire, around Oxford and at Ventnor, Isle of Wight. More than 150 per cent. was received over the north-east tip of Caithness. Less than 50 per cent. of the average was registered in the neighbourhood of the Firth of Forth, in an area covering Northumberland and part of the Lake District, over much of east England from the Humber to east Sussex, at many places in Cornwall and south Devon, and locally in south Wales. The last ten days were dry generally.

Falls of 1.00 in. or more occurred on the 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 11th, and 15th, and among the heavier falls in 24 hours were:—

3rd 1.60 in. at Conaglen (Argyllshire).

15th 1.43 in. at Inverailort Castle (Inverness-shire).

Thunderstorms were less frequent than is usual in March; there were no reports of thunder in Scotland or Northern Ireland, but it was recorded locally in south Wales on the 11th and in south-east England on the 18th.

Snow or sleet showers occurred at times during the first fortnight. Snow occurred widely on the 5th, it lay 4 in. deep at Bolton on the 6th and 3 in. at Whipsnade on the 6th and 7th. Snow was also fairly widespread around the 7th–10th and level snow was 3 in. deep at Harrogate and 6 in. at Malham Tarn (1297 ft.) on the 8th and about 5 in. deep at Paisley, Lauder, and on Deeside on the 9th–10th.

Sunshine.—Broadly speaking sunshine substantially exceeded the average in the west of the country and was less than the average in the east. The percentage of the average for the districts ranged from 81 in England, E. to 123 in Scotland, W. and 126 in England, NW. and N. Wales (see Table I). At Ruthwell, Turnberry and Eskdalemuir it was the sunniest March for at least 20 years. The week ending on April 2nd was unusually sunny in the north-west, but very dull in east Britain and the Midlands.

Fog.—Fog occurred at times, chiefly from the 4th–7th, 12th, 14th, 20th, 23rd–26th and 28th–31st. It was most widespread from the 29th–31st, when it was rather persistent in eastern and Midland districts.

Miscellaneous Phenomena.—The aurora was observed in Scotland, chiefly at northern stations on 12 nights. Solar halos were noted at Oxford on 7 days. The zodiacal light was observed at Oxford on the evening of the 1st.