

MONTHLY WEATHER REPORT

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Mild for three weeks, then cold with wintry showers; wet in north-west.

After a developing ridge of high pressure had moved eastwards on the 1st a cold front crossed all districts between the 2nd and 4th. For the next week a large anticyclone was centred near the south of Britain while a series of frontal waves passed eastwards to the north. On the 10th and 11th a cold front moved southwards into north-eastern areas for a time. The high pressure moved away over Europe allowing a succession of Atlantic fronts to advance over the United Kingdom between the 13th and 20th; on the 18th a shallow low crossed Northern Ireland and the English/Scottish border counties.

On the 21st a particularly vigorous cold front swept south-eastwards across all parts heralding a very disturbed spell of weather. That night a deep low crossed north Scotland while deepening depressions came south-eastwards over west Scotland and north-east England on the 23rd, just to the east of Britain on the 25th and over Northern Ireland and south-western districts on the 27th. An occluding frontal system followed across all areas on the 29th with the associated filling low moving from north of Ireland to the western English Channel on the 31st.

Weather

For nearly three weeks it was mostly mild. After some rain during the first four days all areas, except the north of Scotland, were mainly dry until towards the end of the second week. The remainder of the month was unsettled with rain at times and, from the 20th, much colder too with frequent wintry showers, particularly in the north; scattered thunderstorms occurred on several occasions. On the 21st the vigorous cold front resulted in thunder being reported widely, except in the south-west and far north.

Wind

Until the 20th winds were mainly light or moderate over the southern half of Britain. Otherwise it was often windy, especially in the far north of Scotland, although the month did go out like a lamb with lighter winds generally on the 31st. Gales occurred at times, particularly during the first ten days of the month and after the 18th in the north, and between the 21st and 25th in the south. The gales were severe, even storm force locally, in exposed areas, mainly in the north, between the 4th and 6th and on the 21st, 22nd and 25th. Gusts of 78 kn were recorded at Sumburgh, Shetland on the 4th and Machrihanish, Strathclyde Region on the 22nd, while one of 77 kn occurred at Ronaldsway, Isle of Man on the 21st. Wind directions, while changing at times from day to day, were generally from the south-western quarter, but between the 22nd and 28th mainly north-westerly.

Temperature

Monthly mean temperatures were above average almost everywhere. Values ranged from more than 1 °C above average over much of east Scotland, parts of the Midlands, east and north-east England, and locally in Dumfries and Galloway Region, Clwyd and Norfolk to slightly below normal in the Channel Islands and at isolated spots in the Isle of Wight and the far north of Highland Region.

For almost three weeks from the start of the month temperatures were mostly above normal, especially in central and eastern areas with a number of very mild or even quite warm days. On the 17th the temperature reached 17.0 °C at East Bergholt,

Suffolk, 16.5 °C at Dyce Airport, Aberdeen and 16.2 °C at Downpatrick. North-eastern areas, however, became much colder briefly on the 10th and 11th; for example at Whitby, North Yorkshire a maximum of 15.1 °C on the 10th was followed by one of only 5.3 °C next day. Subsequently, from the 20th, it was much colder with several cold days. Frost occurred from time to time during the month; much of it was slight although on the 1st a minimum of -7.1 °C was recorded at Balmoral, Grampian Region.

Rainfall

Rainfall was above average generally for the eighth consecutive March over Scotland and Northern Ireland and for the seventh over England and Wales. More than twice the average total was recorded in scattered areas in the west and south of Scotland, Northern Ireland and north-west England. Although most places were not so wet as in 1981 Auchincruive, with nearly two and a half times its average rainfall, had its wettest March since records began in 1932. None the less, over much of the southern half of England and part of South Wales rainfall was below normal with rather less than half the average at a few places in the south of Devon.

All areas had some rain early in the month, the rainfall being rather heavy on the 2nd in parts of Dumfries and Galloway Region and Cumbria with 93.3 mm at Honister Pass, but over south-eastern areas of England amounts were small. Whilst, except over northern Scotland, it was dry generally between the 5th and 12th this period gave the highest known three-day rainfall total in the United Kingdom of 348.7 mm with 116.6, 155.8 and 76.3 mm on the 4th, 5th and 6th at Gobernuisgach Lodge in the far north-west of Highland Region in a strong, moist west to north-westerly airstream. Subsequently, all districts had periods of rain or showers at times, the precipitation often being wintry from the 20th.

Snow

Apart from some mostly slight snowfall over northern Scotland on the 10th and 11th there was virtually none until the 19th. Thereafter, snow, mainly falling as showers, occurred daily, particularly in the

north where the showers were frequent and heavy on some occasions. At the highest stations in the north of Scotland, where the last of February's snow melted early in the month, fresh snow cover was established during the 21st; by next morning some moderately heavy accumulations were reported with 18 cm at Knockanrock, Highland Region and 15 cm at Stonehaugh, Northumberland, but at most places including the latter this and subsequent falls quickly thawed by day.

Sunshine

This was a very dull month, particularly over the western half of the United Kingdom with only about 50 per cent of the average sunshine being recorded in parts of north and west Scotland, Northern Ireland, north-west England and Wales. Armagh had its lowest March total since 1886 while Fort Augustus, Highland Region had its dullest since records began in 1909. Only at a few places in Tayside and Fife Regions, Durham, Humberside, Essex and Central London was sunshine about or slightly above normal.

The lack of sunshine was particularly marked in the north-west during the first 19 days and elsewhere between the 10th and 13th and from the 16th to the 19th.

Fog

Hill fog occurred rather frequently, especially over western districts between the 9th and 19th. Fog was also reported at times in coastal areas, mainly in the south-west where it was widespread on the 2nd and between the 16th and 18th. Overnight fog patches developed on several occasions, mostly in the south of Britain during the first half of the month, but only on the 8th and 15th were they at all widespread.

Miscellaneous Phenomena

Minor tornadoes at the cold front caused some local structural damage in Cheshire, the Midlands and South Wales on the 21st; there were also two reports of ball lightning in Cheshire. On the 25th a tornado wrecked farm buildings and machinery at Stratton Strawless near Norwich.

Table 1 District values

District	air temperature °C					mean 30-cm soil temp °C	rain- days	rainfall	sun- shine
	Highest Max*	Lowest Min*	max,	min,	mean				
			difference from average					% of average	
0 Scotland N	13.4	−3.9	+0.2	+0.9	+0.5	+0.9	+9	183	64
1 Scotland E	15.4	−5.6	+0.8	+1.8	+1.3	+1.3	+7	132	75
2 England E & NE	15.1	−3.1	+0.7	+1.3	+1.1	+1.0	+4	130	85
3 East Anglia	16.5	−2.2	+0.8	+0.9	+0.9	+0.8	+5	92	85
4 Midland Counties	14.6	−3.0	+0.4	+1.4	+0.9	+1.1	+5	97	75
5 England SE & Central S	16.1	−2.1	+0.3	+0.8	+0.6	+0.6	+5	87	83
6 Scotland W	13.2	−5.6	0.0	+1.4	+0.7	+1.0	+10	181	55
7 England NW & Wales N	15.2	−2.4	−0.2	+1.7	+0.8	+0.8	+7	159	61
8 England SW & Wales S	15.6	−2.5	−0.1	+0.9	+0.4	+1.1	+6	95	66
N Ireland	13.5	−2.3	+0.3	+1.4	+0.8	+1.1	+5	162	58
Scotland	15.4	−5.6	+0.3	+1.4	+0.8	+1.1	+9	165	65
England & Wales	16.5	−3.1	+0.3	+1.2	+0.8	+0.9	+5	110	76

* Highest maximum and lowest minimum of District Value Stations