

Monthly Weather Report

OF THE METEOROLOGICAL OFFICE

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March 1960—*Dull and rather dry with predominantly easterly winds*

After three days of mainly cyclonic weather with south-westerly winds, an intensifying ridge of high pressure moved across the country on the 4th merging with an anticyclone over Scandinavia and northern Russia the following day. Pressure remained high to the east of the British Isles for the rest of the month, and apart from a spell of southerly winds from 10th to 15th, winds were predominantly easterly.

The unusually mild weather at the end of February continued during the first three days of the month over most of the country with afternoon temperatures at many places around 60°F. At this time depressions to the west of Ireland were moving north-eastwards and winds were moderate to fresh generally reaching gale force locally on western coasts; on the 3rd there were gusts of 40-50 kt. in many districts.

The 4th and 5th were sunny in many areas, and in parts of western Scotland exceptionally mild; temperature reached 64°F. at Achnashealach and 66°F. at Cape Wrath on the 5th.

However, cold easterly winds spread over the British Isles on the 6th as a blocking anticyclone over Russia and Scandinavia developed westward. Temperature fell sharply and weather became generally dull in eastern districts with scattered snow showers; it did not rise above 45°F., except near the west and south coasts, during the next two days, and by the 8th ground was snow covered over most of northern England and Scotland although falls were mainly light.

Weather gradually became milder as air in the circulation of a slow moving depression off our south-west coasts spread to England on the 9th and over the remainder of the country during the following day. The warm air was preceded by a belt of snow turning to rain which by dusk on the 9th had reached northern England. In Scotland snow fell over a wide area on the 8th and 9th and lay 2-3 in. deep in parts of Aberdeenshire, but milder weather with rain brought a general thaw on the 10th. Temperature continued to rise in southern England during the next three or four days reaching the upper fifties in places. Outbreaks of rain were frequent over most of the country as minor troughs moved northwards, but the extreme south-east of England was mostly dry, some places there enjoying 6-8 hours of sunshine daily.

On the 14th, as the depression in the Bay of Biscay moved south-east and filled rapidly, the northern portion of the following ridge of high pressure intensified and merged with the high pressure system over Scandinavia. Easterly winds spread over the British Isles again on the 16th and in many eastern and central districts afternoon temperatures were 10-15°F. lower than the previous day. There was little sunshine except in the extreme west.

On the 18th the Scandinavian anticyclone intensified and extended slowly southward, while fronts, associated with a depression to the south-west of Iceland, moved a little eastwards into Ireland and Cornwall; several places in Cornwall had more than 2 in. of rain in 24 hr. Over Wales and most of England, except the east coast, weather became sunnier and warmer on the 20th. Many areas had 6-8 hours of sunshine for several days, and on the 24th afternoon temperature exceeded 60°F. at some places in the west and Midlands and reached 63°F. at Chivenor.

An area of low pressure extended from Spain towards the Low Countries on the 26th. Heavy rain broke out at times in southern England, especially on the night of the 28th/29th when many places in Dorset had more than 1 in. in 24 hr. and Abbotsbury had 2.40 in. Light or moderate rain spread slowly northwards during the last two days of the month.

Pressure and Wind. Pressure was above average over much of Scotland but below average over most of the rest of the British Isles, departures at 9 h. ranging from +6.1 mb. at Lerwick to -7.9 mb. at Scilly. Winds were mainly south-westerly on the 3rd, southerly on the 4th and 5th becoming easterly on the 6th. Thereafter they were predominantly from between east and south-east until the 24th except from 10th to 15th when south to south-east winds were more prevalent. During the last week of the month winds were mainly from between east and north-east. Gales occurred mainly in western districts; they were reported in Scotland on the 1st, 3rd-10th and 18th-23rd and in England and Wales on the 1st, 3rd, 4th, 7th-9th, 20th-22nd and 27th-30th. A gust of 61 kt. was recorded at Dounreay on the 18th.

Temperature. Mean temperature was 0.5°F. above the 1921-50 average in England and Wales and also in Scotland and 0.7°F. above in Northern Ireland; it was, however, below the average in north-east England and eastern Scotland. These above average values were due almost entirely to warm nights, as maximum day temperatures at most places were below the average—in north-east England by more than 3°F.

Extremes included:—(England and Wales) 63°F. at Chivenor and Sellafield on the 24th, 22°F. at Moor House on the 9th; (Scotland) 66°F. at Cape Wrath on the 5th and at Kinlochewe on the 22nd, 14°F. at Lowther Hill on 9th; (Northern Ireland) 59°F. at Garvagh and Ely Lodge on the 24th, 28°F. at Ballykelly on the 26th and at Garvagh on the 27th.

Precipitation. The general rainfall expressed as a percentage of the 1916-50 average was 89 in England and Wales, 63 in Scotland and 90 in Northern Ireland. Rainfall was slightly above average over much of southern England but was less than half the average in the Manchester area and the Lake District. In Scotland rainfall was above average in East Fife, South Angus, parts of Perthshire and north Ayrshire, but much of the north-west mainland and Shetland had less than half the average.

Thunder was heard in England and Wales on the 2nd, 3rd, 10th-12th and 14th-16th and was fairly widespread in the Midlands and south-east England on the 10th and 11th. In Scotland there were only two isolated reports during the month.

Snow fell widely on the 8th and 9th and also locally in Scotland on the 3rd, 4th, 6th, 7th, 10th, 11th, 20th and 28th-31st. It was 2-3 in. deep in some eastern districts on 8th-10th. In England and Wales it fell locally also on the 7th, 10th-12th, and 27th-31st.

Sunshine. It was an unusually dull month with sunshine only 59 per cent of the 1921-50 average in England and Wales, 81 per cent in Scotland and 64 per cent in Northern Ireland. Only two or three stations in the north-west reported more than average sunshine and many places in the east and Midlands had less than half the average. At Rhyl, North Wales, and at Sandown, I.O.W., it was the dullest March since 1916 and at Worthing the dullest since 1900.

Fog. In England and Wales early morning fog was reported from one place or another every day; it was fairly widespread at 9 h. on 10th to 13th. In Scotland it occurred here and there on 21 days during the month.

Miscellaneous Phenomena. The aurora was visible in Scotland on 10 nights.