

March 2020

The averaging period used for the following assessment was 1981-2010.

March began with a cool showery westerly type, bringing sunshine and showers and occasional longer spells of rain, with sleet and snow on high ground. It was generally milder and more unsettled from the 7th to 15th, with belts of rain crossing the country at regular intervals, interspersed with brighter showery weather. High pressure then slowly built across the British Isles, and a spell of dry sunny weather followed for most of the country, with much of England, Wales and southern Scotland having plenty of sunshine from the 22nd to 27th inclusive, with warm days and cold nights. During this spell, slow-moving fronts often brought more cloud and some rain to north-western Britain. A northerly outbreak brought wintry showers to eastern areas on the 28th, followed by mostly dry but relatively cloudy weather.

The provisional UK mean temperature was 5.6 °C, which is 0.1 °C above the 1981-2010 long-term average. Mean maximum temperatures were generally 0.5 to 1.0 °C above average over England and Wales but closer to average in Scotland and Northern Ireland, while mean minimum temperatures were mostly between 0.0 and 0.5 °C below average. It was a generally dry sunny month overall, with 82% of average rainfall and 134% of average sunshine, ranking as the 9th sunniest March in a series from 1929. Most of the rain fell in the first half of the month. Rainfall was near average in many western and southern areas but below average in the east and north-east, while sunshine was above average everywhere except in parts of the western half of Scotland. The highest ever March reading of mean-sea-level pressure was recorded in north-west Scotland on the 29th.

The UK monthly extremes were as follows: A maximum temperature of 19.4 °C was recorded at Rhyl (Clwyd) on the 24th. A minimum temperature of -7.6 °C was recorded at Aboyne (Aberdeenshire) on the 16th. In the 24 hours ending at 0900 GMT on the 8th, 107.2 mm of rain fell at Skye Alltdearg House. A wind gust of 68 knots (78 mph) was recorded at Aberdaron (Gwynedd) on the 11th. A snow depth of 13 cm was recorded at Tulloch Bridge (Inverness-shire) on the 12th.

Weather impacts

On the 5th rain in parts of the south and south-east of England caused some flooding, with some residents in Yalding being evacuated, and disruption for motorists as numerous roads were closed due to flooding (more than 60 roads were closed in Kent), and the northbound Hindhead tunnel was closed to facilitate emergency drainage. In Northern Ireland, waters in Lough Erne continued to rise which cut off local roads, left homes stranded and inundated farmland.

Unsettled conditions in the second week of March saw warnings issued for parts of Scotland, mid-Wales, north-west England, Yorkshire and the Peak District. In Wales, there was flooding in several places but impacts were mostly confined to travel disruption. The Fire and Rescue service carried out a number of rescues after a tidal surge in Carmarthenshire. Some roads and rail lines were temporarily closed due to flooding and high tides. In north-west England some roads were flooded, with lane closures on the M56 and M62, with some local roads reported as impassable.

On the 12th, Northern Ireland and parts of northern England were windy. Northern Ireland saw some fallen trees and the Rathlin Island Ferry was cancelled, with a power outage reported in Armagh. There were reports of flooding in Cheshire, and a landslip on the railway between Whitehaven and Workington in Cumbria.

The weather was more settled for the remainder of the month.

England diary of highlights

The weather was generally unsettled with westerly winds during the first half, and after a cool showery start it turned milder. The weather turned more settled after mid-month and there was a spell of widespread dry sunny weather, especially from the 22nd to 26th, with warm days and cool nights. A brief northerly outbreak on the 28th and 29th brought some wintry showers to central and eastern areas.

The mean temperature for March was provisionally 0.2 °C above the 1981-2010 long-term average, and it was generally warmer than average by day but a little colder than average by night. Rainfall was 77% of average, and it was a dry month in eastern counties from Norfolk northwards, with near or slightly below average rainfall elsewhere. Sunshine was 146% of average, making it the 8th sunniest March in a series from 1929.

1st to 6th

The weather was generally showery and quite cool, with a slackening westerly flow; some of the showers were wintry on high ground. It was very windy in places on the 1st with a maximum gust of 61 knots (70 mph) at Needles (Isle of Wight). Malham Tarn (North Yorkshire) recorded a maximum of just 3.3 °C on the 1st and 3 cm of lying snow on the 2nd. A belt of rain spread across the south overnight 1st/2nd, clearing the south-east on the 2nd, while otherwise the 2nd and 3rd were days of sunshine and showers. An area of more persistent rain spread across central and southern counties on the 4th, and rain lingered in the south and south-east on the 5th, with a maximum of just 3.3 °C at Okehampton (Devon), while the north turned brighter with isolated showers. Most places had a sunny day on the 6th but with showers at times in the south-west and near eastern coastal fringes. Throughout the period, when skies cleared overnight frost developed quite widely but was not severe.

7th to 15th

The weather turned milder, while remaining unsettled. It was generally mostly dry but cloudy and windy on the 7th, with some light rain mainly in the north-west. A belt of rain crossed the country overnight 7th/8th, heaviest in the west, followed by sunshine and showers on the 8th, the showers locally thundery with hail. After a dry and bright start for many on the 9th, rain spread from the west and gave 78.0 mm at Mickleden (Cumbria). A slow-moving frontal system brought mostly cloudy weather with some rain especially for western areas on the 10th, but some eastern parts stayed mainly dry, and it was very mild in the east. The rain cleared away by the 11th leaving sunshine and showers, and the showers were wintry on high ground. The 12th was again showery, and windy at times with a maximum gust of 61 knots (70 mph) at Needles (Isle of Wight). The 13th saw fewer showers under a ridge of high pressure, but rain reached the south-west in the afternoon and then spread to most other parts overnight 13th/14th. Rain early on the 14th faded but another area of rain spread from the west from late afternoon, and the 15th was another dull wet day for most, the frontal rain clearing only slowly south-eastwards.

16th to 20th

As high pressure gradually became established close to the British Isles, the weather turned more settled, though frontal systems still crossed the country. Many areas had a dry, bright and mild day on the 16th but it was cloudier in the north-west with some rain at times for the far north-west. It was generally cloudier on the 17th and 18th with a slow-moving belt of rain, which lay across the north on the 17th and spread slowly southwards on the 18th, and on the night of the 17th/18th, Hereford (Hereford & Worcester) fell no lower than 10.4 °C. The rain slowly eased and cleared

away south-eastwards on the 19th and 20th, leaving sunshine for most central, northern and western areas and just isolated showers, mainly near coasts, and slight frost at night in places.

21st to 27th

High pressure became persistent to the east of the British Isles, giving dry sunny weather. Many central, western and northern areas had a relatively cloudy day on the 21st, and the 24th was also fairly cloudy in the north, but otherwise there was generally plenty of sunshine, and East Malling (Kent) recorded 12.2 hours of bright sunshine on the 25th. It generally turned warmer by day, with the month's highest temperature of 19.2 °C recorded at Whitby (North Yorkshire) on the 25th. With clear skies and light winds, nights were chilly with some frost at times, especially the night of the 22nd/23rd when there was a low of -6.0 °C at Topcliffe (North Yorkshire). An easterly breeze across the south restricted the daytime temperatures for coastal parts of East Anglia and the south-east for much of the period. The 27th was generally less warm but it was another dry sunny day for most with 12.2 hours of sunshine at Morecambe (Lancashire).

28th to 31st

A northerly outbreak on the 28th and 29th brought much cooler weather, with increasingly wintry showers spreading southwards through central and eastern counties on the 28th, and wintry showers persisted in the east for much of the 29th, with hail and thunder locally in the south-east. Western areas stayed dry with some sunny intervals but rather cloudier than of late. The pattern of showers in central and eastern areas and dry bright weather further west continued on the 30th, by which time the showers at low levels fell as rain. Cloud and a little light rain or drizzle spread from the north on the 31st, but most southern areas were dry with some sunshine.

Wales diary of highlights

The first half of March was unsettled with westerly winds, and after a cool showery start it turned milder. High pressure slowly built from the 16th to 19th, leading into a spell of generally dry sunny weather with warm days and cool nights, which peaked between the 22nd and 27th. It turned cooler and cloudier during the last four days but stayed generally dry with high pressure close to the country.

The mean temperature for the month was provisionally 0.1 °C above the 1981-2010 long-term average. The anticyclonic spell in the second half ensured that it was a dry sunny month, with 81% of average rainfall and 140% of average sunshine across Wales as a whole, making it the 9th sunniest March in a series from 1929.

1st to 6th

The 1st and 2nd both had a mix of sunshine and showers, then after a cloudy start away from the south-west on the 3rd, showers were generally fewer from late morning. A band of persistent rain spread across the country on the 4th, with brighter spells following in the west, and the temperature only reached a high of 2.7 °C at Lake Vyrnwy (Powys). High cloud slowly cleared south-eastwards on the 5th leaving increasing amounts of sunshine, and it generally stayed dry. There were occasional showers on the 6th, mainly in the west. A few places saw slight frost overnight, especially early on the 2nd and 6th.

7th to 15th

The 7th was mostly cloudy with a little rain, though with brief sunny spells in the far north, and it turned windy in the north. Rain crossed the country overnight, followed by sunshine and blustery showers on the 8th. After a quiet start to the 9th with just a scattering of showers, rain spread from the west from midday onwards, and this gave 70.2 mm of rain at Treherbert (Mid Glamorgan). Rain, heavy in the north at first, turned lighter and more showery on the 10th, but persisted for

most of the day. The 11th and 12th had a mix of sunshine and showers, and there were gusts to 68 knots (78 mph) at Aberdaron (Gwynedd) on the 12th. A ridge of high pressure brought a less windy day on the 13th but still with plenty of showers, and rain spread from the south-west in the evening. Showers and isolated thunderstorms early on the 14th gave way to a spell of more general rain in the north, which spread southwards overnight, clearing the south-east during the 15th.

16th to 19th

There was frost and patchy fog in some places early on the 16th, followed by a dry and generally sunny day, but the 17th was cloudier and windier with some light rain in the south. Fronts pushed slowly southwards on the 18th and 19th, and the night of the 17th/18th was notably warm with a minimum of 10.2 °C at Velindre (Powys) and Cardiff Bute Park (South Glamorgan). Rain affected most parts on the 18th, heaviest in the north, but tended to become confined to southern areas on the 19th, with dry bright weather in the far north.

20th to 27th

High pressure became dominant to the east of Britain, giving fine settled weather. Most places were dry and sunny on the 20th but cloud moved in from the south-west during the afternoon, and the 21st was generally cloudier but still quite bright. From the 22nd to 27th inclusive the weather was sunny and dry almost everywhere, becoming warm by day but cool overnight with frost and fog patches in places. The highest temperature of the month was 19.4 °C at Rhyl (Clwyd) on the 24th, and the lowest was -6.4 °C at St Harmon (Powys) early on the 27th. Aberporth (Dyfed) recorded 12.2 hours of sunshine on the 27th.

28th to 31st

A northerly outbreak on the 28th brought much cooler and cloudier weather than of late. The last three days of the month were generally dry, with slight overnight frost in places, and there were some sunny spells but it tended to cloud over inland each afternoon, and on the 30th there were isolated showers.

Scotland diary of highlights

The first six days were cool and showery with some longer outbreaks of rain but also a fair amount of sunshine. It was generally unsettled and milder from the 7th to 15th, then turned more settled, with plenty of dry sunny weather for the south, but the north-west was often affected by slow-moving fronts which brought rain at times. It turned colder from the 27th, with wintry showers for some on the 28th.

The mean temperature for March was equal to the long-term average. Rainfall was 88% of average, and was mainly near or just above normal in the west and below normal in the east. Sunshine was 110% of average, and was generally above normal in the east, the far north and the Western Isles, but mostly near normal in other western areas.

1st to 6th

The first six days were mostly bright and showery, the showers wintry on high ground, and rather cool, but with occasional bands of persistent rain also. A belt of persistent rain, sleet and snow moved north-eastwards across much of the country on the 1st, and there was also some more general rain in southern areas on the 4th, which moved eastwards but turned more showery as it did so. Frost became increasingly widespread at night, though generally slight, as winds eased, with the night of the 5th/6th generally the coldest of the period. Showers were fewer on the 5th, with many eastern and southern parts staying dry.

7th to 15th

The weather became milder, while staying unsettled with more frequent rain bands crossing the country. Following a mostly dry cloudy start to the 7th, rain and wind spread from the west, giving particularly wet weather to the west and south with 107.2 mm at Skye Alltdearg House (Inverness-shire). Sunshine and showers followed on the 8th, the showers locally thundery in the south but relatively few in the north-east. Another belt of rain spread from the west on the 9th, followed by sunshine and showers on the 10th, with some longer spells of rain at times especially in the south. Sunshine and showers continued on the 11th and 12th, with some longer outbreaks of rain, sleet, snow and hail also on the 12th. The temperature reached only 2.4 °C at Loch Glascarnoch (Ross & Cromarty) on the 12th, and Tulloch Bridge (Inverness-shire) reported 13 cm of lying snow. Another belt of rain spread from the south-west on the 14th, clearing south-eastwards on the 15th to leave sunshine and showers, with sleet and snow on high ground.

16th to 21st

A ridge of high pressure resulted in a cold night on the 15th/16th with a minimum of -7.6 °C at Aboyne (Aberdeenshire). After a cloudy but bright start to the 16th in the east and south, rain spread south-eastwards to all parts before dark. Sunshine and showers early on the 17th were replaced by more general rain spreading from the west. The 18th was dry and cloudy in the south, sunny in the north-east, with sunshine and showers elsewhere. Showers became increasingly isolated on the 19th and 20th, with plenty of sunshine, and on the 20th Tiree (Argyll) and Glasgow Bishopton (Renfrewshire) recorded 11.5 hours of bright sunshine. Frost was quite widespread early on the 20th, and also in the north early on the 21st. The 21st was generally cloudier with some light coastal showers in the east and persistent rain reaching the Western Isles, but otherwise it was dry.

22nd to 26th

Slow-moving fronts affected the north-west on the 22nd, giving cloudy weather with some rain early in the day, but southern and eastern areas were dry and sunny. There was some early frost in the south on the 23rd, followed by a dry sunny day, but elsewhere it was cloudy with some persistent rain in the north and north-west. Cloudy skies extended south-eastwards on the 24th with further rain in the far north-west, and with cloudier windier weather the night of the 24th/25th was notably mild with a minimum of 8.8 °C at Aboyne (Aberdeenshire) and Edinburgh Botanic Garden (Midlothian). Southern and far south-eastern parts had further dry sunny weather on the 25th but rain affected the west of the Central Belt as well as the north-west. Most central and southern parts had patchy rain and drizzle on the 26th, with dry sunny weather in the north and in the far south, where Threave (Kirkcudbrightshire) had a maximum temperature of 17.2 °C.

27th to 31st

Fronts moving down from the north introduced colder air on the 27th, and most areas were cloudy with light rain or drizzle, with cold bright weather reaching the north during the afternoon. There was plenty of cloud on the 28th, some brighter spells, and wintry showers in the north and east. Showers mostly turned back to rain at low levels on the 29th, affecting mainly the north and the south-east. The 30th and 31st both had bright starts, but cloudy showery weather developed widely away from the south-west and the far west.

Northern Ireland diary of highlights

March started with six days of fairly cold, bright weather with some showers and occasional longer spells of rain. It turned milder and more unsettled from the 7th to 19th, with rain belts frequently crossing the country, interspersed with brighter showery weather. The rest of the month was somewhat more settled, with variable amounts of cloud.

The provisional mean temperature for March was 0.3 °C below the 1981-2010 long-term average. It was a dry sunny month overall, with 72% of average rainfall and 128% of average sunshine. Rainfall was close to normal in the far west but below normal elsewhere, while sunshine was above average in all counties.

1st to 6th

The first six days of March were generally bright and showery; windy at first but progressively less so. The 1st was breezy and showery, with maxima of only 4.0 °C at Trassey (County Down) and Lough Fea (County Londonderry). There was some frost in places early on the 2nd, followed again by sunshine and showers. An area of more general rain moved across early on the 3rd, clearing to leave sunshine and generally fewer showers. Frost developed quite widely early on the 4th, 5th and 6th, followed by mainly dry sunny weather, with just isolated showers on the 5th. On the 6th a band of showers spread from the west, but cleared by mid-afternoon.

7th to 19th

The weather turned milder, with frequent bands of rain crossing the country. After a cloudy start on the 7th with some light rain and drizzle, persistent rain spread from the west, heaviest in the west, especially from mid-afternoon onwards. This cleared by the 8th, leaving sunshine and blustery showers. More general rain again spread from the west on the 9th, with 25.0 mm falling at Derrylin (County Fermanagh). From the 10th to 12th there was a mix of sunshine and showers with some longer outbreaks of rain at times. Some places had hail and thunder on the 11th, and it turned very windy on the 12th with gusts to 59 knots (68 mph) at Orlock Head (County Down). Also on the 12th, Lough Fea had 3 cm of snow. A ridge of high pressure meant fewer showers on the 13th, with frost and patchy fog in places overnight. Persistent rain spread from the west on the afternoon of the 14th, followed by sunshine and showers on the 15th. Another ridge of high pressure brought sunny chilly weather early on the 16th, before rain spread from the north-west. The 17th started with sunshine and showers, but persistent rain spread to all parts by noon. The 18th was cloudy with scattered showers, but showers were fewer on the 19th as high pressure built across the British Isles.

20th to 26th

With high pressure, light winds and clear skies, there was a frost in places early on the 20th with a minimum of -6.2 °C at Katesbridge (County Down), followed by a dry sunny day. The 21st was somewhat cloudier and breezier, with some patchy rain moving into far western parts from late morning, but elsewhere it remained dry. The 22nd was dry and mainly sunny, but the 23rd was cloudier with rain in central and northern parts, which fizzled as it moved south-eastwards. Some lingering rain cleared by mid-morning on the 24th leaving a dry but cloudy day. The 25th was mostly cloudy with some drizzle, with a minimum temperature of 9.3 °C at Magilligan (County Londonderry), and despite the cloud Katesbridge reached 15.1 °C. A slow-moving front brought further cloudy drizzly weather on the 26th but this dissipated in southern and eastern counties leaving dry and increasingly bright weather.

27th to 31st

Colder weather spread from the north on the 27th; cloud amounts were variable but some places had a very sunny day, with 11.7 hours of sunshine at Thomastown (County Fermanagh). The 28th was generally cool and cloudy with isolated showers, but the 29th was brighter after a frosty start. The 30th and 31st both started off dry and sunny in most areas, but became cloudier with isolated showers during the day. There were also isolated showers in the west early on the 30th.