

Mar 80

Miserable, wet March after warm February

If February managed to be unseasonably warm, then March reversed the tables and was miserable, wet and abnormally cold.

The month began pleasantly enough, with both day and night temperatures recorded at Halesowen being well up to expectation, continuing the pattern set in February.

In fact, though not known at the time, the night of February 29-March 1 was to be the warmest of the month, the temperature not falling below 5.1C (41F) all night.

Unfortunately, pressure began building to the north-east

and much colder air streamed across the country from the Arctic, bringing temperatures down markedly by March 3.

At 8 am on this morning the air temperature was -1.6C (29F) with a grass minimum of -5.6C (22F) to add further to the touch of winter.

Ground frost was to occur from March 2 to March 5 as we continued under the influence of the Scandinavian anticyclone.

By March 6 depressions from the Atlantic became the dominant features and temperatures picked up marginally. However, a wet spell now set in which was to

continue until March 12, rain falling every day during this period.

Ground frost still occurred at night, however, when skies cleared, though we entered a more markedly cold period on March 9 which was to last until March 26.

SOIL FROZE

Air frost was recorded on eight nights and ground frost on 13 nights over this period.

The coldest night of the month, March 22, produced an air minimum of -3.1C (26F), and a grass minimum of -6.6C (20F).

Even the soil froze to a depth of two inches on the mornings of March 22 and 23.

Though the incidence of frost did not continue at the same peak, nights were to remain fairly cool until the end of the month.

Day time temperatures did, however, pick up and the warmed day occurred on March 28 with an air maximum of 11.8C (53F).

Rainfall was more than twice the average, and at 115mm (4.53in) was 59mm (2.32in) above expectation.

The wettest day was March 18 when continuous rain fell for the full 24 hours, only the third time that this has occurred since 1956 (February 1960, March 1979, March 1980). On this day 25.5mm (1.0in) fell over the area.

DISMAL

The month was so dismal that there were only ten occasions when no rain was recorded, giving us our third wettest March since 1946 (1980, 1951, 1947).

To compound the gloom, skies were totally overcast on 20 mornings and the humidity (wetness of the air) averaged to 91.2 per cent, some eight per cent higher than usual.

A long standing March record for low pressure was also broken on the seventh when the barometer read 958.5mb (28.30in Hg) at 8 am. This is certainly the lowest reading for at least 25 years.

SNOWFALLS

In contrast to February, when soil temperatures were well above normal, the values for March have gone the other way. Only on the surface have average temperatures reached the growth point of 5.6C (42F).

At 2in they were 4.8C (41F), 4in 4.6C (40F) and 8in 4.9C (41F).

In fact the mean air temperature for the whole month has been no higher than 4.3C (40F) which is itself below normal.

Other features of the month's weather included four occasions of snow falling (March 16, 17, 19, 23), two days with snow lying (March 19, 23) and two hailstorms (March 24, 25).

There were eight very wet days, twice the usual incidence for March, and the windiest day with gusts of 38 knots was March 19.

The highest radiation temperature of 40.8 (105F) was recorded on the afternoon of March 17. All in all, not a very pleasant month to herald Spring.

HAYLEY GREEN

52°26'N 02°04'W 155m AMSL

C. Roberts