

The clear skies overnight led to a touch of ground frost early on the 20<sup>th</sup>, grass temperatures falling to minus 1.8C, though after the clear start skies quickly clouded over to give a day with no sunshine, though it did remain relatively mild at 10.5C. The 21<sup>st</sup> saw a continuation of high pressure though the centre drifted slowly southwards, declining as it went. The day was thus quiet, and cloudy, with no sunshine, daytime temperatures reaching 11.0C. By the 22<sup>nd</sup> the centre of high pressure was moving towards the south of the country drawing in a north easterly flow of air. Skies were only partially cloud covered giving 5 hours of bright sunshine, clearing at dusk to allow a widespread ground and slight air frost to develop, clearing before dawn on the 23<sup>rd</sup> as a persistent layer of altostratus encroached across the area.

During the 23<sup>rd</sup> cloud gradually increased giving a little light rain around noon, temperatures peaking at 9.3C. Overnight on the 23<sup>rd</sup>/24<sup>th</sup> the rain became more persistent as a cold front made slow progress south eastwards eventually grinding to a halt over the Midlands in the late afternoon of the 24<sup>th</sup> as winds became more SSW'ly in direction. Persistent rain fell for the best part of the 24 hours, though it was fairly mild, giving a total fall of 11.4mm by 09.00 GMT on the 25<sup>th</sup>. By now the parent depression was translating across the UK from Ireland towards the southern North Sea, filling as it went.

As the attendant fronts crossed the area during the day a further 5.8mm of rain fell over a period of 10 hours, though it remained fairly mild, maximum temperatures rising to 9.2C. The 26<sup>th</sup> began dull and wet with further low pressure developing to the north west of the UK. This fed further frontal systems across the area though rain was both intermittent and slight, petering out completely by lunch time, afternoon temperatures then peaking at 12.5C.

The 27<sup>th</sup> dawned fairly clear after a very mild night as air flooded from the south or south west across the area under the influence of a large depression to the south west of Iceland. Brief sunshine during the afternoon raised temperatures to a fairly balmy 15.6C. A deepening low began to develop rapidly in Biscay and this threatened to bring a spell of thundery rain to parts of the south and south west. The very mild air stream persisted over the country and temperatures rose as high as 17.1C during spells of warm sunshine on the afternoon of the 28<sup>th</sup>.

Overnight on the 28<sup>th</sup>/29<sup>th</sup> temperatures remained very high, several places seeing record night time minimum temperatures. The 29<sup>th</sup> dawned cloudy, though mild, and thickening cloud from the east brought a spell of light to moderate rain across the Midlands during the afternoon as the depression to the south moved slowly into the Continent. This rain continued for much of the day as the frontal systems made slow progress south eastwards, finally clearing from Kent during the morning of the 30<sup>th</sup> by which time a total of 7.6 mm of rain had fallen in the 24 hours to 0900.

With low pressure to the south of the country and a high developing near Iceland, the 30<sup>th</sup> was a day of gradually improving weather. After a dull and damp start skies slowly cleared to give spells of broken sunshine during the afternoon amounting to 4.3 hours as temperatures climbed to 15.7C. A ridge pushed southwards from the high near Iceland, and under clear skies the 31<sup>st</sup> dawned with a slight ground frost to minus 1.4 C. With only patchy cirrus the morning saw unbroken sunshine, scattered cumulus developing in the afternoon which reduced this to sunny spells. It became very warm with afternoon temperatures reaching 16.5C in the screen and 39.6C for the black bulb radiation and with 7.2 hours of bright sunshine.

### SUMMARY FOR MARCH 1998.

The unseasonably mild weather continues. The mean daily temperature of 7.7c (45.9f), though below that of last year, was still the third highest in almost half a century. The night of the 29<sup>th</sup>/30<sup>th</sup> was the equal warmest (with 1968) since records began here with air temperatures ranging from 17.1C (62.8F) on the 28<sup>th</sup> to minus 1.8C (28.8F) on the 9<sup>th</sup>.

In fact we have had so little snow, just one occurrence on the 1<sup>st</sup>, and so few air frosts, just 2 from a possible 8, that all soil temperatures are way above normal for March.

However, gardeners beware ! It is not time to think of any form of planting, tempting though this may be. In 1975 we had a disastrous frost on the night of May31st/June 1<sup>st</sup> which destroyed much of the bedding out material and caused thousands of pounds worth of damage to market garden crops. In fact, since 1956 there have even been 41 occurrences of ground frost in June !!