

SUMMARY FOR MARCH.

March was a month of contrasts with both very warm, spring-like days at the end coupled with quite sharp night frosts under clear anticyclonic skies.

Air temperatures ranged from a daytime maximum of 16.7°C/62.1°F on the 30th to a night minimum of -3.7°C/25.3°F on the 2nd, a monthly range of 20.4°C/36.7°F. The air minimum was 1.3°C above the 30-year mean, roughly in line with the immediate past, 1996 seeing a maximum of just 12.4°C/54.3°F with the night of the 1st/2nd being the coldest since 1996. The 13 ground frosts was 7 fewer than last year but roughly in line with most recent years. The 5 air frosts was the same as last year but the highest then since 1996. However, the solar maximum of 49.8°C/121.6°F on the 21st is the highest on record for March, the previous record of 49.4°C/120.9°F being in 1961!

Rainfall was well down with just 68% of the normal fall, almost double last year but well below both 1998 and 1999. Rain fell on 13 days, 3 below expectation, with the rain duration totalling 44.7 hours, again double last year but well below 1998 and 1999. The heaviest fall of 14.6mm/0.57in occurred on the 18th whilst the maximum intensity of 38mm/1.50 ins per hour also occurred on the 18th, neither figure being exceptional for March.

Sunshine was at a premium with a fifth more than expectation, just 6 days being sunless, the best figures since 1997. The 29th with its 11 hours sunshine was also the best since 1997 as well as being 1.6 hours above average.

It was not as windy as February, the maximum gust of 45 knots/ 52 mph occurring on the 9th and with gusts above gale force on 5 days. The prevailing direction was WSW at 6.6knots/7.9 mph. There was no incidence of thunder, hail, sleet or snow, exceptional for March that ended as a rather pleasant spring-like month.