

MARCH DATA

March arrived with less stormy conditions than those seen at the end of February. After a brief spell of easterly winds on the 1st the direction changed to a more westerly flow from the 2nd bringing in much milder Atlantic air and far less in the way of rain. Maximum temperatures over the first week ranged from 7.3°C/45.1°F on the 2nd to 12.2°C/54.0°F on the 7th by which time we were experiencing almost spring-like conditions. Rainfall was sparse totalling just 1.0mm/0.04in, the lowest figures for several weeks, whilst sunshine amounted to 27.9 hours with a maximum daily total of 8 hours on the 7th. Slight ground frost occurred on 4 occasions with just one frost in the air on the 2nd, temperatures falling as low as -3.7°C/25.3°F. Radiation levels are also showing signs of rising, values now peaking at 621 watts per square metre on the 5th. With daytime mean temperatures also approaching the 6°C mark signs of spring are once again in the air.

The second week saw more in the way of sunshine, though as winds turned to the east on the 12th it became very much colder with night frosts again a problem. The period from the 8th to the 12th was mild with ample sunshine, maximum temperatures reaching 13.6°C/56.5°F on the 12th though this day also saw frost in both the air and over grass. The minimum temperature for the week was -0.5°C/31.1°F on the 12th whilst over grass the minimum was -2.6°C/27.3°F. Sunshine totalled 22.2 hours with rainfall amounting to just 6.0mm/0.24in. The week lived up to the reputation for March with winds gusting to gale force on 5 days peaking at 45 knots/54mph on the 9th. Peak radiation levels are also rising, reaching a maximum of 726 watts per square metre on the 9th. The differences in soil temperatures at depths of 30cm and 100cm began the week at 6.8°C/44.2°F and 6.9°C/44.2°F and ended at 6.0°C/42.8°F and 7.1°C/44.8°F, a very small range for such a wide variation in depth.

The third week saw little in the way of a change in the synoptic situation with a series of low-pressure systems crossing the country. This was accompanied by a generally westerly airflow and ample rain. In all a total fall of 31mm/1.22ins of rain fell over the 7 days with the heaviest fall of 14.6mm/0.57 in occurring on the 18th just one day being totally dry. Sunshine over the same period amounted to 16.8 hours, the best day seeing 7.7 hours on the 21st. Temperatures in the air ranged from a maximum of 15.5°C/59.5°F on the 21st to a low of 1.7°C/35.1°F on the 15th. The week saw no frost at all and radiation temperatures climbed as high as 49.8°C/121.6°F on the 21st though radiation levels peaked at 680 watts per square metre on the 16th.

The fourth week saw a marked change in the synoptic situation with high pressure dominating. This brought in easterly winds or otherwise air that had come from a much drier Continent. Consequently the week was completely dry and sunshine levels rose accordingly under the mainly clear skies. The week produced 32 hours of sunshine, with 10.8 hours of this on the 27th. However, nights were cold with both air and ground frosts quite common under the clear skies. Air temperatures ranged from a maximum of 14.7°C/58.5°F on the 22nd to a low of -1.5°C/29.3°F on the 27th, frost on the grass occurring on 3 nights, the worst to -4.2°C/24.4°F on the 27th. Radiation levels were now much higher and peaked at 592 watts per square metre on the 26th with a black bulb radiation maximum of 46.8°C/116.2°F on the 27th. Radiation fog was widespread on the morning of the 28th leading to major accidents on both the M5 and M40 with 4 deaths reported and tail-backs of over 12 miles. The maximum sea level air pressure occurred on the 24th with a reading of 1033.9 hPa at 09.00 UTC.

The final few days saw a gradual breakdown in the pleasant anticyclonic conditions that had prevailed over the past week as a more westerly regime took over. However, temperatures managed to remain high, the maximum on the 30th reaching 16.7°C/62.1°F, the highest of the month. It also remained dry with just a sprinkling of rain on the 31st that laid the dust. Sunshine was also at a premium with 11 hours on the 29th, a figure which would do justice to a summer's day and also the highest for the month.