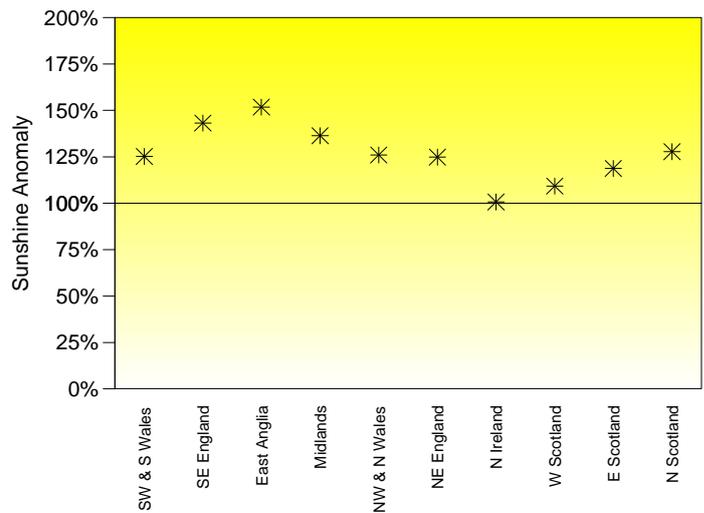
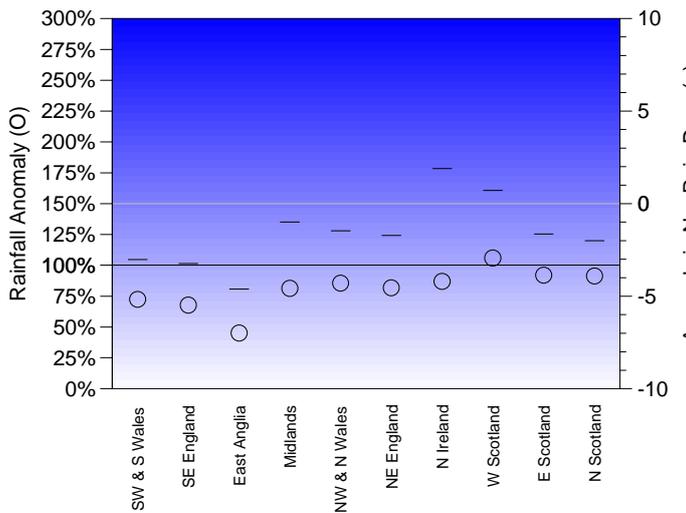


Extremes for March 2014	
Hottest:	21.4°C Ebbw Vale, Gwent, 16th
Coldest:	-6.6°C Redesdale Camp, Northumberland, 24th
Most Rain:	63.6mm Cluanie Inn No 3, Ross & Cromarty, 20th
Most Sun:	12.0hrs Monifieth, Tayside, 24th
Windiest:	75mph Fair Isle, Shetland, 7th
Warmest:	10.1°C St James Park, Greater London
Coolest:	4.6°C Braemar No 2, Avon
Wettest:	358.6mm Cluanie Inn No 3, Ross & Cromarty
Driest:	14.0mm Charsfield, Suffolk
Sunniest:	190.8hrs Jersey St Helier, Channel Islands
Dullest:	69.4hrs Thomastown, County Fermanagh



March marks the beginning of the meteorological spring - yet is a notoriously fickle month. Last year saw snowfalls and Arctic winds - and temperatures more akin to January, whereas this year was warm - stimulating early growth in the garden and dramatic blooms. The days lengthen markedly through March - especially around the vernal equinox on the 21st.

The month started unsettled, and a band of rain swept east on the 2nd, followed by widespread heavy showers. By the 5th, pressure was building across southern Britain and a long settled spell ensued, although fronts grazed north-western parts at times. By the 9th, it had become decidedly warm - with widespread maxima above 16°C (61°F). Nights however were chilly and misty. A north-easterly wind brought much cooler weather and more cloud on the 10th but it remained settled and dry. Fog was widespread on the mornings of the 12th, 13th and 14th, and the cause of some serious road traffic accidents. Winds turned westerly again on the 15th, and the south basked in warmth, although it was more unsettled further north. A rain band crossed the UK on the 20th and three showery days followed. Hail and thunder was widespread - and there was snow over northern hills. Spadeadam (Cumbria) woke up to 7cm of snow on the 22nd. The showers died out from the west on the 23rd as a ridge of high pressure approached and the following night temperatures plummeted. There was a hard frost countrywide and Redesdale Camp (Northumberland) recorded a minimum of -6.8°C (20°F). The 24th dawned fine but rain followed later in the day. By now, pressure was building over Scandinavia and this impeded fronts' eastward progress. Over the next few days heavy showers, often with hail and thunder, lingered in the sluggish air. There was also some sleet and snow - mainly over high ground in the east. The final three days saw a welcome return of warm and dry weather for most. St. James' Park (London) and Santon Downham (Suffolk) reached the magic 70°F (20.9°C) on the 31st but heavy showers and thunderstorms affected western areas.

For the month as a whole, daytime temperatures and sunshine were well above average everywhere and most especially in the south and east. Night time temperatures were only marginally above average, but this was sufficient to make frosts rare. Rainfall was similar to - or a little below average for the entire UK.

Unusual early Spring warmth embraced west and central Europe during the first three weeks of March. On the 9th, Germany recorded its highest ever temperatures for so early in the year with Lippstadt leading the way with 23.7°C (75°F). Daffodils and crocuses were in full bloom, even in the north of the country. Lugano, Switzerland reached 27°C (81°F) on the 18th - the second warmest March temperature ever measured in the city - while Aosta, Italy, in the lee of Mount Blanc (Europe's highest mountain), soared to an incredible 30°C (86°F) partly a result of a Fohn effect. Holland had its sunniest March on record with 205 hours at De Bilt.

Meanwhile the Atlantic US remained locked in winter. On the 3rd, a heavy snowstorm once again created travel chaos on the East Coast. Schools were closed across the region, and Washington government offices were shut. Rapidly accumulating snow clogged up motorways and local roads while in the mid-Western states 30,000 homes and businesses in Memphis, Tennessee, lost power. On the 12th and 13th, further snowstorms swept the mid-western and north-eastern states. 15cm of snow fell on Chicago bringing the winter aggregate total snowfall to 170cm. A cocktail of blizzards and violent thunderstorms tracking from Illinois to Maine left tens of thousands of people without power. Severe blizzards also affected upstate New York and New England - and caused widespread flight disruptions. In contrast, on the west coast, thunderstorms broke weeks of drought and triggered bush fires in California on the 1st. The potent mix of fire and torrential rain sent mudslides surging through foothill communities, flooding roadways and opening up sinkholes. The storm's eastward move on the 2nd finally broke a 70-day draught in the Phoenix area of Arizona. Los Angeles logged 110mm of rain from the second of two severe thunderstorms.

In the southern hemisphere, a 'once-in-a-century' storm forced the evacuation of homes, caused landslips and cut power to thousands of homes across Canterbury, New Zealand on the 4th. Ferry crossings were suspended because of huge waves through the Cook Strait. Wellington was buffeted with gusts reaching 75mph and 160mm of rain fell in Lyttelton.