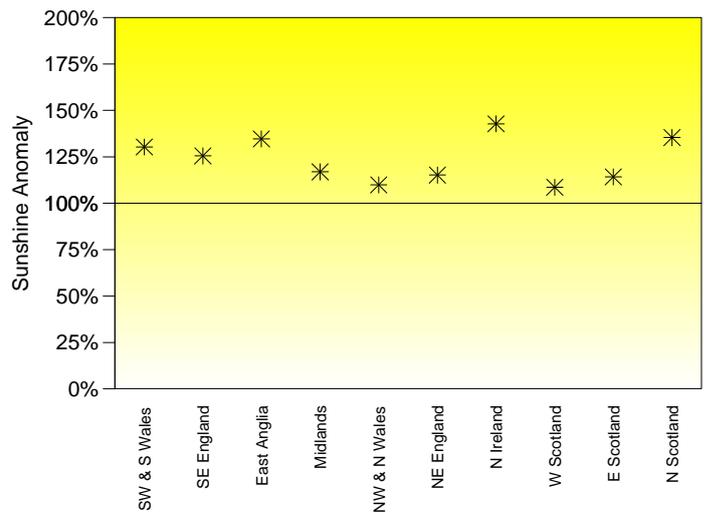
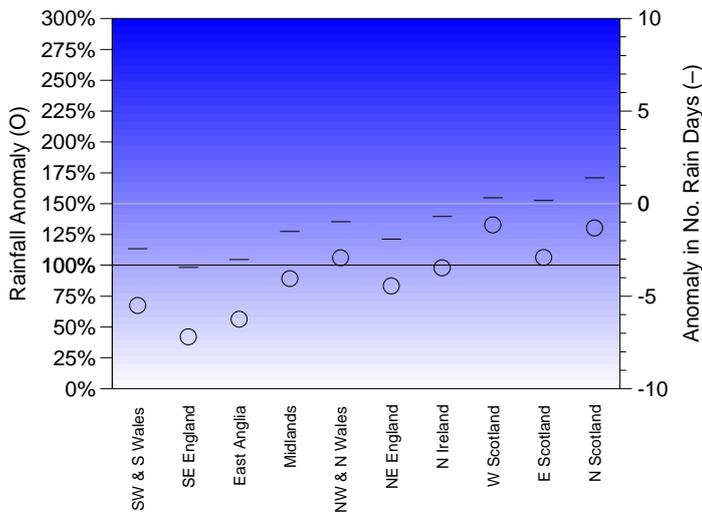


Extremes for March 2015	
Hottest:	17.2°C Credenhill, Hereford and Worcester, 7th
Coldest:	-7.4°C Aboyne, Grampian, 15th
Most Rain:	124.0mm Achnagart, Highland, 7th
Most Sun:	11.5hrs Glasgow Bishopton, Strathclyde, 21st
Windiest:	97mph Capel Curig SAWS, Gwynedd, 30th
Warmest:	8.8°C Scilly St. Mary's SAWS, Cornwall
Coolest:	3.5°C Dalwhinnie No 2, Tayside
Wettest:	500.6mm Cluanie Inn No 3, Ross & Cromarty
Driest:	13.6mm South Farnborough SAWS, Hampshire
Sunniest:	152.3hrs Kinloss, Grampian
Dullest:	73.2hrs Eskdalemuir, Dumfries and Galloway



March marks the start of the meteorological Spring. The days lengthen appreciably, gardens and hedgerows begin to bloom and daffodils cheer the waysides. Winter however can still carry a sting - with bouts of polar maritime air bringing sharp frosts and snow. Gales too are not uncommon, and some sources suggest they recur around the Vernal Equinox on the 20th - although there is little evidence for this in fact.

March began unsettled and cold. Showers were heavy and wintry in the north and there were some impressive falls of snow over the Pennines. Malham Tarn (North Yorkshire) measured 17cm of lying snow early on the 3rd. It became increasingly dry and sunny in England and Wales from the 4th, but remained cool. Daytime temperatures struggled to exceed 10°C - and there were some overnight frosts, notably early on the 5th which affected much of the south. Scotland meanwhile remained wet - and its western mountains were struck by a deluge on the 6th and 7th that flooded roads and later triggered several landslips. Achnagart (Highland) recorded 124mm of rain in 24 hours. Meanwhile the 7th was sunny and quite warm over England with temperatures reaching 15°C or more. The second week was characterised by sunshine and showers nationwide, before pressure began to build over Scandinavia - heralding a prolonged settled spell. Cloud amounts were very variable, with some places experiencing glorious sunshine whilst others saw persistent anticyclonic gloom. On the 20th, weak fronts moving south-east brought widespread low cloud which spoiled the view of the partial solar eclipse for most. Temperatures remained depressed throughout, and a cold front moving south-east on the 23rd was followed by scattered sharp showers on the 24th which were wintry over high ground. After a dry, bright day on the 25th, wet and windy weather swept eastward overnight and dumping snow on northern hills. This ushered in a very disturbed final week. At last it became milder, but vigorous fronts crossed the UK at frequent intervals. A severe gale "Niklas" battered the UK overnight 30th/31st and Capel Curig (Gwynedd) recorded a gust of 97mph. Fallen trees caused disruption to road and rail transport, many flights were cancelled and the roof of the Silverstone motor racing circuit in Northampton was damaged.

Mean temperatures for March were very close to normal, but rainfall showed a marked contrast between southern areas which were much drier than average and western Scotland which was very wet. Despite all the rainfall, frequent early morning mist and gloom, sunshine totals were above average nationwide and especially so in the south.

Winter storms swept southern Europe during the opening days of March. A week of heavy rain, coupled with snow melt from the Pyrenees, caused the River Ebro in Spain to burst its banks on the 4th and to flood areas of northeast Spain, including the city of Zaragoza. Around 1,500 people were evacuated from local towns while roads were rendered impassable and bridges damaged by the deluge. On the 5th violent, north-easterly Bora winds left a trail of damage and fallen trees across northern and central Italy. Italy's Capo Mele Lighthouse recorded a gust of 92mph and Florence 80mph. The same day, in the Italian alpine village of Capracotta, an extraordinary 256cm of snow fell in just 18 hours - a new world record for a one day snowfall! Many residents were marooned in their homes, electricity and telephones were cut off and trees snapped beneath the sheer weight of snow.

Record snow was also a feature of the weather in North America during March. By the 18th, Boston had officially endured its snowiest winter season on record with Logan International Airport accruing a colossal 280cm of snow since November. Meanwhile, on the East coast, violent thunderstorms in California on the 2nd created the unusual sight of beaches smothered 20-30mm deep in hailstones. A waterspout was also spotted just off the coast of Santa Monica. The same winter storm left 30cm of snow in Californian ski resorts - and neighbouring states of Arizona and Utah also saw huge snowfalls. Spring thaws caused a dramatic rise in the Ohio River and on the 16th the river crested in Cincinnati at its highest level since 1997. Also on the 16th an exceptional March rainstorm hit western and central Mexico. At Chamela-Cuixmala Reserve in Jalisco, 145mm of rain (equivalent to 20 times the normal March total) fell within just a few hours. In South America, flash flooding affected one of the driest regions in the world, Chile's Atacama desert, on the 24th-25th. Torrential rains in the Andes sent a torrent of floodwater down into the valleys and towns below, leaving at least 2 dead, and 40,000 homes without power.

In Africa, Lagos State, Nigeria was struck by a localised windstorm on the 9th which wrecked 400 buildings and left thousands of residents homeless. Meanwhile Western Australia bore the brunt of Tropical Cyclone "Olwyn". This category 3 storm ripped roofs off homes and destroyed banana plantations around Carnarvon on the 14th. More serious still was damage wrought upon the Pacific island of Vanuatu. The island - which lies between Fiji and Australia - took a direct hit from Category 5 Cyclone "Pam" on the 13th. Maximum sustained winds reached 168mph and gusts topped 200mph. An estimated 103,000 islanders were made homeless and 11 killed.