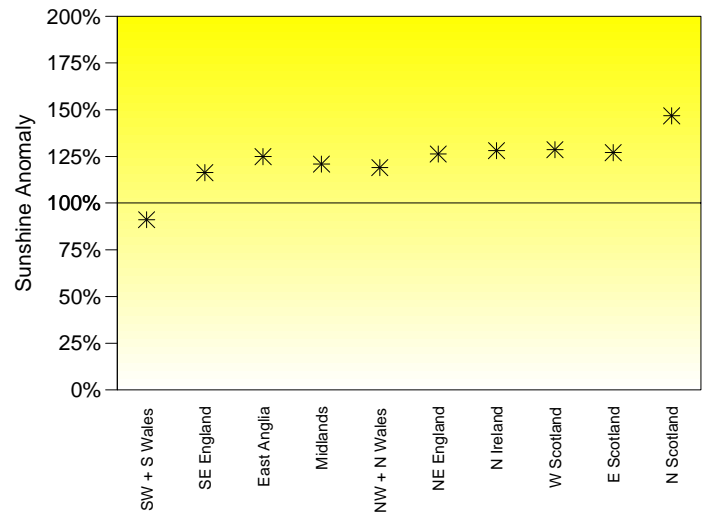
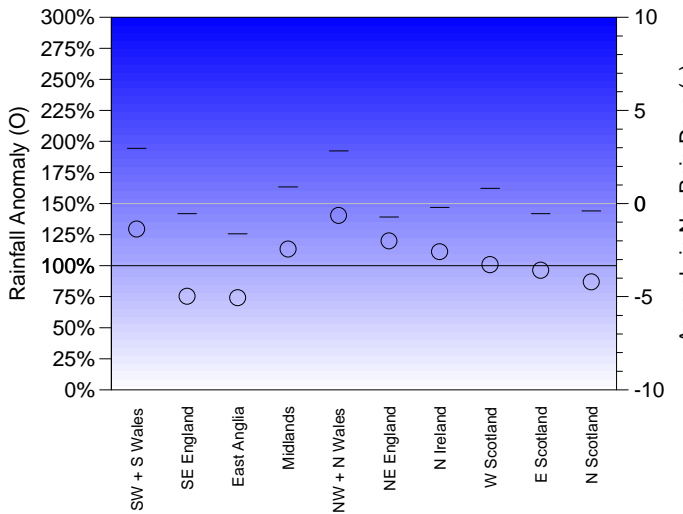


Extremes for March 2017		
Hottest:	22.1°C	Gravesend Broadness SAMOS, Kent, 30th
Coldest:	-8.0°C	Dalwhinnie No 2, Tayside, 22nd
Most Rain:	49.0mm	Stonyhurst, Lancashire, 17th
Most Sun:	12.2hrs	Charterhall SAWS, Borders, 25th
Windiest:	77mph	Lerwick, Shetland, 14th
Warmest:	10.9°C	St James Park, Greater London
Coolest:	4.3°C	Braemar No 2, Grampian
Wettest:	338.8mm	Capel Curig SAWS, Gwynedd
Driest:	21.4mm	Manston, Kent
Sunniest:	163.8hrs	Tiree, Strathclyde
Dullest:	73.1hrs	Liscombe, Somerset



March winds reputedly come 'in like a lion, out like a lamb'. Not so this year, nor much sign of northwesterlies, showers of snow and of hail normally characteristic of this time of year.

March began changeable with rain in all areas interspersed with some drier and brighter spells. It was cold enough in the Peak District for snow to disrupt motorists on the morning of the 2nd and the A57 'Snake Pass' was closed for a time. Otherwise, the weather was generally mild and as pressure slowly built in the south, it became increasingly settled, especially for England. Further north, the westerly gradient tightened sufficiently to bring gales to the Northern Isles on the 14th. These caused some (short lived) power cuts on Lewis and, further south, closure of the Forth Road Bridge. From the 17th, cooler air gradually incurred from the north, and there was very heavy rainfall over Northwest England in the warm sector ahead of the advancing cold front. A brief cold snap 20th-22nd brought snow to northern Britain and this caused a spate of road traffic accidents across central Scotland on the 21st (the M77 was blocked for a time) and higher routes further south the following day. Pressure then built strongly from the north, sweeping easterly winds across the country until the 27th. There were some beautiful sunny days, but also cold clear nights with sharp frosts. On the 28th, fog caused disruption to flights in London, and the Woolwich Ferry on the Thames was suspended for a time due to poor visibility. As high pressure drifted away, winds gradually veered to the south west, drafting in moist but milder air from the south or southwest. Very warm continental air raised temperatures across the southeast to 22.1°C (71.8°F) at Gravesend, Kent on the 30th - remarkable for so early in the year.

England enjoyed its 3rd mildest March ever, and for the southeast, no March has ever been warmer. For much of the UK, daytime temperatures averaged 2°C above normal and whilst nighttimes were relatively a little less warm, the number of air frosts for England was still the lowest ever - with many places in the south recording none. Sunshine was well above average everywhere except in the southwest and south Wales - which were blighted by many dull, cloudy days. Northern Scotland received nearly 50% more sunshine than usual - and Tiree in the Western Isles clocked up a remarkable 164 hours. Rainfall was close to the average for the UK as a whole - but this disguised significant regional variation. Northern England and Wales were relatively wet (e.g. 174% of normal rain at Aberporth, Ceredigion), whilst northern Scotland, East Anglia and the South East were notably dry (e.g. 44% of normal rain at Manston, Kent) For the UK as a whole it has been the driest 6 months in 20 years.

A major storm affected north-western France on the 6th. The storm (named 'Zeus'), packed 120mph winds, left 600,000 homes without power - and was responsible for 2 deaths. Across the Atlantic on the 1st, destructive tornadoes with winds up to 165mph ripped through the Midwestern United States. One person died in Perryville, Missouri, and two more were killed in Illinois. On the 8th, severe gales felled power lines and caused widespread damage across the Great Lakes and the Northeast USA. At least 14 tornadoes also wrought destruction across North Texas 28-29th. Violent thunderstorms, torrential rain and tennis ball sized hail added to the maelstrom and left 200,000 homes without power. On the 7th, Tropical Cyclone 'Enawo' made landfall in Madagascar between Farahalana and Antalaha. 140mph winds made it the most severe event to strike the island in 13 years. Five people were killed and 22,000 homes left ruined. The city of Sambava was pounded by winds and inundated by 300mm of rain that caused extensive flooding.

In the southern hemisphere, Peru suffered devastating flooding on the 17th. Over 100 bridges were swept away, 115,000 homes damaged and 67 people killed. Meanwhile, New Zealand was struck by a deluge dubbed 'The Tasman Tempest'. Whangamata received an astonishing 475mm of rain 7th-12th. Severe flooding also hit Australia as severe thunderstorms swamped northern New South Wales and south-east Queensland on the 16th. The town of Sawtell, 500km north of Sydney, received 250mm rain in 24 hours. On the 22nd, Sydney itself was battered by an epic thunderstorm which left 48,000 homes without power - and many more flooded. At month end cyclone 'Debbie' pounded the Whitsunday Islands. Gusts reached 163mph at Hamilton Island. 'Debbie' made landfall on mainland Australia 28-29th at Airlie Beach in Queensland - and whilst it weakened rapidly inland - still produced some remarkable 72 hour rainfall totals including 1300mm at Mount William.