

## MARCH STATISTICS RECORDED AT LERWICK OBSERVATORY

|                          | <b>March<br/>2008</b>         | <b>Averages<br/>1971-2000</b> |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Mean maximum temperature | 5.8°C                         | 6.3°C                         |
| Mean minimum temperature | 1.6°C                         | 1.9°C                         |
| Daily mean temperature   | 3.5°C                         | 4.1°C                         |
| Mean sea-level pressure  | 996.7 hPa (mb)                | 1008.3 hPa (mb)               |
| Total rainfall           | 116.9 mm                      | 122.3 mm                      |
| Wet days => 1 mm         | 22 days                       | 19.0 days                     |
| Sunshine                 | 136.1 hours                   | 85.6 hours                    |
| Air frosts               | 9 days                        | 6.5 days                      |
| Ground frosts            | 16 days                       | 14 days                       |
| Snow/sleet               | 15 days                       | 12.9 days                     |
| Days with gale           | 3 days                        | 5.6 days                      |
| Maximum daily mean temp. | 6.6°C on 30 <sup>th</sup>     |                               |
| Minimum daily mean temp. | -1.9°C on 24 <sup>th</sup>    |                               |
| Highest maximum          | 8.6°C on 31 <sup>st</sup>     |                               |
| Lowest day maximum       | 0.1°C on 24 <sup>th</sup>     |                               |
| Highest night minimum    | 5.3°C on 30 <sup>th</sup>     |                               |
| Lowest minimum           | -3.4°C on 24 <sup>th</sup>    |                               |
| Lowest grass minimum     | -4.9°C on 4 <sup>th</sup>     |                               |
| Wettest day              | 15.6 mm on 19 <sup>th</sup>   |                               |
| Sunniest day             | 9.9 hours on 29 <sup>th</sup> |                               |
| Highest mean hourly wind | 42 knots 21 <sup>st</sup>     |                               |
| Highest gust             | 63 knots on 21 <sup>st</sup>  |                               |

### **Cool, dry and very sunny**

**In fact this month was Lerwick's sunniest March, beating the previous highest of 135.7 hours in 1931, the year that records began.**

**From the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month, with high pressure sitting to the south or southwest of the UK, depressions tracking east to the north of Scotland brought an unsettled W'yly or NW'yly airflow to the Northern Isles.**

**A brief anticyclonic period occurred shortly after mid-month when - between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> - the East Greenland High, ridging south across Iceland, spawned an off-shoot anticyclone that then drifted south to the west of the British Isles.**

**A cold N'yly airflow followed, bringing a wintry spell between the 20<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>, as high pressure to the west relaxed and a low, moving east from Iceland, slipped south between Shetland and Norway into the North Sea. The 24<sup>th</sup> was a particularly chilly day, with an average temperature for the 24 hours of -1.9° Celsius. (On March 28<sup>th</sup> 1985 a daytime maximum of -1.6° Celsius was recorded at Lerwick). Between the 28<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> a complex area of low pressure to the west and north of Scotland then became the dominant feature with milder SW'yly winds.**

Strong to gale N to NW'yly winds carried frequent showers – some with hail – across the Isles on the 1<sup>st</sup>. These turned more wintry overnight before dying out on 2<sup>nd</sup> as winds eased, when a deep low over southern Norway/Sweden moved east and a complex area of low pressure developed to the west of Scotland. This transferred east over the Northern Isles, with strong N to NE'yly winds then bringing frequent wintry showers on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, with many places seeing a patchy snow cover by evening. Temperatures fell further on the 4<sup>th</sup> as winds backed NW'yly and the airflow became Arctic in origin. However this cold snap was short-lived, with a developing low - moving east from Iceland - bringing heavy rain, drizzle and mist accompanied by strong to gale SW'yly winds as it trailed fronts across Shetland on the 5<sup>th</sup>.

The strong winds veered NW'yly by the 6<sup>th</sup>, bringing brighter conditions as the low moved into the Norwegian Sea, but quickly eased as a ridge followed. This soon declined, with SW'yly winds strengthening ahead of more fronts driven east by the next depression moving east from Iceland. The fronts cleared overnight, leaving a showery SW'yly airflow across the area on the 7<sup>th</sup>.

This persisted through the 8<sup>th</sup>, before backing S'ly on the 9<sup>th</sup> as a deep Atlantic depression ran quickly east. By 06GMT on the 10<sup>th</sup> this was 950mb just west of Ireland, While it was bringing stormy conditions to the Southwest, winds were just a fresh SE'ly over northeast Scotland. However these did increase strong for a time on the 11<sup>th</sup> and heavy rain crossed the area as the filling low, drifting east across the British Isles into the southern North Sea, pushed fronts north over Shetland.

The next few days were reasonably sunny, with scattered showers and light S'ly winds on the 12<sup>th</sup> as a complex, shallow area of low pressure developed over northern Scotland. Winds freshened W'ly for the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, with further scattered showers affecting the Northern Isles as low pressure drifted north.

Winds had veered NW'ly by the 15<sup>th</sup> as the low moved away into the Norwegian Sea. The East Greenland High then ridged south across Iceland, producing a cold Arctic airflow down across Shetland by the 16<sup>th</sup>. Cold N'ly winds persisted through the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>. Milder NW'ly winds, flowing around the northern flank of a small breakaway anticyclone - developing over Iceland and drifting south to the west of the British Isles - followed on the 19<sup>th</sup>. These backed S or SE'ly, with heavy rain affecting Shetland early on the 20<sup>th</sup> when a low - moving east from Iceland - pushed fronts east across northern Scotland. As fronts cleared, a showery SW to W'ly followed, this then veering to a cooler NW'ly later. Low pressure, slipping south to the east of Shetland on the 21<sup>st</sup>, resulted in a chilly and strong to severe gale N to NE'ly wind, with Lerwick recording a gust of 72 mph.

An anticyclone then built to the west on the 22<sup>nd</sup> with a cold N'ly airflow developing over northeast Scotland. By the end of the day most places had a covering of snow. This persisted through to the 28<sup>th</sup>, with the remnants of deep drifts lingering for several days longer. Showery troughs, moving south over the islands, brought snow showers or longer periods of snow, with quite a lot of drifting in the strong N'ly winds. The 24<sup>th</sup> was a very cold day, with a strong N'ly wind and the maximum at Lerwick rising to just 0.1°C Celsius above freezing. By the 25<sup>th</sup> the snow on Fair Isle was 11cms deep. N'ly winds eased on the 26<sup>th</sup> as a slack area of low pressure developed over northern Scotland.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> SE'ly winds freshened as a depression moved east towards northern Scotland. Associated fronts crossed the area on the 28<sup>th</sup>, the rain and milder temperatures finally removing much of the remaining snow cover. Despite a complex area of low pressure slow-moving across the area, the 28<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> were relatively fine days with light S to SW'ly winds and an average of some 7 hours of sunshine each day.

#### **Dave Wheeler**

#### **Initial Statistical details for Scotland as a whole (1961-1990 average) for March:**

**Mean Temperature** – 3.6°C (0.1°C above average).

**Rainfall** – 163.2 mm (127% of average).

**Sunshine** – 109.0 hours (117% of average).

(These figures may be revised as late data becomes available)

#### **Data from the UK Met Office**