

APRIL STATISTICS RECORDED AT LERWICK OBSERVATORY

	April 2009	Averages 1971-2000
Mean maximum temperature	9.5°C	7.7°C
Mean minimum temperature	5.9°C	2.9°C
Daily mean temperature	7.5°C	5.3°C
Mean sea-level pressure	1012.7 hPa (mb)	1012.7 hPa (mb)
Total rainfall	45.0 mm	74.2 mm
Wet days => 1 mm	8 days	14.4 days
Sunshine (electronic sensor)	120.0 hours	129.9 hours
Air frosts	0 day	4.3 days
Ground frosts	4 days	11 days
Snow/sleet	0 days	7.5 days
Days with gale	1 days	1.9 days
Maximum daily mean temp.	9.4°C on 1st	
Minimum daily mean temp.	6.1°C on 16th	
Highest maximum	12.8°C on 28th	
Lowest day maximum	6.7°C on 3rd & 4th	
Highest night minimum	7.9°C on 10th	
Lowest minimum	2.5°C on 13th	
Lowest grass minimum	-3.6°C on 13th	
Wettest day	8.2 mm on 10th	
Sunniest day	12.9 hours on 22nd	
Highest mean hourly wind	34 knots 5th	
Highest gust	48 knots on 5th	

MILDER AND DRIER, BUT DULLER THAN AVERAGE

The month began with high pressure over the UK. However, this quickly declined and cyclonic conditions prevailed across Shetland during the first two weeks of April, as depressions tracked north to the west of Scotland. The 11th-13th was notably sunny as pressure built across the area. The third week of the month saw mainly settled conditions as an anticyclone meandered down from Iceland, across the UK, and then drifted away into Scandinavia. This left the last week again potentially unsettled, as Atlantic low pressure systems tracked northeast between Scotland and Iceland. However, benefiting from the shelter of the Scottish mainland and closer to high pressure, Shetland saw little if any rainfall.

While pressure was well below normal over western Britain, it was near-average over the Northern Isles, resulting in an anomalous SE'ly airflow over the British Isles. As with the rest of the country, Shetland was much warmer than average. For the UK as a whole, this was the third warmest April since 1914 (April 2007 was the warmest). While rainfall was close to normal in many parts, it was dry in the east - Shetland included. Sunshine was also close to normal, but above normal in the north-west. Shetland was duller than average. Sunshine percentages ranged from 141% at Wattisham (Suffolk) to 71% at Fair Isle.

On the 1st mild SW'ly winds, blowing round the northern edge of an anticyclone centred over the British Isles, brought cloudy but mainly dry conditions to Shetland. While it remained dry and initially quite sunny on the 2nd, as the high moved over southern Scandinavia, winds backed SE'ly and began blowing over a cold North Sea, resulting in mist, low cloud and sea-fog becoming quite extensive by the 3rd.

A depression - tracking east over Shetland - brought misty conditions with low cloud, patchy fog and outbreaks of rain and drizzle for the 4th. These cleared on the 5th as the low moved away and cyclonic winds became strong to gale W'ly for a time. Winds eased overnight, and the 6th dawned chilly with a slight ground frost in places. It was a mainly dry day with sunny or clear spells, the wind backing S'ly again as a complex area of low pressure developed to the west of the British Isles. SE'ly winds strengthened on the 7th, with some early rain or drizzle as a front moved north across the Isles.

With high pressure intensifying over Scandinavia and low pressure deepening to the west, S or SE'ly winds strengthened on the 8th, but eased later as a slack, complex area of low pressure developed between

Scotland and Iceland and outbreaks of rain spread from the west. SE'ly winds had strengthened again by the 10th as a low - deepening off northwest Scotland - pushed fronts across the Northern Isles, bringing more rain later in the day. Fronts cleared overnight as the low drifted north over Faeroe, leaving fresh S'ly winds and a mainly dry, bright day on the 11th. Winds eased during the 12th as the low moved away past Iceland. A ridge, building across the area, gave a mainly dry day with plenty of sunshine. The following night was chilly, with many places seeing a ground frost.

Pressure then remained relatively high across the area, giving another fine, dry and sunny day with light winds on the 13th. By the 14th - a dry but mainly cloudy day - SE'ly winds were again freshening as the next Atlantic depression moved east towards the British Isles. However, with pressure remaining high to the north and east, fronts made little headway towards northeast Scotland. As the low slipped southwards into Biscay and high pressure built to the north, a cool E'ly breeze blew across the Northern Isles during the next two days. It was dry, with sunny spells by day and - with clear periods - chilly nights, with a touch of ground frost early on the 16th.

E'ly winds backed NE'ly and freshened on the 17th as an anticyclone developed to the east of Iceland, a few showers affecting parts of Shetland later in the day. The 18th was mostly dry though rather cloudy, with lighter NE'ly winds as the high ridged down across northern Scotland. With an anticyclone, developing near Faeroe, moving south over the Northern Isles and expanding eventually to cover much of the UK, North Sea and southern Scandinavia, the next two days remained dry. The 19th was rather cloudy and - later on the 20th - as light and variable winds became SE'ly, patchy fog and mist affected eastern districts.

As the high pressure relaxed eastwards, a waving front moved towards Shetland on the 21st, bringing outbreaks of rain. High pressure - building over Biscay - then ridged north across Scotland, bringing a fine, dry and sunny day on the 22nd. However, this ridge collapsed overnight and S or SE'ly winds strengthened ahead of fronts pushed east. The fronts - eventually amalgamating into one slow-moving front over the Northern Isles - produced some rain on the 23rd. As the front weakened further, the rain died out overnight and - after a misty start with local hill fog - the 24th was mostly dry, though rather cloudy. The 25th was also mainly dry but brighter, with hazy sunshine and light SE'ly winds as high pressure to the east - building across Shetland - pushed the front back into the Atlantic.

The mainly dry, though generally cloudy weather with moderate or fresh SE'ly winds, continued through the 26th and 27th. As pressure built to the north of Shetland, the 28th was brighter with sunny or clear spells and lighter E'ly winds.

A high, developing over the Norwegian Sea and ridging south, brought another dry though generally cloudy day with a freshening NE'ly breeze to Shetland on the 29th. The 30th remained dry, though winds veered SE'ly ahead of fronts pushed north towards the Northern Isles, as the high weakened and the next depression moved east towards Scotland.

Initial Statistical details for Scotland as a whole (1961-1990 average) for April:

Mean Temperature – 7.8°C (2.1°C above average).

Rainfall – 83.6 mm (97% of average).

Sunshine – 151.4 hours (116% of average).

Data from the UK Met Office