

## MARCH STATISTICS RECORDED AT LERWICK OBSERVATORY

	March 2009	Averages 1971-2000
Mean maximum temperature	7.2°C	6.3°C
Mean minimum temperature	3.4°C	1.9°C
Daily mean temperature	5.2°C	4.1°C
Mean sea-level pressure	1003.3 hPa (mb)	1008.3 hPa (mb)
Total rainfall	131.4 mm	122.3 mm
Wet days => 1 mm	23 days	19.0 days
Sunshine (electronic sensor)	89.6 hours	85.6 hours
Air frosts	2 days	6.5 days
Ground frosts	8 days	14 days
Snow/sleet	9 days	12.9 days
Days with gale	3 days	5.6 days
Maximum daily mean temp.	7.8°C on 15 <sup>th</sup>	
Minimum daily mean temp.	1.0°C on 28 <sup>th</sup>	
Highest maximum	9.5°C on 17 <sup>th</sup>	
Lowest day maximum	1.8°C on 28 <sup>th</sup>	
Highest night minimum	6.4°C on 15 <sup>th</sup>	
Lowest minimum	-3.0°C on 29 <sup>th</sup>	
Lowest grass minimum	-4.4°C on 10 <sup>th</sup>	
Wettest day	26.7 mm on 8 <sup>th</sup>	
Sunniest day	9.6 hours on 17 <sup>th</sup>	
Highest mean hourly wind	48 knots 8 <sup>th</sup>	
Highest gust	69 knots on 8 <sup>th</sup>	

### **MILD, WET AND SUNNY**

**As last year, the first half of March 2009 was rather unsettled and changeable, with low pressure systems, separated by transient ridges, passing close by - or over - Shetland in quick succession. The period between the 16th - 21st - again very similar to last year - was more settled, as an anticyclone meandered around the North Sea, Scotland and southern Scandinavia.**

**Similarly the last ten days reverted to an unsettled and changeable pattern, as high pressure returned to a position south of the UK and depressions again passed close by Shetland.**

**Overall, Shetland - like the rest of the country - experienced a milder and wetter March, but also a sunnier month than normal.**

On the 1st cloud and rain were followed by brighter, showery conditions and a SW'ly breeze as fronts cleared Shetland. A cool dry evening with a patchy frost followed, as a weak ridge declined east. Freshening SW'ly winds brought rain overnight, which persisted for most of the 2nd as a sequence of fronts - driven off the Atlantic by a depression deepening to the south of Iceland - crossed the Northern Isles.

The 3rd saw gusty SW'ly winds and cooler conditions with heavy wintry showers of rain, hail and sleet, giving places a slight covering of wet snow and ice by morning. The day became mostly dry as winds backed SE'ly, later increasing strong as the deep low swung down from Iceland. Heavy frontal rain moved east across Shetland overnight and winds increased to gale-force, with gusts to 60mph. As the low became a filling feature off northwest Scotland on the 4th, the strong to gale-force winds quickly eased. Later in the day, showers merged to give a longer period of rain.

By the 5th a large, slack area of low pressure lay between Scotland and Iceland. With mainly SW'ly winds, Shetland - benefiting from the shelter of the Scottish mainland - was mainly dry and bright. Though clear spells led to local early frost, a weak warm front brought cloud and patchy rain later in the night. This cleared, and the 6th was again quite sunny and generally dry with moderate SW'ly winds. Clear spells gave another slight frost overnight.

After a bright start on the 7th, a deep Atlantic low brought periods of occasionally heavy rain or drizzle later in the day, as fronts pushed east over Shetland. As the low tracked slowly north, S'ly winds veered SW'ly and strengthened. Rain cleared to blustery, heavy, wintry showers overnight, leaving a patchy covering of wet

snow and ice by the morning of the 8th. Gale to storm-force SW to W'ly winds, gusting to 81mph at Lerwick and 89mph on Foula, slowly eased and veered W to NW'ly. Wintry showers continued through the 9th, as the depression moved away over the Norwegian Sea. The 10th was a bright, cold day, with early showers dying out as NW to W'ly winds continued to ease. A cold, clear and frosty night followed as a ridge swung east across Scotland and winds fell light.

After a bright start, rain spread from the west on the 11th as S to SE'ly winds increased strong, ahead of fronts driven east by a deep Atlantic depression. The rain cleared overnight, with sunny spells and showers - some of hail - accompanied by strong SW to W'ly winds following for the 12th, as the low moved away northwards.

A weak ridge crossed Shetland, bringing a mainly dry day on the 13th. Light winds backed SE'ly later as yet another low, tracking east towards the Hebrides, pushed further frontal systems towards the Northern Isles. These brought a little rain or drizzle through the 14th, together with coastal and hill fog patches, as they moved slowly through the area.

High pressure - building across southern Britain - extended northwards on the 15th. Moderate SW'ly winds brought generally cloudy and mild conditions with patchy drizzle to Shetland during the 16th. In marked contrast, as an anticyclone drifted northwest over Scotland, the 17th was a pleasantly mild day with almost unbroken sunshine. Though the next few days remained mainly dry and settled as the high drifted a little further east, cloud amounts tended to increase and sunshine amounts were not so high. By the 20th, while the temperature at Altnaharra (Highland) reached 18.5°Celsius, freshening SE'ly winds were pushing fog banks off the cold North Sea on to southern and eastern coasts of Shetland, and here it was much cooler, with temperatures struggling to reach 8° Celsius.

By the 21st, with the centre of high pressure transferring to a position southwest of the British Isles, freshening W'ly winds - though clearing the fog - brought rather cloudy conditions with patchy drizzle. The 22nd was a brighter day with scattered showers, occasionally wintry with hail.

As low pressure moved into Scandinavia, the 23rd was a cooler day, with fresh NW'ly winds bringing sunny or clear spells and wintry showers of hail and sleet. These died out as a ridge declined early on the 24th, with rain and strong SE'ly winds following from the west later. Winds became cyclonic variable early on the 25th, as low pressure moved east over the Northern Isles. Though a ridge made a very brief appearance, this quickly declined, with another Atlantic depression approaching northwest Scotland, resulting in a strengthening SE'ly wind with further rain followed by showers for the 26th.

Frequent showers - some with hail - continued through the 27th, and the strong SE'ly wind backed NE'ly as the depression moved northeast over northern Scotland. Temperatures fell overnight, and by the 28th showers were of snow. Despite some sunny spells, strong NW to N'ly winds resulted in daytime temperatures failing to reach 2° Celsius in Lerwick. As another ridge crossed the area, winds fell light and skies cleared during the evening. A cold night followed, with the air temperature falling to -3.0° Celsius and down to -3.7° Celsius on the grass.

After a bright, cold start, milder SW'ly winds and patchy rain spread from the west later on the 29th, as fronts approached Shetland. These cleared by early on the 30th, leaving bright spells and occasionally wintry showers, accompanied by strong SW'ly winds, as low pressure over Iceland moved northwards. With high pressure persisting to the south and low pressure to the north, the month ended with a mild SW'ly airflow over northern Scotland. While this brought damp, drizzly and misty conditions with extensive low cloud to Shetland, elsewhere in Scotland it was dry and warm with some sunshine. The temperature at Dyce reached 17.7°C, the warmest March day there for 10 years. In Shetland, temperatures at best just reached 8° Celsius.

## **Dave Wheeler**

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

**Mean Temperature:** 4.9°C (1.0°C above average).

**Rainfall:** 145.8 mm (105% of average).

**Sunshine:** 123.5 hours (139% of average).

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

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