

Mar 79

Friday, April 6, 1979 9

Despite the fact that we are now well into spring, there are surprisingly few seasonal signs.

Indeed, March as a whole has seen a continuation of the colder than usual weather which began in late November and which has persisted with a tenacity seldom experienced in recent years.

The mean daily temperature recorded at the Halesowen Climatological Centre has been no more than 4.3C (39.7F), some 1.0C (1.8F) below normal, whilst rainfall, at 112mm (4.40in) has been the heaviest since March 1947 with just twice

the usual fall.

March came in with frost and snow, both residues from the extremely cold February, though milder westerlies encroached from the southwest, daytime temperatures reaching a maximum of 12C (53.6F) on the third.

This milder spell from March 2 to March 15 gave the first substantially frost-free period for over 10 weeks, though skies were clear enough to give ground frosts on all but four nights until March 10.

Late on March 15, winds

backed northerly and driving snow hit the area, persisting until well into March 17. This produced the heaviest snowfall of the entire 'winter', with over 20cm (8in) by the morning of March 17. In fact, March 16 produced 24 hours of snow, equalling the area duration record first set on February 11, 1960.

The period March 16 to March 25 was the coldest of the month with ground frosts every night except one, as well as several air frosts. The minimum temperatures of the month. -1.5C (29.5F) in

the air, and -5.0C (23F) on the ground, were recorded on March 24.

The final week of the month, with over 34mm (1.34in) of rain, saw a spell of very disturbed weather, which was carried over the area by predominant westerly or north westerly winds. Hail, sleet, snow and rain all occurred, quite substantial 24 hour falls being recorded, with cold, fresh to strong winds, as a series of depressions crossed the Midlands from the west.

In spite of the cold air there

is now a noticeable increase in the warmth of the sun. On no less than nine occasions solar radiation temperatures have risen to over 30C (86.0F). The maximum solar radiation temperature of 35.4C (95.7F) was recorded on March 23, whilst the month as a whole has averaged to 22.2C (72F). By comparison the mean solar radiation for January was 10C (50F) and February 14.1C (57.4F).

Rainfall was twice the average for March at 112mm (4.40in), the heaviest fall of 19mm (0.75in) occurring on

March 16 as snow. Some form of precipitation fell on 23 of the 31 days, with snow on eight, the total duration being 106.9 hours. Level snow in excess of 1/2 inch was recorded as lying on four mornings.

Soil temperatures have recovered only marginally from the low points of January and February and are still well below normal. The mean soil surface temperature has been 4.7C (40.5F), the mean 5cm (2in) 4.1C (39.3F) and the mean 30cm (1ft) 3.9C (39F).

Reasonable plant growth does not occur until both mean soil and air temperatures regularly attain 5.6C (42F).

Cold weather blues this spring

HAYLEY GREEN
52°26'N 02°04'W 155m AMSL

Cl Roberts