

MARCH 1997.

The disturbed SW airstream which prevailed for much of February, continued into March with gusts to 34 knots on the 1st. Rain, heavy at times, spread across the area during the small hours of the 2nd giving a total of 4mm. With clearing skies under rapidly rising pressure on the evening of the 2nd/3rd ground frost was widespread. By the 4th further fronts were approaching and the day was dull and dismal though fairly mild. An active cold front swept quickly across the area on the afternoon of the 5th giving a spell of quite heavy rain.

Once this had passed, skies cleared and widespread fog occurred on the 6th. When this had dispersed the day went on to provide 8.3 hours of bright sunshine. Pressure had now built substantially and this gave much quieter conditions which resulted in dense fog on both mornings of the 9th and 10th. A pile up on the M42 near Bromsgrove in fog on the 10th led to 6 deaths.

From the 9th on it became unseasonably mild, daytime maximums being above 10C every day from the 9th to the 18th, peaking at 17.3C on the 11th. Nights also remained mild as the anticyclone over France fed warm Continental air from the south over the country.

By early on the 18th pressure had fallen and rain spread across the region during the small hours as a cold front swept southwards, With rising pressure on the 20th, skies cleared and ground frost was recorded on both the 20th and 24th each day then going on to provide over 8 hours of bright sunshine and fairly mild temperatures.

From the 22nd conditions became more changeable with a predominantly westerly airflow and spells of light rain. A cold front crossed the Midlands on the 27th introducing a blustery NW airstream. This gave some bright and dry weather though ground frost occurred widely on the 30th and 31st. The last day of the month was almost Springlike with 11.8 hours of bright sunshine and light W winds.

The month as a whole was very dry with only 28% of the expected rainfall total, and a surplus of 33% in sunshine.