

Prime Meridian

(13) May 25, 2013



March 29, 2013. Top: Looking across a bare field to St. Peter & St. Paul's Church, Ash, Kent. Right. Green leaves of bluebells poke up through leaf litter on the woodland floor (Saxten's & Cage's Wood, Kent, UK).

Above the parapet - a response.

A *Nature* editorial for January 5, 2012 urged “*Where political leadership on climate change is lacking, scientists must be prepared to stick their heads above the parapet.*”

Recently (see item on page 3), the USA's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration adjusted statements made earlier in its global climate review for 2012, and cries of foul went up from the climate-sceptic lobby. This was despite the fact that the data had been “*preliminary.*”

My concern is that the *Nature* editorial, with its level-headed admonition that for scientists wanting to engage in the climate debate “*Training in communication is advisable,*” erred on the side of optimism. Scientists speaking out on environmental issues are, I fear, going to need courage. Many will be naturally reluctant to attract the attention of opponents determined to pillory them before a global public as cheats or, at the very least, poor scientists with an alarmist bias. In a piece (last updated Oct. 30, 2011) headed “*Lying, cheating climate scientists caught lying, cheating again,*” James Delingpole, not an obscure blogger, but a columnist on the wide circulation UK paper, the *Telegraph*, proclaimed “. . . if those lying, cheating climate scientists will insist on going on lying and cheating what else can I do other than expose their lying and cheating?” A website attacking climate scientists at Pennsylvania State University, even flagged up a child abuse scandal involving a Penn State football coach, seemingly to damn researchers by this tenuous association.

A scientist doesn't have the logistic, legal or public relations support systems that our politicians enjoy and their job involves modifying their ideas as our knowledge improves, rather than delivering the clear, no ifs-or-buts message favoured by publicists. Raising one's head above the parapet means exposure to the political storm - where opponents are out to deliberately misrepresent what one says or does, no matter how innocent - and most scientists aren't frauds. Courage aside, evolving a stratagem for life above the parapet will be no mean challenge.

Martin Heath, Editor.



Seasons in South East England March, 2013



Above: Fields and hedgerows in the vicinity of Ash, Kent on March 2, 2013



For the UK as a whole, this was a bitter March, the coldest since 1962. Kinbrace and Aboyne felt the UK's min. temp. of -12.9°C (March 11).

On March 1, there were patches of drizzle on the southern coast, but generally dry and fine conditions prevailed. High pressure conditions saw frost at night but days with sunny episodes from March 2 to 6. On March 5, temperature of 17.1°C was recorded at Gravesend (Kent). Cloudiness on March 6 was followed by unsettled weather. The south saw rain from March 7 to 8 (28 mm at Manston, Kent on March 8). Rain was joined by sleet and snow in central and E England on March 9, becoming colder from March 10 to 13, with snow showers. March 10 to 12 saw cold abnormally conditions, with gale-force NE winds and snow in S England. *"Motorists spent the night in vehicles in Sussex and Kent, there were several hundred collisions on the roads, schools were closed, and there was disruption at Gatwick airport. Eurostar services were severely disrupted due to heavy snowfalls in northern France. Conditions were exceptionally severe in the Channel Islands with strong winds, freezing temperatures and over 10cm of lying snow; both Jersey and Guernsey airports were closed for a time."* The early hours of March 14 saw temperatures of -8.1°C at Benson (Oxfordshire) and -8.2°C at Shap (Cumbria). Milder conditions followed with rain, sleet and snow, but by March 19, inland areas saw dry conditions with sunny but cold episodes. It clouded over on March 20, brightening on March 21. Very cold conditions followed on March 22, and snow continued in N England. It was lighter and restricted to eastern areas on March 24, but light showers occurred in the N declining on March 28 and 29, and showers took place in E coastal areas on March 30. Despite sunny spells, March 31 was the coldest Easter day on record (-8.7°C at Shap, Cumbria).

For SE and central S England, mean max. temp.: 6.3°C (-3.8°C); mean min. temp.: 0.5°C (-2.3°C). Hours of sunshine: 68.7 (62%). Rain: 71.3 mm (64%). Anomalies re. 1971-2000 norm in brackets. Respective figs. re. 1981-2010 norm are -4.2°C ; -2.5°C ; 60%; 124%. (Based on online Met Office data).



Top left: Snowdrops in St. Peter & St. Paul's churchyard, Ash, Kent, March 2. Lower left: Tenebrae service in the chapel of King's College London, on March 26. Centre: Sunshine for Easter morning service. All Saint's Church, West Dulwich, South London. March 31.



Above left: Weather systems imaged over western Europe on March 20, 2013 by NOAA satellite (this was the date of the spring equinox) courtesy Geoff Hamilton. Centre: Snow lingers along hedgerow near Ash, Kent. March 16. Right: Ploughed field and bare hedgerow near West Kingsdown, Kent. March 29.

NOAA revise data for 2012.

Climate-sceptics have pounced on revisions in NOAA's State of the Climate Global Analysis annual summary for 2012 as evidence of poor science and disinformation. Under fire has been NOAA's adjustment of a statement that 2012 was (taken globally) the warmest La Niña year on record.

In response, we direct readers to the original report, published online. Immediately beneath the title, NOAA advised readers *"Note: The data presented in this report are preliminary. Ranks and anomalies may change as more complete data are received and processed."*

NOAA had stated that *"When compared to previous La Niña years, the 2012 global surface temperature was the warmest observed during such a year; 2011 was the previous warmest La Niña year on record."* NOAA literature explains: *"No single climate phenomenon has more influence on year-to-year variation in average global temperature than the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO). When the central tropical Pacific Ocean is warmer than average (El Niño) or colder than average (La Niña), a cascade of atmospheric changes ensures that many parts of the globe feel the effects."*

NOAA explained its reason for changing its statement: *"Our original post, based on the Jan. 15 release of the [2012 Global Climate Analysis](#) by the National Climatic Data Center, stated 2012 was the warmest La Niña year on record. Later analysis showed that 2012 was shy of the record by 0.02°C. For more information on the reason for the change, see our related article [In Watching for El Niño and La Niña, NOAA Adapts to Global Warming](#)."* However, *"Although 2012 warmth did not top the charts, it was the third warmest "La Niña year" on record."*



Heavy rain splashes into water-filled gutter. West Norwood, London. March 18, 2013.



Primroses bloom in a crevice in the porch of St. Peter & St. Paul's Church, Ash, Kent. March 29, 2013.



Left, top to bottom. Silver birch catkins, March 17 (Saxten's & Cage's Wood, Kent). Sunset, March 20 (Ash, Kent). Daffodils, Belair Park, West Dulwich, London (March 20). Enlarging leaves of Arum, Saxten's & Cage's Wood (March 29).

Global climate; March 2013.

According to the NOAA, the mean global temperature for March 2013 (combining data for land and sea) was $0.58 \pm 0.07^\circ\text{C}$ above the 20th C average of 12.3°C . This was not record breaking, but, in a series beginning in 1880, it tied with 2006 as the 10th warmest March on record. However, many parts of the N. Hemisphere, saw unusually cold conditions.

For the world as a whole, the surface of the land was $1.06 \pm 0.13^\circ\text{C}$ warmer than the average (11th warmest on record behind March 2008), and the ocean was $+0.41 \pm 0.04^\circ\text{C}$ warmer (9th warmest with 1998 and 2012 as warmest on record). For the Northern Hemisphere the combined result for land and ocean was $+0.69 \pm 0.09$ above the 20th Century mean, making it the 10th warmest March (warmest was 2008). Land in the Northern Hemisphere was overall $+1.17 \pm 0.17^\circ\text{C}$ above the average, the 13th warmest March with 2008 as the record. In the Southern Hemisphere, a trend of record highs did not continue. Mean land temperature was $+0.80 \pm 0.16^\circ\text{C}$ above the average (10th warmest March with 2010 as warmest). The combined land and ocean temperature was $+0.48 \pm 0.08^\circ\text{C}$ above the mean (10th warmest March with 2010 as warmest).



“ . . . there were some marked temperature anomaly differences around the world. The [Arctic Oscillation \(AO\)](#), a large-scale climate pattern that can influence temperatures in the Northern Hemisphere, was strongly negative during the month, and in fact reached a monthly-averaged record low for March. This negative phase was associated with frigid Arctic air spilling southward into the Northern Hemisphere middle latitudes.”

Cooler than normal conditions were experienced in E USA, Europe, European Russia and Northern Siberia, whilst it was warmer than normal in NE Canada SE Greenland, large parts of China and areas in N and central Africa, N South America and N Australia. It was, however, distinctly cool in Argentina.



Sources: NOAA National Climatic Data Center, State of the Climate: Global Analysis for March 2013, published online February 2013, retrieved on March 1, 2013 from <http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc/global/2013/1>. Data provisional.

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