Volunteers are wanted for a citizen science project to document some of the earliest weather records in Britain and parts of Europe. Operation Weather Rescue aims to digitise 2.5 million meteorological measurements from between 1860 and 1880. The original tables were recorded in beautiful copperplate handwriting, and transferring them to an online database will help scientists to better understand unusual weather and to get a more accurate picture of past climate, which is useful for predicting future climate.

Every day since 1860 the Met Office has produced weather reports from observations made across western Europe, which were originally sent to London by telegraph. The first public weather forecast, by Vice-Admiral Robert FitzRoy, who founded the Met Office, was published in *The Times* on August 1, 1861. Most of the old reports have never been digitised, particularly from before 1950, and remain in archives held by the Met Office at its headquarters in Exeter in Devon.

Operation Weather Rescue is asking for volunteers to go online and type up the observations from photographs to build a digital archive. It would take the team of scientists years to enter the information without the public's help. For more information, see weatherrescue.org.

The scientists are from the University of Reading and the National Centre for Atmospheric Science, but experts from all over the world will be able to use the digitised information.

"It's a great opportunity for the public to contribute to real scientific research. As the world warms, the data will provide a baseline to help us measure weather changes and monitor climate change," said Professor Ed Hawkins of the University of Reading in Berkshire.

Operation Weather Rescue has also been chosen as the citizen science project for British Science Week, which runs from March 8.