

MONTHLY WEATHER REPORT

MAY**1978**

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Cool first half, with rain in places: warm and dry later.

Depressions to the south-west and south affected southern areas at the beginning of the month, their associated fronts moving mostly northwards over Britain. A ridge of high pressure from an anticyclone over Scandinavia extended south-westwards over Scotland on the 7th, however, and by the 9th a belt of high pressure became established from Scandinavia to the Azores. This ridge then moved east and frontal systems crossed all parts of the British Isles from north-west to south-east between the 11th and the 15th. Pressure rose again as a ridge over Norway extended south-westwards across the North Sea, but the ridge retreated northwards a few days later as most areas gradually came within the circulation of a complex low-pressure system over the Continent. This European depression moved east on the 23rd and a ridge of high pressure from the Azores then extended north-eastwards across Britain. An anticyclone developed over the North Sea on the 27th and remained in that area until the end of the month, when it declined a little and drifted east.

Weather

The month started cool, and it was very cold in parts of Scotland on the night of the 1st/2nd. A little sleet was reported in Shetland on the 2nd. Most areas had rain at times during the first week, but the heaviest falls occurred in southern England, where it was also thundery. Fog occurred from time to time, mostly over high ground in the south. The weather was drier and a little warmer in the early part of the second week and many areas had prolonged sunshine, but it then became cooler, with rain or showers, some of hail, until around mid-month. The second part of May was mainly dry and warm, and although north-easterly winds kept some eastern coasts cooler, and there was coastal fog at times, most areas became very warm and sunny towards the end of the month.

Wind

Winds were occasionally fresh or strong on exposed coasts, but seldom reached gale force. Speeds were often light during the second half of the month, although onshore breezes affected some coastal districts. Directions were mostly north-easterly, but were occasionally north-westerly.

Temperature

Monthly mean temperatures were above average in northern and western parts of the United Kingdom and in places on the south coast, but were below average along the coast of north-east England and in most of eastern England south of the Humber. They ranged from about 1.5 °C above the normal in parts of Scotland, away from the eastern coastal strip, to around 1.5 °C below normal along the coast of Norfolk, but most values were within 1 °C of average. Temperatures were rather variable until around mid-month; it was mostly cool, particularly along eastern coasts, but some areas became warm by day between the 7th and 11th. Daytime temperatures were higher during the second half of the month, and although some eastern coasts remained cool, it became very warm generally towards the end of the month and was hot in some inland districts. In Scotland temperatures reached about 27 °C in a few places on the 29th, and on the 31st maxima of around 28 °C were recorded in North Wales and in one or two places in the southern half of England.

Rainfall

Monthly totals were above average only in parts of north-east England and in a band extending southwards from the Humber to the Home Counties. Rainfall was below average in almost all other parts of the United Kingdom, and most western areas, and a large part of central and southern Scotland, recorded less than half the normal amount. Some districts were particularly dry: less than 25 per cent of the average fell in western Scotland, south of Loch Linnhe, and in parts of north-west England, Dyfed and south-west England. This was the driest May at Stornoway (Western Isles) and Paisley (Strathclyde) since 1890 and 1895 respectively and as little as 4 mm fell during the month at Cally Market Gardens (Dumfries and Galloway) and at Stainburn Reservoir (Cumbria). Heavy rain fell in some areas, however. There was flooding in south-east England and in the Cambridge/Huntingdon area during the first week, and thunderstorms were reported in parts of England. Isolated thunderstorms occurred in Scotland and Northern Ireland on the 22nd, 32 mm of rain falling in 30 minutes at Knockbreckan, near Belfast, and many areas had thundery outbreaks on the 31st.

Snow

The higher Scottish mountains remained snow-covered throughout the month, with snow lying down to about 600 m at first, but gradually receding. Over much of the remaining high ground in Scotland, however, as in the extreme north of England, only patches of snow and drifts in corries, were still observed by the end of the month. On Dartmoor, where deep snow accumulated earlier in the year, the last known drift disappeared during the first week of May.

Sunshine

Sunshine totals were a little below average in

south-east England and East Anglia, in Northern Ireland and in parts of western Scotland. Monthly totals were mostly between 100 and 120 per cent of average elsewhere, but exceeded 130 per cent of the normal in the area around Aberdeen. This was the sunniest May along the east coast of Scotland between Dundee and the Moray Firth since 1971. Long sunny periods occurred in many parts of the United Kingdom early in the second week, but sunny spells were more frequent during the second half of the month, and it became very sunny in most areas during the last week.

Fog

Fog formed fairly frequently. Overnight fog patches in the Midlands and south-eastern England during the first week became thick in places and London/Heathrow Airport was affected by fog on the morning of the 3rd. Fog patches continued to occur in inland areas from time to time, chiefly during the early part of the third week and at times in the last week, but most of this overnight fog cleared during the following morning. Hill fog, which was sometimes associated with precipitation, occurred at times over England and Wales until about the 11th, and occasionally affected southern Scotland during the latter part of the month. Coastal fog occurred more frequently, particularly during the second half of the month, and was sometimes persistent. Eastern coasts were the most affected, but fog was also sometimes slow to clear around northern Scottish coasts and patches of sea fog drifted on to western coasts from time to time.

Miscellaneous Phenomena

A funnel cloud was observed at Morley St Botolph (Norfolk) in the early afternoon of the 15th and three funnel clouds were seen near Benson (Oxfordshire) on the evening of the same day.

Table 1 District values

District	air temperature °C					mean 30-cm earth temp °C	rain- days	rainfall	sun- shine
	Highest Max.*	Lowest Min.*	max.	min.	mean				
			difference from average						
0 Scotland N	26.3	-0.5	+1.3	+0.4	+0.9	-0.1	-7	52	109
1 Scotland E	25.7	-1.6	+1.4	+0.7	+1.0	+0.5	-5	56	119
2 England E & NE	28.4	-0.4	-0.7	-0.1	-0.4	+0.3	-3	91	106
3 East Anglia	28.4	0.5	-1.3	-0.3	-0.8	-0.5	-3	111	91
4 Midland Counties	26.7	0.1	+0.2	-0.1	+0.1	-0.1	-3	66	107
5 England SE & Central S	27.0	1.3	-0.2	0.0	-0.1	-0.5	-3	93	95
6 Scotland W	25.8	-1.1	+1.7	+0.3	+1.0	+0.1	-7	22	106
7 England NW & Wales N	27.7	1.2	+1.1	+0.2	+0.7	-0.3	-4	38	112
8 England SW & Wales S	27.1	3.2	+0.3	0.0	+0.1	+0.3	-5	40	106
N Ireland	24.5	-1.5	+1.1	+0.1	+0.6	+0.2	-6	42	89
Scotland	26.3	-1.6	+1.5	+0.5	+1.0	+0.2	-6	43	111
England & Wales	28.4	-0.4	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1	-3	73	103

*Highest maximum and lowest minimum of District Value Stations.