

May 2008

The averaging period used for the following assessment was 1961-1990.

UK overview

Mean temperatures generally 2 °C to 3 °C above average, but only 1 °C to 2 °C above average across eastern parts of Scotland and NE England. The warmest May in the series back to 1914 for the UK, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales (and equal warmest for England). Rainfall well above average across southern areas of England and Wales, but below average across central and northern areas of the UK. Sunshine ranging from slightly below average across south-western areas of the UK to well above average across northern areas of Scotland.

Hunstanton (Norfolk) recorded a maximum temperature of 28.1 °C on 10th. Kinbrace (Highland) recorded a minimum temperature of -6.2 °C on 19th. 67.3 mm of rainfall was recorded at Holne (Devon) on 14th. Manston (Kent) recorded 121.4 mm during the four-day period between 24th and 27th. A wind gust of 74 mph was recorded at Mumbles Head (West Glamorgan) on 26th.

England diary of highlights

Mean temperatures well above average. Notable rainfall variations, with well below average rainfall across the north and well above average across the south.

1st to 8th: Low pressure over the north of the UK on the 1st with some heavy and thundery showers in the south. A ridge of high pressure then extended across the North Sea and covered much of the UK. Clear skies in the south led to a cool night on the 2nd/3rd, with Benson (Oxfordshire) recording a minimum temperature of 3.2 °C. A very mild night on the 3rd/4th, with Yeovilton (Somerset) recording an overnight minimum temperature of 14.8 °C. Some showers and isolated thunderstorms on the 4th. Temperatures during this period peaked at 25.4 °C at Wisley (Surrey) on the 7th.

9th to 11th: The high pressure temporarily broke down, with a generally cyclonic synoptic situation. However, Wiggonholt (Sussex) recorded a temperature of 26.4 °C on the 9th. At the same time, widespread thunderstorms in the west gave 2 cm of hail on the M4 in Wiltshire. Great Malvern (Worcestershire) recorded a maximum temperature of 27.5 °C on the 11th. Low cloud and patchy fog spread from the North Sea into north-east England overnight.

12th to 13th: High pressure over the Faeroes with a ridge of high pressure over much of the UK. Persistent low cloud and fog affected eastern coasts. A cool night on the 12th/13th, with Redesdale Camp (Northumberland) recording a minimum temperature of 3.4 °C.

14th to 17th: The ridge of high pressure persisted over the north where it stayed mainly dry with further low cloud around windward coasts. Low pressure in the south led to heavy showers and thunderstorms, with Teignmouth (Devon) recording 57.7 mm on the 14th.

18th to 22nd: High pressure over most of the UK with a weak front pushing into the south-west on the 22nd. Generally rather cool with frost in places during the mornings through this period, with the minimum temperature down to -3.2 °C at Alston Springhouse Park (Cumbria) on the 19th/20th.

23rd to 31st: Mainly unsettled conditions with low pressure close to or over the UK giving showers or longer spells of rain and temperatures around average. Strong to gale force easterly winds on the 24th. Heavy rainfall

over SE England on the 25th, with Otterbourne (Hampshire) recording 55.0 mm. Heavy showers on the 26th saw 25 mm of rain falling quite widely across the south, with Nettlecombe (Somerset) recording 42.7 mm. Manston (Kent) recorded 121.4 mm during the 4-day period between 24th and 27th, including 19.4 mm in one hour early on the 28th. Hemyock (Devon) recorded 54.1 mm on 29th.

Wales diary of highlights

Mean temperatures well above average. Notable rainfall variations, with well below average rainfall across the north and well above average across the south.

1st to 5th: High pressure persisted to the east with low pressure either over or to the west of Wales maintaining unsettled conditions. Winds were mostly from a southerly or south-westerly direction so temperatures overall were near or above normal. But it was often cloudy with showers and some longer spells of rain as well.

6th to 14th: High pressure was dominant to the east and then the north of the country maintaining much more settled weather with often dry conditions although there were some thundery showers around during the 9th and 10th. Winds from the east or north-east persisted through this period giving some warm days but others rather chillier, especially when cloudy. St Clears (Carmarthenshire) recorded a temperature of 25.6 °C on the 12th.

15th to 18th: Low pressure edged northwards from France giving mainly cloudy and sometimes quite wet conditions with occasional showers or longer spells of rain, some heavy with local thunder. Temperatures were mostly near normal.

19th to 31st: Although briefly drier and brighter over the 19th to 21st, much of this latter part of the month was again dominated by low pressure to the south giving persistent east or north-east winds and occasional showers or longer spells of rain, some of these heavy and thundery. A cool night on the 18th/19th, with Capel Curig (Conwy) recording a minimum temperature of 0.5 °C. The 26th was notable not only for the rain but also very strong north-east winds in the south. Velindre (Powys) recorded 34.0 mm on the 26th, with a highest gust of 74 m.p.h. at Mumbles (near Swansea).

Scotland diary of highlights

Dry, warm and sunny.

1st to 4th: The month started bright and cool with sunshine and showers, locally thundery. Occasional mainly light rain affected the south and west on the 3rd and 4th. It gradually warmed up, especially in the drier northeast with a temperature of 20.3 °C recorded at Kinloss and Lossiemouth (both Moray) on the 4th.

5th to 10th: The 5th to the 7th were fine, warm and sunny, especially in the west. Girvan (Ayrshire) recorded a temperature of 25.2 °C on the 7th. Patchy mist affected some coasts. Some thunderstorms affected the Western Isles early on the 8th, otherwise it was dry with sunny spells. Very warm in the north-west, with Kinlochewe (Highland) recording a temperature of 25.3 °C. East coasts were much cooler, with only 13.1 °C being recorded at Inverbervie (Aberdeenshire). The 9th started clear and sunny for most, especially in the east, but cloud gradually thickened from the west, bringing outbreaks of mostly light rain. A rather cloudy day on the 10th, with outbreaks of showery rain, which turned heavy and thundery, with 20.2 mm falling in 2 hours at Strathallan (Perthshire). Warm in the south with a temperature of 24.2 °C at Eskdalemuir (Dumfries & Galloway) but much cooler in the north-west, with Kinlochewe only reaching 14.2 °C.

11th to 26th: The 11th and 12th were warm in the west, with Threave (Dumfries & Galloway) recording a temperature of 24.6 °C on the 11th, but with a few thundery showers developing. Cooler near the east coast, with Dyce (Aberdeen Airport) reaching just 12.3 °C on the 12th. The 13th and 14th were mainly sunny, but less

warm in the west and much cooler in the east. A cloudier day generally on the 15th with only western areas having some sunshine.

A band of cloud and patchy rain moved down across the north on the 16th, but mainly dry and bright in the south. Cloudy with rain in the south at first on the 17th, but becoming brighter. The 18th to 21st was mainly sunny around the coasts but most inland areas clouded over during the mornings with isolated showers in the afternoons. Some cold nights with Kinbrace (Highland) recording a temperature of -6.2 °C overnight on the 18th/19th.

Most places stayed dry on the 22nd with some sunshine. Light rain reached the south-west during the evening. The 23rd was mostly cloudy with patchy light rain during the morning in the west. Dry with sunny spells on the 24th, but cool on the east coast. A touch of ground frost in some glens overnight on the 24th/25th with Loch Glascarnoch (Highland) recording a temperature of 1.4 °C, but the temperature rose to 20.5 °C at Dunstaffnage (Argyll & Bute) in the sunshine on the 25th. A north-easterly breeze and patchy cloud limited the temperature at Rosehearty (Aberdeenshire) to 11.5 on the 25th and 11.6 on the 26th.

27th to 31st: The dry and settled spell began to come to an end on the 27th, with cloudier skies over much of the country, although still bright in the north and west. A little patchy light rain pushed into the south. Some heavy and, occasionally thundery, rain moved in from the south and east during the 28th. This became patchy during the evening and night and cleared away during the morning of the 29th, allowing skies to brighten. Further rain arrived in eastern Scotland overnight into the 30th. However, the rain was light and patchy and largely fizzled out during the afternoon. It became warm under sunnier skies in the far west. Mainly dry with bright and sunny spells to end the month, with Glasgow Bishopton recording a temperature of 24.4 °C on the 31st.

Northern Ireland diary of highlights

Very dry, warm and sunny.

1st to 4th: The month started bright and rather cool with sunshine and showers, locally thundery. Occasional mainly light rain fell on the mornings of the 3rd and 4th, but the afternoons brightened up. It turned warmer with Lough Navar Forest (County Fermanagh) recording 20.7 °C on the 3rd.

5th to 10th: From the 5th to the 7th it was sunny and warm. Scattered thunderstorms developed early on the 8th, followed by sunny weather. Lough Navar Forest recorded a temperature of 24.1 °C on the 8th. The 9th saw a change to much cooler cloudier weather with some patchy light rain. On the 10th showery rain turned heavier with some thunder.

11th to 16th: Mainly sunny and warm on the 11th, with isolated heavy showers in the far west later. Scattered thundery showers early on the 12th cleared to mainly sunny and warm conditions. Lough Navar Forest recorded a temperature of 23.7 °C on the 12th. The 13th to 15th was mainly sunny, with Belfast Airport recording 14.3 hours on the 13th, 14.6 hours on the 14th and 13.5 hours on the 15th. Warmest in the west during this period, whilst east coasts were cooler.

17th to 26th: A cloudier day on the 17th with some patchy rain. Mainly dry with some bright spells on the 18th. A cold start on the 19th, with Katesbridge (County Down) recording a minimum temperature of -2.6 °C, then dry with some sunshine. The 20th was dry and bright with some sunny intervals, the best of these in the west. The 21st saw some hazy sunshine in the east but was generally cloudy with patchy light rain in the west. Cloudy on the 22nd with occasional rain in the west extending to County Down and County Antrim later in the afternoon. Sunny periods developed on the 23rd along with scattered showers, these mainly in the south and west. The 24th was dry with sunny spells and this weather persisted through the 25th and 26th. Ballywatticock (County Down) and Lough Navar Forest both recorded 20.3 °C on the 25th.

27th to 31st: The dry and settled spell came to an end on the 27th, with rather cloudy skies and occasional rain, with little change on the 28th. The 29th and 30th saw some daytime showers develop, these becoming locally heavy in the west. A dry and sunny end to the month for most, although the odd shower developed across County Fermanagh on the 31st. Castlederg (County Tyrone) recorded a temperature of 24.5 °C on the 31st.

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