

Monthly Weather Report

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OF THE METEOROLOGICAL OFFICE

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SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS COMPILED FROM RETURNS OF OFFICIAL STATIONS AND VOLUNTEER OBSERVERS

VOL. 68 No. 5

PUBLISHED BY HIS MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE

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May, 1951 - Cool; dry and sunny in the north-west and north; wet and mainly dull in the south and east.

The weather of the month was cool, with winds from between north and east predominating. Broadly speaking it was dry and sunny in the north-west and north but wet and dull in the south and east.

In the opening days a small depression off Denmark moved west across south Scotland and then swung south-west to south. Rather heavy rain fell in some areas on the 1st, while scattered thunderstorms occurred from the 1st to the 3rd; snow or sleet fell locally on the 1st and 2nd. On the 4th a trough of low pressure over France moved slowly north and was associated in England with heavy rain in places and local thunderstorms. In Scotland, however, the weather was dry and sunny. On the 7th a depression over France moved north-east to Germany, while a small secondary disturbance moved south over western Scotland; a spell of cold north-east to north winds prevailed, with local slight rain or snow. Meanwhile a belt of high pressure was situated to the west and north-west of the British Isles, and subsequently the anticyclone off north-west Scotland moved slowly south-east over the British Isles and later withdrew south-westward. A period of dry, cold weather ensued and lasted until the 15th when a cold front moving south-west across Great Britain caused some rain in most places. This was, however, only a temporary break in the dry spell as, on the 16th, another anticyclone developed to the north of Scotland and moved southward to the North Sea. The weather was mainly dry from the 16th to the 18th, apart from some rain in the south of England.

A change occurred on the 19th when the British Isles began to come under the influence of a complex depression in the Atlantic south of Greenland. Small secondary depressions associated with this system moved north or north-east over the British Isles and a spell of milder, unsettled weather prevailed with rain and local thunderstorms. Temperature rose to 70°F. at a number of stations in England on the 24th and 25th and touched 74°F. at Camden Square, London, on the 24th and at Hull on the 25th. On the 26th and 27th a depression moved north over France to east England, thence west across the Midlands and south-south-west to the mouth of the English Channel; heavy rain and rather widespread thunderstorms occurred on the 26th and moderately heavy rain in some parts on the 27th.

Subsequently an anticyclone off the north of Scotland moved slowly south-south-east and the closing days were dry and sunny on the whole, though it was rather dull locally, particularly in some eastern districts on the 29th and 30th. The 31st was the sunniest day of the month in many places and temperature rose to 70°F. at a number of places in the west and north of Scotland.

Pressure and Wind.—Mean pressure exceeded the average in the northern half of the British Isles and was somewhat below the average in the south, the deviation from the average at 9h. ranging from +6.8 mb. at Lerwick to -2.3 mb. at Scilly and -2.4 mb. at Tunbridge Wells. The distribution of mean pressure was thus the reverse of the average, the highest pressure being found off north-east Scotland and the lowest off south-west England and winds from between north and east predominated. At Southport there were more north-easterly winds than in any May on record, probably since 1871. Local gales occurred at times, chiefly in the west and north and mainly on the 1st, 2nd, 8th, 9th, 22nd, 27th and 28th. Among the highest gusts registered in knots were 53 at Millport on the 2nd, 54 at Scilly on the 8th and 55 at Sellafield on the 27th.

Temperature.—Mean temperature was less than the 1906-35 average by 2.2°F. In England and Wales, 1.5°F. in Scotland and

2.1°F. in Northern Ireland. There was no really warm spell though temperature reached 70°F. locally in England on the 23rd-25th and in Scotland on the 31st. Low minimum temperatures for the season were registered locally at times mainly on the 1st, 6th-8th, 10th-12th and 17th.

Extreme temperatures for the month included:— (England and Wales) 74°F. at Camden Square, London on the 24th and at Hull on the 25th, 22°F. at Kielder Castle on the 11th; (Scotland) 71°F. at Achnashellach and Glenbranter on the 31st, 21°F. at Glenlivet on the 7th; (Northern Ireland) 68°F. at Castle Archdale on the 30th, 27°F. at Garvagh on the 11th.

Precipitation.—The general precipitation expressed as a percentage of the average for the periods 1881-1915 was 140 over England and Wales, 63 over Scotland and 72 over Northern Ireland. In Scotland more than the average rainfall was practically confined to the extreme south-east, while less than 25 per cent. of the average was registered in the Western Highlands, on the east coast of Caithness and in the Shetland Islands. Fort William and Glenquoich reported their smallest May rainfalls for about 75 years. In England and Wales less than the average occurred in a fairly large area covering Cumberland, Westmorland and part of Lancashire, locally in Cheshire, in small areas in north and south Wales and at a few rather isolated places elsewhere. In contrast more than twice the average was received over most of north-east England and Yorkshire east of the Pennines and more than 175 per cent. over part of the east Midlands and locally in north Devon and north Cornwall. In Northern Ireland more than the average occurred in the south-east of the Province and less than the average elsewhere, percentages at individual stations ranging from 138 at Seaford, County Down, to 51 at Ballymena, County Antrim.

Among the heavier falls in 24 hours were:—

4th 2.15 in. at Bradford, 2.10 in. at Harrogate and 2.00 in. at Walshaw Dean (West Riding).

5th 2.30 in. at West Houses, Nidderdale, and 2.25 in. at Scar House Reservoirs (West Riding).

Local thunderstorms occurred fairly frequently, mainly on the 1st-8th, 18th-20th and 22nd-28th. They were rather widespread at times, particularly on the 2nd, 24th and 26th.

Snow or sleet showers occurred locally, mainly on the 1st, 2nd, 7th-9th and 16th.

Sunshine.—The general sunshine expressed as a percentage of the average for the period 1906-35 was 88 in England and Wales, 124 in Scotland and 114 in Northern Ireland. In the west and north of Scotland it was notably sunny; at Fort William it was the sunniest month for 20 years except August 1947, and at Tiree it was the sunniest May since records were first taken in September 1926, apart from those of 1935 and 1946. On the other hand the month was dull in eastern and Midland districts of England. The mean daily duration ranged from more than 9 hours at Tiree, in the Hebrides, to less than 4 hours at Scarborough and locally in the centre of England (see chart 4). There were some extremely sunny days, notably the 31st, when Dyce, near Aberdeen, recorded 16.0 hours.

Fog.—Fog occurred rather frequently for the time of year in Scotland and north-east and east England; it was most considerable from the 3rd to 6th, 12th and 22nd to 28th.

Miscellaneous Phenomena.—The aurora was observed in Scotland on nine nights. Solar halos were noted at Oxford on nine days. Ball lightning was seen at Wrexham at 19h. on the 19th.