

MONTHLY WEATHER REPORT

COMPILED FROM RETURNS OF OFFICIAL AND VOLUNTARY OBSERVERS

MAY

VOLUME 104

1987

NUMBER 5

Cool, dry with occasional warmer spells

After a cold front cleared south-east England late on the 1st, low pressure moved away eastwards and was replaced by an anticyclone moving slowly into western areas from the Atlantic. The anticyclone gradually declined and slipped away over the continent early on the 9th, allowing a weak cold front to move southwards across all areas during the next 36 hours. A developing anticyclone in mid-Atlantic became slow moving and a series of depressions running round its northern and eastern flanks influenced the British Isles over the next two weeks. On the 12th a deepening depression over the North Sea affected East Anglia and on the 14th and 17th further depressions moved south-eastwards across eastern parts of the United Kingdom. Further fronts crossed all areas on the 19th; while western areas came under the influence of the Atlantic anticyclone, frontal activity over south-east England was associated with low pressure to the south and east of Great Britain. As the anticyclone drifted northwards the airflow became easterly and on the 26th a complex low-pressure area to the south of Great Britain dominated southern areas, coming temporarily under the influence of a ridge of high pressure from late on the 27th. After further frontal activity on the 29th, associated with a depression in mid Atlantic, southern areas again came under the influence of a ridge of high pressure on the 31st.

Weather

The month began rather cool and unsettled, windy and showery with hail and thunder, especially in eastern England, and some snow in Scotland on higher ground over 300 m. The rest of the first week was dry in many areas. Temperatures recovered slowly during the week, rising above normal on the 7th and 8th, with plenty of sunshine. In Scotland some light rain moved southwards in the latter part of the week; rain and showers spread to most areas on the 11th and 12th, with hail and thunder in some areas. After ground frost in places early on the 13th, there were further showers, especially in northern and eastern areas, accompanied by hail and thunder in places, the rain becoming more persistent in places. It remained unsettled with showers or longer periods of rain on the 14th and 15th and thunder was reported on both days. Persistent rain affected many areas of central and eastern England on the 17th and 18th. The 19th and 20th were almost completely dry days, but on the 22nd and 23rd there were heavy showers, prolonged in places, in parts of the south-east. Rain in south-west England became thundery and heavy by the evening of the 26th. Cloud and light rain spread across all areas on the 28th, followed by brighter weather with sunny spells and some showers. Although the east began dry with sunny intervals on the 29th, cloud and rain spread from the west later to give further rain, heavy in places, early on the 30th. On the morning of the 31st there was some heavy rain in southern areas. Hail was reported on up to 7 days during the month.

Wind

May was a quiet month with gales reported only on exposed western coasts on the 2nd, when Belfast Harbour, Co. Antrim and Orlock Head, Co. Down recorded mean hourly wind speeds of

more than 34 kn. The highest gust recorded at a low-level station was 62 kn at West Freugh, Dumfries and Galloway late on the 1st. Aigburth, Merseyside had a gust of 59 kn on the 2nd. Other gusts of 50 kn or more were 51 kn at Heysham, Lancashire and Preston Wynne, Hereford and Worcester, and 52 kn at Butt of Lewis, Western Isles on the 2nd, and 53 kn in central London and 50 kn at Gorleston, Norfolk on the 3rd. Wind directions were mainly northerly or westerly during the month.

Temperature

Mean monthly temperatures were below normal everywhere, ranging from less than 0.5 °C below normal on the coast of Dorset and the Isle of Wight to more than 1.5 °C below in Kent and East Anglia.

The month as a whole was cool; temperatures rose slowly to more than 20 °C in central and southern areas on the 9th and then dropped on the 10th. It remained cool for the next 10 days, again becoming warmer on the 19th and 20th then, after another drop, temperatures again rose, reaching around 20 °C on the 23rd in Scotland; 22 °C was reached at Fort William on the 24th. On the 26th the temperature at Southampton reached 24 °C and all areas remained warm for the rest of the month. The highest temperature of the month was 24.7 °C at Cookstown, Co. Tyrone on the 8th and the lowest was -3.8 °C at Eskdalemuir, Dumfries and Galloway on the 4th.

Rainfall

Monthly rainfall amounts were generally below normal over the United Kingdom as a whole and ranged from less than half the normal amount in parts of central England and Wales to one and a half times the normal on the coasts of Norfolk and Suffolk.

In eastern England there were frequent showers on the 14th and 15th, and more general rain on the 17th brought falls of up to 15 mm. After a short drier spell further rain affected most parts of England and Wales on the 21st and 22nd and south-western counties on the next day. Thundery

troughs affected Devon and Cornwall on the 24th and more general thundery outbreaks on the 26th affected parts of the south and south-west of England. Among falls of more than 40 mm in 24 hours were; 49 mm at Aros, Strathclyde on the 31st, 47 mm at Stronachullin, Strathclyde and 46 mm at Isle of Rhum, Highland Region, both on the 29th.

Snow

In Scotland on the 3rd snow fell on higher ground above 300 m; all areas were affected by cold and strong northerly winds with widespread showers, some of which, particularly over northern and eastern areas of Great Britain, were of hail or snow at times. On the 12th some snow was reported over the mountains. On the 12th and 13th sleet was reported as far south as Wingfield, Suffolk.

Sunshine

Sunshine amounts were about normal everywhere, ranging from less than 80 per cent of normal in northern Scotland to 120 per cent in parts of north-west England and south-west Scotland.

Daily sunshine amounts reached 14 hours or 15 hours on up to 15 days in the month. The brightest days over a large area were the 7th, 8th and 9th. The 11th, 14th, 17th and 18th were dull days everywhere, while the 28th to 30th were mainly dull. Highest daily sunshine amount was 15.9 hours recorded at Hillsborough, Co. Down on the 20th. The highest monthly sunshine total was 269 hours at Gorey Castle, Jersey.

Fog

On the 1st two cross-Channel ferries collided in thick fog outside Dover harbour. Fog formed overnight in places on the 6th, 8th, 9th and from the 25th until the end of the month. Fog spread inland from the North Sea late on the 25th. There was extensive fog on coasts and hills in the south-west on the 29th.

Miscellaneous Phenomena

None reported.

Table 1 District values

| District | Air temperature °C | | | | | Mean 30 cm soil temp°C | Rain- days | Rainfall | Sun- shine |
|--------------------------|--------------------|----------------|-------------------------|------|------|---------------------------------|---------------|----------|---------------|
| | Highest Max* | Lowest Min* | Max. | Min. | Mean | | | | |
| | | | Difference from average | | | | | | |
| 0 Scotland N | 23.0 | −2.5 | −0.7 | −0.6 | −0.6 | +0.5 | +1 | 91 | 93 |
| 1 Scotland E | 19.9 | −2.4 | −1.0 | −0.3 | −0.6 | +0.6 | −1 | 75 | 94 |
| 2 England E & NE | 23.2 | −2.0 | −1.6 | −0.9 | −1.3 | +0.3 | +1 | 73 | 98 |
| 3 East Anglia | 22.9 | −0.8 | −1.6 | −1.1 | −1.4 | −0.4 | +3 | 118 | 90 |
| 4 Midland Counties | 22.3 | −1.2 | −1.2 | −1.0 | −1.1 | −0.1 | 0 | 68 | 97 |
| 5 England SE & Central S | 23.7 | −0.2 | −0.7 | −0.8 | −0.8 | −0.4 | 0 | 79 | 100 |
| 6 Scotland W | 19.4 | −3.8 | −0.7 | −0.7 | −0.7 | +0.6 | −3 | 80 | 110 |
| 7 England NW & Wales N | 22.0 | −1.9 | −1.0 | −0.6 | −0.9 | +0.4 | 0 | 67 | 108 |
| 8 England SW & Wales S | 24.0 | −1.8 | −0.7 | −0.6 | −0.7 | +0.3 | −2 | 56 | 104 |
| N Ireland | 20.5 | −0.4 | −0.5 | −0.1 | −0.3 | +0.7 | −3 | 58 | 104 |
| Scotland | 23.0 | −3.8 | −0.8 | −0.5 | −0.6 | +0.6 | −1 | 85 | 99 |
| England & Wales | 24.0 | −2.0 | −1.1 | −0.8 | −1.0 | 0.0 | 0 | 71 | 99 |

* Highest maximum and lowest minimum of District Value Stations