

Monthly Weather Report

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April 1961 — *Mild, Wet and Mainly Dull*

A mainly cyclonic month. During the first week a belt of low pressure lay across the British Isles but apart from feeble anticyclonic periods on the 15th–18th and 27th–29th, the country was under the influence of depressions from the Atlantic for most of the remainder of the month.

The month began with a ridge of high pressure extending south-eastwards from Greenland to Scotland and a weak cold front lying east-west across the British Isles. The cold front moved slowly southwards during the first three days from central to southern England; weather ahead of the front was dull with rain at times, but behind the front it was brighter and colder with scattered showers, which were of snow in Scotland. On the 4th, a depression west of Ireland deepened, and a warm, moist airstream from the Atlantic, accompanied by widespread rain, spread north-east across the country reaching the Scottish Highlands the following day. The frontal rain, which was heavy locally, was preceded by snow in parts of the Midlands and the North on the 4th, and occasional rain continued for another two days as the front became slow-moving, and finally retrograde, before giving place to an anticyclone from the Atlantic. There were, however, fair periods especially in the south of England, and in the north of Scotland weather was generally fine and dry with over 10 hours of sunshine in the Hebrides on both the 5th and 6th.

The anticyclone was centred over the British Isles on the 7th and apart from some rain in south-east England, associated with a frontal wave over the English Channel, weather became dry almost everywhere; it was dull in the east but continued sunny in the north-west with as much as 12 hours sunshine in some places.

Frontal rain, associated with a deep depression in mid-Atlantic, reached south-west England during the afternoon of the 8th and spread slowly across the country reaching the east coast the following morning. Weather remained generally dull and mild with occasional rain during the next two days, as the Atlantic depression moved slowly eastwards, and associated troughs of low pressure crossed the British Isles.

On the 13th and 14th a trough of low pressure extended southwards over the country from a complex low pressure area between Iceland and Greenland. Weather was showery with occasional thunder but there were long sunny periods. Four days of sunny and mainly dry weather followed as a belt of relatively high pressure became established over the British Isles and the North Sea; Guernsey recorded almost 45 hours of sunshine during this spell and afternoon temperatures reached 19°C in many parts of East Anglia and the North Midlands. Fog patches on the night of the 15th/16th reduced visibility to 50 yards locally but cleared quickly after sunrise.

Weather was unsettled and changeable in all districts from 19th to 22nd. Rain was widespread on the 22nd as a shallow depression moved northward over the Irish Sea; more than 1 in. was recorded at a number of places in Wales.

On the 25th, which was the wettest and most disturbed day of the month, a complex depression deepened rapidly in the South-West Approaches before moving north-east across the country. There were gales in all areas and rain was widespread and locally heavy with falls of more than 1 in. in many places in southern England. The depression moved to the southern North Sea late the following day and, as it continued to move eastward towards the continent, easterly winds on its northern flank brought low cloud and fog on the 27th and 28th to north-eastern coasts. Elsewhere, however, there were sunny periods with some slight occasional rain. Further rain from the Atlantic reached most districts on the last day of the month.

Pressure and Wind — Mean pressure was everywhere below the average, the deficit at 9h ranging from 1.8 mb at Lerwick to 7.3 mb at Scilly. Surface winds were predominantly south-westerly on the 4th–5th, 10th–13th and 18th–24th, otherwise they were generally light and mainly variable in direction. In Scotland, wind reached gale force on five days and in England and Wales on the 2nd, 4th, 10th, 11th, 13th, 14th, 18th, 20th, 21st, 23rd–27th and 29th (15 days). Gales were widespread on the 24th and 25th; a gust of 57 kt was recorded at Port Talbot on the 25th.

Temperature — Mean temperatures exceeded the 1921–50 average everywhere, the excess being 1.6°C in England and Wales, and 0.9°C in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Temperature was below average in Scotland and northern England during the first ten days, otherwise it was a mild month in most districts. The first four days were among the coldest of the month when afternoon temperatures in Scotland failed to exceed 2°C at many places.

Extremes included: (England and Wales) 20°C at several places in east, south-east and central England on the 6th and 11th, –7.8°C at Moor House on the 8th; (Scotland) 18.3°C at Castle Douglas on the 18th, –11.2°C at Glenlivet on the 4th; (Northern Ireland) 17.2°C at Armagh on the 29th, –4.4°C at Loughgall on the 3rd.

Precipitation — The general rainfall expressed as a percentage of the 1916–50 average was 160 in England and Wales, 115 in Scotland and 209 in Northern Ireland where the total for the month at many stations exceeded that for any previous April on record, including Armagh with 120 years of records. Less than half the average occurred in the Spey Valley and mid-Sutherland, while values exceeded 250 per cent of the average over the Brecon Beacons, the Black mountains, the Rhondda Valley, to the north of Lough Neagh, over eastern Armagh and over the greater part of Co. Down; parts of Co. Down had as much as 275 per cent of the average. At Ross-on-Wye it was the wettest April since 1889.

Snow or sleet occurred at one place or another on 14 days in Scotland but was most widespread during the first few days of the month, ground being snow covered in places from 1st to 6th. It was widespread on the 4th in North Wales and in northern and central England and also occurred locally in these districts during the first three days of the month.

Thunder was reported at one place or another on nine days in Scotland and on the 10th–14th, 18th, 19th, 21st, 23rd–27th and 29th (14 days) in England and Wales where it was widespread on the 13th and 24th.

Sunshine — The general sunshine expressed as a percentage of the 1921–50 average was 66 in England and Wales, where it was the duller April since 1937, 82 in Scotland and 70 in Northern Ireland. Sunshine exceeded the average only in north-west Scotland and in districts adjacent to the inner Moray Firth. Elsewhere in the British Isles amounts were below average and as much as 50 per cent below average in the Midlands. At Ross-on-Wye it was the duller April since 1920.

Fog — In England and Wales early morning fog was reported at one place or another on the 1st–12th, 15th–18th and 25th–30th (22 days); it was widespread around the 18th and 28th. In Scotland morning fog occurred on 23 days.

Miscellaneous Phenomena — The aurora was visible in Scotland on 11 nights; it was seen as far south as Ronaldsway on the nights of the 14th/15th and 15th/16th.