

Monthly Weather Report

OF THE METEOROLOGICAL OFFICE

Summary of observations compiled from returns of official stations and voluntary observers

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April 1958—Cold for two weeks, then rather warm

During the first half of the month winds over the British Isles were predominantly from a north to north-east direction throughout the troposphere, a persistent feature of the upper air pattern being a trough or cut-off low over Europe. After the middle of the month a mild westerly régime became established with troughs and ridges moving across the country.

The month opened with a blocking pattern over central Europe, the upper low of the pattern moving slowly westward from the southern Baltic to northern England during the first three days of the month while the upper high moved eastwards to north-west Russia. With a surface ridge of high pressure extending from Scandinavia to the British Isles the south-east to east surface winds, which had persisted over the country from mid-March, continued during the first three days of April, giving cold dry weather, apart from scattered snow showers chiefly on the 3rd. On Good Friday and Easter Saturday, the 4th and 5th, the upper low moved south-west towards Cornwall later turning south-east into France, while surface depressions moved northward across France into the North Sea and in an anti-clockwise sweep over much of England and Wales. The depressions brought widespread rain and snow, and in some northern areas there was considerable drifting. The Easter week-end was the coldest on record; at Kew there had been no colder Good Friday since 1917, nor a colder Easter Saturday since the beginning of the century.

On the 6th an upper ridge, which had intensified in mid-Atlantic, moved towards Iceland while an anticyclone developed to the north-west of the British Isles. Cold north to north-east winds became established over much of the country and persisted until about the middle of the month with temperature rarely exceeding 50°F. From 7th to 12th there were light local showers of rain or snow and good sunny periods in most districts, although on the 10th a small depression, moving south-eastwards, gave dull weather with heavy rain for a time in Devon and Cornwall.

The upper ridge in the eastern Atlantic extended north-eastward to Scandinavia on the 11th, subsequently moving slowly south. The following day an anticyclone which had become centred over the British Isles moved west-south-west and declined, allowing mild air from the Atlantic to reach northern Scotland and spread slowly southwards. By the 14th the cold easterly winds were confined to the southern half of the country; on that day temperature reached 63°F. at Edinburgh, 20°F. higher than at Margate.

The influx of warm air was only temporary however, as the upper ridge over the British Isles declined rapidly the next day giving place to an intensifying upper trough which moved east from Iceland and extended southward over the North Sea. Winds over the country became northerly at all levels, exceeding 140 kt. at 300 mb., and weather cold again in all districts with occasional sleet showers and plentiful sunshine; on the 16th Aberporth recorded 13.5 hr., its highest daily total of sunshine so far this year.

On the 17th an upper ridge, which had been situated off the west of Ireland for 10 days, moved eastwards and the strong northerly winds over the British Isles rapidly moderated and backed. Surface winds became westerly and mild cloudy weather from the Atlantic spread to all districts. An extensive surface depression deepened in the Iceland area on the 21st and pressure remained low in that region until the end of the month, giving mainly westerly winds and changeable weather over the British Isles with temperature mostly above average. An upper ridge from the Atlantic intensified over the country on the 29th and with an anticyclone centred near southern England the month ended with fine summer-like weather, temperature exceeding 70°F. at many places.

Pressure and wind. The month was the fifth successive April with mean pressure above the 1921–50 average, the excess at 9 h. ranging from 6.3 mb. at Tiree to 4.6 mb. at Lerwick and Felixstowe. Winds were between south-east and east during the first three days becoming predominantly between north-east and north until the 14th. After a brief spell of north-westerlies winds became generally south-west from 18th until the end of the month. Gale force was reached on seven days chiefly during the second half of the month; gales were fairly widespread on the 25th and 26th. Gusts above 50 kt. were rare; 57 kt. was reached at Moor House on 28th.

Temperature. Warm weather during the latter part of the month did not compensate for the earlier cold spell and mean temperature over the month as a whole was 1.5°F. below the 1921–50 average in England and Wales and 0.3°F. below the average in Scotland and Northern Ireland. One of the coldest periods in most districts was around the 2nd; a second cold period occurred around the 12th in the north and west of the country. The 30th was the warmest day at many places.

Extreme temperatures included:—(England and Wales) 75°F. at Kettering and Hampton on 30th, 15°F. at Moor House on the 2nd and Alwen on the 12th; (Scotland) 68°F. at Arbroath, St. Andrews and Turnhouse on the 30th, 15°F. at Kincaig on the 2nd and 11th; (Northern Ireland) 66°F. at Garvagh and Armagh on the 22nd, 24°F. at Aldergrove on the 12th.

Precipitation. The general precipitation expressed as a percentage of the 1916–50 average was 51 in England and Wales, making this the fifth successive April with rainfall below the average, 75 in Scotland, where in spite of the low rainfall it was the wettest April since 1954, and 63 in Northern Ireland where, except for 1955, April rainfall has been below the average since 1952. More than the average was measured at places on the east coast from Tynemouth to Fife, but less than 25 per cent. of the average occurred in parts of the Severn, Wye and Usk Valleys to the east of the Welsh mountains. There was no measurable rain at many places in north-west England and Wales from about the 1st to 15th and in southern England and Wales from about 6th to 23rd. A few stations in Wales reported more than 1 in. of rain on the 25th; Llangurig, Montgomeryshire, recorded 2.07 in. on that day.

Snow. Mainly light snow and sleet showers occurred almost daily in Scotland and northern England during the first two weeks. There were heavier falls, particularly in eastern districts on the 3rd, 4th, 5th and 11th; on the last three dates there was snow in south-west England and the Channel Isles. Snow fell to a depth of 1–4 in. in Scotland and ground was snow-covered at many places in northern England on the 3rd and 4th, and in south-east England on the 5th; maximum depths included 6 in. at Chopwellwood on the 4th and at Great Bookham (Surrey) on the 5th.

Thunder. Local thunder occurred on the 24th, 25th and 27th in Scotland, and on the 15th, 16th, 24th and 28th in England and Wales; thunder was heard widely in the Midlands and southern England on the 26th.

Sunshine. The general sunshine was about equal to the 1921–50 average in England, Wales and Scotland and 95 per cent. of the average in Northern Ireland. In England and Wales April sunshine has been near or above the average since 1942.

Fog. Local fog occurred every morning during the first week and almost daily from 11th to the end of the month. Sea fog was persistent in south-western coastal districts on 19th–22nd and 27th–29th.

Miscellaneous Phenomena. The aurora was observed every night in Scotland from 6th except 13th and 26th–29th.