

MONTHLY WEATHER REPORT OF THE METEOROLOGICAL OFFICE

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

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MAY, 1936.—Dry; sunny in the north and west.

The month was distinguished by a deficiency of rainfall. Sunshine was excessive in Scotland, Ireland and north-west England but deficient, on the whole, elsewhere in England.

On the 1st an anticyclone centred over the British Isles moved east and, subsequently, the highest pressure was situated over northern Scandinavia while a wedge extended south-west across the British Isles. Mainly fair weather prevailed during the first four days, with good records of bright sunshine in many places. A depression moving south-east from the west of Ireland brought rain to western districts on the 5th and rain locally on the 6th. Thunderstorms occurred in places on the 5th and 6th.

During the next few days pressure was high over Scandinavia and low over France and, subsequently, a ridge of high pressure connecting anticyclones over the Azores and Scandinavia lay over the British Isles. Little or no rain fell between the 7th and 11th and sunshine records were good at times, particularly in the north and west.

A depression centred south-west of Iceland and a shallow trough moving south-east across the British Isles gave rain in the north-west and west late on the 11th and more generally on the 12th. Further Atlantic depressions caused a continuance of rather unsettled conditions and moderately heavy rain fell in parts of Ireland on the 14th and locally in the west and north-west on the 15th and 16th, while local thunderstorms were reported between the 16th and 18th. From the 18th-20th, pressure was low over France and Spain, while the Azores anticyclone moved north-east, and, by the morning of the 21st, the depression over France had moved to north Germany. Mainly fair weather prevailed on the 19th and 20th and the 21st was bright with showers, chiefly in eastern districts. Temperature fell decidedly between the 19th and 21st. From the 22nd-23rd, a depression moved south from the north of Scotland to the Bay of Biscay where it remained almost stationary for some days. Rain was fairly general on the 22nd and occurred at many places in England on the 23rd, while a shallow depression over Germany spreading west caused heavy rain in north-east England on the 24th. Meanwhile, pressure became high northward of Scotland and by the 27th an intense anticyclone was established south-west of Iceland and dominated conditions in the British Isles. Subsequently, a depression north of the Faeroes moved south-east and then east and cool, showery weather, with local thunderstorms prevailed until the end of the month.

Pressure and Wind.—Although mean pressure exceeded the average generally, the excess was so much greater in the north than in the south that the normal distribution was reversed and mean pressure was highest northward of Scotland and lowest southward of England. Winds from some northerly or easterly point greatly predominated.

No noteworthy gales occurred and among the highest speeds registered in gusts were 57 m.p.h. at Valentia Observatory on the 14th, 56 m.p.h. at Kirkwall on the 16th and 52 m.p.h. at Lympne on the 20th, at South Shields and Spurn Head on the 21st and at Eskdalemuir and the Lizard on the 24th.

Temperature.—Mean temperature somewhat exceeded the average over the country as a whole, the deviation from the average ranging from -0.2°F. in England, E. to $+1.4^{\circ}\text{F.}$ in Scotland, N. (See Table I).

As is so often the case in May, there were marked fluctuations in temperature; at Rickmansworth the monthly range amounted to

54°F. Warm spells occurred around the 6th (particularly in south-east and east England), from the 10th-19th and around the 26th. In many parts of Ireland the highest temperature of the month was registered on the 26th. At one or two stations in England 80°F. was reached on the 17th and 18th. Cold spells included the 1st-4th, 21st-23rd and 28th-31st. At Totland Bay, Isle of Wight, the minimum, 36°F. on the 29th, is the lowest so late in May, in 51 years' observations. At Chelmsford strawberry and potato crops were caught by the frost on the 29th (grass minimum 24°F.) and at Street (Somerset) exposed beds of potatoes and French beans were injured by ground frosts on the 29th and 31st.

The extremes for the month were:—(England and Wales) 80°F. at Tunbridge Wells on the 17th and at Camden Square (London) and Reading on the 18th, 22°F. at Houghall on the 3rd; (Scotland) 73°F. at Ardtornish and Ruthwell on the 10th, 26°F. at Dalwhinnie on the 1st; (Ireland) 73°F. at Cork on the 26th and 32°F. at Newtownforbes on the 31st.

Precipitation.—The general precipitation of the British Isles expressed as a percentage of the average for the period 1881-1915 was 58, the values for the constituent countries being England and Wales 53, Scotland 65 and Ireland 61. It was only in small isolated areas mainly in south-west and west Scotland, at Braemar, in east and north-east England, north Wales and the Isle of Man that more than the average rainfall occurred.

An "absolute drought" was recorded at many places in south and east England during the 1st half of the month. At Lexden, Essex, the drought lasted for 26 days from April 26th to May 21st inclusive and at Selborne, Hants, and at Oxford droughts of 25 days occurred; the last days being May 20th and May 21st respectively. At Oxford it was the longest drought on record for this time of year, the previous longest being one of 22 days, May 12th-June 2nd, 1919. At Eastbourne it was the driest May since 1895 and at Totland Bay, Isle of Wight, since 1896. At some other stations established in more recent years it was the driest May on record.

Thunderstorms occurred at times, mainly on the 5th, 6th, 15th-18th, 26th and 30th-31st. A severe thunderstorm occurred in the Dunstable district on the afternoon of the 6th. The hailstones were in some instances fully one inch in diameter. At Houghton Regis, 53 mm. of rain fell in 45 minutes (See Meteorological Magazine, vol. 71, page 115). Heavy rain fell during thundery conditions in Argyllshire on the 16th and 17th; 62 mm. were registered at Ardrishaig and 53 mm. at Admaddy Castle on the 16th and 79 mm. at Poltalloch and 54 mm. at Tobermory on the 17th.

Sunshine.—Broadly speaking, sunshine was excessive in Scotland, Ireland, north-west England and the Channel Islands and deficient in other parts of England. The greatest deficiency occurred in England, E. and the Midlands (See Table I). Although the district values show a slight deficiency in the southern districts of England, at some individual stations, chiefly on the coast, there was a considerable excess; for example, the month's total at Plymouth (Mount Batten) was nearly 49 hours more than the average.

Fog.—Fog occurred at times, particularly from the 5th-13th, 17th-20th and 5th-26th.

Miscellaneous Phenomena.—The aurora was observed at Lerwick in the Shetland Islands on the 12th. Solar halos were noted at Oxford on 11 days.