

# Monthly Weather Report

## OF THE METEOROLOGICAL OFFICE

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

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### May 1960—*Warm and mainly dry*

The month presented a variety of synoptic types. There were anticyclonic spells in all areas but also periods of cyclonic activity chiefly in the south and west.

The mainly dry weather of the latter part of April continued into May over much of the country, but the anticyclone covering the British Isles moved south-east on the 2nd. The first two days of the month were rather cool with very variable cloud; sunshine at many places exceeded 10 hours on both days but there were scattered thundery showers, mainly slight, particularly in south-east England.

Subsequently pressure became high over western Europe, and in a south-westerly airstream temperature over south-east England rose steadily from the 3rd onwards exceeding 70°F. at several places by the 5th and reaching 77°F. at Hampton on the 7th. Fronts associated with a complex depression to the south-west of Iceland brought occasional slight rain to many parts of the country on the 4th and 5th, but south-east England remained mainly dry.

With the development of a trough of low pressure over the Bay of Biscay a spell of thundery rain and thunderstorms began on the 8th and lasted about five days. Heavy rain, the first rain for 24 days, fell in parts of Devon and Cornwall on the night of the 10th/11th as a depression became established to the south-west of the British Isles; Culdrose recorded 1.25 in. in 12 hours. Fronts associated with this depression moved slowly northward over the country and rain was particularly heavy on the 12th in the west Midlands and the Cheshire Plain areas, and on the 13th in northern England and central Scotland. The next day the depression moved away north-west. Bright periods and scattered thundery showers followed the rain, but on the 16th a ridge of high pressure, from an anticyclone over the Norwegian Sea, extended slowly south over the British Isles and weather became sunny and dry nearly everywhere. Fog patches developed along the east coast spreading inland at night.

During the 18th-20th the easterly winds over the country gradually freshened and backed towards north-east as an anticyclone to the north of Scotland moved slowly westward and a depression, after entering the Bay of Biscay, moved north towards Brittany. Temperature fell sharply, and most parts of south-east England had frequent and occasionally heavy rain during this period, some places in Kent recording more than 1 in. both on the 19th and 20th. The rain belt did not extend very far north of a line from the Bristol Channel to the Thames Estuary.

The low pressure area off southern England filled up on the 21st and the following day winds veered to south-west as depressions approached from the Atlantic. Fronts, with waves moving north-east, gave rather heavy rain on the 23rd in north-west England and west Scotland but the 24th was generally a fine sunny day. The anticyclone which had developed over England moved south-east to the continent and apart from slight occasional frontal rain in northern districts on the 25th and 27th, associated with depressions near Iceland, weather remained

generally fine until the end of the month. Somewhat cooler air spread over the country on the 28th as an anticyclone became centred over Ireland, but sunshine was abundant almost everywhere and more than 15 hours was recorded somewhere in the British Isles on most days during the last week.

**Pressure and Wind.** Pressure was above average everywhere, the excess at 9 h. ranging from 5.4 mb. at Wick to 2.1 mb. at Scilly. Winds were light and variable at first becoming mainly south-westerly on 3rd-7th and thereafter generally south-easterly until the 13th. Winds were predominantly easterly on 17th-20th and south-westerly on 22nd-30th but variable and mainly light during the intervening periods. In Scotland wind reached gale force at a few places on the 11th-13th; gales were also reported locally on the 24th and 25th in Scotland and on the 12th, 18th, 23rd and 24th in England and Wales.

**Temperature.** Mean temperature was everywhere above the average, the excess being 2.7°F. in England and Wales, 3.4°F. in Scotland and 3.7°F. in Northern Ireland. In Scotland there has only been one warmer May, that of 1936, since the beginning of the century, while at Bidston Observatory it was the warmest May since 1919.

Extremes included:—(England and Wales) 78°F. at Wakefield on the 26th, 20°F. at Santon Downham on the 2nd; (Scotland) 77°F. at Lairg (Achan) on the 26th, 22°F. at Balmoral on the 1st and Glenlivet on the 2nd; (Northern Ireland) 71°F. at Ely Lodge on the 18th and at Garvagh on the 26th, 31°F. at Garvagh on the 2nd.

**Precipitation.** The general rainfall expressed as a percentage of the 1916-50 average was 72 in England and Wales, 70 in Scotland and 86 in Northern Ireland. Less than half the average occurred in many eastern districts from Suffolk to the Moray Firth where there was less than 25 per cent. over a wide area. More than 150 per cent. of the average was recorded in some coastal areas of Kent and Essex.

Thunder occurred at many places in Scotland on the 14th-16th and was heard on 12 other days. In England and Wales it was heard on the 1st-3rd, 8th-16th, 24th, 25th and 27th.

Snow or sleet was reported at a few places in Scotland, mainly in the north and east, on the 1st, 2nd and 24th.

**Sunshine.** The general sunshine expressed as a percentage of the 1921-50 average was 97 over England and Wales, 108 over Scotland and 106 over Northern Ireland. Sunshine was generally above average in Scotland, except in some southern and western districts, and also in northern England, but over much of south-east England and the coastal districts of East Anglia it was below average.

**Fog.** In Scotland fog was reported in places on 14 days; it was most prevalent from 14th to 17th. In England and Wales fog occurred at 9 h. at one place or another on most days of the month.

**Miscellaneous Phenomena.** The aurora was observed in Scotland on 10 nights.