

Monthly Weather Report

OF THE METEOROLOGICAL OFFICE

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

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May 1954—Mainly dull and wet, with frequent thunderstorms; large variations of temperature.

The first six days of the month were cool and unsettled. A short warm spell followed but was succeeded about the 14th by a cool, mainly northerly type which lasted until the 23rd. Subsequently there was a return to cyclonic conditions with another temporary rise in temperature.

The month began with a cool cyclonic type of weather, a depression developing to the south of Ireland on the 1st and bringing rain to all parts of the country, thus ending the drought which had prevailed in parts of southern England for the last three weeks of April. This depression moved north-east across the British Isles and was followed by another which maintained the cyclonic type until the 6th. There was heavy rain in places during this period and thunderstorms occurred in England from the 1st to 4th and on the 6th, and in Scotland on the 7th. There were gales at times, particularly on our south and west coasts from the 1st to the 6th. An anticyclone which was centred over northern France on the 7th intensified and drifted to the North Sea bringing a warm southerly airstream over the British Isles. By the 10th temperatures had risen to the seventies and from the 11th to the 13th reached the eighties locally in south-eastern and eastern England. Some good sunshine records were obtained during this period. Thunderstorms broke out in east Scotland and east England on the 10th and occurred also from the 11th to the 14th; they were widespread on the 12th and 13th. Sea fog occurred round the coasts from the 10th to the 12th, notably in south-western districts. Between the 12th and 15th a cold front moved slowly eastward across the country and a ridge developed from the Azores anticyclone to the west of Ireland giving a cool and cloudy, mainly northerly airstream over the British Isles which lasted from the 14th to the 23rd, with some slight falls of rain in eastern England and Scotland but mainly dry weather elsewhere. During this period, however, western districts from the Hebrides to Cornwall had some sunny days; over 14 hours were recorded locally. In eastern districts temperature was low and maxima of only 46°F. at Cleethorpes and Mildenhall and 45°F. at Lindholme were recorded on the 22nd. From the 24th to the 28th pressure was low to the west of Ireland and troughs moved eastward across the country in a southerly airstream giving outbreaks of rain, especially in Wales and the west of England, with gradually rising temperature; 80°F. was again reached on the 27th. Thunderstorms occurred from the 25th to the 30th and were widespread on the 27th and 28th. On the 29th a depression formed over north-east England and moved slowly west then south, causing further outbreaks of rain. By the 31st this depression had filled up and an anticyclone had developed to the north of Scotland; this gave mainly fine weather in the west, though with a few scattered thunderstorms, but rather cool and mostly cloudy weather in the east.

Pressure and Wind.—Mean pressure was not very different from the average for 1921–50. The deviation from the average at 9h. ranged from +2.5 mb. at Lerwick and Stornoway to –0.7 mb. at Cranwell. Winds from some northerly point were rather frequent. The total run of the wind was mostly below the average, particularly in the north of Scotland. Gales occurred at times at some exposed stations during the first six days. Among the highest gusts, registered in knots, were 70 at the Lizard and 65 at Scilly on the 2nd, 72 at Prestwick on the 5th and 63 at Bidston on the 6th.

Temperature.—Mean temperature somewhat exceeded the average for the period 1921–50 in Scotland and Northern Ireland and was about average in England and Wales. The deviations from the average for the districts ranged from –0.2°F. in south-west England to +1.5°F. in west Scotland (see Table I). There were large variations of temperature; the first week and the period 14th to the 24th were mainly cool, while it was warm on the whole from about the 10th to the 12th and 26th to 31st though the last days became cooler in eastern districts.

Extreme temperatures for the month included:—(England and Wales) 84°F. at Camden Square, London, on the 27th, 28°F. at Lincoln on the 19th; (Scotland) 78°F. at Onich on the 29th, 26°F. at Achnashellach and Glenlee on the 1st; (Northern Ireland) 75°F. at Ballykelly and Garvagh on the 31st, 25°F. at Nutt's Corner on the 1st.

Precipitation.—The general precipitation expressed as a percentage of the average for the period 1881–1915 was 130 over England and Wales, 160 over Scotland and 163 over Northern Ireland. It was less than average locally in the extreme north of Scotland (including the Shetland Islands), in small areas in north-west and south-west Scotland and western districts of England and locally on the east and south coasts of England. Parts of south-west England and Wales were without rain from the 6th to the 23rd. Considerably more than average was registered at most places elsewhere and more than twice the average over most of Central Scotland from Banffshire to Dumfriesshire and in County Durham. In Northern Ireland percentages of the average ranged from 118 at Newtownbutler, County Fermanagh to 200 at Garvagh, County Londonderry. The variable distribution was due in part to heavy rain during thunderstorms.

Among the heavier falls in 24 hours or less were:—

5th	2.04 in. at Fettercairn, Kincardineshire.
12th	2.41 in. at Sheffield Waterworks, 2.29 in. at Ilkley and 1.81 in. in 45 minutes at Fulham, London.
13th	2.32 in. at Dorchester and 2.07 in. at Pitlair, near Cupar.
24th	3.53 in. at Llyn-y-fan-Fach, Carmarthenshire, and 2.92 in. at Treherbert, Glamorganshire and more than 2.00 in. at numerous other places in the west.
28th	2.31 in. at Throckley Filters, Northumberland and 2.29 in. at Birdsall Gardens, Yorkshire.

Thunderstorms occurred frequently mainly on the 1st–4th, 6th–7th, 10th–14th, 20th, 23rd and 25th–31st. They were widespread and locally severe on the 12th, 13th, 27th and 28th. On the 12th and 13th there was local flooding and lightning caused structural damage and some loss of life.

Sunshine.—The general sunshine expressed as a percentage of the average for the period 1921–50 was 82 over England and Wales, 88 over Scotland and 86 over Northern Ireland. It was less than average almost everywhere, though there was an appreciable excess at some places in Devon and Cornwall and at Lerwick, in the Shetland Islands.

Fog.—Fog occurred at times, particularly from the 10th to the 14th and 30th to 31st, notably on the south-west coasts from the 10th to the 12th.

Miscellaneous Phenomena.—The aurora was observed in Scotland on five nights. Solar halos were noted at Oxford on 12 days.