

Sunnier than average in most areas.

Relatively high pressure on the first 4 days was followed by troughs of low pressure until the 10th; these troughs of low pressure were associated with depressions to the west of the British Isles. During the next 10 days or so the country was dominated first by an anticyclone and then by a ridge of high pressure separated by a cyclonic interlude from the 15th to 17th. On the 21st low pressure returned and continued until a ridge of high pressure developed over the country on the 31st.

Weather

It was a sunny month generally, and unusually so in east Scotland and north-east England. Weather in the northern half of the country was mainly changeable but some southern areas had spells of almost dry weather. Much of the rainfall was of a showery nature and most of the rain in the south fell in a few thundery outbreaks. Slight snow showers occurred on the peaks of the Scottish mountains around mid-month and on the 27th.

Wind

Although winds were often fresh or strong in northern districts they seldom reached gale force, except locally in gusts. Gales were reported, however, on the 9th/10th and 16th from one or two exposed places in Scotland and northern England, mainly on high ground. In parts of England and Wales on the 6th wind speeds exceeded gale force in gusts near heavy showers or thunderstorms.

Temperature

In most areas monthly mean temperature was near average but one or two places in Scotland were more than 1 degC warmer than average. The month began cool with air frost at night in parts of Scotland until the 5th, although it became warm by day on the 3rd away from coastal areas. The period 6th to 18th was generally warmer than average, but coastal districts were often cool and there were some very cool nights; air frost recurred in Scotland on the 13th and 14th and ground frost was widespread in the United Kingdom on the 17th and 18th. The remainder of the month was cool although southern England continued warm by day until the 22nd. During this last period, slight air frost was recorded at times in parts of Scotland and ground frost occurred widely in England and Wales around dawn on the 21st.

Rainfall

Most districts were drier than average. Although deficits were mainly small, less than half the average rainfall occurred in parts of south-west England (notably in south Devon), the south Midlands, north Wales and the adjacent counties of England, the Isle of Man and in small areas of south-west

Scotland and Northern Ireland. At Teignmouth (Devon) only 9.9 mm of rain (17 per cent of average) were recorded during the whole month; this is the lowest May rainfall here since continuous records commenced in 1910. On the other hand the average was exceeded by 50 per cent in a few small areas in Greater London, Sussex, Ross and Cromarty and the Shetland Islands. The first 5 days of the month were dry almost everywhere. On the 6th showers or outbreaks of rain with local thunderstorms occurred over much of England, Wales and southern Scotland; these thunderstorms led to minor flooding in several localities including Portsmouth and Bath, and also in the west Midlands where a house at Admaston (Shropshire) was struck by lightning and damaged. On the next day prolonged rain, which was sometimes heavy and thundery, occurred in southern and eastern England; according to the Press, large numbers of hailstones 'the size of new pennies' (2 cm diameter) occurred at Ilkley (West Riding of Yorkshire) and many parts of the town suffered minor flooding. Numerous places had little or no rainfall from the 8th to 14th and, after a changeable spell from the 15th to 17th, many southern and eastern areas were again virtually dry until the 23rd when rain occurred over much of the country with thunderstorms in the Midlands, West Country and eastern Scotland. Overnight on the 24th/25th periods of prolonged rain accompanied by thunderstorms in the Midlands and southern England led to local flooding. The London area was especially affected; minor flooding was reported from east London, lightning slightly damaged houses in Har-

row and Wembley, and large hailstones fell at Uxbridge where, at Honeycroft Nursery, 34 mm of rain were recorded in 35 minutes. A rainfall of this intensity is classified as 'remarkable'.

Sunshine

Amounts of sunshine were above average in Wales, over most of England and in much of Scotland apart from a few places in the north and west. Some areas in east Scotland and north-east England were much sunnier than average; here a few places had their sunniest May for over 25 years and one or two stations recorded about 250 hours of sunshine. Durham with 258.8 hours of sunshine had its sunniest May since records began in 1886 and Marchmont (Berwickshire) with 237.8 hours equalled its highest May sunshine total (in 1901) since records commenced in 1881. Some localities in the Midlands recorded their sunniest May for over 20 years but, on the other hand, amounts of sunshine in Northern Ireland were mostly a little below average.

Fog

Local early morning fog patches occurred in most areas at times during the month but around dawn on the 15th fog affected much of eastern England; this fog was particularly dense in East Anglia but it cleared fairly quickly during the morning. Sea fog affected coasts bordering the North Sea on the 8th, 12th, 13th and 15th, and hill and coastal fog were widespread in southern and western areas of England and Wales on the 10th, 11th and 30th.

Table 1 District Values**May, 1971**

District	air temperature °C					mean 30 cm earth temp °C	rain days	rain- fall	sun- shine
	High Max. *	Lowest Min. *	max.	min.	mean				
	difference from average °C								
0 Scotland N	20.0	+0.4	+1.2	+0.6	+1.0	—	0	114	102
1 Scotland E	20.0	+1.7	+1.5	+0.5	+1.0	+0.8	-1	85	126
2 England N E	22.8	-2.8	+0.4	-0.1	+0.1	+1.0	-2	81	130
3 England E	23.3	-1.7	+0.3	+0.1	+0.2	+0.4	-1	81	116
4 Midlands	21.6	-2.1	+0.6	0.0	+0.3	+0.8	-2	77	122
5 England S E	24.0	-1.1	+0.4	+0.2	+0.3	+0.4	0	110	111
6 Scotland W	19.7	-1.9	0.0	+0.1	+0.1	+0.5	+1	79	106
7 Eng NW - Wales N	21.6	0.0	+0.6	+0.3	+0.5	+0.5	-1	69	106
8 Eng SW - Wales S	22.1	-1.6	+0.7	+0.1	+0.4	+0.3	-2	69	119
N Ireland	20.0	+0.2	-0.2	-0.1	-0.1	—	-2	85	89
Scotland	20.0	-1.9	+0.9	+0.4	+0.7	—	0	94	111
Eng - Wales	24.0	-2.8	+0.5	+0.1	+0.3	—	-1	79	117

*Highest max. and lowest min. of the District Value Stations.