

Monthly Weather Report

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OF THE METEOROLOGICAL OFFICE

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

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April 1960—Changeable and rather wet at first, mainly dry later

April was divided into two sharply contrasting periods. The first half of the month was characterised by changeable westerly type of weather; the second half was mainly anticyclonic with a high pressure belt extending from the Azores across the British Isles to Scandinavia from 16th to 20th and an anticyclone to the west of Ireland during most of the remainder of the month.

At the beginning of the month, the British Isles was in the circulation of a complex slow moving depression to the west of Ireland. A warm southerly air-stream spread over the British Isles and during the next few days afternoon temperatures reached 60°F. locally in southern England. Small secondaries moving north gave some particularly heavy rain in western districts; several places in Cornwall had more than 1 in. of rain in 24 hr. on the 1st, while on the 2nd between 1 in. and 2 in. fell over a wide area in western Scotland. However falls in east and south-east England were slight.

A sunny day on the 4th ended with the arrival of warm front rain as the main centre of low pressure in the Atlantic moved towards Iceland. The anti-cyclone over Russia increased in intensity and fronts associated with the Icelandic depression became slow moving over the British Isles, and the next two or three days were generally dull with south-westerly winds and periods of rain in England and Wales, although weather was somewhat brighter in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

On the evening of the 9th a depression approached Ireland from the Atlantic bringing heavy rain to central England the following day as it moved across the country to the North Sea, and, on the 12th, an active wave depression brought heavy rain to north-west England and western Scotland where many places recorded more than 1 in. in 24 hr. and Fort William 2.78 in. With the rapid deepening of a depression between Scotland and Iceland, gales became widespread over the northern half of the country on the 13th; gusts of 77 kt. were recorded in the Hebrides. Rain also was widespread and heavy locally and there was hail and thunder in places. Gales persisted on the 14th in many areas, but as the depression moved eastward north-westerly winds brought cooler weather with bright periods and showers to most districts. On Good Friday, 15th, heavy rain fell in parts of south-west England as a small but active depression moved from Southern Ireland to north-west France.

On the 16th the general pattern of the weather changed completely as an anticyclone became centred over the British Isles. Pressure remained high over or to the west of the country until the end of the month, maintaining mainly dry weather with a good deal of sunshine. In some areas, more especially in the west and the extreme south of England, sunshine amounts were high, and many places in Devon recorded 11 or more hours daily from 16th to 22nd inclusive, with as much as 13 hr. locally on some days. By the 20th temperatures were about 10°F. above the average generally, 68°F. being recorded at a number of places in eastern England and in the Midlands.

On the 20th the anticyclone intensified and became centred to the west of Ireland and northerly winds spread over the country and persisted for most of the remainder of the month. They brought somewhat cooler weather with variable cloud. Rainfall was very slight during this period and was confined mainly to eastern districts.

Pressure and Wind. Pressure was above the average everywhere, the excess at 9 h. ranging from 2.9 mb. at Stornoway to 5.9 mb. at Plymouth. Winds were mainly between south and south-east until the 3rd, becoming

predominantly between west and south-west until the 14th, light and variable until the 19th and then mainly northerly until the end of the month. Gales occurred mainly during the first half of the month, in Scotland on the 2nd, 4th–6th, 10th, 12th–15th and 20th–21st (11 days) and in England and Wales on the 3rd, 5th–6th, and 10th–14th (8 days). Wind reached gale force in Northern Ireland on the 2nd and 13th and in the Channel Islands on the 3rd. On the 13th gusts of 75 kt. were recorded at Tiree and 77 kt. at Stornoway and Dounreay.

Temperature. Mean temperature was everywhere above the average, the excess being 1.3°F. in England and Wales, 2.8°F. in Scotland and 2.1°F. in Northern Ireland. Temperatures in most districts of England and Wales reached the upper sixties around the 20th; there were some warm days in Scotland also during the last week of the month when temperatures exceeded 60°F. at many places.

Extremes included:—(England and Wales) 68°F. at many places on the 20th and at Dishforth on the 22nd, 17°F. at Alwen on the 17th; (Scotland) 65°F. at Fort William on the 27th and 28th, 21°F. at Buddon Ness on the 17th; (Northern Ireland) 65°F. at Armagh and Ely Lodge on the 28th, 28°F. at Aldergrove on the 16th.

Precipitation. The general rainfall expressed as a percentage of the 1916–50 average was 75 in England and Wales, 125 in Scotland and 117 in Northern Ireland. Most of the rain fell during the first half of the month and it showed a well marked percentage increase from east to west over Great Britain and from west to east over Northern Ireland. Less than half the average occurred over south-east England, the east Midlands, most of East Anglia, the north Yorkshire Moors and the east coast between Flamborough Head and Tynemouth. Twice the average was exceeded in an area extending from the Firth of Clyde to Pitlochry.

Thunder was reported at a number of stations in south Scotland, north-east and southern England on the 10th and in northern Scotland on the 13th and 14th. There were also isolated reports of thunder in Scotland on the 4th–6th, 12th and 15th, and in England and Wales on the 6th–7th, 13th–15th and 26th.

Some light falls of snow or sleet occurred locally in central England and Northern Ireland on the 13th and in south-east England on the 11th. In Scotland snow or sleet fell at a number of places between 11th and 16th and at a few on the 6th, 9th, 19th, 20th, 23rd and 30th, but was nowhere reported as lying.

Sunshine. The general sunshine expressed as a percentage of the 1921–50 average was 106 in England and Wales, 95 in Scotland and 111 in Northern Ireland. Sunshine at most stations was within 20 per cent. of the average; in Scotland it was below average over all northern districts, in Argyllshire and parts of East Lothian and Midlothian, elsewhere it was below average in parts of south-east England and locally in central England and East Anglia.

Fog. Fog occurred at a number of places in Scotland on the 2nd–4th and there were isolated reports on 7 other days. In England and Wales early morning fog occurred almost every morning during the first half of the month, and was fairly prevalent on the 1st–3rd and 7th.

Miscellaneous Phenomena. The aurora was visible in Scotland on 17 nights; it was also seen over most of England and Wales on the night of the 27th–28th.