

Monthly Weather Report

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

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May 1952—Warm; wet in south-west England and the Midlands; sunny during second half of month.

The month was unusually warm and quiet. There were frequent outbreaks of thundery rain during the first eleven days and heavy scattered thunderstorms on the 19th. In contrast warm, sunny, mainly dry weather prevailed in most places from the 12th to the 27th.

In the opening days a depression westward of Ireland moved south-east to the north-west of Spain, while associated troughs of low pressure affected southern districts of the British Isles causing rain, heavy in places in the south-west, and local thunderstorms. On the 3rd and 4th the depression moved north-east and became less deep; further rain and scattered thunderstorms occurred in southern districts and some rain fell also in the north. On the 5th a depression in the North Sea moved north and turned west to the north of Scotland, subsequently moving southward to a position south-west of Ireland. This system, with its associated troughs or secondary depressions, dominated conditions over the British Isles until the 13th, with rain or showers and local thunderstorms but sunny periods; rainfall was heavy locally at times. On the 13th and 14th an anticyclone situated over Spain and south-west France moved north; meanwhile a trough to an Atlantic depression moved north-east across the British Isles causing appreciable rain at some places in the north of Scotland. The anticyclone continued to move north, and fair, very warm weather prevailed apart from scattered thunderstorms until the 19th. On the 19th and 20th a shallow trough of low pressure moved very slowly westward over the British Isles; thunderstorms occurred and heavy rain and hail caused floods in places but the heavy rain was very local. At Tibshelf, Derbyshire, a small tornado caused considerable damage on the 19th. Thereafter an anticyclone over Scandinavia moved south-south-west and subsequently another anticyclone was centred westward of Ireland; these systems maintained fair, slightly cooler weather in most areas until the 26th. On the 26th and 27th a depression off north-west Iceland moved slowly east-south-east giving rain in Scotland on the 26th and scattered rain or showers on the 27th. In the rear of this depression cool north-westerly winds brought a fall in temperature, and early morning frost occurred at a few places, chiefly in Scotland, on the 29th, 30th and 31st. Meanwhile on the 30th and 31st an almost stationary depression was centred westward of Ireland and an associated trough moved north over England and Wales; rain or showers occurred in many places on the 30th and 31st, the rainfall being rather heavy locally on the 31st, particularly during the following night.

Pressure and Wind.—Mean pressure somewhat exceeded the average except at the Scilly Isles. At 9 h. the deviation from the 1901–30 average ranged from +2.5 mb. at Tiree to –0.2 mb. at Scilly. Mean pressure was thus more uniform than the average over much of the country and conditions were quieter than usual, the total run of the wind being considerably below the average. The only mean hourly velocity of 34 kt. or more was recorded at Scilly on the 9th (see Table II). Among the highest gusts registered in knots were 51 at Millport on the 2nd, 56 at Scilly on the 9th, 50 at Stornoway on the 27th and 51 at Lerwick on the 28th.

Temperature.—Mean temperature exceeded the average for 1906–35 by 3.3°F. in England and Wales, 3.1°F. in Scotland and 2.5°F. in Northern Ireland. Over England and Wales as a whole it was probably the warmest May since before 1901, while in Scotland it was the warmest since 1940. At Kew Observatory it was the warmest May since records began in 1871, at Greenwich the warmest

since 1848 and at Oxford since 1868, but at some places in England May 1947 was equally warm. In particular the period from about the 13th to 27th was warm, notably so from the 15th to 19th and 24th to 25th, though locally in East Anglia minimum temperatures fell to 32°F. on the 22nd. The last few days were cooler, with early morning frost here and there.

Extreme temperatures for the month included:—(England and Wales) 86°F. in London (Camden Square) on the 18th, 28°F. at Kielder Castle on the 8th and 30th; (Scotland) 80°F. at Falkirk on the 17th, 25°F. at West Linton on the 31st; (Northern Ireland) 79°F. at Aldergrove on the 17th and 30°F. at Aldergrove on the 30th.

Precipitation.—The general precipitation expressed as a percentage of the average for the period 1881–1915 was 114 over England and Wales, 89 over Scotland and 66 over Northern Ireland. In Scotland, broadly speaking, less than the average occurred except in an area covering Angus and the neighbouring parts of Perthshire, Aberdeenshire and Inverness-shire, in a small area on the mainland in the north-west and in the Shetlands, where Lerwick recorded its wettest May since 1933. In England and Wales less than the average occurred in the northern half of the country except at a few places on or near the north-west coast, in an area east of a line from Cromer to Beachy Head and on the extreme south-west coast of Cornwall. In many places elsewhere there was a considerable excess; more than twice the average was received in south-west Wales and in an area covering north Somerset, extreme south of Gloucestershire and part of Wiltshire. In Northern Ireland there was a general deficiency; at Armagh less than half the average was received. An absolute drought occurred in many parts of England and Northern Ireland from about the 12th or 13th until the 27th or 29th.

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

1st 2.29 in. at Trowbridge and 2.01 in. at Westbury (Wiltshire).
8th 2.21 in. at Borrowdale (Cumberland).
19th 2.56 in. at Cotleigh, near Honiton (Devonshire), in less than 50 minutes, 3.27 in. at Malden (Surrey) in 75 minutes, and 2.34 in. at Kidlington (Oxfordshire), 2.30 in. of which fell in 75 minutes.

Local thunderstorms occurred frequently, mainly from the 1st to 12th, 16th to 20th and 22nd to 23rd. They were severe at times, notably on the 19th.

Sunshine.—The duration of bright sunshine expressed as a percentage of the average for the period 1906–35 was 109 in England and Wales, 98 in Scotland and 96 in Northern Ireland. In Scotland sunshine tended to exceed the average in the south and locally in the west but in the east and extreme north there was generally a deficiency; Lerwick, with only 49 per cent. of its average, had its dullest May for nearly 20 years. Over most of the country sunshine was scanty during the first 10 or 11 days but the remainder of the month was very sunny on the whole.

Fog.—Fog occurred rather frequently for the time of year, particularly at night and in the early morning, and mainly during the 1st–20th and on the 25th. It was most common on or near the east coast of Great Britain, on the south-west coast of England and Wales and on high ground.

Miscellaneous Phenomena.—The aurora was observed in Scotland on two nights. Solar halos were noted at Oxford on 13 days. A small tornado caused considerable local damage at Tibshelf, Derbyshire on the 19th.