

MONTHLY WEATHER REPORT OF THE METEOROLOGICAL OFFICE.

(Supplement to the Weekly Weather Report.)

SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS COMPILED FROM THE RETURNS OF OFFICIAL STATIONS AND VOLUNTEER OBSERVERS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM,
WITH A CHART CONTRIBUTED BY THE BRITISH RAINFALL ORGANISATION.

ISSUED BY THE AUTHORITY OF THE METEOROLOGICAL COMMITTEE,

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SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS.

General Summary.—As is so very commonly the case at this period of the year, the weather experienced during the month under review has proved of an exceedingly variable character, resulting in great extremes of day maximum and of night minimum temperatures. The weather was frequently dull, cold and cheerless, with much rain; occasional hail, sleet or snow, and thunderstorms of more or less severity were frequent. In the Summaries for each of the four months, January to April, it was pointed out that most of the disturbances which had come within the area under observation had moved on an easterly path, with their minima of pressure about or beyond the Arctic Circle. With the advent of May the situation underwent a great alteration, the distribution of atmospheric pressure becoming anticyclonic in the extreme north, where there was not a single instance of a disturbance during the month. All the low-pressure systems were found in lower latitudes, mainly in the neighbourhood of the British Isles.

The Iceland reports of May 1st pointed to the existence of a depression on the Atlantic at a considerable distance from our shores. By the following day the system, which was apparently advancing on a south-easterly course, arrived on the west coast of Scotland. It proved to be unusually deep for the time of year, the barometer sinking below 29 ins. at all stations in Scotland and in the north of Ireland and of England, below 28·7 ins. at several of the most northern ones. Altering its path to the north-eastward the minimum of pressure was transferred very slowly across Scotland, passed on to the Norwegian coast by the morning of the 5th, and there it quickly dispersed in the course of the day, the rate of progression since the arrival on the Scotch coast having been less than 10 miles an hour. A very shallow secondary depression which appeared at the southern end of St. George's Channel on the evening of the 3rd passed rapidly across England and the North Sea in the course of the night and subsequently disappeared in the direction of the White Sea. It was during the presence of the primary disturbance and its satellite in our neighbourhood on the 2nd and 3rd that the most boisterous weather of the month was experienced. The Southerly to Westerly wind increased quickly in force, and along the western and southern coasts a fresh gale was felt pretty generally, a strong gale being reported at Roche's Point, Pembroke and Liverpool, and a whole gale at Blacksod Point. There was no instance of an anemometrical registration of a velocity of 50 miles in any one hour, but in gusts of short duration the wind rose to a velocity at the rate of 67 miles per hour at Shoeburyness, and of 64 miles per hour at Southport on the 2nd, and 62 miles per hour at Pendennis Castle on the evening of the 3rd.

Between the 5th and the 31st the low-pressure systems which had an influence on the weather of the British Isles were unusually numerous. As many as ten different areas made their appearance off the western coasts or in the vicinity of the Bay of Biscay. In every case the line of progression was in a northerly direction, towards a well-defined anticyclone which was situated about Iceland and the Arctic Circle practically throughout the month. Against this high pressure the depressions failed to make much advance, the majority of them dispersing near the western end of the English Channel or in the western parts of Ireland. Only two were possessed of sufficient energy to cross the 60th parallel, where, to the westward of the Færøe, they disappeared on the 8th and on the 14th respectively. A shallow depression which formed near Paris on the evening of the 12th went northward across the North Sea, but on reaching southern Norway its course was altered to the eastward, and it passed away to central Russia.

From the 5th onward all the depressions were comparatively shallow, the barometer falling a little below 29·5 ins. only in a few instances. From time to time strong or high winds were felt on various sections of our coasts, but the only gale experienced at the telegraphic reporting stations occurred on the 9th, when Roche's Point had a fresh Southerly gale, and Pembroke a strong gale. A gust of Easterly wind having a velocity at the rate of 60 miles an hour was registered by the anemometer at Pendennis Castle on the afternoon of the 5th.

The character of the month was largely determined by this great frequency of slow-moving disturbances, many of which, appearing about the Bay region, produced winds from the colder directions between East and North. Many chilly to very cold days were consequently experienced in all parts of the kingdom. Down to quite the close maximum afternoon temperatures below 50° were numerous. So late as the 20th stations as far south as Cirencester and Shaftesbury failed to pass above 47°. Various places in Scotland and the northern half of England did not exceed 44° on the 1st, 2nd, 19th, 20th, 21st, 30th and 31st. A maximum of 43° occurred at Cockle Park, Morpeth on the 21st, at Sumburgh Head on the 29th, and at Ardross Castle on the 30th; and 42° at Marchmont on the 21st, and at Balmoral on the 30th. Partially to make up for this general prevalence of cold there were only two very short intervals of noticeable warmth. There was a sudden increase of temperature on the 11th and 12th, and maxima above 75° were registered in many parts of England, a few inland stations exceeding 80°. Isleworth and Great Billing touched 84°, and Barnet 85° on the 12th. A decidedly less marked rise took place near the end of the month, mainly affecting Scotland. Maxima exceeding 70° were not very numerous, but on the 26th Lairg touched 79°, Fort William 77°, and Glencarron 74°. There was thus a very large range in the afternoon temperature, from 30° to 35° in places, and even from the 12th to the 13th the reduction in the maximum values at some inland stations amounted to from 20° to 23°. On the whole cold nights were not nearly so frequent as cold days, but on some occasions the shade minima were rather low. Over southern Ireland the morning of the 5th was cold, with readings between 31° and 35°. At different times readings from 30° to 32° in the shade were registered in many districts; there were few lower readings, but Wokingham had 25° on the morning of the 19th. In the warmest period, however, night minima well above 50° were recorded at a large number of stations, 58° at Manchester (11th), Nottingham, Kew, Brighton, Worthing (12th), and Southend-on-Sea (13th), and 59° at Folkestone and St. Leonards (12th). The range of night temperature was consequently large, between 25° and 30° in some localities.

Rain was both abnormally frequent and heavy in the various districts, falls of more than an inch in a day occurring without as well as with thunderstorms, the closing days in particular being exceptionally wet over the north-eastern parts of Britain. Setting in with a sharp thunderstorm, there was a very heavy downpour in the Midlands during the night of the 13th and a part of the 14th, the rain continuing almost without any interruption. At Edgbaston, Birmingham, 2 ins. fell in 14 hours, and at Great Billing 2·8 ins. in 20 hours. On the 30th, at Ulverston, 2·6 ins. fell in 23 hours, no thunderstorm being reported in the neighbourhood. Hail or sleet was recorded in many localities on various occasions. There was snow at Strathearn on the 1st, at Leeds on the 2nd, at Kinlochewe on the 11th and 12th, at Llangammarch Wells and Stokesay on the 21st, and on elevated situations in Scotland and the north of England on several other days.

Thunderstorms, or thunder or lightning alone, were abnormally frequent, being reported at one or more stations on at least 25 days. Many of the storms were of a severe character, and accompanied by very heavy falls of rain, and occasionally hail. The largest areas affected were:—On the 6th, the portions of Wales and Ireland bordering on St. George's Channel, rainfall, 1·3 in. at Aberdovey, 1·1 in. at Dublin and Dundrum; on the 8th, Britain generally, from Wick to Jersey and Pembroke to Spurn Head; on the 9th, the northern half of England, 0·27 in. of rain in 8 minutes at Newcastle; on the 11th, the southern half of England; on the 12th, the greater part of Britain (from Oban southward) and in the north-east of Ireland; on the 13th, southern England, a deluge of rain at Southampton, 1·1 in. in 30 minutes; on the 14th, the Midlands, 1·3 in. of rain at Coventry; on the 23rd, the south-east quarter of England; on the 24th, England generally, 0·4 in. of rain at Hoylake in 14 minutes; and on the 25th and 31st southern England.

Compared with previous months there was a perceptible increase in the frequency of fog along the coasts, the phenomena being reported in various localities on at least 18 days. From the 6th to the 8th the region mainly affected was in the north-east; on the 11th and 12th in the west; from the 24th to the 27th in the west, south and east; and on the 30th and 31st in the west and south-west.

With such a record of disturbed conditions the sky was naturally often very cloudy, so what is usually one of the sunniest months of the year proved unusually dull, the duration of bright sunshine showing a loss of from two to three hours per day in places, the totals for the month being generally less than those for March.

For the month as a whole, pressure and bright sunshine were in defect; temperature was lower than usual except in the eastern half of England; rainfall as a rule was in excess; and the winds were mostly Southerly to Easterly and Northerly.