

MONTHLY WEATHER REPORT

COMPILED FROM RETURNS OF OFFICIAL AND VOLUNTARY OBSERVERS

MAY

1989

Warm, dry and sunny generally

On the 1st frontal systems associated with a low-pressure area over the Atlantic were crossing all areas of the British Isles, but by the evening an anticyclone became centred over Brittany before moving northwards across the English Channel on the 2nd. High pressure predominated until the 8th when a cold front associated with low pressure over the Faroe Islands moved southwards, clearing the southernmost parts of southern England very early on the 10th. A temporary ridge of high pressure affected all parts of the United Kingdom on the 10th. On the 11th and 12th an Atlantic depression crossed all areas before moving away over Scandinavia on the 13th. As fronts associated with a further Atlantic depression encroached upon northern and western coasts on the 14th an anticyclone to the south-west of the British Isles extended a ridge north-eastwards to cover southern areas of Great Britain. High pressure predominated during the next few days, although Northern Ireland and some northern and western areas of Scotland continued to be affected by frontal incursions. On the 20th the high pressure moved away northwards leaving a ridge over northern areas of the British Isles, but with an area of low pressure to the south and west of Great Britain. Although for the rest of the month pressure was high over most parts, some shallow troughs of low pressure affected the south until the 26th, and northern areas suffered some temporary interruptions from frontal activity.

Weather

The month was warm, dry and sunny generally. However, thunderstorms developed over East Anglia on the 11th and 12th and north-west England and North Wales on the 19th when a flash flood at Halifax, West Yorkshire caused considerable damage. On the 20th and 21st there were thundery showers in the south-west; on the 22nd thunderstorms developed over southern England and moved north-westwards. On the 23rd and 24th widespread thunderstorms brought floods to central and southern England, the Midlands and northern areas. Hail was widespread over Wales and Northern Ireland on the 11th, northern and eastern England on the 12th and central southern England on the 24th when Easthampstead, Berkshire recorded hailstones up to 23 mm in diameter.

Wind

May was a quiet month in all areas. The highest gust at a low-level station was 56 kn on the 12th at Sheerness, Kent. Strong winds on the 15th in northern areas gave gusts to 55 kn at Stornoway and Butt of Lewis, Western Isles, the latter with an associated highest mean wind of 42 kn. Wind directions were mainly westerly or variable until the 19th and easterly or north-easterly or variable for the rest of the month.

Temperature

Monthly mean temperatures were above normal in all areas, ranging from just above normal in parts of western Scotland to more than 3 °C above normal in the London area. The overall mean temperature of 14.4 °C and the mean maximum of 19.7 °C at Hampstead, Greater London were the highest for May since records began there in 1909;

at Oxford the mean temperature was the highest since May 1952. On the 21st the temperature at Kinlochewe, Highland Region reached 27.4 °C and at Cape Wrath, Highland Region a maximum of 24.4 °C was recorded, the highest May value in a record that goes back to 1940. On the 24th the temperature at Wyton, Cambridgeshire reached 28.4 °C, the hottest May day at the station since records began in 1954. The mean temperature at Newton Linford, Leicestershire was the highest for May at the station for 25 years. It was the warmest May recorded at North Wyke, Devon since the record began in 1960. The highest temperature during the month was 29.9 °C at March, Cambridgeshire on the 24th, and the lowest was -4.0 °C at Carnwath, Strathclyde Region on the 10th.

Rainfall

Rainfall was well below average except in some north-eastern parts of Scotland where it was nearer normal, reaching 104 per cent at Lerwick, Shetland. Parts of eastern and southern England were particularly dry although local thundery outbreaks produced variable amounts of rain; for example Farnborough, Hampshire received 117 per cent of its May average, while London Weather Centre, 50 km away, had only 2 per cent. Central London had its driest May for about 300 years and over England and Wales as a whole it was the driest May since 1896. Many places in the south and east had less than 10 mm of rain and a number of places in Kent including Manston and Ulcombe had less than 1 mm and Faversham and Herne Bay were among several places reporting nil rain. Ryhope, Co. Durham and Letheringham, Suffolk also reported nil rain. Worthing, West Sussex and Durham had the driest May since records started there in 1902 and 1886 respectively. At Oxford, about 95 per cent of the month's rain fell during a thunderstorm on the 24th. Among heavy falls were 63 mm at Mickleham, Surrey and 60 mm at South Farnborough, Hampshire both on the 24th.

Snow

Northernmost parts of Scotland had some snow

showers on the 8th, 9th and 10th. On the 12th a few sleet and snow showers fell in the north Midlands and northern England as well as western Scotland; snow settled on the higher parts of the Pennines and other hills, most of the snow melting after sunrise. Sleet was reported on the 29th over Orkney and Shetland and parts of the Scottish Highlands.

Sunshine

Monthly sunshine amounts were above normal over the whole United Kingdom, reaching 163 per cent of the average in central London, but only just above normal, 102 per cent, at Benbecula, Western Isles. Some places measured record amounts of sunshine, with most places south of a line from south Devon to north Norfolk having in excess of 300 hours; the last time such a large area of the United Kingdom experienced sunshine totals of over 300 hours in May was probably in 1909. Oxford reported the highest May sunshine amount (301 hours) in 110 years of record. The highest daily sunshine total was 15.9 hours at Lerwick, Shetland on the 21st and 22nd and Inverness, Highland Region on the 22nd; the most sunshine in the month was 339 hours at Jersey Airport, Channel Islands.

Fog

The quiet conditions led to the formation of fog on several nights, notably over England and Wales in the first week, between the 15th and 20th and on the 25th. Patchy sea fog affected southern and western coasts from the 1st to the 3rd, while on the 17th fog patches persisted all day in the Channel.

Miscellaneous Phenomena

Winterbourne, West Midlands reported extensive dust on the 4th, and again red sand deposited in rain on the 23rd. A marked dust devil was reported at Hurst Green near Oxted, Surrey during the afternoon of the 9th. It lifted garden furniture and raised a child's metal slide 4 metres into the air and carried it nearly 12 metres.

Table 1 District values

District	Air temperature °C					Mean 30 cm soil temp °C	Rain-days	Rainfall	Sunshine
	Highest Max*	Lowest Min*	Max.	Min.	Mean				
	Difference from average					% of average			
0 Scotland N	27.4	-3.6	+0.9	+0.3	+0.6	+0.6	0	68	120
1 Scotland E	25.5	-1.4	+1.5	+0.8	+1.2	+1.1	-5	63	124
2 England E & NE	26.0	-2.6	+2.0	+0.9	+1.4	+1.4	-7	31	139
3 East Anglia	28.5	-0.2	+2.7	+0.5	+1.6	+1.4	-8	22	150
4 Midland Counties	28.0	-0.4	+2.9	+1.0	+1.9	+1.6	-8	41	141
5 England SE & Central S	29.4	2.1	+3.3	+1.6	+2.5	+1.8	-10	21	148
6 Scotland W	24.2	-4.0	+1.2	+0.2	+0.7	+1.2	-4	46	120
7 England NW & Wales N	28.2	-1.3	+1.7	+1.3	+1.3	+1.9	-7	43	137
8 England SW & Wales S	27.5	-0.6	+3.0	+1.9	+2.4	+2.1	-9	22	131
N Ireland	26.2	-1.5	+1.4	+0.3	+0.9	+1.0	-5	46	126
Scotland	27.4	-4.0	+1.2	+0.4	+0.8	+1.0	-3	61	121
England & Wales	29.4	-2.6	+2.6	+1.2	+1.9	+1.7	-8	32	141

* Highest maximum and lowest minimum of District Value Stations