

Monthly Weather Report

OF THE METEOROLOGICAL OFFICE

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

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May 1969 — *Very dull, wet and thundery*

For almost the entire month depressions were situated to the west or south-west of the British Isles and troughs of low pressure regularly crossed the country. However, on the 18th and 19th low pressure was temporarily transferred to the North Sea and a cold northerly airstream covered all districts.

Weather — The weather was very changeable throughout the month and periods of thundery rain alternated with brighter, though showery, interludes. Some of the rain was heavy and thunderstorms occurred frequently, particularly in England. Flooding was reported from many places and was widespread and severe at times in the Midlands. Outdoor sports were often curtailed. Farmers were again handicapped by waterlogged fields especially in the east Midlands and one farmer in East Anglia sowed barley by dropping seed from an aircraft.

Wind — Winds were unexceptional during the month and there were no noteworthy gusts. Gales were reported locally near the south coast on three days and in South Wales on two days.

Temperature — Mean temperature was about 1 deg C below normal in most of Scotland. Elsewhere it was near normal and it was slightly above average in parts of the Midlands and eastern England.

The month began rather cold especially in the north. The 3rd was a day of contrasts when maximum temperatures ranged from 4°C reported in Aberdeenshire to 21°C at London/Heathrow Airport. Around the 18th and 19th fruit growers became anxious about the possibility of frost damage which, fortunately, did not materialize. During this period slight air frost occurred in places and ground frost was widespread especially early on the 20th. Among the lowest temperatures recorded were: -5.6°C at Carnwath (Lanarkshire) on the 2nd; -5.0°C at Alwen (Denbighshire) on the 20th; -4.0°C at Loughermore Forest (Co. Londonderry) on the 1st; -2.8°C at Santon Downham (Norfolk) on the 20th.

There was a warm spell at the end of the second week and it was very warm in the south on the 13th. Maxima during the month included: 27.2°C at a number of places in the London area on the 13th; 21.1°C at Prestatyn (Flintshire) on the 12th and at Kinlochewe (Ross and Cromarty) on the 23rd; 19.8°C at Ballykelly (Co. Londonderry) on the 22nd.

Rainfall — In England and Wales, most areas had over one and a half times the average rainfall and many places recorded more than twice the normal amount. In parts of the fenland in East Anglia over three and a half times the average occurred. More than three times the normal fell in the west Midlands; at Bidston Observatory (Cheshire) it was the wettest May since records began in 1870 and in the Shrewsbury area it was the wettest May for at least 75 years. Around the Thames estuary rainfall was near normal. In east Scotland over twice the average rainfall occurred in many areas. At Montrose, on the Angus coast, more than three times the normal amount of rain fell and it was the wettest May there since records began in 1866. In contrast it was the seventh consecutive month in the Fort William (Invernesshire) area with a rainfall deficit and some places in this area had less than half the normal amount. Northern Ireland was wetter than usual with more than twice the average occurring in Co. Down.

Much of the rainfall during the month was thundery and flooding often followed the heavier outbreaks. The 3rd was very wet in east Scotland and Aberdeen Airport recorded a 'daily' fall of 41 mm. It was very wet in many areas of the British Isles on the 5th and 6th and many places recorded falls in excess of 30 mm. Flooding was widespread on the 6th and was particularly severe in the Midlands where Walsall (Staffordshire) railway station was closed due to flood-water. A 'noteworthy' fall of rain occurred on the 24th at Knotty Ash, near Liverpool, where 27 mm fell in about 35 minutes during a violent thunderstorm. On the same day Oaken (Staffordshire) had 58 mm and on the 25th a 'daily' fall of 50 mm was recorded at Moel Cynnedd (Montgomeryshire).

Thunder was much more frequent than normal and occurred on 25 days in England, it was concentrated mostly in the Midlands and

south-east and eastern areas. A number of places had thunderstorms on 9 or 10 days and Edgbaston, near Birmingham, reported thunder on 11 days. This is about 5 times the average number for May. Thunder occurred on 15 days in Scotland, 10 days in Wales but on only 2 days in Northern Ireland. On the 9th a boy was struck by lightning and killed at Corby (Northamptonshire) and minor damage due to lightning was reported from many places during the month. On the 16th, hailstones up to 16 mm diameter accumulated to a depth of about 50 mm at Quainton (Buckinghamshire). Storms were reported from many areas during the last 3 days.

Snow — Falls of snow or sleet (rain or drizzle and snow) were light and mostly confined to upland areas in the north. They occurred during the first week on high ground in Scotland and northern England and in North Wales on the 1st. On the 17th and 18th snow or sleet fell again in northern districts and on the 18th snow or sleet was reported as far south as Hawkrigge (height 314 m), on Exmoor.

Sunshine — Except for a few places in Sussex, monthly sunshine amounts were below average everywhere. It was particularly dull in Scotland and a few areas recorded less than half the normal. It was the dullest May at Eskdalemuir Observatory (Dumfriesshire) and at Dumfries since records began in 1910. At Perth it was the dullest May since records commenced in 1914 and Kirkwall (Orkney Isles) had only 47 per cent of average sunshine. The north Midlands were also very dull with most places recording only slightly more than half the normal amount of sunshine. Daily sunshine amounts throughout the month were very erratic although there was a relatively sunny spell in Scotland from the 19th to 23rd. The maximum daily duration of sunshine of 10.1 hours for the month at Ross-on-Wye (Herefordshire) was the lowest May maximum since records started in 1915.

Fog — Morning fog was widespread in the Midlands, south and east England on the 3rd with visibilities of only 30 yards in places. Both Heathrow and Gatwick airports were closed for some hours. Sea fog drifted onto coasts in east Scotland and north-east England during the period 3rd-5th and on the 5th this fog extended well inland. Coastal fog affected south and west coasts of England on the 10th and returned to eastern coasts at times during the last 10 days.

Miscellaneous Phenomena — The aurora was observed on 4 nights in Scotland and was seen in Northern Ireland on the 16th.

TABLE I—DISTRICT VALUES, May 1969

DISTRICTS	AIR TEMPERATURE °C					EARTH TEMP. °C		RAIN DAYS	RAIN-FALL	SUNSHINE
	*Highest Max.	*Lowest Min.	Max.	Min.	Mean	Mean 30 cm.	Mean 122 cm.			
	Difference from Average					% of Average				
0 SCOTLAND, N.	16.7	-0.5	-1.0	-0.3	-0.7	-0.3	-0.7	+3	124	65
1 SCOTLAND, E.	18.9	1.1	-1.5	-0.2	-0.8	-1.0	-0.5	+9	192	67
2 ENGLAND, N.E.	20.6	-2.2	-1.2	+0.3	-0.4	-0.2	-0.5	+9	157	72
3 ENGLAND, E.	26.1	2.2	-0.3	+1.1	+0.4	+0.3	-0.2	+6	173	86
4 MIDLANDS	23.9	0.6	-0.9	+1.0	+0.1	-0.1	-0.4	+9	204	68
5 ENGLAND, S.E.	26.7	0.6	-0.6	+0.2	-0.1	0.0	-0.3	+8	172	69
6 SCOTLAND, W.	19.0	-1.6	-1.5	-0.1	-0.8	-0.5	-0.7	+3	109	72
7 ENGLAND, N.W. and N.Wales	19.3	-1.1	-1.1	+0.2	-0.4	-1.2	-0.8	+8	182	71
8 ENGLAND, S.W. and S.Wales	20.6	-1.1	-1.0	+0.3	-0.3	-0.9	-0.5	+8	169	71
N.IRELAND	19.8	-1.9	-0.9	-0.2	-0.5	-	-	+6	149	76
SCOTLAND	19.0	-1.6	-1.3	-0.2	-0.8	-	-	+5	142	52
ENG. and WALES	26.7	-2.2	-0.9	+0.5	-0.1	-	-	+8	176	73

*Highest Max. and Lowest Min. of the District Value Stations.