

Monthly Weather Report

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

VOL. 67 No. 5

PUBLISHED BY HIS MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE

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May, 1950 - Changeable temperature; dry in West and North.

The weather of the month was very changeable with alternating cold and warm spells. It was dry on the whole but rainfall exceeded the average over much of England south-east of a line from the Humber to south Devon. It was dull in east and south-east England and the Midlands but sunny on the whole in the west and extreme north of the British Isles.

During the opening days a large depression westward of Scotland moved north-east and then turned east, becoming less deep; rain occurred generally on the 1st and showers and local thunderstorms on the 2nd. Thereafter the Azores anticyclone spread north-east and mainly fair weather prevailed, apart from slight showers locally in eastern districts on the 3rd and very slight scattered rain on the 4th. Subsequently a belt of high pressure extended south-south-west across the British Isles from an anticyclone over Scandinavia. Meanwhile a shallow depression moved slowly west from Germany over England giving rain, chiefly in England and Wales. On the 8th a small depression over Holland moved west-south-west and was associated with further rain in England. Thereafter the Scandinavian anticyclone moved slowly south-west to a position off the north of Scotland and a spell of warm, sunny weather prevailed over the British Isles; day temperatures reached or exceeded 75°F. in many places. On the 13th a new anticyclone near Iceland moved slowly east and later south-east and the dry spell persisted until the 16th, but a rapid fall in temperature occurred on the 14th, with an influx of cold northerly winds of polar origin. On the 16th and 17th a cold front moved slowly south over Scotland and Ireland giving scattered rain or showers in these areas but weather continued dry over practically the whole of England and Wales.

A change occurred on the 19th when a small depression developed off north-west Portugal and subsequently moved quickly north-east across England to the North Sea. Rain occurred fairly generally and there were local thunderstorms. By the 21st pressure was high in a belt from south-west Iceland to Norway and a large depression was centred off south-west Ireland, while associated troughs of low pressure moved north over the British Isles. Heavy rain occurred in places and was accompanied locally by hail and thunder; in Buckinghamshire a tornado moving from Wendover to Linslade caused great damage. Subsequently the depression off south-west Ireland drifted slowly south-west, while the anticyclone west of Iceland moved south and by the 24th the cold north-east winds already blowing over Scotland reached the south of England; rain occurred in the south-west and west, and was rather heavy locally. On the 24th and 25th the depression off north-west Portugal moved slowly east and later moved north-east to north France; heavy rain occurred locally in the south-west and the Channel Islands on the 24th and fairly heavy rain in the south of England on the 25th. On the 26th and 27th a depression centred over the south of Iceland moved south-east to the North Sea and on the 28th and 29th another disturbance off south-west Iceland moved east-south-east; meanwhile the Azores anticyclone spread east. Rain, mainly slight, occurred in many places on the 26th and 27th and further rain fell in the west and north on the 28th and 29th. In the closing days mainly anticyclonic conditions prevailed, particularly in the south, and temperature rose again, reaching or exceeding 75°F. at a number of places in England.

Pressure and Wind.—Mean pressure exceeded the average, the excess at 9 h. ranging from +6.1 mb. at Wick to +1.2 mb. at Scilly. The pressure distribution over the country was thus quite different from the average, the highest pressure being found over Scotland and the lowest off the south-west coast of England. Winds from between north and east predominated, while the total run of the wind was considerably below the average in the north of Scotland but was somewhat in excess of the average over much of England. A gale

occurred at exposed stations in Scotland and Northern Ireland on the 29th. Among the highest gusts registered in knots were 51 at Cardington on the 21st, 48 at Bidston on the 27th and 49 at Lerwick and 48 at Stornoway on the 29th.

Temperature.—Mean temperature somewhat exceeded the average in the west and extreme north of the British Isles and was slightly below the average in eastern districts of England and the Midlands. The temperature was very changeable, warm spells being rapidly followed by cold spells with the break through of cold, polar air. Over the country as a whole the warmest period occurred from the 10th–13th; in England and Wales and Ireland it was warm also from the 21st–23rd, in the south of England on the 30th and more generally on the 31st. The coldest week was the one ending on the 20th but it was cold also from the 24th–27th and in parts of England from the 4th–7th. Screen frost was registered at numerous stations during the cold spells.

Extreme temperatures for the month included:—(England and Wales) 81°F. at Ambleside on the 13th, 27°F. at Lincoln on the 17th; (Scotland) 80°F. at Colmonell on the 11th, 23°F. at Dalwhinnie on the 15th, 16th and 25th; (Northern Ireland) 75°F. at Ballykelly on the 12th and at Garvagh, Lisburn and Castle Archdale on the 13th, 32°F. at Garvagh on the 6th and Aldergrove on the 19th.

Precipitation.—The general precipitation expressed as a percentage of the average for the period 1881–1915 was 90 over England and Wales, 66 over Scotland and 54 over Northern Ireland. In Scotland the deficiency was almost general; more than the average occurred, however, in the Moray Firth, locally on the Isle of Islay and on the coast of Fife. Less than half the average was registered at numerous stations in the extreme north and in the neighbourhood of the Clyde. In England and Wales more than the average occurred over a large area extending from the Humber south-west to Somerset and west Hampshire and including Lincolnshire and East Anglia, as well as in south Devon and west Cornwall. More than twice the average was received over much of Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire and in the neighbourhood of Torquay. Less than half the average occurred over much of north Wales and on the Lancashire coast. There was a long dry spell in Scotland from the 3rd–15th and in England and Wales from the 10th–17th.

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

21st 2.21 in. at Hockliffe (Beds.), 1.75 in. of which fell in 1 hour, and 2.10 in. at Battlesden Pumping Station (Beds.).
24th 1.97 in. at Torquay and 1.89 in. at Paignton.

Thunderstorms occurred locally on the 1st–3rd, 5th, 6th, 18th–25th, 28th and 31st.

Sunshine.—Broadly speaking sunshine was considerably in excess of the average in the west and extreme north and well below the average in north-east and east England and the Midlands. The mean daily duration in hours ranged from 8 hours or more at Benbecula, locally in the Isle of Man, at Holyhead and St. Ann's Head to less than 4 hours on most of the north-east coast of England and locally in the Midlands (see chart 4).

Fog.—Fog (mainly in the early morning and at night) developed locally, chiefly on the 1st, 4th–13th, 17th, 19th–23rd, 25th–27th, 30th–31st. It was rather persistent locally on the north-east coast of England on the 11th and 12th.

Miscellaneous Phenomena.—The aurora was observed in Scotland on four nights. Solar halos were noted at Oxford on seven days. In the tornado which moved from Wendover to Linslade on the 21st, trees were felled, roofs of old buildings and vehicles in farmyards lifted. Thunderstorms also occurred with heavy rain and flooding and large hailstones; the largest individual stone, an irregular mass of ice with several centres, measured 6½ inches round.