

MONTHLY WEATHER REPORT OF THE METEOROLOGICAL OFFICE.

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

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MAY, 1926: UNSETTLED AND MAINLY COLD; CONSIDERABLE SUNNY PERIODS.

General.—The weather of May was, for the most part, cool and changeable with considerable bright and showery periods and a brief spell of warm weather extending from about the 21st to the 26th. Thunderstorms and hail showers were of frequent occurrence and some snow fell in parts of Scotland and the south Midlands on the 14th. Although precipitation was above normal over the British Isles as a whole, monthly aggregates varied considerably; thus, the month on the whole was wet in the central and north-western districts of England but relatively dry in parts of Scotland, Ireland, the south-west of England and the Channel Isles.

During the first two or three days easterly winds and fair to cloudy skies were prevalent. In Scotland good sunshine records were obtained during this period. On the 4th, the winds backed to north and secondaries moving in this northerly current caused showers of rain, hail, sleet and snow and occasional thunder; 28mm. were measured at Brighton on the 5th, and during a thunderstorm at Hampstead on the 7th 11mm. fell in 11 minutes. Screen minimum temperatures about 30°F. occurred at several places, and at a few northern stations the maximum temperature did not reach 50°F. during this period. Between the 9th and 13th a depression developing south of Iceland moved slowly south-east across the British Isles, causing a slight rise in temperature with the change in the wind direction. Showers occurred at most places, but the amounts measured were small. Northerly winds were renewed in the west on the 12th in the rear of the depression, and later over the whole country. During the cold spell which followed, ground temperatures were slightly lower than during the first week, 15°F. being recorded at Rhayader on the 16th. Snow occurred in parts of Scotland and the south Midlands on the 14th. On the same day 46mm. (1.81 in.) of rain were measured at Winchmore (Gloucester), 38mm. (1.50 in.) at Tenterden (Kent) and, during a thunderstorm in and around London, 45mm. (1.77 in.) fell at Hampstead, the largest amount recorded there in May since records began in 1910. Between the 16th and 20th winds continued northerly and the weather was cloudy and cool, but on the 21st there was a considerable rise in temperature in southern districts and later in all districts as a high pressure area became established over the country. Light variable winds with warm, sunny weather and some local thunderstorms prevailed for the next four or five days, and maximum temperatures above 70°F. were recorded at many stations, 79°F. being reached at Camden Square, London, on the 26th. Meanwhile, a fresh depression approached from the Atlantic, causing rain generally in the west on the 24th, which extended to the eastern districts on the 27th. Changeable weather with cooler westerly winds continued until the end of the month.

The general character of the month is illustrated by the following remarks taken from observers' notes:—Southport, —Very cool generally until the 20th with considerable frequency of northerly winds. Much warmer afterwards. Rather wet but not dull. Mornings decidedly drier and sunnier than the afternoons. West Kirby, —Cold winds and many screen night frosts. Rainfall excessive. Huddersfield, —Low temperature except during closing days and rather wet. Light winds. Dovercourt, —A fairly dry month with cold winds prevailing up to the 20th. Copdock, —May, 1926, has proved dry, dull and cold, although the number of rain days is up to the average and there is thus an impression that the month has been wetter than has been the case. The rise in temperature during the last ten days prevented its proving what seemed probable at one time the coldest May in May records: on only one other occasion in 25 years, except 1902, has the average maximum temperature been below 60°F. (59.2 in 1923). Bromyard, —Fruit badly damaged by frosts. Dublin, —Very cool, showery month; vegetation much delayed. Cork, —A cold and wet month.

Pressure and Winds.—The mean pressure was everywhere below normal. The deviation of monthly means of pressure at fixed hours varied from 3.9mb. at Southport to 1.9 mb. at St. Mary's, Scilly. The highest recorded pressure was 1026mb. at Cahireiveen (Kerry) on the 6th and the lowest 985mb. at Stornoway on the 11th. There was a considerable frequency of northerly and easterly winds. Gales were infrequent but occurred at a few coastal stations on one or two occasions. High winds occurred round about the 5th, 9th and 12th, but on the whole winds were mainly light to moderate.

Temperature.—The mean temperature of Districts 1-10 was 49.3°F. In all Districts the mean temperature was below normal, the deficit ranging from 1.9°F. in Scotland E. (mean temperature 46.3°F.) to 0.4°F.

in the Channel Isles (mean temperature 52.6°F.). During each of the first three weeks the mean temperature was decidedly below normal in all Districts but the effect in lowering the monthly mean temperature was reduced by the warmth of the last ten days. During the week ending May 29th the excess of the mean temperature above the normal averaged about 4°F. The highest temperatures of the month were recorded during the warm spell between the 21st and the 26th; on the 22nd and 23rd in the south-west of England and in many parts of Ireland and on the 26th in most other districts.

Ground frosts were numerous and occurred in all districts. Amongst the largest numbers of ground frosts recorded were 14 at Braemar and West Linton, and 13 at Newton Rigg and Rhayader.

The extreme temperatures for the month were:—(England and Wales) 79°F. at Camden Square (London) on the 26th, 23°F. at Comondale on the 19th; (Scotland) 75°F. at Edinburgh (Liberton) on the 26th; 23°F. at Wolfelee on the 6th, 15th and 19th; (Ireland) 68°F. at Lisburn on the 25th, Mountmellick on the 22nd and Kilkenny on the 29th, 27°F. at Dublin, Newtownforbes, and Clongowes Wood on the 16th.

Precipitation.—Although the number of days of precipitation was above normal in most Districts, monthly aggregates showed considerable variations. In the central and north-western districts of England and Wales, in the west and north-west of Ireland and in the central and eastern districts of Scotland, there was, on the whole, an excess of precipitation but elsewhere there was a deficiency which was greatest in the eastern counties of England and in Devon and Cornwall. As an example of the large local variation in rainfall totals, Tenterden (Kent) had more than twice the normal amount of rainfall for May while Margate had less than half the normal. In Scotland light to moderate rains were general from the 4th to the 7th and from the 11th to the 13th or 14th, with some rather heavier falls towards north-west on the 11th (35mm. at Roshven). The period from the 14th to the 23rd was almost rainless in many districts, except for moderate falls on the 19th and the 20th, whilst from the 24th to the 31st, conditions were rather unsettled with rain on every day in some areas. On 24th, 27th and 30th, some fairly heavy falls occurred, with 23mm. at Boggall, near Edinburgh, on 30th.

The total precipitation for each country as a whole was above normal. Expressed as a percentage of the normal 1881-1915, the values were:—England and Wales 121, Scotland 109, Ireland 117, British Isles 117.

Thunderstorms occurred in practically all districts during the month. The largest number reported was nine at Oxford but in a great many districts the number reported was not less than five. Although there were no thunderstorms of outstanding severity, some were noteworthy because of the heavy rainfall which accompanied them. Reference has already been made to the heavy fall of 11mm. in 11 minutes at Hampstead (London) during the thunderstorm on the 7th and to the fall of 45mm. at the same place and at Kensington (London) during the thunderstorm on the 14th. At Hellingly during a thunderstorm shortly after noon on the 22nd 11.4mm. fell in 15 minutes and the temperature dropped 12°F. in less than 30 minutes.

In the northern districts some snow or sleet fell in a few places on several days.

Sunshine.—The mean daily duration of sunshine was below normal in all Districts except in Scotland N. and E. and in England N.E., where however, sunshine totals did not differ greatly from the normal. The largest mean daily excess was 0.27 hrs. in Scotland N. (Mean daily duration 5.63 hrs.) and the largest deficiency 1.28 hrs. in the Channel Isles (Mean daily duration 6.50 hrs.). Although there was a deficiency of sunshine at the majority of stations, there were few sunless days. Good sunshine records were obtained in all districts on various days. Amongst the largest daily measurements were 15.1 hrs. at Stornoway and 14.7 hrs. at Gordon Castle (Elgin) on the 23rd, 14.8 at Hoylake and Holyhead on the 16th and 14.9 hrs. at Stornoway on the 19th and at Inchkeith on the 22nd.

Fog.—Little fog was reported during the month; it occurred on one or two occasions in several districts. The highest number of days of fog reported was five at Petersfield. Coastal mist or fog occurred locally in the south-west of England between the 22nd and 29th.

Miscellaneous Phenomena.—Solar halos were observed in various districts on several days. Parhelia were observed at Oxford on the 2nd and on the 29th. A double solar halo was observed on the evening of the 16th at Bury St. Edmunds, Greenwich, and at Petersfield.