

MONTHLY WEATHER REPORT

COMPILED FROM RETURNS OF OFFICIAL AND VOLUNTARY OBSERVERS

MAY

VOLUME 105

1988

NUMBER 5

Generally rather dry, warm and sunny, apart from the east coast; showery at times

The month began with a deep depression to the south-west of the British Isles moving north-eastwards and filling over the North Sea by late on the 4th. By the evening of the 5th an anticyclone was centred over the Strait of Dover and during the next two days it drifted north-eastwards to Scandinavia. By the 7th a depression had become established over northern France; associated weak troughs of low pressure moving from the east continued to affect southern and eastern areas of Great Britain until the 13th. High pressure became established to the north of Scotland from the 13th and over the next two days a ridge of high pressure extended southwards over most parts of the United Kingdom, although on the 15th a shallow depression over northern France spread its influence to some parts of central southern England. An area of low pressure moved over western Norway on the 16th, and its associated cold front moved southwards across all regions by the 19th. Behind the front an anticyclone was re-established over the United Kingdom on the 20th, but drifted over the northern North Sea on the 21st and 22nd. Frontal systems crossed many areas from the west between the 23rd and 26th, associated with a depression to the west of Scotland. A transient ridge of high pressure followed on the 27th and 28th, giving way as a new depression became established over northern parts of Great Britain on the 29th. Several minor disturbances moved around the parent low during the last three days of the month.

Weather

May was quite a warm month with sunshine totals slightly above normal everywhere, apart from the east coast where it was a little cloudier and cooler. The month started showery with thundery outbreaks; warm, moist air from the Continent brought further outbreaks of thundery rain, particularly to the south-east, on the 8th. Generally dry conditions prevailed until the 23rd, although some rain was reported on the 11th in the east and more generally on the 12th. There were a few thundery showers in central southern England on the 15th and scattered showers occurred on the 18th and 19th with thunder reported from southern counties of England and Wales on the 19th. Rain over south-west England late on the 22nd moved northwards and eastwards on the following day. A bright day on the 24th was followed by further rain crossing all areas on the 25th and 26th. The last three days were also unsettled; however, much of southern and eastern Scotland escaped rain on the 30th and Wales and southern England soon became mainly dry on the 31st. A climber was reported killed by lightning near Grasmere, Cumbria on the 1st. A severe thunderstorm occurred at Moel-y-Crio, Clwyd on the 1st just after 13 GMT and was accompanied by hailstones 15 mm in diameter that caused considerable damage to fruit trees and hedges in the vicinity; heavy rain caused some local flooding.

Wind

May was a quiet month throughout. The highest hourly mean wind speed at a low-level station was 39 kn at Butt of Lewis, Western Isles on the 2nd, with a gust to 50 kn. The highest gust during the month was 56 kn recorded at Camborne, Cornwall on the 1st. Wind directions were very variable

during the month, but southerly or easterly winds predominated.

Temperature

Mean monthly temperatures were above normal nearly everywhere, ranging from 0.3 °C below normal at Whitby, North Yorkshire to 1.6 °C above normal in parts of Dorset and East and West Sussex.

The temperature failed to reach 6 °C on both the 3rd and 4th at Cape Wrath, Highland Region. From the 13th to 15th, most places had warm, sunny days, the temperature at Littlehampton, West Sussex reached 25 °C on the 14th, the wind keeping the east coast cooler. Clear skies gave cold nights with quite a widespread frost on the 20th and 21st, the temperature falling to -2 °C at Eskdalemuir, Dumfries and Galloway on the 20th. Coventry (Bablake), Warwickshire reported the warmest May since 1970, and the first May without any frost in Coventry since 1970, while Hampstead, Greater London had the warmest May since 1976. The highest temperature during the month was 26.5 °C at Inverailort, Highland Region on the 15th and the lowest was -3.5 °C at Leadhills, Strathclyde Region on the 18th.

Rainfall

Monthly rainfall totals were near normal in England and Wales as a whole, and below normal in Scotland and Northern Ireland, ranging from a very dry 32 per cent of normal at Poolewe, Highland Region to 159 per cent of normal at Hastings, East Sussex.

The first 26 days of the month yielded just half the normal rainfall at many places in the south-east and across the United Kingdom it was the driest May for 6 years. There was little rain between the 4th and 18th in many parts of south and south-west England, with parts of Dorset, southern Hampshire and the Isle of Wight being completely dry. Nevertheless, some locations had large daily falls, notably in thundery conditions. Much of north-eastern Scotland had more than 20 mm of rainfall on the 1st. Falls also exceeded 20 mm in parts of south-west England on the 1st and Wales on the

3rd. Widespread flooding was caused in the Thames Valley and north-west London during thunderstorms on the 8th: Northwood, Greater London measured 48.5 mm in 3 hours in an early morning storm and 23 mm in a storm later in the day. Among other large daily falls (09-09 GMT) was 48 mm at Trassey Slievenaman, Co. Down on the 28th.

Snow

Wintry showers gave snow down to less than 100 m in parts of central and northern Scotland between the 17th and 19th, but snow cover generally was only reported above about 400 m, although with a dusting to 100 m here and there, mostly disappearing by the 24th.

Sunshine

Monthly sunshine amounts were near normal or just above normal in all areas of the United Kingdom, ranging from 81 per cent at Cambridge (N.I.A.B.), Cambridgeshire to 135 per cent at Dyce, Grampian Region.

The sunniest period over a large area was from the 15th to 17th when almost the whole of Great Britain had between 10 hours and 14 hours of sunshine a day. The highest daily sunshine amount was 15.9 hours at Kirkwall, Orkney on the 22nd. The highest monthly total was 271.4 hours at Valley, Gwynedd.

Fog

Overnight fog occurred in many places between the 9th and 13th, and on the 27th and 28th, mainly in England and Wales. Sea fog affected the coasts of north-east England and eastern Scotland at times, notably on the 1st and 2nd and on the 28th.

Miscellaneous Phenomena

Reports of coloured dust deposited on the 7th were received from places as far apart as North Yorkshire, Dyfed, Essex and the south coast. Hampstead, Greater London reported haze of an unusual colour after 15 GMT on the 7th, possibly with desert dust in suspension. A funnel cloud was observed at Rhoose Airport, South Glamorgan on the 19th at around 13 GMT.

Table 1 District values

District	Air temperature °C					Mean 30 cm soil temp°C	Rain- days	Rainfall	Sun- shine
	Highest Max*	Lowest Min*	Max.	Min.	Mean				
						Difference from average			
0 Scotland N	25.0	−1.1	+1.3	+0.5	+0.9	+0.9	−2	48	115
1 Scotland E	21.1	−1.7	+0.5	+0.4	+0.5	+0.9	−3	75	115
2 England E & NE	20.6	−1.6	+0.1	+0.4	+0.3	+0.7	+1	97	101
3 East Anglia	23.7	−0.5	+0.5	+1.1	+0.8	+0.6	+2	102	94
4 Midland Counties	24.0	−0.4	+0.7	+0.4	+0.6	+0.6	0	84	102
5 England SE & Central S	24.4	1.5	+0.9	+1.2	+1.1	+0.9	0	78	103
6 Scotland W	22.8	−3.4	+1.0	0.0	+0.5	+0.7	−2	68	109
7 England NW & Wales N	24.8	0.5	+0.9	+0.7	+0.7	+1.2	−1	84	113
8 England SW & Wales S	23.4	−0.7	+0.7	+0.7	+0.7	+0.9	−1	110	105
N Ireland	22.8	−1.3	+0.7	+0.1	+0.4	+0.8	−4	60	103
Scotland	25.0	−3.4	+0.9	+0.3	+0.6	+0.8	−2	63	113
England & Wales	24.8	−1.6	+0.6	+0.7	+0.7	+0.8	0	93	103

* Highest maximum and lowest minimum of District Value Stations