

# MONTHLY WEATHER REPORT

# AUGUST 1979

COMPILED FROM RETURNS OF OFFICIAL AND VOLUNTARY OBSERVERS

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## Mostly unsettled and cool; gales around mid-month.

Between the 1st and 3rd a complex low-pressure system moved north-eastwards from Scotland to Scandinavia and was followed by a ridge of high pressure which crossed the British Isles during the 4th and 5th. This pattern of events was repeated until the 25th as a succession of depressions moved north-eastwards across or near to the British Isles, with intervening ridges of high pressure. One depression during this period deepened rapidly as it approached south-west Ireland on the 13th and then moved quickly north-eastwards across Ireland and Scotland on the 14th.

A break in the cyclonic activity began on the 26th as a ridge to the west of the British Isles moved eastwards, with an anticyclone developing off southern Ireland. During the next few days most parts of the United Kingdom remained under the influence of this anticyclone as the centre of high pressure moved slowly eastwards into Europe, but by the end of the month fronts from the Atlantic were once again moving into western districts.

### Weather

Until the last week of the month the weather in all areas was very changeable, and generally rather cool. Periods of rain or showers occurred frequently and there were thunderstorms in places. Around mid-month gales occurred over much of England and Wales, being particularly severe in south-western districts on the 14th.

During the last week there was a spell of more settled weather in many areas. Most districts became drier, and warmer by day, but on the 31st unsettled conditions returned to western parts of the United Kingdom.

### Wind

Winds were fresh or strong in exposed coastal areas at times throughout the month. Western and northern districts were the most affected, but on the 9th gales occurred around the coasts of southern England. After a brief spell of lighter winds, speeds increased in south-western areas during the evening of the 13th and on the following day there were gales over much of England and Wales. In south western districts the gales were severe and in the area between Land's End and south-west Ireland 23 yachts taking part in the Fastnet Race were abandoned or sunk with the loss of 15 lives; 4 other yachtsmen lost their lives in the same area and the gales also led to several fatalities on land. At Milford Haven (Dyfed) a gust of 65 kt was recorded. A number of places, mostly well inland, measured their highest gust speeds for any August; these included Elmdon Airport (Birmingham) and Watnall (Nottinghamshire) with gusts of 51 kt and 49 kt respectively. Gales again occurred in south-western areas on the 16th but, except in some coastal districts, winds were then generally lighter up to the end of the month. Wind directions throughout the month were mostly between south-west and north-west but became variable over much of England and Wales for a few days during the last week.

### Temperature

Monthly mean temperatures were below average in all areas. Values in most places were not more than

1 °C below the normal, but in a few scattered districts throughout England, Wales and Scotland values about 1.5 °C below normal were recorded.

Although there were no prolonged warm spells during the month, many areas away from south-west and west-facing coasts had a warm day on the 12th, when several places in the lee of high ground recorded maxima of at least 26 °C. Daytime temperatures rose again during the last three days of the month in many areas, the maximum reaching 27.0 °C on the 30th at Aldenham School (Hertfordshire). However, the nights were cold during this period with frost in some areas, minima of -0.5 °C and -0.7 °C being recorded at Carnwath (Strathclyde) and Eskdalemuir (Dumfries and Galloway) respectively on the night of 29th/30th.

### Rainfall

Rainfall amounts were very variable over the United Kingdom. Totals were above average in Northern Ireland, south-western and eastern parts of Scotland, the Western Isles, Orkney and Shetland. Values exceeded 160 per cent of normal in a few places and Prestwick (Strathclyde) had its wettest August since records began there in 1942. Above-average rainfall was also recorded over a large part of northern England (excluding the north-east), the north and west Midlands, parts of East Anglia, central and South Wales, much of south-west England and southern coastal areas from the Isle of Wight to Kent. Almost twice the normal for the month was recorded in part of Bedfordshire. Most remaining areas in the United Kingdom had less than average rainfall, with only about half the normal falling in some parts of the Greater London area and around Inverness in the Highland Region of Scotland.

Until the last week of the month there were frequent periods of rain or showers in most areas. Thunderstorms, sometimes accompanied by hail, occurred in places; on the 3rd there was flooding in parts of southern England and East Anglia following heavy thunderstorms, and on the 9th hailstones up to 25 mm in diameter were reported in south-west

London. On the 7th 56.9 mm of rain fell in 1 hour 45 minutes from 1615 GMT at Silsoe (Bedfordshire). Except in northernmost parts of Scotland, the weather became much drier during the last week of the month.

### Sunshine

Over most of England and Wales sunshine totals were within 10 per cent of normal, with values above the average over much of northern England and North Wales, the north Midlands and some southern counties extending from East Sussex to southern parts of Devon and Cornwall. In most remaining areas of England and Wales less than average sunshine was recorded. Eastern counties of Northern Ireland were sunny with 125 per cent of normal being recorded at Hillsborough (Co Down), but western areas were dull with only 75 per cent of normal at Castle Archdale Forest in Co Fermanagh. South-western parts of Scotland had above-average sunshine, but in all other areas there was less than average with about 75 per cent of the normal sunshine for the month being recorded in the Aberdeen area and in parts of the Western Isles, and only around 65 per cent of normal in Orkney.

Because of the generally changeable nature of the weather for much of the month, there were no prolonged sunny spells until the last week, when many areas, except northernmost parts of Scotland, enjoyed a few sunny days. The 28th to 30th were particularly sunny over England and Wales.

### Fog

Fog patches in inland areas were reported on a few occasions, mostly during the second half of the month, clearing quickly after sunrise.

Hill and coastal fog occurred from time to time, being particularly widespread and persistent in south-western districts and the Channel Islands during the second week, and around north-eastern coasts of England and Scotland between the 17th and 19th and again on the 31st.

### Miscellaneous Phenomena

A funnel cloud was observed from Fairlight (East Sussex) on the 17th.

**Table 1 District values**

District	air temperature °C					mean 30-cm earth temp °C	rain-days	rainfall	sunshine
	Highest Max*	Lowest Min*	max.	min.	mean				
	difference from average								
0 Scotland N	21.5	3.9	-1.0	-0.9	-1.0	-0.5	+2	98	79
1 Scotland E	23.9	-0.7	-0.9	-0.5	-0.7	+0.1	+3	105	91
2 England E & NE	25.9	3.8	-0.5	-0.7	-0.6	+0.1	0	110	102
3 East Anglia	25.9	3.1	-0.5	-0.6	-0.5	-0.4	-1	97	96
4 Midland Counties	25.8	3.5	-0.7	-0.5	-0.6	-0.3	0	105	101
5 England SE & Central S	25.1	2.0	-1.1	-0.8	-1.0	-0.7	+1	103	97
6 Scotland W	22.1	-0.7	-0.9	-0.8	-0.8	-0.1	+2	122	101
7 England NW & Wales N	26.2	3.9	-1.0	-0.5	-0.8	-0.9	+3	103	100
8 England SW & Wales S	24.5	4.0	-1.1	-0.9	-1.0	-0.4	+1	116	96
N Ireland	22.2	3.0	-0.8	-0.8	-0.8	0.0	+1	125	97
Scotland	23.9	-0.7	-0.9	-0.7	-0.8	-0.2	+2	108	90
England & Wales	26.2	2.0	-0.8	-0.7	-0.7	-0.4	+1	106	99

\*Highest maximum and lowest minimum of District Value Stations