

Mainly dull, cold and dry; widespread heavy rain on the 23rd

Relatively high pressure predominated in most districts during the first half of the month and an anticyclone drifted slowly eastwards across the British Isles from the 9th to 13th. Thereafter troughs of low pressure, mostly weak except around the 23rd, affected many areas until anticyclonic weather returned on the 27th.

Weather

Easterly winds, which were especially persistent during the first fortnight, led to a cold and dull month, particularly in the east. It was generally dry for the first half of the month and some areas in the south remained almost dry for a further week. From the 22nd to 25th rain fell in most areas, especially on the 23rd, and a brief heavy snowfall occurred in south Wales and the West Country on the 26th. Mainly dry weather returned for the last few days.

Wind

The number of days with gale-force winds was generally below average in western areas and about average elsewhere. During the first 15 days winds were mainly from an easterly direction and they were often strong on the east coast of England. On the 16th gales occurred locally in north and west Scotland and they returned to Scotland on the 18th when a gust of 67 kt was recorded at Lerwick (Shetland).

Temperature

The month was colder than average in most districts, especially in eastern England by day, and ground frost at night was a frequent occurrence in Scotland. Monthly mean temperature ranged from a little over 1 degC below average in a few areas in England, mostly in the east, to just above average in parts of Scotland and north-west England. East winds kept areas near the North Sea coast cold during the first half of the month and air frost occurred in Scotland, although it was mostly slight. The next 7 days were warmer than average generally but again eastern areas were cold. On the 22nd most inland areas became very warm and the temperature at Santon Downham (Norfolk) reached 22.9°C. However, cold weather soon returned and by the 26th some areas in southern England were very cold and night air frost was widespread for the remainder of the month.

Rainfall

Rainfall (including melted snow) was below average over large regions of Scotland and England and in much of Wales. Less than half the average occurred in parts of Cornwall, East Anglia, northern England and southern Scotland, and also over most of the Scottish mainland north-west of a line from Oban to Nairn. Rainfall was below 25 per cent of average near Loch Linnhe

and around the Moray Firth; the town of Nairn had its driest April (8 mm) since records began in 1866 and at one or two other places in Scotland it was the driest April for over 30 years. Farther south, Lowestoft (Suffolk) recorded its lowest April rainfall (16.4 mm) since 1957. In contrast to these areas, parts of Co. Down received more than twice the average rainfall. Although the 9th was wet in southern England, very little rain fell anywhere during the first fortnight and mainly dry weather continued in the south for another week. It was again mainly dry during the last few days. In addition to the dry spells, the other notable feature of the month was the widespread heavy rainfall on the 23rd. During the period 22nd to 24th a slow-moving complex trough of low pressure over the country deepened. Throughout the 23rd and at first on the 24th all areas, except parts of extreme south-west England and north Scotland, had continuous rain which was occasionally heavy and, in places, thundery. The 24-hour period commencing at 09 GMT on the 23rd was remarkable more for the geographic extent of heavy rainfall than for notably large individual amounts. Nevertheless, there were several falls in excess of 50 mm and a number of places had their wettest April day on record, including a 'daily' fall of 40.9 mm at Watnall (Nottinghamshire), where records began in 1941.

Snow

Snow or sleet (rain or drizzle and snow) occurred on fewer days than average in most areas and amounts were generally small. Snow fell on high ground in Scotland, northern England and north Wales on the first few days and snow

occurred more widely in the north on the 16th and 17th but it settled to any extent only at the highest altitudes. On the 26th snow fell in south Wales and the West Country and sleet occurred in many parts of southern England; snow depths of 5-10 cm were reported in the west but the snow soon melted on low ground, and snow settled briefly on the hills in south-east England.

Sunshine

Sunshine totals were below average nearly everywhere. The greatest deficits occurred in the Midlands and eastern England. Only 70 hours of sunshine were recorded at Sheffield (West Riding of Yorkshire) — the lowest here in April since 1920 — and, in the same county, Huddersfield had its dullest April since 1941. Some places in north and west Scotland had their lowest April sunshine totals for over 20 years, for example Wick (Caithness) since records began in 1945. One or two areas in Scotland and a solitary station in southern England had slightly more sunshine than average.

Fog

Hill and coastal fog patches occurred in eastern England during the first week and again from the 11th to 16th. On the 19th sea fog affected the English Channel coast and on the following night dense fog patches formed widely in southern England. Hill fog was widespread on the 23rd and sea fog affected coasts, mainly in the south.

Miscellaneous phenomena

Observers in Scotland saw the aurora on 4 nights.

Table 1 District Values**April, 1971**

District	air temperature °C					mean 30 cm earth temp °C	rain days	rain- fall	sun- shine
	Highest Max. *	Lowest Min. *	max.	min.	mean				
	difference from average								
0 Scotland N	17.2	-2.3	+0.5	-0.7	-0.1	--	--4	52	98
1 Scotland E	17.3	-0.8	-0.4	+0.2	-0.1	+0.7	--3	79	96
2 England N E	20.6	-4.4	-1.7	0.0	-0.9	+0.4	--5	105	73
3 England E	22.7	-1.3	-1.8	0.0	-0.9	--0.4	--6	63	74
4 Midlands	21.2	-1.7	-1.3	-0.2	-0.8	0.0	--7	106	68
5 England S E	21.8	-2.5	-1.6	-0.3	-0.9	--0.4	--6	100	81
6 Scotland W	18.3	-4.7	+0.3	-0.3	0.0	+0.5	--6	69	103
7 Eng NW - Wales N	19.5	-2.6	+0.2	0.0	+0.1	+0.1	--6	83	87
8 Eng SW - Wales S	20.4	-2.0	-1.2	-0.7	-0.9	--0.5	--5	81	78
N Ireland	17.8	-2.6	-0.3	-0.7	-0.5	--	--6	146	92
Scotland	18.3	-4.7	+0.1	-0.3	-0.1	--	--4	67	99
Eng - Wales	22.7	-4.4	-1.2	-0.2	-0.7	--	--6	91	77

*Highest max. and lowest min. of the District Value Stations.