

MONTHLY WEATHER REPORT

COMPILED FROM RETURNS OF OFFICIAL AND VOLUNTARY OBSERVERS

MAY**1979**

VOLUME 96

NUMBER 5

Mostly cool and unsettled, with snow at first.

A deepening depression moved eastwards across southern parts of the British Isles on the 1st, whilst a large depression was almost stationary over the Norwegian Sea. A north-westerly airstream then became established and persisted until the 6th when a shallow depression moved towards Scotland from the north-west. The associated frontal system crossed northern and central districts before returning northwards on the 10th and 11th as pressure rose over Biscay.

Between the 12th and 14th all areas remained under the influence of an anticyclone, but as this moved slowly eastwards into Europe, fronts gradually encroached from the north-west. During the remainder of the month, complex low-pressure systems dominated the weather, except for very brief interludes as ridges moved across the British Isles on the 19th and 31st.

Weather

The month started with a very cold unsettled spell which lasted into the second week. There were showers or longer periods of snow, sleet and rain at times in all areas and widespread night frosts occurred. This spell was followed by a period of much warmer and drier weather in most parts of the United Kingdom between the 11th and 16th although coastal fog was persistent in southern and western districts of England and Wales. The remainder of the month was changeable with further showers or periods of rain at times. Thunderstorms affected many areas during this period and were occasionally accompanied by heavy rain and hail.

Wind

Between the 1st and 5th winds were mostly fresh or strong north-westerly, reaching gale force on exposed coasts in south-western England and the Channel Isles on the 1st. From the 6th to 16th the wind was generally lighter, and from between south-west and south-east, although on the 13th and 14th gales occurred in coastal areas of north and west Scotland. During the 17th and 18th a fresh to strong northerly wind developed over Scotland whilst England and Wales had lighter south-westerlies. From the 19th onwards winds blew from directions mainly between south and west over England and Wales but were more variable in direction over Scotland and Northern Ireland. Wind speeds were sometimes fresh or strong and occasionally reached gale force in some coastal areas.

Temperature

Monthly mean temperatures were below average almost everywhere. Values ranged from more than 2 °C below normal in western Scotland, Northern Ireland, the Isle of Man, Wales and much of south-western England, to between 0 and 1 °C below normal over parts of eastern Scotland and England east of a line from Newcastle to Brighton.

The first week of the month was cold with day-time temperatures well below normal in most districts and with widespread night frosts. On the 4th the temperature fell to -7.1 °C at Eskdalemuir, the lowest in May since records began at the Observatory in 1910. The cold weather continued into the second week with further night frosts, especially in parts of Scotland. After the 10th, temperatures began to

rise and the next few days became very warm away from southern and western coastal districts. On the 13th a maximum of 25.0 °C was recorded at Fyvie Castle (Grampian Region) and on the 14th and 15th maxima over 27 °C occurred in a number of places in eastern and southern England. Cooler weather spread to all areas during the 16th and apart from a warmer spell in the east of the British Isles during the last few days, the remainder of the month was generally cool.

Rainfall

Rainfall was well above average over much of the United Kingdom. The only areas with less than normal were parts of western Scotland, some eastern districts of Northern Ireland and parts of north-western England and the Isle of Man. All remaining areas had more than their normal rainfall for the month with values exceeding 200 per cent of the average over parts of North and mid Wales and in a broad belt extending from Tyne and Wear to Dorset. In the latter area some places recorded more than three times the normal for May.

During the first ten days of the month there were showers or longer periods of rain, sleet or snow in all districts with scattered thunderstorms. After an area of rain, heavy in southern and western parts of Wales, had crossed the British Isles between the 10th and 12th, there followed a few days of mostly dry weather. Changeable weather returned to all areas between the 15th and 17th and the rest of the month remained unsettled with further showers or longer periods of rain at times. Thunderstorms occurred in many places and on the 30th heavy rain and thunderstorms affected parts of south-western and southern England leading to extensive flooding; at Beaminster (Dorset) 61.0 mm of rain fell in 5½ hours from 0800 GMT and later the same day at Wokingham (Berkshire) 40.4 mm fell in 50 minutes from 1650 GMT.

Snow

Showers and occasionally longer periods of snow and sleet occurred in all parts of the United Kingdom between the 1st and 9th, snow showers occurring as

far south as the Channel Isles on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th. There were further falls of snow or sleet in some parts of Scotland and over the northern Pennines on the 18th and 19th.

On low ground snow settled but did not lie for long. However, snow cover was unusually persistent over high ground in Scotland and northern England, the tops of many of the higher Scottish mountains being snow-covered throughout the month.

Sunshine

Sunshine was below average over much of the United Kingdom with values mostly between 80 and 100 per cent of the normal, but only about 70 per cent over western parts of Northern Ireland and some areas in the Scottish Highlands and Shetland. The only districts with above-average sunshine were around the Glasgow area, in some coastal areas of eastern Scotland and north-eastern England, most of East Anglia and south-eastern England and also in parts of south-western England.

Most places had long sunny spells at some time during the month. These were most marked during the first week in the Glasgow area and during the warm period around mid-month in eastern and north-eastern Scotland when much of England and Wales away from south-western and western coasts was also sunny.

Fog

Overnight fog patches formed occasionally during the month but were most widespread in England and Wales during the second week. On the night of the 12th/13th fog became dense in places but cleared quickly in the morning.

Persistent fog affected southern and western coastal areas of England and Wales between the 10th and 16th. Some northern and western coasts of Scotland were also affected at times from the 10th until the end of the month.

Miscellaneous Phenomena

None reported.

Table 1 District values

District	air temperature °C					mean 30-cm earth temp °C	rain- days	rainfall	sun- shine
	Highest Max*	Lowest Min*	max.	min.	mean				
			difference from average						
0 Scotland N	20.0	-4.0	-1.9	-1.8	-1.8	-1.8	+7	113	88
1 Scotland E	22.2	-7.1	-1.3	-0.9	-1.1	-0.7	+6	118	99
2 England E & NE	27.1	-4.3	-0.8	-0.8	-0.8	-0.8	+7	217	91
3 East Anglia	26.7	-2.9	-0.6	-0.5	-0.5	-0.9	+6	172	100
4 Midland Counties	26.0	-3.1	-1.6	-0.9	-1.3	-0.9	+5	188	92
5 England SE & Central S	27.0	-2.3	-1.2	-1.0	-1.1	-0.9	+5	180	103
6 Scotland W	20.0	-7.1	-2.3	-1.6	-2.0	-1.1	+5	85	89
7 England NW & Wales N	23.3	-2.9	-2.7	-1.2	-2.0	-1.6	+6	171	87
8 England SW & Wales S	27.5	-2.0	-2.2	-1.9	-2.1	-1.0	+5	167	98
N Ireland	19.8	-4.0	-2.3	-2.1	-2.2	-1.0	+8	130	83
Scotland	22.2	-7.1	-1.8	-1.4	-1.6	-1.2	+6	105	92
England & Wales	27.5	-4.3	-1.5	-1.1	-1.3	-1.0	+6	183	95

*Highest maximum and lowest minimum of District Value Stations