

MONTHLY WEATHER REPORT OF THE METEOROLOGICAL OFFICE.

(Supplement to the Weekly Weather Report.)

SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS COMPILED FROM THE RETURNS OF OFFICIAL STATIONS AND VOLUNTEER OBSERVERS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM, WITH A CHART OF RAINFALL CONTRIBUTED BY THE BRITISH RAINFALL ORGANISATION.

ISSUED BY THE AUTHORITY OF THE METEOROLOGICAL COMMITTEE,

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SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS.

Pressure, Winds and Weather.—The general distribution of atmospheric pressure during the period under review was mainly of an anticyclonic type. Through the first half of May the high pressure system ruled almost exclusively over the British Isles, but the position of its central space changed about very considerably, its wanderings forming, roughly, a circular path. At the beginning of the month it was on the Atlantic, immediately to the westward of Ireland, but in the course of about nine days it was transferred to the Bay of Biscay, thence across to the Baltic, to Scandinavia, and then westward to Iceland. Here it divided into two parts, one remaining practically stationary, the other, moving to the British Isles, the Bay of Biscay, and later, back to the Atlantic beyond our western coasts by the middle of the month. Throughout this fortnight the barometer descended below 30 ins. only at some of the south and south-west coast stations, associated with the very slow progress of a disturbance which according to wireless reports from steamers made its appearance on the evening of the 3rd in about 53° N., 32° W. From this position it advanced along a south-easterly course to the northern part of Spain by the 9th, then passed to the western Mediterranean and dispersed. On the 17th there was a temporary break in the high pressure conditions, occasioned by the passage of another Atlantic disturbance which had appeared over mid-ocean on the 12th. It subsequently advanced to the southward of the Azores, thence to Portugal, and taking a north-easterly course from the neighbourhood of Lisbon it crossed northern France to Denmark and northern Russia. From the 18th to the 24th the pressure distribution was again anticyclonic over Western Europe generally, and cyclonic out on the Atlantic, but from the 25th to the end of the month the British Isles were visited by a series of disturbances of no great intensity, moving on a general north-easterly path across Ireland and Scotland. On the 3rd the barometer rose to 30·5 ins. at Yarmouth; on the 6th to 30·6 ins. at Aberdeen and in Shetland; on the 13th to nearly 30·5 ins. at Blacksod Point; on the 19th to nearly 30·4 ins. at Yarmouth; and on the 24th it passed above 30·4 ins. at Bath. The disturbances which visited this country were very shallow, the barometer sinking to or below 29·5 ins. in the last week only, below 29·3 ins. over the north-western districts in the afternoon of the 26th, 29·23 ins. at Stornoway being the lowest value reported. The extreme range of pressure for the month was consequently small, from 0·75 in. to an inch in the south and east of England, against 1·2 in. at Stornoway, and 1·3 in. at Aberdeen. For the whole month the mean pressure values were everywhere above the normal, by 0·03 in. at Valencia, and 0·04 in. at Blacksod Point, but by as much as 0·14 in. at Yarmouth. The values indicate the region of lowest pressure to have been on the Atlantic, the barometer averaging slightly above 30 ins. on our western and north-western coasts and in the south of Iceland, while two areas of high pressure were indicated, above 30·1 ins. over northern Iceland and beyond the Arctic Circle, and above 30·15 ins. over the Low Countries. Owing to the ever-changing positions of the various pressure systems the wind was very variable in direction, all quarters of the compass being represented, and an Easterly current was as frequent as a Westerly one. In the absence of any great disturbances the wind was generally light to moderate in force, but from the 4th to the 8th a high wind from some Easterly direction was felt at various stations on the southern coasts, and on the 7th the pressure anemometer at Plymouth registered gusts in which the velocity was at the rate of 64 miles per hour. From the 9th to the 25th much weaker winds were reported, but from the 26th to the 31st the force of a high wind was again experienced locally, South-Easterly in Shetland, Westerly or South-Westerly in other districts. At Jersey on the 26th, and at Wick on the 30th, the strength of a gale was attained, the only instances during the month at the telegraphic reporting stations.

The very inclement weather which marked the closing days of April was maintained over the country generally on the opening day of May. With the high pressure system off the Irish coast and a depression covering the Baltic region the British Isles were within a broad belt of air coming from the North. Temperature was consequently very low, failing to touch 50° over a great part of the country, a number of stations registering maxima as low as 42° to 45°, and even at several of the southern stations the readings were 46° to 48°. Accompanying this cold, snow fell pretty generally throughout Britain, nearly all places along the south coast of England and in the Isle of Wight experiencing it. At Llandudno and Rauceby thunderstorms occurred. Following immediately upon this polar weather the conditions underwent a remarkable change, the Atlantic anticyclone working round by the Bay of Biscay, and the wind shifting into Southerly directions in all districts. Weather of an exceptionally brilliant character followed. For the week ending with the 8th the sunshine records were above the average at every station in the kingdom, the excess in very numerous instances being at the rate of more than six hours per day, and at Westminster nearly eight hours a day. The total duration

for the seven days exceeded 90 hours in many parts of England and Wales, amounting to 93·2 hours at Cardiff and Wisley, 93·3 at Cambridge, 93·5 at Hastings, 94 at Jersey and Southend, 95·7 at Yarmouth, and 95·8 at Worthing. The smallest returns were 50 hours at Valencia, and 49 at Fort Augustus. Here and there slight showers fell, but as a general rule the weather was rainless. However, notwithstanding the fine weather and its unprecedented brightness, the temperature, under the influence of an East wind, did not rise as high as might have been expected. At the beginning of the week the thermometer kept well below the normal, then rose to 73° at Cally, 74° at Bettwys-y-Coed and Dumfries, and 75° at Crieff. This warmer interval was maintained into the middle of the following week, the values just quoted being repeated at other stations, while at Killarney 76° was reached on the 10th.

During the later half of the second week the pressure distribution was very similar to that noticed at the beginning of the month, an anticyclone on the Atlantic and a depression beyond the North Sea. Winds from the northern regions again invaded the country, and produced another very cold interval. Maximum afternoon temperatures below 50° were numerous as far south as the shores of the English Channel, 42° at Huddersfield on the 17th, and not higher than 39° at Sumburgh Head on the 14th. Sharp night frosts were also registered over a wide area, the thermometer in the screen sinking to 25° at Kingston-on-Soar (Notts.) and Mayfield (Staffs.), to 24° at Llangammarch Wells, Balmoral, Cally and Poltalloch, and to 22° at West Linton. Thermometers freely exposed on the grass fell below 20° at several stations, to 18° at Thornthall, 17° at Birmingham, 14° at Carlisle, and 13° at Llangammarch Wells.

In spite of these wintry conditions, there was a very striking persistency of dry and sunny weather in many parts of the Kingdom. No precipitation was measured during the first twenty-three days at Abergavenny, Bath, Parkstone (Dorset) and Rochford (Worcestershire), and at numerous stations the period was marked by only one or two slight showers, this remark applying to the usually rainy districts in the west as well as to the drier eastern neighbourhoods. Regardless of a settled, or an unsettled, type of weather there was always an abundance of bright sunshine, and near the close of the dry spell there was a sudden increase of warmth, so that between the 21st and 23rd maximum day temperatures of 80° and upwards occurred in various parts of England, 84° at Maidenhead on the 21st, and at Camden Square and Greenwich on the 22nd.

This was a brief period of heat, for on the 24th disturbances began to move in from the Atlantic, and the weather became much less settled, with frequent rain, and in many places thunder, lightning or both. On the 24th and 25th there were some falls of an inch or more of rain, in the more southern districts on the former date, and in the north of England and south of Scotland on the latter, 1·3 in. at Watergate, Sussex, being the largest quantity in the south, 2 ins. at Crieff in the north. The rainfall of the closing week was consequently above the normal in most localities, and temperature and sunshine below the normal.

Fog was experienced on many parts of the western and south-western coasts from the 10th to the 12th, the 20th to the 24th, and the 30th and 31st, dense at times. It was also rather more frequent in the neighbourhood of Shetland and the Orkneys, but on the east coast of Britain and along the eastern half of the English Channel it was rarely noted.

The temperature of the coastal sea water was everywhere higher than in the preceding month, by as much as 5° or 6° in some localities, but compared with the temperature of the air on shore the water was a little warmer off the west of Ireland and the north-east of Scotland, cooler in most other districts, by about 5° off the north-east of England.

Rainfall.—In most parts of Scotland the precipitation was rather above the normal, but elsewhere it was in defect, considerably so in many localities. At a very large number of stations precipitation was measured on less than ten days, at Margate, Dover, Parkstone, Jersey, Braceland (Forest of Dean) and Mallaranny on 5 days, and at Newquay on only 4 days, whereas few had more than 20 days, 22 at Ardrross Castle, Kinlochewe and Stornoway, and 23 at Castlebay. In many instances the aggregate totals for the month were less than an inch, about 0·5 in. at Weymouth, in the Forest of Dean, at Shrewsbury and Ruthin, while only a few spots in the mountainous districts of western Scotland and the north-west of England reported more than 6 ins.

Bright Sunshine.—With two or three unimportant exceptions the bright sunshine records were above the average, the excess being more than 100 hours at a number of southern stations, 130 hours at Westminster, and 140 at Greenwich. Both Eastbourne and Totland Bay aggregated 351 hours, and Worthing 353 hours, these totals being 74 per cent. of the possible duration. Worthing had 220 hours more than Fort Augustus. At various stations the month's totals were the largest registered in any month since the introduction of sunshine recorders.