

Monthly Weather Report

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SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS COMPILED FROM RETURNS OF OFFICIAL STATIONS AND VOLUNTEER OBSERVERS

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MAY, 1946; sunny and dry in northern districts; wet and cool in the south

The month was dry with abundant sunshine in the north, particularly the north-west, but in the southern half of England and the Midlands it was wet and cool. North-easterly winds predominated.

During the opening days a belt of high pressure lay over Scotland and a depression was centred off the west of Portugal. Some slight rain occurred, chiefly in the south of England and thunder was heard locally. By the 3rd the depression had moved away south and become less deep, while the ridge of high pressure had extended over the British Isles and was increasing in intensity. On the 5th an anticyclone was situated north-west of the British Isles and a cold front moved south over England and caused some rain in the east and south-east. Strong north-easterly winds and local gales prevailed over England and Wales from the 5th-7th. On the 7th a depression over Spain moved north-west to a position off our south-west coasts and thereafter pressure remained high to the north-west of Scotland and low to the south-west of England for some days. In southern England heavy rain occurred on the 7th and local rain on the 8th, while thunderstorms were reported at a number of places in this area on both days. On the 9th and 10th the anticyclone over Scotland extended south-east and fair weather prevailed with abundant sunshine. From the 12th-15th a depression centred initially off south-west Portugal moved north-eastward to the Baltic. A cold north-easterly air stream flowed over the British Isles and there were scattered showers. On the 16th and 17th a depression over the North Sea moved south-south-west and thereafter it remained almost stationary over the western English Channel until the 21st, when it moved away north. During this spell there were rather widespread thunderstorms and, in the south, heavy local rain at times. A wedge of high pressure moving west over Britain maintained fair, sunny weather on the 22nd and until the evening of the 23rd, when a trough moving west caused local rain and scattered thunderstorms. From the 25th-27th a depression over south-west France moved first north-north-east to the Low Countries and subsequently westward across the British Isles. Rain occurred and local thunderstorms, the rain being heavy at many places on the 26th. The unsettled weather persisted until the end of the month; on the last two days a depression on the Atlantic westward of Scotland drifted south-east, while secondaries moved north-east over the British Isles giving considerable rainfall and local thunderstorms, but bright periods. Temperatures were rather high on the 29th and 30th.

Pressure and Wind.—Mean pressure exceeded the average except in southern England and south Ireland. The deviation at 9h. ranged from +6.1 mb. at Lerwick, Stornoway and Wick to -4.4 mb. at the Scilly Isles. The general pressure distribution was thus reversed, the highest pressure being situated to the north of Scotland and the lowest off south-west England. The prevailing winds were north-easterly and the month was windier than the average in the south and less windy in the north. Strong winds, with a gale locally, were reported in England from the 5th-7th. Among the highest speeds registered in gusts were 54 m.p.h. at Spurn Head on the 5th, 58 m.p.h. at St. Ann's Head on the 7th, 55 m.p.h. at Holyhead on the 18th and 57 m.p.h. at Aldergrove on the 29th.

Temperature.—Mean temperature somewhat exceeded the average in the west and north of Scotland and was rather below the average

elsewhere. The deviations for the districts ranged from +1.2°F. in Scotland, W. to -1.9°F. in England, E. Among warm days were the 10th-12th, 23rd, 26th, 29th and 30th and cold mornings included the 6th, 9th and 14th-17th; on all these mornings minimum temperatures of 28°F. or below were registered locally. The frost caused damage to crops in some areas.

The extremes for the month were:—(England and Wales) 73°F. at Leyland on the 29th and at Wakefield on the 30th, 22°F. at Santon Downham on the 15th; (Scotland) 76°F. at Kilmarnock on the 10th, 21°F. at Dalwhinnie on the 6th; (Northern Ireland) 70°F. at Lisburn on the 12th, 29°F. at Aldergrove on the 15th.

Precipitation.—The general precipitation expressed as a percentage of the average for the period 1881-1915 was 131 over England and Wales, 55 over Scotland and 52 over Northern Ireland. Broadly speaking, more than the average occurred over most of the area south of a line drawn roughly from Liverpool to Lowestoft, in a narrow strip stretching from Mansfield to Durham and in an area over east Aberdeenshire. Less than the average occurred elsewhere. The variation in the rainfall distribution was great, over 300 per cent of the average occurring over a small area in South Devon, while less than 25 per cent. of the average was received in scattered areas in west and north-west Scotland.

Among the heaviest falls in 24 hours were:—

7th	2.92 in. at Wye (Kent).
17th	1.80 in. at Paignton and 1.76 in. at Newton Abbot.
18th	1.76 in. at Seaton.
26th	1.76 in. at Lyneham (Wiltshire) and 1.75 in. at Usk (Monmouth).

Local thunderstorms occurred frequently, particularly during the latter part of the month. They were reported on the 1st, 2nd, 7th-9th, 15th-21st, 23rd-28th and 30th-31st.

In Scotland snow or sleet showers were reported at times in eastern districts and at high level stations in the north and west, especially during the third week; an inch of snow fell at Tomintoul on the 14th.

An absolute drought was recorded at numerous stations during the latter part of April and the first two weeks of May. At Colmonell (Ayrshire) there were no measureable falls from April 25th to May 19th.

Sunshine.—Sunshine exceeded the average in Scotland, Northern Ireland and northern England, but was below the average on the whole in southern England and the Midlands. The excessive sunshine in the west of Scotland, Northern Ireland and north-west England was a notable feature of the weather of the month. At Eskdalemuir, Renfrew and Aldergrove it was the sunniest May on record, and the mean daily duration was 10.6 hours at Tiree and 10.0 hours at Turnberry. At Edinburgh, too, it was the sunniest May since 1901. On the other hand, at one or two large towns in the Midland Counties of England, the mean daily duration was less than 5 hours.

Fog.—Fog developed locally at times, chiefly on the 1st, 2nd, 17th, 20th-23rd and 26th-31st.

Miscellaneous Phenomena.—The Aurora was observed in Scotland on two nights. Solar halos were noted at Oxford on 13 days. A small whirlwind occurred near Ampleforth College on the evening of the 31st. A moon pillar was seen at Wrexham on the 14th and 15th.