



Weather Front

May 2021/1921.

May 2021.

Observers Notes.

Pitsford: Generally unsettled with frequent showers and longer spells of rain and feeling cool for the time of year. Turning drier and warmer in the final few days.ⁱ

Derby: Coldest May since 1996, and 20 C temperatures absent until 28th, when each of the last four days reached, or exceeded, this value. May was the wettest May on the Derby Arboretum record (1901), but for all known local records, May 1932 was the wettest of all with 160-170 mm widely collected. Thunder in May was mainly brief and associated with vigorous showers, some of which could be seen nearby.

Ely: Apart from the last four days, a generally cold and wet month with severe frosts in the first week. May 2021 saw the lowest mean minimum, and the lowest overall mean, since 1996.

Lowdham: The mean temperatures were the lowest since 1996. May 2021 was the wettest in the Nottingham area since 1840 and saw the highest number of days of hail on the station record (1991).

Middleton: May 2021 was the coolest May since 1996 and the wettest on a local record beginning in 1870.

Bablake: It was the coolest May since 1996, the wettest since 1967 and the dullest since 2007.

Mickleover: May 2021 was the coldest May since 1996 and the second coldest since 1984. It was also the second wettest on the station record (1984).

Mountsorrel: It was the wettest May on the station's 20 years of records.

Lincoln (Non-instrumental observations): Rain Days 21, Days of Thunder 6, Days of Hail 3.

Coton-in-the-Elms: This was the coldest May since 1996. It only warmed up, with a taste of summer, in the final few days. Nights were often chilly, with air frost recorded in the first few days and, with nine ground frosts being the most since 2013. The air minimum was the third coldest May night on a thirty-year record. It was the wettest month as well, not just in terms of the total recorded but, also the number of rain days: 21 days with rain was the highest number for any May in the past thirty years.

Desford: Cold and wet, unsettled with a wintry flavour at times; cold Arctic air brought hail showers and cold nights for the time of year.

May 1921.

Observers Notes.

Copdock (Ipswich): Over the series of years covered by the observations at this station May has proved to be the most dependable of the months in this locality and has proved no exception this year. It has been a beautiful month in every sense of the word, the rainfall during the first few days and again at the end of the month redeeming what would otherwise have been a very serious drought. From the 9th to the 25th inclusive a brilliant spell of weather yielded an abundant amount of sunshine, nearly 200 hours of the total occurring in that period.

Lenton Fields (Notts.): Owing to drought some leaves were falling of the trees at the end of the month, their tint was quite yellow as if it were Autumn.

Tenbury (Worcester): Night frosts on the 16th, 18th, 21st and 28th caused much damage to fruit and vegetables.

Southport (Lancs.): An exceedingly fine month, very sunny, with sea-breezes almost every afternoon, and a marked deficiency of the northerly to easterly winds of spring. A light rainfall, but well spread. Relative humidity decidedly below, and evaporation somewhat above, normal. Ground water level becoming low.

Sheepstor (Dartmoor): From March 24th to May 5th this station escaped ground frost on three nights only. Potatoes severely cut down and red currants and gooseberries damaged. The May and Lilac had hardly any bloom except in sheltered places, the persistent frosts having destroyed the first shoots.

Dublin (Fitzwilliam Square): In general terms the month may be described as favourable. It opened and closed with cold spells of some intensity. In the middle and second third of the

month, on the other hand, quiet dry, bright and warm weather prevailed, insolation being particularly powerful.ⁱⁱ

Derby and Burton Area: Most of the rainfall sites collected 40-45 mm, with just two below 40 mm. It was therefore a little drier than normal. Temperatures varied between about -1 C on the 5th to between 24 and 1 C on the 25th. Several cold nights occurred late in the month with minima around 2 to 3 C. The overall mean temperature for Burton on Trent was about 12.ⁱⁱⁱ

Overview of May 1921.

The weather of the month was generally fine and dry over much of the country, except for the extreme north-west, where it was unsettled. The weather that had been the main characteristic of the previous months of 1921 was therefore maintained. There was also continuous fine weather in southern England from the 16th to the 25th.

The month commenced with an anticyclone over Iceland and a depression over Scandinavia. This allowed fine warm weather to cover the British Isles apart from some local parts of the coast. A cold northerly gradually extended south reaching southern England by the evening of the 2nd, which continued until the 4th. This produced cold showery weather in northern Scotland with night frosts in places. Between the 5th and 10th unsettled, milder, weather predominated, with some rain, throughout the country and, on the 12th, a depression, from the Atlantic, filled over England after causing local thunderstorms. The unsettled weather continued until the 16th when a belt of high pressure became established, extending from the Azores to the Baltic, and produced a spell of fine weather over Southern England, which persisted until the 25th; maxima on this day exceeded 24 C at many stations. On the 25th a trough of low pressure developed over England and France which produced thunderstorms in a few places in Eastern England during the night of the 25th, and more widely on the 26th. The trough moved East, and cooler weather extended over the country from the north-west. There was a northerly gale and snow over Iceland on the 25th and 26th. This allowed cold air into the country and resulted in low upper air temperatures and local hail and thunder over much of the British Isles. Unsettled weather returned between the 28th and 31st, with strong winds over much of the country, heavy rain in the north-west, but smaller amounts of rain elsewhere. The month closed with the Azores anticyclone becoming re-established.

Sea fog was reported along south-western coasts from the 11th to the 13th, and in the English Channel on the 13th and 14th. Visibility was otherwise good and, unusually, a significant number of stations reported exceptionally good visibility.

An exceptionally severe, late season, frost was noted in many parts of Scotland, eastern Ireland, and northern England on the 5th, and even in the south some wintry temperatures were recorded. Ground frost was generally noted in the London area with grass minima

registering [-4 C] at Greenwich, [-3 C] at Kew and Kensington Palace, and [-2 C] at Croydon airfield. In direct contrast the 25th was the warmest day of the month. At Weymouth, a temperature of [27 C] was noted, and at Tunbridge Wells [26 C]. However, locally on the east coast, with a cold northerly breeze, temperatures were around [11 C] lower; at Lowestoft, for example, the day-time maximum was only [16 C], even though the sun shone continuously through-out the day.

Following the 25th, cold weather became re-established towards the end of the month. Under the influence of Arctic air, lower temperatures became general and, on the 27th, temperatures in the north of the country barely exceeded [10 C], while at Eskdalemuir a minimum of [-3 C] was recorded and a grass minimum of [-5 C]. At Ilfracombe, the maximum was only [12 C] and, as far south as Ross-on-Wye there was ground frost at night. It was a fairly similar situation in Scotland.

Rainfall was below average, except in western Scotland, where precipitation totals were around average, and in northern Scotland where the precipitation was above average. The deficiency ranged from 59% of average in the south-east of England, to 90% in southern Scotland and south-west England. Less than 25 mm fell over parts of the east coast and 50 mm was rare in any part of the east. In the Welsh Mountains precipitation was below 100 mm, while more than 150 mm fell in the Lake District and over the western Highlands. May was the fourth successive month with rainfall below average in England. The areas that experienced this lack of rainfall during the four-month period, extended from Devon and Sussex in the south, across England, to Haddingtonshire [East Lothian]. At Totland Bay (Isle of Wight) the total rainfall was lower than in any previous four Spring months, except during the great Spring drought of 1893. [February 5 mm or 10%, March 27 mm or 53%, April 21 mm or 50%, May 29 mm or 60%. This gives a combined average of 43% for the four-month period].^{iv}

Except for Northern Ireland, with a mean temperature [0.2 C] below average, and Southern Ireland with an average mean temperature, the remainder of the British Isles was above average. This excess ranged from [+1.6 C] in north-east England to [+0.1 C] in western Scotland.

In general May 1921 was fine and dry.

May 1921.

Central England Data.^v (Averaging period is 1891 to 1920.)

Mean Maximum Temperature: 16.5 C. Average: 16.3 C.

Mean Minimum Temperature: 6.5 C. Average: 6.7 C.

Mean Temperature: 11.5 C. Average: 11.3 C.

England and Wales Rainfall: 46.5 mm. Average: 57.8 mm.

Midlands Mean Maximum Temperature: 16.5 C.

Midlands Mean Minimum Temperature: 5.3 C.

Midlands Mean Temperature: 10.9 C.

Midlands Rainfall: 41.8 mm.

May 2021 (Provisional)

Central England (Averaging period is 1991-2020).

Mean Maximum Temperature: 14.6 C. Average: 16.5 C.

Mean Minimum Temperature: 5.7 C. Average: 7.3 C.

Mean Temperature: 10.1 C. Average: 11.9 C.

England and Wales Rainfall: 122.5 mm. Average: 62.7 mm.

ⁱ Pitsford Monthly Weather Report, May 2021, Pitsford Weather Centre, Headline p. 3.

ⁱⁱ Monthly Weather Report, May 1921, Meteorological Office, 1921, HMSO, p. 57.

ⁱⁱⁱ D J Stanier, by email, 2 June 2021.

^{iv} Monthly Weather Report, February to May 1921, Meteorological Office, 1921, HMSO, Table 3 for each month.

^v Hadley Centre, Central England and Midlands, Meteorological Office.