

High pressure remained the dominant feature over the next few days, its centre migrating slowly westwards maintaining a broad easterly flow across the UK. Both the 17th and 18th were virtually cloudless days providing 14.3 and 14.5 hours of sunshine respectively, temperatures peaking at 21.8C and 22.4C on these days. By the 19th frontal troughs were beginning to penetrate both Scotland and the north of England, though progress southwards was slow. The result was to introduce some cloud into the region late in the afternoon of the 19th after another hot and sunny day.

Skies cleared overnight on the 19th/20th to see another day dawn almost cloudless. The high pressure centre had moved further into the Atlantic allowing a weak frontal system to straddle the north of the country from west to east, though this made very little progress southwards until late afternoon. By 16.00 UTC a narrow belt of convective cloud moved from the north bringing a short spell of heavy rain and localised thunder. As this cold front passed skies again cleared to give a further spell of late sunshine bringing the total for the day to 10.5 hours.

The 21st dawned with high pressure still entrenched to the west of Ireland whilst a low pressure centre lay to the north east. Weak cold fronts straddled the north of the UK and these made slow and erratic progress southwards during the day. The result was a period of light rain from 1050 to 1130 UTC with a light NNW to NW wind and a negligible amount of sunshine, the maximum temperature of 16.9C being 7 degrees down on the previous day. With high pressure now firmly established in the Atlantic off the south west of the UK and a complex area of low pressure over Scandinavia, winds remained generally from a north westerly quarter. Weak frontal troughs continued to be spawned and these moved erratically south eastwards over northern areas bringing little more than cloud to the Midlands with occasional, and light, rain. The 22nd, though marginally sunnier, saw a daytime maximum no higher than 18.5C and it did remain dry.

The 23rd saw a continuation in this pattern of weather, the day being rather dull with a mere 12 minutes of sunshine, a maximum afternoon temperature of 15.8C and a trace of precipitation from the occasional drizzle and light rain which occurred during the afternoon. The predominant synoptic pattern continued to consist of low pressure to the north east and high pressure to the south west of the country. The result was to draw in rather cool and showery northerly air over the next few days. The 24th was a dry day with 4.9 hours of sunshine and a maximum temperature of 17.4C. This was bettered on the 25th which saw 5.2 hours of sunshine and a maximum of 18.1C though intermittent, slight rain occurred during the afternoon and early evening amounting to no more than 0.2mm.

On the 26th a cold front made erratic and slow progress southwards to clear the region at 13.00 UTC. This gave a little rain though sunshine was very sparse amounting to no more than 0.9 hour over the day. It was also cool with a maximum of 14.8C, the cool and showery air stream continuing into the 27th which was a day of sunny spells with a very cool northerly wind.

This general pattern of weather continued basically until the end of the month as low pressure systems moved to the south and south west of the country. This maintained a broad easterly air flow across the region allowing daytime temperatures to rise gradually to 17.1C on the 28th, 19.6C on the 29th and 21.2 by the 30th by which time the wind had moved to a more south westerly quarter. The 30th was a day of almost unbroken sunshine totalling 13.8 hours, though it did cloud over during the late evening to give a little light rain in the small hours of the 31st. With a more pronounced south westerly flow the 31st was a warm and sunny day with 8.9 hours of sunshine and a day maximum of 20.3C though low pressure to the south and south west of the country remained the dominant synoptic feature.

SUMMARY FOR MAY 1998.

In general it was the warmest May since 1992, the mean maximum of 18.3C being the fifth warmest in 43 years as was the mean daily of 13.1C. With a daily maximum of 24.7C the month produced the eleventh highest figure on record and the warmest May day since the 24.7C registered in 1992. The night minimum of 13.4C gave the warmest night since the 13.8C of 1989. In addition, only 1 ground frost was recorded, the second lowest on record bettered only by the zero record of 1970. All temperature anomalies were positive ranging from +2.8C for the radiation maximum to +1.2C for the 50 cm earth.

The rainfall total of 13.3mm was the second lowest in 53 years behind the 12.2mm of 1991. In all rain fell on only 8 days, the best figures since the 7 in 1991 whilst the total of 11 hours rainfall duration was the lowest on record, the previous best being 12.2 hours in 1991.

Sunshine at 200.7 hours was 11% up on average, but well below the 256.6 hours of May last year. Only 1 day was without sun, one third of the normal, and the lowest since 1995 which also had 1 occasion.

The predominant wind direction ended at ENE with a mean speed of 5.4 knots, the maximum gust of 27 knots occurring on the 5th.

No snow, sleet, hail or thunder occurred during the month though fog was reported on two mornings.