

AUGUST 1998.

After the succession of depressions which had crossed the country during July, it was something of a change to find a ridge of high pressure feeding across the north west from the Azores high on the 1st. This, coupled with low pressure to the north east of the UK, resulted in a mainly north easterly airstream across much of the Midlands which was both cloudy and relatively cool. Light rain occurred on and off until 1448, though the very heavy storms which crossed some areas in the south and south east missed this area completely. Sunshine was no more than token, at 18 minutes, with a maximum temperature of 17.2C, not exactly summer weather!

The 2nd began bright and sunny, with pressure building appreciably across the southern half of the country as the ridge tumbled south eastwards. Winds remained north easterly and light and the day was warm and sunny, 8.8 hours of sunshine being recorded with a maximum temperature of 20.8C. The interlude was short lived as dawn on the 3rd saw a return to the cloudy and cool weather, active frontal systems crossing rapidly from west to south east bringing a period of intermittent light rain beginning at 05.25 UTC to become prolonged and heavy by 0630, this continuing until a little after 10.00. The ensuing day was thence one of periods of intermittent light rain and fleeting sunshine amounting to no more than 42 minutes with a daytime maximum temperature of 18.5C.

By the morning of the 4th a developing, and intensifying, ridge pushed from the Azores high to cover most of the south of the country. This gave a much sunnier day in the south though parts of the Midlands, and places further north, continued to be plagued with cloud. However, here we had a warm and sunny day with an afternoon maximum of 20.5C and 8.1 hours sunshine.

This ridge persisted over the next few days, the centre moving gradually eastwards, an area of low pressure remaining firmly rooted to the north of Scotland. This resulted in weak frontal systems straddling the north of the country which moved little, and which brought spells of light, sometimes moderate, rain to both southern Scotland and the north of England. Over the south of the UK the weather gradually improved to give sunny and warm days. Maximum temperatures climbed gradually, giving 23.4C on the 5th, 23.6C on the 6th and 25.3C on the 7th, the latter only the second time that the 25C had been capped so far this year. Both the 5th and 6th saw almost 14 hours of sunshine, though the 7th was down to 8.3 hours due to a rather cloudy morning.

By the 8th the ridge was declining somewhat, though a further high began to develop to the north west of the UK. A cloudless night brought a heavy dew, followed by a hot day with an afternoon maximum of 27.5C, the hottest day of the year to date, and 12.5 hours of bright sunshine. Overnight on the 8th/9th a cloud sheet from the North Sea encroached across the Midlands and this failed to clear until late morning. Despite this maximum temperatures still managed to top 26.2C though sunshine was pegged back to 8.8 hours.

The 10th again dawned clear, though a persistent cover of fracto cumulus developed covering the Midlands until mid morning, by which time temperatures had reached 20C. With high pressure in the North Sea pulling back towards the Continent, weak frontal systems from the Atlantic were once again able to make some headway towards the UK, spreading cloud and rain into western Scotland. Here the afternoon maximum peaked at 26.4C with 8 hours of hazy sunshine recorded under part clouded skies which cleared completely by sunset.