

2003

MAY SUMMARY.

The maximum temperature of 27.0C/80.6F on the 31st was 3.6C above the 30-year mean and the highest May figure since 1990 [also 27.0C/80.6F]. This brought the mean maximum to 16.7C/62.1F, 0.4C above average and the lowest such figure since 2000 [16.7C/62.1F] due to the rather cold period mid-month. The lowest minimum temperature of -1.2C/29.8F on the 15th was well down on expectation and the lowest since May 1996 with -2.2C/28F. The mean daily thus ended at 12.1C/53.8F some 0.8C above average giving the lowest figure since 2000 [11.8C/53.2F]. May was therefore a variable month regarding temperature, having high values at the end but decidedly cool mid-month. The lowest temperature above grass was -4.0C/24.8F on the 15th giving a sharp ground frost damaging to bedding out material. However, all soil and earth temperatures show positive anomalies from +0.1C at both 10 and 20cm to +3.9C at the soil surface.

Rainfall was above average by 11.5% giving rather a wet month with 20 days on which rain fell, the highest figure since 1986 with 21. Of these 14 were wet [$>1\text{mm}/0.04\text{in}$] and 1 very wet [$>10\text{mm}/0.39\text{in}$]. Rain fell for a period of 60.2 hours some 35% in excess of the normal with a maximum rate of 67mm/2.64 in per hour on the 18th in a thunder-

storm. It was not until the final week that high pressure "killed off" the shower activity leading to more settled weather.

Sunshine did, however, manage to exceed the average by 12.5%, slightly down on the 212 hours recorded in 2001. By far the best day was the last, with a total of 14.3 hours of sunshine, and in all just 2 days were totally sunless. Despite the high rainfall, 11 days were classed as "sunny" [$>9\text{hrs daily}$] and 4 days "very sunny" [$>12\text{ hours daily}$], in what had seemed in places, to be a rather poor month!

Thunder occurred on 3 days, the 13th, 18th and 19th, the latter accompanied by large hail over 8mm in size. A lightning bolt caused severe damage to electronic equipment at the station and several houses locally suffered roof damage with one lady householder who was on the telephone at the time ending in hospital. Winds were predominantly south westerly and light with a maximum gust of 33kn/38mph on the 19th in the thundery line squall.

Evaporation totalled 65.9mm/3.59ins with rainfall at 61.1mm/2.41ins leading to a water deficit of 4.8mm/0.19in for the month. Air frost occurred over a time span of 2.3 hours with ground frost covering 7.9 hours, the latter causing some plant damage locally. Fog was not recorded on any morning and the mean cloud cover of 65% helped the mean 09hr humidity of 72.2%. Black bulb radiation peaked on the final day at 57.8C/136.0F. In all, a pleasant end to spring.