

May 2021

Slack pressure across Northern Europe opened up the new month, with a gentle but cool northerly drift down across the UK and Channel. Localised showers built up over the southern half of the island through the day, limiting sunshine totals with even a report of a hail shower late morning on the 1st in St Martins. Overnight clear skies led to hoar frosts by dawn on each of the first 3 days of the month, as high pressure gently started to nudge in from the southwest.

A glance at the European weather charts finally started to show a change from a mostly settled anticyclonic pattern, to a more mobile and less settled, Atlantic driven scenario, as a deepening low pressure system swept in from the west bringing strong winds and outbreaks of rain across the UK. Locally thickening cloud through the afternoon of the 3rd, together with freshening southwesterly winds heralded the arrival of a band of patchy rain mid evening, clearing overnight to a bright but breezy day on the 4th. That low continued its progress eastward into Scandinavia, with a cold plunge of Arctic air running down across northern and central parts of the UK, with some appreciable amounts of snow over high ground.

A brief rash of rain & hail showers reached our shores later that evening before clearing to the south by dawn on the 5th, to leave us with a bright start to the day. Extensive high cloud ahead of the next developing wave depression out in the near Atlantic started to feed in that afternoon, making our sunshine hazy for the most part before the cloud thickened and lowered overnight with rain arriving in the small hours of the 6th. That rain became persistent through the morning and early afternoon before easing away by late afternoon to leave a fine evening with excellent visibility. Indeed such was the lack of cloud and exceptionally clear visibility that we observed a Green Flash at sunset.

This brief interlude of cool, clear air sweeping down from the north was all too short-lived however, as the next Atlantic low was already deepening out to the west with the associated frontal rain arriving late evening on the 7th, becoming persistent overnight with some hill fog patches. The clearing cold front hung back out to the west though, so we enjoyed dry but mostly cloudy conditions through the 8th and in to Liberation Day. That cold front began to edge closer to our western shores later that afternoon with a few spots of rain, and although we didn't see too much in the way of sunshine, at least temperatures made it up to a pleasant 17°C.

That low pressure had become near-stationary just off the west coast of Ireland by the 10th, and the cold front had cleared through to the east, leaving us in a showery southwesterly flow until a slow moving occlusion wrapped around another slow moving area of low pressure pushed in to the Western Channel early on the 12th. Cloudy conditions with intermittent rain through the day gave way to some heavier bursts around dawn on the 13th, with more persistent rain & drizzle before finally clearing around midnight going in to the 14th. That 36 hour spell of rain yielded some 15mm of much needed rain, but only 2.2 hours of sunshine. A funnel cloud was also spotted off the south coast of the island late on the 12th.

The next Atlantic system was already queuing up out the west though, and after a cloudy day on the 14th, the next band of rain pushed in late evening but cleared through by dawn on the 15th to leave a bright but breezy day with just the odd passing light shower. This unsettled, showery and rather breezy spell with lower than average temperatures continued for the next few days, but a ridge between systems on the 19th gave us a pleasant but still rather cool & breezy day in the islands with extensive high cloud towards the end of the day.

The next low out to the west was deepening rapidly as it swung in across the British Isles, bringing strong winds together with bands of rain, often heavy and prolonged in places. Initially rainfall amounts were quite small locally as the bulk of the weather tracked just to the north of the islands, but a band of more organised and heavy showers dropped across the Bailiwick through the late afternoon of the 21st with winds gusting up to gale force for a time.

As that low filled and edged slowly over the North Sea so conditions in the islands improved with the showers becoming more isolated and those strong westerly winds gradually easing down. Air temperatures continued to disappoint though, barely making the mid teens.



Impressive display of optical phenomena just before sunset on the 19th. Sunlight is reflecting and refracting through ice crystals in high level *Cirrus* clouds to produce a strong 22° halo and 2 well defined *Parhelia* or Mock Suns. Photo credit Laura Johns.

Following the departure of that last area of low pressure, it wasn't long before the next system rolled in from the Atlantic as extensive pre-frontal high cloud thickened and lowered through the 23rd with the first of the rain arriving just after midday. That rain became heavier and more persistent through the evening before clearing just before midnight. The cold frontal clearance saw a gust at the airport of 46.3 knots (just over 53mph) around 2036hrs, that's the highest recorded May gust for 8 years.

This particular low slowed its eastward progress over the UK with a strong showery flow covering all parts of the British Isles, with a number of heavy showers locally, occasionally with hail through the 24th. Pressure was starting to build from the southwest overnight into the 25th with those showers all but dying out locally. Just squeezing in ahead of this ridge, though, was an active open wave depression developing off the southern tip of Ireland bringing outbreaks of rain to our shores by noon. This rain became heavier and more persistent through the afternoon and together with strong southwesterly winds and temperatures barely reaching double figures, it felt more like March than the end of May.

By dawn on the 26th that system had cleared through to the southeast, leaving the islands in a drier, post frontal flow, but still with the cloud from the back edge of that cold front keeping sunshine down to just a few hours that afternoon. However, the good news was that finally the Atlantic Conveyor was being replaced by something altogether more settled and warm as pressure started to rise over southern Britain and the nearby continent.

Early shallow fog lifted and thickened briefly before the 27th dawned fine with temperatures picking up nicely to the mid teens and this trend continued in to the 28th when we saw the mercury reach 20.1°C for only the 2nd time so far this year. Extensive medium & high cloud through the day however, kept the edge off the sunshine total.

Slow moving fronts out to the west of the UK were kept at bay by this high pressure belt, now centred to the north of Norway, but a rogue band of showers pushed up through the Channel in the small hours of the 29th, easing away only around lunchtime. Clearing skies through the afternoon continued overnight and in to the

30th although a nagging northeasterly breeze pegged temperatures back to just short of 17°C that afternoon. As that high slipped slowly southward so the gradient down the Channel slackened for the 31st and with the absence of any nearby fronts, we enjoyed 14.1 hours of sunshine and temperatures peaking at 21.2°C; the warmest and sunniest day of the year so far.

Despite that warm snap at the end of the month, May ended up 1.2°C cooler than the long term mean; duller, wetter and also windier than average as Atlantic low pressure provided the main influence on the UK weather.

May 2021

DAY	DATE	TEMPERATURE deg C							WIND				RAIN	SUN	WEATHER
		BAROMETER		AIR		GRASS	SOIL		DIR'N	SPEED(knots)					
		at 9a.m.	MAX	MIN	MEAN	MIN	30cm	100cm	9a.m.	9a.m.	MEAN	MAX			
Sat	1	1016.7	10.9	4.5	7.7	-1.6	10.9	11.1	120	05	4.1	12	NIL	7.5	Hoar frost then mainly fine odd shower am
Sun	2	1022.2	12.7	4.7	8.7	-1.8	10.6	11.1	290	04	4.5	13	NIL	10.5	Hoar frost then fine occn fair am
Mon	3	1020.8	13.6	4.9	9.3	-0.5	10.8	11.1	210	14	16.6	46	1.7	7.0	Fine, bec cldy & windy pm with rain late eve
Tue	4	1008.5	12.7	8.3	10.5	7.4	11.3	11.0	280	17	17.9	40	0.6	9.1	Cldy, slt rain early am. Fine pm. Cldy late eve with rain/hail shw rs
Wed	5	1013.5	11.6	6.0	8.8	3.2	11.3	11.0	290	13	13.1	26	4.5	8.5	Fine bec fair w ith slt shw r @ noon then xtmsv high cloud pm
Thu	6	1004.6	10.2	6.6	8.4	4.7	11.3	11.1	050	05	5.5	15	1.4	3.6	Cldy w ith rain until late pm, bec fair then fine eve
Fri	7	1018.5	12.0	5.2	8.6	-0.5	10.8	11.1	090	03	6.4	21	4.9	9.8	Fine bec cldy pm, w ith patchy rain from late eve
Sat	8	1006.2	16.1	9.5	12.8	9.2	12.2	11.1	200	16	14.8	27	NIL	5.2	Early mist & fog assoc w ith rain & drz, clrg by daw n to fair
Sun	9	998.0	17.0	10.4	13.7	10.0	12.7	11.2	190	10	10.6	21	TR	1.9	Cloudy occn fair, light rain pm
Mon	10	1000.5	14.9	8.7	11.8	7.9	12.6	11.3	210	16	10.9	25	2.6	7.8	Fair am bec cldy pm w ith sct shw rs, occn hvy
Tue	11	1007.1	13.2	8.3	10.8	6.3	12.7	11.5	180	12	13.5	29	TR	10.2	Fine, becoming cloudy w ith occ show ers
Wed	12	1008.8	12.9	7.7	10.3	6.1	12.5	11.6	150	10	12.1	33	8.1	2.2	Bright am. Patchy rain bec mod late pm. Funnel cloud @ 1620z
Thu	13	1005.5	9.9	7.3	8.6	6.9	12.1	11.6	280	17	14.5	26	7.3	NIL	Overcast w ith rain from daw n, occn hvy w ith drz am
Fri	14	1011.0	13.4	9.5	11.5	9.1	11.7	11.6	330	09	8.4	25	2.9	5.6	Cloudy occn fair. Rain from late eve
Sat	15	1002.3	14.4	8.2	11.3	7.9	12.4	11.6	250	16	15.2	27	1.8	9.3	Early rain clrg to cldy occn fair am, fair/fine pm
Sun	16	1000.6	13.9	9.9	11.9	7.8	12.8	11.7	220	14	16.7	35	0.2	4.5	Scattered show ers am, fair pm
Mon	17	1009.1	13.9	9.9	11.9	8.4	12.7	11.8	280	16	15.7	32	NIL	8.6	Isl shw rs before daw n, fair w ith some brighter spells pm
Tue	18	1016.3	14.5	9.2	11.9	6.5	13.1	11.9	240	10	11.5	20	2.2	11.8	Fair w ith good sunny periods odd shower eve
Wed	19	1020.8	14.2	9.2	11.7	7.4	13.4	12.0	290	14	12.8	24	TR	12.0	Early shw rs clrg to fair/fine. High cloud late pm
Thu	20	1016.2	14.2	9.7	12.0	7.1	13.8	12.2	170	19	17.0	39	0.6	2.8	Cloudy w ith occ rain, clrg to fine early eve
Fri	21	1005.2	13.8	8.4	11.1	7.9	13.0	12.3	240	26	24.6	46	4.3	10.0	Isolated blustery show ers, some heavy for a time in the evening
Sat	22	1006.8	13.1	8.7	10.9	8.1	12.7	12.3	250	18	15.4	31	TR	8.8	Cloudy w ith occ shower clearing to long sunny intervals pm
Sun	23	1012.3	13.5	7.4	10.5	4.4	12.9	12.4	210	15	14.4	46	9.8	2.3	Cloudy w ith rain from early pm, bec prsistnt & hvy, clrg late eve
Mon	24	1003.7	12.2	7.6	9.9	6.7	12.7	12.4	220	18	16.8	33	3.0	7.7	Sunny periods, sct show ers occn w ith hail
Tue	25	1020.4	13.1	9.4	11.3	7.3	12.5	12.3	280	15	15.2	34	11.8	3.4	Fair bec cldy w ith rain from mid pm, cleared by midnight
Wed	26	1017.8	14.4	8.8	11.6	7.6	12.6	12.2	290	07	7.5	15	NIL	2.5	Cloudy w ith sunny spells developing in the afternoon
Thu	27	1020.9	16.3	7.7	12.0	2.1	13.1	12.3	240	04	4.4	10	NIL	14.0	Mist w ith early fog soon clrg to fine
Fri	28	1021.6	20.1	9.8	15.0	7.4	14.5	12.4	150	03	5.7	13	0.3	8.8	Extensive high & medium cloud
Sat	29	1024.3	18.5	12.1	15.3	11.1	15.3	12.6	090	08	7.3	17	0.1	4.2	Cloudy w ith show ers am, clrg to fair periods pm
Sun	30	1025.5	15.7	11.3	13.5	10.1	15.2	12.8	060	12	10.7	21	NIL	11.4	Cloudy, became fine late am
Mon	31	1019.8	21.2	10.5	15.9	7.6	15.5	13.0	080	08	8.4	18	NIL	14.1	Fine, dry air
MEAN	30 YEAR AVG	1012.4	14.1	8.4	11.3	6.2	12.6	11.8	W	12.1	12.0	TOTAL	68.1	225.1	
	1991-2020	1016.9	15.1	9.4	12.3	7.2	13.4	12.2	NE	10.9	10.4	////	49.0	238.9	
Diff from prev Avg		+0.9mb	+0.2°C	+0.2°C	+0.3°C	+0.5°C	+0.4°C	+0.4°C	NE	-0.5Kt	-0.5Kt		-1.9mm	+3.4hrs	
EXTREMES	NUMBER	RAIN	WET	SNOW//	HAIL	THNDER	LGHTNG	AIR	GROUND	FOG	FOG	FOG	GALE	NO	
ARE IN	OF DAYS	≥0.2mm	≥1.0mm	SLEET				FROST	FROST		9a.m.			SUN	
BOLD TYPE	WITH	18	14	0	2	0	1	0	4	2	0	0	0	1	TOTALS FOR YEAR TO DATE
RECORDS FROM JANUARY 1947															
WETTEST DAY	40.4mm	DRIEST MONTH	4.1mm	LOWEST MN	0.1°C	WARMEST MNTH	13.9°C	SUNNIEST MNTH	336.4hrs	RAINFALL	345.5 mm	SUNSHINE	798.6 hrs		
DAY/YEAR	24th/1950	YEAR	1989	DAY/YEAR	2nd/1979	YEAR	1989	YEAR	1989	RAIN DAYS	71	SUNLESS I	17		
WETTEST MNTH	128.7mm	HIGHEST MAX	25.9	LOWEST GRASS	-5.6°C	COLDEST MNTH	9.9°C	DULLEST MNTH	136.9hrs	WET DAYS	58				
YEAR	1994	DAY/YEAR	30th/2003	DAY/YEAR	5th/1979	YEAR	1984	YEAR	1981						