

Apr 80

RECORDS TUMBLE WITH THE WEATHER IN APRIL.

The month of April saw no fewer than four long-standing records broken, these in rainfall, temperature and pressure.

Cool weather was the predominant feature of the first week, ground frost being recorded on six out of the first seven nights. The first two days also saw over half of the month's recorded rainfall with 6.0 mm (0.24in) and 5.2 mm (0.20in) respectively. Skies were reasonably cloud-free, and daytime temperatures were in the region of 15°C (59°F).

On the third an anticyclone began building to the south west and on Sunday April 6 the sea-level pressure stood at 1035.2 mb (~~30.57~~in Hg), equalling the record first set in April 1957. Pressure was to remain abnormally high for the rest of the month, and this produced a succession of relatively warm, sunny days coupled with cool, or even cold, nights with widespread ground frosts.

By April 14 daytime temperatures were peaking at 21.6°C (71°F) giving the area its warmest April day for at least 25 years. For a short spell around the middle of the month no ground frosts were recorded, though these recurred with the onset of anticyclonic conditions from April 20 until the last day of the month.

Rainfall has been very sparse, though no records for dryness have been broken. In all, 21 mm (0.81 in) fell, which was 33 mm (1.30 in) lower than usual for April. The period from April 3 to April 22 was rain-free, thus creating a period of absolute drought (15 days with no measurable rain). Rain was recorded on only six days of the month for a total of some 8.5 hours, also creating a new record. The previous 'low' for April rain duration was 15.6 hours in 1957.

Examination of the mean temperatures for the month reveal above-average values for all except the mean minimum. The mean maximum at 14°C (57°F) was 2.4°C above expectation, whilst the mean daily at 8.9°C (48°F) was 1.3°C up on an average year. Due to the preponderance of ground frosts, the mean minimum, at 3.8°C (39°F) was marginally below expectation.

All soil temperatures are now well up, and plant growth potential ought to be improving. However, tender garden material can still be harmed by ground frosts of which we could expect four in a normal May.

Frost was recorded on 15 nights on the ground (5 up on normal) and on 1 night in the air (3 down on normal). There was no incidence of fog, thunder, snowflakes or gales, though hail was recorded on April 2. The strongest wind, at 25 kt, was on April 19, the gusts reaching gale force on that day. The wind was from a north-westerly quarter on 16 days. In essence, a very warm, sunny and dry month.

The summer of 1957, which followed an almost identical Spring, was warmer than average, but considerably wetter and with 50% more thunder than normal, and less sun.