

AUGUST AND SUMMER OF 1997.

Relatively low pressure dominated the first few days of the month as fronts crossed the UK from NW to SE from a depression to the NW of Iceland. Concurrently, a ridge of high pressure was developing from the Azores high though its influence on the first was not enough to prevent spells of light rain. The 2nd saw a cold front across the southern half of the country moving only slowly and giving a brief spell of light rain over the area. In the meantime the ridge continued building from the SW.

On the 3rd a warm front lay across the Channel with a ridge building across NE England. This introduced an ENE airflow giving a dull day with no sunshine recorded. By the 4th a depression in the SW Approaches had introduced fronts lying from the Channel across the Midlands as pressure continued high over the north of England and Scotland. Although the SW of England saw spells of heavy rain from this slow moving front most of the rest of the country remained dry and relatively warm, temperatures here reaching 22.6C on the 5th.

The contributory depression was filling by the 6th, though the SW and south of England continued to see periods of heavy rain from the frontal system which still lay across these areas. The ridge of high pressure over the north of the Midlands gave an almost cloudless day with a maximum temperature of 27C and 6.8 hours of sunshine.

High pressure continued to dominate the weather over the Midlands for the next 5 days bringing a settled spell with gradually rising daytime maximum temperatures peaking at 30.6C on the 10th. Days were airless, hot and oppressive though thundery activity did make brief incursions into some parts of the Midlands from the south west during this period. Every day from the 6th to 12th inclusive produced maximum temperatures in excess of 25C

By the 13th a frontal system was making erratic, and slow, movement eastwards across the region, as the high pressure over the Norwegian Sea moved north eastwards and declined. Heavy rain accompanied by thunder spread across the Midlands during the mid-afternoon with 12.2mm of rain falling in a little over 20 minutes.

A new ridge of high pressure was building across the UK on the 14th as the thundery trough edged north eastwards into the North Sea. This allowed both temperature and humidity to rise again, each day from the 14th to the 20th seeing daytime maxima above 25C, though weak fragmenting fronts still continued to pass through this high pressure area, bringing little more than broken cloud. On the 19th temperatures peaked at 28.9C with little wind, giving a sultry, oppressive day. Heavy, almost tropical storms broke out in several parts of the Midlands, both central Birmingham and Worcester seeing torrential rain.

Pressure had remained high to the NE and low to the NW of the country, drawing hot and humid air from a S or SE direction across the Midlands. A further weak front crossed the area on the 20th, its cloud being thick enough to give a little light rain for a few hours during the morning. Temperatures, however, still managed to climb above 25C although only an hour of sunshine was recorded.

The 21st saw a cold front straddling the country from NW to SE which became slow moving. This introduced cooler air over the region giving the first sub 25C maximum for 8 days and the first sunless day since the 3rd. Intermittent rain occurred for much of the day with more pronounced rain in the evening though totals were no higher than 0.6mm.

As the cold front moved into Europe on the 22nd temperatures rose once again to peak at 25.3C under a slack pressure gradient. By the 23rd the UK was surrounded by low pressure and an undulating front criss-crossed the country from NE to SW, how be it, lying well to the north of the Midlands for much of daylight hours. The day was hence one of broken sunshine and brief showers temperatures peaking at 23C.

The cold front was almost stationary on the 24th and lay from the Wash to the Lizard Peninsula at 9 a.m. Heavy rain bands pulsed along this front northwards throughout the day causing local flooding on roads with a total of 13mm in around 3 hours. The frontal system had moved into Europe by early on the 25th leaving the UK in a mainly showery NW air stream and much cooler, and fresher, air.