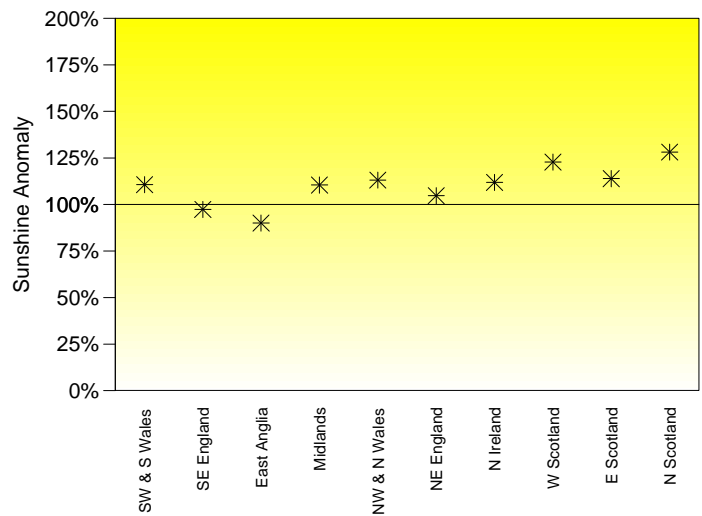
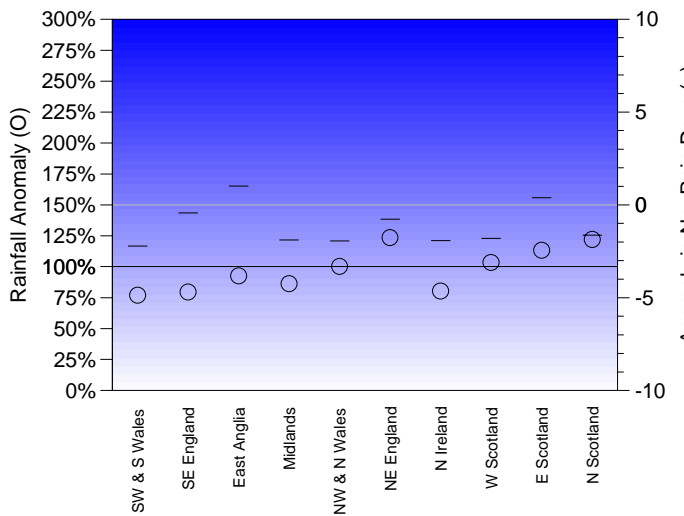


Extremes for May 2012		
Hottest:	29.0°C	Haselbury Plucknett, Somerset, 25th
Coldest:	-6.2°C	Saughall, Strathclyde, 5th
Most Rain:	101.6mm	Kinlochewe, Highland, 13th
Most Sun:	16.6hrs	Auchincruive, Strathclyde, 23rd
Windiest:	115mph	Lerwick, Shetland, 28th
Warmest:	14.3°C	Portchester, Hampshire
Coollest:	7.1°C	Lerwick, Shetland
Wettest:	158.4mm	Kinlochewe, Highland
Driest:	15.2mm	Swaffham, Norfolk
Sunniest:	302.9hrs	Radstock, Somerset
Dullest:	114.2hrs	Swaffham, Norfolk



"He who shears his sheep before St Saviour's Day (May 13th) loves his wool more than his sheep..." This saying suggests that although summer may appear to be just around the corner, May weather often springs some chilly surprises. May 11th marks the feast day of St Mamertus and the 12th that of St Pancras, and the period 11th-13th comprises the festival of the Ice Saints, so named because mid-May was commonly associated with cold weather and frosts damaging young plants and fruit blossom. Interestingly, just such a cold spell occurred this year.

The month opened with the remnants of heavy and thundery rain over England and Wales, and the next two days were cool and overcast with occasional light rain or drizzle. By the 4th, Arctic air had reached northern Britain. Wintry showers fell in northern and eastern Scotland and in many places the early May Bank Holiday was a good deal colder than was Christmas! On the early morning of the 5th, Saughall, Ayrshire, recorded a sharp air frost -6.2°C (22°F), whilst Fair Isle struggled to a maximum of just 4.5°C (40°F) during the afternoon. More rain reached southern and western areas on the 7th, and the following days were very unsettled. It became warmer in the south, but further snow fell over the Scottish Highlands. The 11th was a windy day, but rather brighter, albeit with showers. The 12th saw a ridge establish from an Atlantic anticyclone bringing a brief sunny interlude to most parts before more fronts drove rain across Scotland and Northern Ireland on the 13th and 14th. Hail and thunder were observed widely on the 15th and snow and sleet fell over the Highlands. There was a widespread ground frost on the 16th and raw northeasterly winds set in over the next few days keeping the weather dull and unseasonably cool. However, from the 22nd pressure rose, as an anticyclone developed over Scandinavia, the cloud broke and temperatures soared. It was hottest in western Scotland, and on the 25th, Kinlochewe, Western Ross recorded 28.7°C (84°F). Thundery showers encroached into the south-west on the 27th and these subsequently broke out more widely. On the 28th, a huge cumulonimbus cloud was observed to the north-east of St Albans, Hertfordshire, and two lanes on the Dartford Bridge crossing were closed owing to very heavy rain.

Mean temperatures for May were below average for most places although the warm weather later redeemed what was otherwise a very cool month. Rainfall was generally near or slightly above normal. Sunshine was plentiful for Wales, northern England, Northern Ireland and Scotland, but for many central, southern and eastern areas of England it was a dull month.

In Ireland, as in the UK, summer heat arrived in the last week with 27.8°C (82°F) at Shannon airport on the 25th the highest May reading since records began there in 1938. Two British tourists died while hiking on Gran Canaria as the island was gripped by a heat wave on the 13th. At least six others suffered heat exhaustion as temperatures soared to 40°C (104°F). On the 15th, the new French President, Francois Hollande was on board a plane which was struck by lightning en route to Berlin. There were no injuries, but the aircraft returned to Paris for checks.

In Japan, a deadly tornado struck the city of Tsukuba, 40 miles away from Tokyo on the 6th, leaving devastation in its wake. 200 homes were damaged by the twister and lightning and severe squalls knocked out power to 24,000 homes. 30 people were injured, and there was at least one death. A flash flood swept through the Seti River at Pokhara, a Himalayan tourist spot in Nepal on the 6th. 17 people were killed with 47 others left missing. Tbilisi, the Georgian capital, also suffered flooding on the 13th following heavy rain and snowmelt. At least five people were killed and dozens injured. Floodwaters from the main Mtkvari River inundated roads, cut power and left behind quagmires of mud. Stifling heat affected India during May. Allahabad, Nagpur, Gaya, Raipur and Ramagundam were among the cities exceeding the scorching 45°C (113°F) mark and on the 22nd, Brahmपुरi reached 46.3°C (115°F). Pakistan was also sweltering with several cities in the Sindh region topping 45°C on the 23rd.

In South America, on the 20th the Rio Negro (the largest tributary of the Amazon) burst its banks flooding the centre of Manaus. In contrast, to the west of the Andes, Chile has been in drought. Santiago has received just 9mm of rain so far during 2012 (23% of the normal amount) On 27th-28th a state of emergency was declared in the Thunder Bay area, Canada after severe flooding struck Ontario's Lake Superior region. Roads were washed out, and many schools shut. 70mm rain (nearly the normal monthly amount for May) fell within six hours late on 27th and the 30 hour total exceeded 100mm. On the 30th, the remnants of Tropical Storm Beryl spawned a tornado that destroyed three homes and damaged dozens of others on the North Carolina coast.