

A Science Service Feature

Released upon receipt  
but intended for use  
June 24, 1931

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Mailed June 17, 1931

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"BRITISH RAINFALL"

Each year the principal scientific libraries of the world receive from London a handsome blue volume entitled "British Rainfall," containing records for the previous year from more than 5,000 rainfall stations in the British Isles, together with papers on various topics connected with rainfall and its measurement. Since 1919 this annual work has been published by the Meteorological Office, but prior to that time it was issued by the unofficial British Rainfall Organization.

In proportion to area, the British Isles are vastly better supplied with rainfall records than the United States or Canada. The earliest were begun about the middle of the 17th century, and down to 1800 rainfall had been measured at about 80 places in the islands, though most of the records were very short. After the publication of Luke Howard's "Climate of London" in 1818, keeping a rain record became a hobby of British scientific men and garden lovers.

The present remarkable development of such work, however, was due to the zeal and energy of George James Symons, who began collecting rainfall statistics in 1859, and in 1861 printed a four-page pamphlet entitled "English Rainfall, 1860," containing the total rainfall of the year at 168 stations in England and Wales. He published an appeal for records in the newspapers and next year produced a larger work, "British Rainfall, 1860-61," for which he had secured records from 507 stations in the British Isles. When he died in 1900, about 3,500 stations were included in the British Rainfall Organization, and, under Symons' direction, rain gauges and methods of measurement had been thoroughly standardized throughout the organization.

The great fund of statistics thus assembled made possible the beautiful "Rainfall Atlas of the British Isles," published by the Royal Meteorological Society in 1926.

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21st and Constitution Ave,  
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