

Bournemouth Gardens

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Before we started this project, we didn't know anything about Bournemouth Gardens (also called parks), but our aims were to focus on the Lower, Central and Upper Gardens out of the several different gardens in this city. With the help of the survey we wanted to find out what the meaning of the gardens is for the residents of Bournemouth. We've chosen this topic because we like nature and we think we would like to visit these gardens if we lived in a town like Bournemouth.

When still in Switzerland we made a rough plan of what we're going to do and when, but in the end, we had to change our plans. We didn't get an answer from our interview partner, so our methods were quite spontaneous. We wrote down the different subtopics we wanted to research and split them up among us.

In Bournemouth, we met several times at Marina's house to work for the project (writing the report, finding information, doing the interview). It was more time consuming than we thought but finally, we had done everything we wanted.

General information

The Upper, Central and Lower Gardens are altogether 3 kilometres long. They are all part of the Bourne Valley Greenway and are listed grade 2 in the English heritage register of gardens and parks. The three gardens have all been Green Flag winners since 1999. It is an award which Bournemouth holds more than any other town in the south of England. The parks are recognised for:

- Environmental protection
- Community use
- High quality landscapes
- Safety, cleanliness and accessibility



Lower garden

The Lower Garden lies between Bournemouth Square and the beach. It has plenty of benches to sit on, many flowerbeds and grassy areas. The Lower Garden was laid out in the 1840s and the design and layout of the garden hasn't changed much since the 1870s. Lots of the trees and types of shrubs are still the same.

The Lower Garden isn't very long, but there are attractions for every time of the year. For example minigolf. The minigolf area is at the heart of the Lower Garden. Since 1919, there is also an aviary which is run by volunteers. Most birds are rescues and so the species is not known for all the birds. The garden also features food corners and kiosks for snacks or something to drink.



Central Garden

The Central Garden was first developed in the 1870s. It is located between the lower and the Upper Gardens. It is now the home of tennis courts, a children's playground and a war memorial with beautiful rose borders. A Pergola was added in 1990 to commemorate the centenary of the Borough of Bournemouth. Trails are marked throughout Bournemouth Gardens, with information boards and signs along the way.

Upper Garden

The Upper Garden was originally laid out as a private garden for a family in the 1860s. However, the lease was assigned over to Bournemouth Council after a few years. The Upper Garden has a “three continents”-theme with three separate sections. The first has a European theme, the second an Asian and finally the third theme is based on plant species from North America. Many of the trees in this garden were planted during the latter part of the 19th century and are well over 100 years old.

Throughout the Upper Garden, there are several wooden walkways that allow the visitor to stroll through the unique scenery and inspect the uncommon species growing there. It is more of a “nature trail” than the other two gardens and it ends at the coy pond gardens (a little lake with fish and ducks).

Other gardens

There are some more gardens in and around Bournemouth, for example Boscombe Cliff Garden. To get there one has to walk east from Boscombe Pier. This garden isn't very colourful: there aren't many flowers, but there are more trees and green plants. It originally opened in 1900 and it merges into the Boscombe Overcliff Local Nature Reserve.

Another garden is Boscombe Chine Garden. This one is situated west of Boscombe Pier. This garden is more like the Lower Garden. It has well-kept flowerbeds, large grassy areas for recreation and a minigolf. It also features a café, and both a plant and an animal quiz.

Wildlife

The most common animals that can be seen in the parks and gardens are grey squirrels, seagulls, doves, mice and foxes. They have enough food and it seems that they are quite happy in this location. Surprisingly, we once saw a rabbit in the garden. But also other animals are supposed to live there, but we haven't seen them in the gardens, for example deer, rabbits, blackbirds, sparrows, and others.

Our experience

The first garden we visited was the Lower Garden. We went there on the first Sunday the 23.09.2018 when the weather was nice. Our first impression: we were amazed how many people spent their free time walking in the park and how clean and in a good condition the gardens are kept. As expected, we saw one of these brave grey squirrels running around. It was funny because it looked as if it wanted to attract our attention. On the other hand, we noticed that the parks are also used for several purposes such as music performances or rallies (f.ex. by vegans).

During the next week we spent a several hours in the gardens. Once for the survey and once we just strolled from the Lower Garden to the upper end of the Upper Garden to take pictures for our presentation. It was very impressive and every time we saw different people:

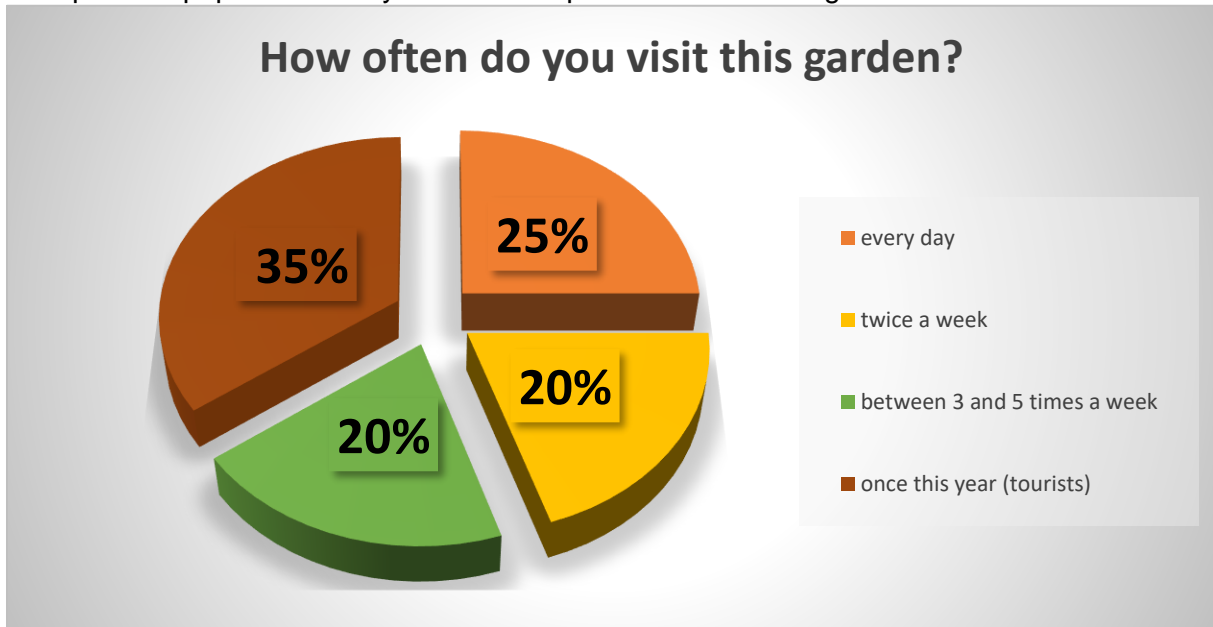
In the Lower Garden there were lots of tourists and people on their way back home from the beach because this garden connects the beach with Bournemouth Square. In addition, it is the sunniest garden of the three, so there are also many people spending time with their friends and studying on the meadow. To sustain yourself there are some kiosks.

The Central garden is quieter and less popular, therefore the perfect place to go for a walk with the dog or a child. Maybe this is also the reason why there were a few homeless people sleeping on benches. The Upper Garden is a little more remote and that is the reason why it is used more by the local people.

In general, in every of the three gardens there were many people doing sports like: jogging, cycling or playing football.

Survey

We conducted our survey in the Lower and Central Garden and asked 20 people about their opinion. One person asked the people three questions and the other one wrote the answers on a piece of paper. We analysed the first question with the diagram after.



The second question was: What do you usually do in this garden? Most people answered this question by saying that they like to sit on a bench and just relax. Other answers were: taking a stroll for example with their dog, reading, studying, sunbathing, jogging and meeting friends or family.

Our last question was: What does this garden (or what do these gardens) mean to you? Many people answered that it is peaceful here and that they enjoy the silence. In addition, for some people it was hard to answer this question because the meaning of the gardens was the same as their activities they do in the gardens, for example a nice place to meet people or to do sports. Surprisingly, only few people (two or three people) told us that the gardens are the only green area in the centre of Bournemouth.

Our conclusion: For most people the gardens are a place to relax with friends and family.

Overall we can say, it was very challenging not to catch too many tourists because most of the people walking through the gardens weren't residents. Seven people, who we asked, were tourists. Finally, we were surprised that so many people agreed to answer our questions.

Our planning

In general, we think we planned our project quite well. We started early enough and could stick to schedule. The only thing we might change in a similar project in the future would be to find an interview partner in advance. This would have spared us the unnecessarily wasted time we had to spend trying to find a person to interview on-site. Unfortunately, we couldn't find much detailed information about the individual gardens on the internet. So we had to search for different sources, for example information boards in the parks and the tourist information desk on-site.

At the beginning we were a bit challenged because the documentation should not be written in German as usual, but in English. However, when we look back, it was a good exercise for our knowledge of the English language. We got the chance to improve our written language and thereby we could build up our language skills..

Links:

Pictures:

- we took the pictures on-site in the parks
- <https://www.letsgoout-bournemouthandpoole.co.uk/things-to-do/bournemouth-gardens/>

Websites:

- <https://www.bournemouth.gov.uk/Parks/FindParksGardens/BournemouthGardens.aspx>
- <https://www.letsgoout-bournemouthandpoole.co.uk/things-to-do/bournemouth-gardens/>
- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bournemouth>