

# Streets of Bournemouth Health

Bournemouth's early reputation for sea-bathing provided the foundation for the first sanatorium in England. People came not only for a cure from disease, but also because the clean sea air, freshened by the pines, and the sheltered walks, offered a warm refuge from the cold northern winters. Eminent physicians compared its healthy quality to the fashionable resorts of the Mediterranean.

The town's motto 'Pulchritudo et Salubritas' adopted in 1890 emphasised its reputation as a beautiful and healthy place. However, it was also regarded unfavourably as a place only for invalids. The First World War saw many of the injured servicemen placed in the local hospitals and hotels. Outbreaks of flu and typhoid affected the town between the wars, and the School Medical Service gives us a detailed view of children's' health.

The older hospitals gradually changed their role or were demolished to be replaced by the Royal Bournemouth Hospital.



ABOVE

The Royal National Sanatorium in about 1900

LEFT

The Royal Bournemouth Hospital in November 2009

Streets of Bournemouth





## **HEALTH AND CLIMATE**

**This Theme has the following Sub-Themes**

**The very first sea-watering place in England**

**The first hospitals**

**Public Health and Epidemics**

**Pulchritudo et Salubritas**

**Climate**

### **The very first sea-watering place in England**

In 1810 when Lewis Tregonwell bought the land on which to build his seaside house the understanding of disease processes was only just beginning. Medical treatment was little different from earlier centuries. Caring for the sick was usually the responsibility of the women in the family, few people had access to doctors and those doctors were not qualified in the way we understand today. Recovery from illness was often due to luck rather than the skill. Surgery was brutish and only undertaken as a last resort. So what could doctors do for their patients? He might, and it was always a 'he' at that time, recommend:

- \* taking a 'powder', that the doctor had prepared himself
- \* using laxatives or emetics in a treatment known as 'purging'
- \* bloodletting by lancing a vein or using leeches
- \* saying prayers for the sick person until the medical emergency had passed.

There were no adequate painkillers until the 19th century when opium became available. Laudanum, a mixture of alcohol and opium, could be bought without prescription. Physicians used laudanum as a panacea for a wide range of illness in adults and children with the consequence that patients frequently became addicted to their medicine.

Health was at the forefront of Bournemouth's ascendance and, in particular, the new fashion for sea-bathing. The first house in modern Bournemouth was in fact a second home built for Lewis Tregonwell as for a summer-house his wife Henrietta. Bournemouth could have continued in this very small way except that Sir George William Tapps-Gervis saw a commercial opportunity to build



an exclusive watering place similar to the fashionable resorts of Weymouth and Brighton. He inherited the Meyrick Estate in 1835 and within four years, two hotels had opened and apartments for visitors were established along what is now Westover Road. The Marine Village of Bourne soon had the requisite features of a spa-by-the-sea:

- \* bathing machines
- \* a hot and cold sea-water bath house
- \* an assembly room at the Belle Vue Hotel where people could gather.

Fortunately the success of the new enterprise received some welcome publicity in a travel guide for those seeking a health-cure *Spas of England and Principal Sea-Bathing Places*, written by Dr A. B. Granville in 1841. In particular he recommended Bournemouth in winter

Bournemouth's reputation as a place for treatment and convalescence improved when it received the commendation of medical practitioners such as Dr Horace Dobell, a specialist in chest diseases. In his worthy 337-page book *The Medical Aspects of Bournemouth and its Surroundings* published in 1885 he discusses the merits of the town and the drawbacks of other places. We would not agree with all of his words today, he advises caution to those people visiting Bournemouth in 1885.

'The practice of 'paddling' or moving about in water barely up to the knees, needs only to be mentioned to be condemned. It has none of the elements of intelligent bathing, and generally ends in congestive headache and bilious vomiting, sometimes both.'

A growing town needs medical services but the first hospital was in fact a sanatorium built for the Brompton Hospital in London in 1855. The Brompton chose Bournemouth as a convalescent home as the climate was considered ideal for people recovering from tuberculosis (TB), a wasting disease of the lungs. The opening of the National Sanatorium for Consumption and Diseases of the Chest in 1855 drew attention to Bournemouth as it was the first Sanatorium for the treatment of tuberculosis in the country. TB was one of the most feared diseases of the 19th century and was a major cause of death in people aged 24-45. It affected all classes but poverty and poor nutrition exacerbated the symptoms. People thought it was hereditary because it often spread within a family especially in overcrowded conditions. TB is passed on through spitting, sneezing



and coughing and was not recognised as an infectious disease until 1880. The Sanatorium existed entirely on charitable donations and patients paid a weekly fee towards their keep.

The Annual Report of 1864 records the counties from which patients were admitted - two people came from as far away as Aberdeen. The report lists the occupations of patients. The highest figures recorded included 11 dressmakers, 11 labourers, 14 menservants and 29 maidservants. Dr Willoughby M. Burslem was the first doctor of the National Sanatorium. He was particularly interested in the cause and treatment of TB and published a book *Pulmonary Consumption and its Treatment* in 1852 based on his experience working in other hospitals.

Bournemouth's role as a place to recuperate from TB and other lung diseases brought new people to the town. This created opportunities for employment and added to the town's growing population who would need doctors and chemists and related service industries.



## The first hospitals

Thirty years after Tregonwell built his house there was a little cluster of new villas centred around the Bourne stream. Residents and visitors who needed to see a doctor would have to go to Poole or Christchurch. An advert appeared in the Salisbury and Winchester Journal on 16th May 1842 'a resident surgeon now affords the patients at Bourne what was before much needed, the opportunity of a skilful hand'.

The Bournemouth Public Dispensary opened at 2 Granville Cottages, Yelverton Road on the 17th October 1859 offering advice and free medicine to the poor people of Bournemouth. The earliest dispensaries were not chemists' shops but a place where people could attend as out-patients or request treatment at home. Between 1851 and 1861 the population of Bournemouth trebled and the successful Dispensary quickly outgrew the site and moved in 1868 to larger premises in Madeira Vale near the junction of modern-day Stafford and Lorne Park Roads. It provided in-patient wards for male and female patients and accident cases. Boscombe opened its first

Date of opening	Name	Location
1859	Bournemouth Public Dispensary	2 Granville Cottages, Yelverton Road
1869	The Bournemouth General Dispensary & Cottage Hospital	Madeira Vale, near Holy Trinity Church
1876	Provident Dispensary Boscombe	4 Gervis Terrace, Boscombe
1877	Boscombe, Pokesdown & Springbourne Infirmary	Shelley Road, Boscombe
1883	Provident Infirmary and Cottage Hospital, Boscombe	Shelley Road, Boscombe
1886	Bournemouth Sanitary Hospital for Infectious Diseases	Gloucester Road
1890	The Royal Victoria & Jubilee Hospital	Poole Road, Westbourne
1914	Workhouse in Christchurch becomes Fairmile House and Fairmile Hospital in 1949	Fairmile Road, Christchurch
1902	Royal Boscombe Hospital	Shelley Road, Boscombe
1906	Lowther Road Hospital,	Lowther Road, Charminster
1912	Hospitals in Boscombe and Westbourne amalgamate to become Royal Victoria and West Hants Hospital	
1920	Isolation Hospital, West Howe	Ringwood Road

Table 1: The first hospitals for Bournemouth residents

dispensary in 1876 at 4 Gervis Place opposite the Palmerston Hotel. It later became the Provident Dispensary in Shelley Road and the forerunner of hospital facilities on that site.

The Hampshire County Lunatic Asylum at Knowle in Fareham was built as a result of the 1845 County Asylums Act. The Act made it compulsory for every county to build an asylum whereas previous legislation had only recommended authorities to build asylums for 'lunatics, idiots and persons of unsound mind.' There were several private asylums in Hampshire for people who could afford to pay. The new county asylums were for 'pauper lunatics' and these were dealt with as part of the Poor Law system. Christchurch Union paid for people to be confined at Knowle. Another asylum was Fisherton House in Salisbury.

Census returns were completed for patients resident at the asylum on the night the census was taken. In 1861 and 1871 there were several patients from Christchurch and Poole but it is not until the 1881 census that anyone who was born in Bournemouth appears in the list. The patients were recorded by their initials only. The language used is copied directly from the census return. It is sad to see that both TR and SB appear both in 1881 and 1891. Their lives can only be imagined.

1881 census							
Name	Age	Born about	Marital status	M/f	Occupation	Born	Status
TR	36	1845	Single	Male	None	Bournemouth	Imbecile
SB	36	1845	Married	Male	Carpenter	Bournemouth	Lunatic
1891 census							
TR	46	1845	Single	Male	None	Bournemouth	Imbecile
SB	46	1845	Married	Male	Carpenter	Bournemouth	Lunatic
FF	16	1875	Single	Male	None	Bournemouth	Idiot

Table 2: Census returns for Hampshire County Asylum, Knowle, Fareham



## **Public Health and Epidemics**

Bournemouth was still part of the larger mainly rural parish of Holdenhurst, but residents around the Bourne began to consider self-government and acquiring the formal infrastructure of a town. The Bournemouth Improvement Act 1856 gave a Board of Commissioners the powers to construct roads, sewers and drains, and to contract for a supply of water to the district. One appointment made by the Improvement Commissioners was an Inspector of Nuisances.

The first Public Health Act in 1848 empowered local authorities to appoint a Medical Officer of Health. The annual reports of the Medical Officer of Health (MOH) summarised the health of the town's residents, noted any significant occurrences of disease, and recorded the number of births, marriages and deaths. Dr Kinsey-Morgan was the MOH in 1890 and recorded 582 deaths. He noted that one-third of these are 'strangers', presumably visitors to the town. Bournemouth has always had the added responsibility for the medical emergencies of the many visitors. The reports also recorded annual temperatures and rainfall.

Surrounded by water it was important to have fresh drinking water. The Bournemouth Gas and Water Company was set up in 1863. The original works were in the Bourne Valley and the water came from moors above. The company moved out to Longham in 1885 on a site next to the River Stour. There was also a reservoir at Alderney. As the town grew it became important to have a reliable source of water. A site was found at Walsford north of Wimborne where it was pumped up from below ground and gravity fed to Bournemouth in 1896.

As part of the Infectious Disease (Notification) Act of 1889 doctors were obliged to report any case of certain infectious disease to the MOH. The diseases included smallpox, cholera, diphtheria, membranous croup, erysipelas (St. Anthony's fire), scarlatina or scarlet fever, typhus, typhoid, enteric fever, relapsing fever (an illness associated with rodents and lice) and childbirth fever. The Act was adopted by the Bournemouth Commissioners in 1890 and is first referred to in the report for the year ending 1891 in which 86 cases were notified and referred to the Bournemouth Sanitary Hospital for Infectious Diseases in Gloucester Road.



The School Medical Service was established in 1907 and the first reference to a visit by Dr Edwards, the School Medical Officer, is logged on 18th September 1908. The head teacher of each school recorded day-to-day events in a school logbook. The Somerset Road (Freemantle) Infants School in Pokesdown opened on 26th April 1897. The schoolmistress was Amy Evans. On 11th May, she wrote 'The attendance is very irregular, several children absent through sickness; two cases of whooping-cough.' and on 18th May 1900 'The attendance is not so good this week owing to several of the children being sick with whooping-cough and measles.' In 1910, there were approximately 1,000 deaths a year from measles in children under 15 in England. Schools were not always the warmest places. On 6th February 1902 the head teacher wrote in the log book 'Although the gas has been burning the whole day and the fires as large as the grates will allow the thermometer has marked 51° [Fahrenheit] at the highest.'

Influenza or flu is a highly infectious illness which spreads very rapidly through coughs and sneezes of people who are already infected. The 1918-19 influenza pandemic killed 20 million people around the world. In Bournemouth the pandemic ran from the middle of June 1918 until the following May and there were 189 recorded deaths. The Medical Officer of Health reported to the Borough's Health Committee on 11th October 1918 that there had been 'a number of cases of influenza in the town.' The Committee agreed that schools should be closed. The school logbooks of the time outline some of the events but do not give any insight into the human experience. The headmaster of Alma Road School writes in the logbook on 27th September 1918 'There have been several cases of influenza during the past week.' On 4th October, he records 'Owing to the outbreak of influenza the school closed today at noon by order of the Medical Officer of Health.' The school was due to re-open on 29th October but remained closed until 11th November.

In 1936 an outbreak of typhoid occurred in Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch. Doctors began to see people with symptoms from 4th August onwards. In total 718 cases were reported, 51 people died locally and 20 people died elsewhere, mainly visitors who had returned home. The outbreak was caused by contaminated milk being delivered to homes across the conurbation and traced to an infected sewage tank at Merley House discharging into a stream above a small dairy farm. The milk was sent to Frowd's Dairy in Parkstone where it was mixed with milk from other farms. Although the dairy had strict hygiene controls it did not pasteurise the milk and the entire delivery was contaminated.



Until milk was routinely pasteurised contamination of milk supplies was an important matter. In the Minutes of evidence given in support of the 1892 Bournemouth Improvement Bill Dr PWG Nunn the current Medical Officer of Health was questioned very rigorously about the supply of milk to the town by the Parliamentary Committee. There was lengthy discussion about whether the milk was supplied from farms outside of the Borough and therefore any controls the Borough wanted to introduce would not be applicable. Dr Nunn was adamant that milk was an important part of the diet in Bournemouth and that a pure milk supply was absolutely necessary, especially as 'The majority of people who resort to Bournemouth in the winter are of the invalid classes.' Establishing a list of the customers and purveyors of milk in order to trace the source of any potential outbreak was essential in 'maintaining the good reputation of the town.'

Control of infection before the advent of antibiotics was of constant concern. During the same questioning Dr Nunn was able to confirm that Bournemouth did have an infectious diseases hospital, that the refuse of the town was burned in a refuse destructor, and that the gas and water supply was in the hands of the same company, although this was not the municipal authority.



## **Pulchritudo et Salubritas**

When Bournemouth became a Municipal Borough in 1890 the Council adopted the Latin motto *Pulchritudo et Salubritas* meaning Beauty and Health. At the end of its first century the town had many medical institutions. Some of these were for townspeople others were set up by external charities that chose to provide facilities for their own clients in Bournemouth. The names of some of those seem very stark today such as The Victoria Home for Cripples in Alum Chine, a branch of Ragged School Union in London, or the Convalescent Home for the Sick and Afflicted.

The Firs Home For Cases of Advanced Consumption founded in 1868 was an early form of hospice. The rules stated it was for advanced cases of chest disease 'which required removal from any of the institutions in Bournemouth intended solely for convalescents, preference being in all instances given to patients from the Royal National Sanatorium'. Of the 32 cases admitted in 1917, 23 people died.

Bournemouth had a Homeopathic hospital. The Hahnemann Convalescent Home and Homeopathic Dispensary opened on 3rd June 1879. It was established for the recuperative care of TB patients. The doctors were medically qualified and the clientele were mainly aristocratic, wealthy or professional people.

Many of the guidebooks comment on the salubrity of the town. In particular the beneficial nature of the pine trees was frequently quoted as central to the health-giving character of the resort. Bright's 1898 Guide to Bournemouth devoted a whole page to the subject and mentions the '*antiseptic properties of the volatile substances which the pines exhale ...*' Doctors of the day stressed the benefits from the pine trees, some referring to the quality it gave the air, others that the trees simply protected against strong winds in the winter and the hot sun in summer. Pine oil had been used in the home to alleviate the symptoms of respiratory infections and lung congestion. Visitors could even buy decorative bottles of pine crystals to take home as a souvenir.

Another of the town's chief attractions according to the 19th century guidebooks was the delight of promenading along Invalids' Walk in the Central Gardens. The first known printed reference is in Heywood's 1886 Guide to Bournemouth. For almost 20 years the name was not considered



inappropriate but amidst the news of the First World War there was a very brief paragraph in the Bournemouth Daily Echo on 20th January 1917.

*'Tomorrow is the last day on which the "Invalids' Walk" at Bournemouth will be officially known under that title. After Sunday the famous pine-strewn avenue from the Arcade to the sea will be known, officially at any rate, as "The Pine-Walk".'*

A similar mention in the Manchester Guardian suggested how the town wanted to rid itself of the 'old character of a resort for consumptives and bronchially affected' not least because of changes in the treatment of the disease. Although published in Manchester, this was a newspaper of national standing and many of its readers would travel by train to Bournemouth for their seaside holiday.

At the outbreak of the First World War, the British Red Cross and the Order of St John formed the Joint War Committee (JWC). The JWC administered auxiliary hospitals and convalescent homes and Bournemouth was able to provide beds for the influx of wounded soldiers. Such was the pressure for beds that six Auxiliary Home Hospitals were set up in Bournemouth, the St John Ambulance Brigade Hospital at 2 Bodorgan Road, the Crag Head Red Cross Hospital in Manor Road, Stourwood House Hospital in Grand Avenue, Boscombe Wentworth Lodge, Grata Quies in Branksome Park, and Branksome Gate (for officers). Boscombe Military Hospital at the Royal Victoria and West Hants Hospital in Shelley Road came under direct control of the War Office.

The Mont Dore Hotel was also requisitioned as a military hospital by the War Office. The first casualties to arrive in November 1914 were soldiers from the Indian Army wounded on the Western Front. The Bournemouth Daily Echo was very positive in support of the 'bronze-faced warriors with sparkling eyes' although there was local concern about whether English nurses should be permitted to care for the Indian soldiers.

Some of the soldiers who died in Bournemouth's auxiliary and private hospitals were buried in Bournemouth East Cemetery. One of those is Private W F Stevens who was the first soldier to die of wounds at Boscombe Hospital. He received a gunshot wound to the thigh on 14th August 1914



and following treatment in France arrived back in England on 5th October. He died of his wounds in Bournemouth on 21st October aged 23. Although Private Stevens was born in Gloucestershire, he died and is buried in Bournemouth so he and all the other soldiers who died in the hospitals have a rightful place in the history of the town.



## **Towards a universal health system**

From the beginning of the 20th century people increasingly believed that medical services should be available to all, not just those that could afford to pay or were eligible for charitable assistance. Voluntary provident societies had existed but legislation in 1911 provided compulsory medical insurance for workingmen over 16 years of age.

When the National Health Service was born on 5th July 1948 the townsfolk of Bournemouth were to have access to free health care for the first time. After almost 150 years of assorted charitable and municipal health provision, everyone would have their own doctor, free dental and optical care, and hospital and specialist services when required.

The Medical Officer of Health had continued to publish annual reports. In 1948 the MOH proudly reported that the infant mortality rate was the lowest ever recorded in Bournemouth with only one death associated with childbirth.

Local government reorganisation in 1974 removed Bournemouth's status as a County Borough and placed it within the County of Dorset. The MOH Robert H. Browning delivered his annual report for 1972 ahead of this change. Dr Browning had a wider worldview and considered the health and sanitary provision of Bournemouth compared well with those of other European towns. In the same report he starts to mention the '*problem of illicit drugs.*' Abortion had been legalised in 1967 and he commented that the number of abortions was still quite low but recommended spending money on Family Planning Services.

The Bournemouth Public Health Report for 2006 identified priorities for improving health in Bournemouth based on local needs within the framework of government policy on health. The priorities for action were

- \* Health inequalities
- \* Reducing smoking
- \* Tackling obesity



- \* Improving sexual health
- \* Improving mental health and well-being
- \* Reducing the harm caused by alcohol
- \* Children and young people
- \* Older people
- \* Health protection

In 2010 Bournemouth residents can receive a wide range of services including family health services, community health services, local hospital services, local mental health services, and continuing healthcare as well as primary care from the Dorset Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, The Royal Bournemouth and Christchurch Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and the NHS Bournemouth and Poole, until recently Bournemouth and Poole Teaching Primary Care Trust. Some services are provided solely at Bournemouth Hospital or at Poole Hospital. Many of the old buildings have been demolished or converted into flats including the National Sanatorium and Westbourne Eye Hospital. A few of the old buildings survive and are re-used. The Community Mental Health Team is based in the former Hahnemann Homeopathic Convalescent Home.

The official website of the Royal Bournemouth and Christchurch Hospitals NHS Trust records that the Trust was formed on 1st April, 1992 and became a Foundation Trust in April 2005. It provides health care for the residents of Bournemouth, Christchurch, East Dorset and part of the New Forest which has a total population of over 550,000. The figure rises during the summer months. The services managed by the Royal Bournemouth and Christchurch Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust are the Royal Bournemouth Hospital, Christchurch Hospital and a Sterile Supply Department at Alderney Hospital

The Royal Bournemouth Hospital occupies a huge site that was formerly part of the Cooper-Dean Estate on Castle Lane East. The Christchurch Hospital is still in Fairmile Road. It provides general medical services but also has specialist rheumatology and stroke rehabilitation units.



## Climate

The climate was one of the most important reasons for Bournemouth's pre-eminence as a Victorian health resort. As the fashion for resorts beside the sea grew visitors came both to Tregonwell's bathing beach and the tiny settlement of Bourne Marine. In 1840, Dr. Granville suggested that the differences of climate between the higher ground and the valleys gave the 'as yet unformed colony' an unrivalled opportunity to attract the wealthy consumptives instead of them spending their money on the Continent. A local Doctor Aitkin was unconvinced and decided to check if there were measurable differences in the temperature. So at 1pm on 8th March 1841 on the west cliff with a fresh breeze from the southwest, his thermometer 'sheltered from the wind and in the shade, stood at 49 degrees (Fahrenheit)'. A reading nearby was 50°F. It varied in the valleys between 58 and 60°F. He repeated his observations over several days. Similar differences of up to 10°F convinced him that Granville's assertion was correct.

Almost two decades later, regular readings supported Aitkin's description of the microclimatic differences which became so important for Bournemouth's future. The evidence was thus available to support Dr Granville's judgement in his very influential *The Spas of England*, that Bournemouth could become England's most important 'winter residence for the delicate constitutions requiring a warm and sheltered locality'.

By the 1850s, several new residents were recording the daily weather. Annual rainfall between 1862 and 1868 varied from 551mm in 1864 (probably Bournemouth's fourth driest year) and 876mm in 1868. By 1868 the data from ten locations provided an overall value for Bournemouth. The Bournemouth Meteorological Society published annual reports which describe the variable year-to-year weather. 1868 was '*a very extraordinary year*' had eight months of '*unusual heat, great drought, dashing rain in August and September and enormous rainfall in December*'. The report describes the gales as peculiar and was puzzled by winter thunderstorms. There was only 41mm rainfall between 25th May and 5th August in contrast to 268mm between 21st November and 31st December.



1869 had a particularly cold June and 'in consequence of this unseasonable weather large numbers of swallows died in many places from cold and want of their usual supply of insect food.' The temperature of the longest day in 1869 was 'almost identical' with that of the shortest day in 1868.

Not only did Bournemouth offer warm winters but it also provided different climates that were better for some medical conditions than others. Surveys of the climate in spas and coastal resorts across Europe stressed Bournemouth's special climate. Dr Dobell wrote in 1886 for example that 'its softness, its freshness, its purity, and its antiseptic properties' were a combination peculiarly difficult to find elsewhere, provided by gentle sea-breezes, well-drained soils and abundant sunshine, as well as its sheltered walks. In 1914 Dr Harries urged the town to '*... be content with its unique position in the climatic scale, which is not equalled by any other town*' and described the town as '*blessed ... with a rare combination of sea air and pine-wood air, a combination which is of inestimable value*' so that visitors and residents would always be able to find protection from the wind. At its 1934 meeting, the British Medical Association made much of the health-giving attributes of the resort.

The separate resort at Southbourne-On-Sea advertised a 'Salubrious Climate', 'Full south exposure' (meaning plenty of sunshine and healthy sea air) and 'Gravel Soils (i.e. well-drained soils) and therefore air. Dr Compton wrote to The Times in 1868 to say that although there had been very heavy rain on 17th and 18th August (52mm), the local soils meant that the ground would very quickly be as dry as during the earlier drought that year.

Not all agreed that the climate suited everyone. Hawkins, for example, emphasized in 1923 that the climate was '*unsuited for growing and healthy children; for those with rheumatism, neuralgia, or an irritable cough; and for all who cannot go out of doors*'<sup>4</sup> and, according to Burney in 1885, '*It would be an error to regard Bournemouth as a perfect winter climate, which, indeed, it is far from being*

Not surprisingly the location of the official weather station became important. In the 1920s rainfall at the official station near the Pier was lower than on the cliffs. For example in January 1928 30mm more rain fell on the higher ground than at the Pleasure Gardens. It was especially important to show how sunny the town was in contrast to other resorts. The official site moved to Meyrick Park in the 1960s, but being worried that this was perhaps less sunny than a location nearer the sea, the



Public Health Department. placed a trial recorder on Bournemouth Pier. Between June 1964 and June 1965 the pier had 103 hours less sunshine than the park, mainly as a result of sea fog. July, August and September lost an average of 26.8 minutes daily, too much for the title of sunniest seaside resort. The official site moved from Meyrick Park in the late 1970s, temporarily to the University site, and then to King's Park where all the official climatological information for the town is now recorded.

The temperature of the sea was also important, especially to attract sea-bathing. During winter, with calm air and high pressure air temperatures can be as much as 4°C lower at the upper end of Boscombe Gardens compared to the seaward end of Boscombe Pier, because the sea is relatively warm compared to the cold frosty land. Further inland, Hurn airport often has the lowest minimum temperatures in lowland England. A common feature of the summer is the sea mists which can empty the beaches, being several degrees cooler than the clear sunny skies just inland from Christchurch Road. Rainfall is slightly lower at the coast than further inland.

Official records of sea temperature begin in 1970, but there are many earlier reports. For example, in 1934, sea temperatures varied from 10°C in May to 18°C in August. In 1868, the mean sea temperature between April and September, the main period for sea bathing, was 17.6°C, but two years later was only 14.3°C. In comparison from 1971 to 2004 the mean sea temperature was 13.7°C. Even in the hot summer of 1976, the mean April to September sea temperature only reached 14.9°C. In 1976 (for April to September), the mean maximum land temperature was 14.3°C. In contrast, in 2003, the sea temperature was 13.3°C, 2 degrees lower than on land (15.5°C). Although air temperatures rose in the 1990s and 2000s, sea temperature increased more slowly, so that there is a greater contrast between them.

Climate is always changing. People remember extremes, for example, the 'Great Snowstorm' of 25<sup>th</sup> April 1908, the long cold winter of 1962-3 when streams froze and temperatures remained below freezing for several weeks, or the hot summers of 1947 and 1976. Very dry, wet, hot or cold days or months do not necessarily reflect long-term trends in climate. For those, we can look at over a century of daily records.



Of the ten warmest years since 1900, seven occurred after 1993, but only one year since 1993 (2003) is among the sunniest. The 1930s were amongst the warmest years: they were also the least sunny. This probably because more cloud kept night-time temperatures higher. The mean annual temperature for 2008 was 10.9°C, a whole degree lower than the mean for the previous decade. The most obvious change in the town's climate is a steady increase in mean annual temperature from the 1980s to the present. However, warm temperatures in the 1930s and 1940s were only exceeded in the 1980s. Sunshine amounts have only returned to the level of the 1900s since the 1990s. Recent rainfall amounts are comparable to those of the later decades of the 19th century.

Bournemouth's climate is an important part of its image and its attraction but the Victorians knew more about it in detail than we do today. With their network of recording stations, we might detect subtle changes within the town as it has become more built-up. Taller buildings now shade some areas and have changed the way the wind blows through the town. However, the contribution of the weather to the town's reputation remains important. In 2009 Bournemouth's Director of Tourism claimed that 25,000 visitors shunned the town on the May Bank Holiday Monday because the Meteorological Office forecast constant thundery showers, when it turned out to be the hottest day of the year until then. As day visitors spend on average £41 each, just over £1million tourist income was lost. On 21st May 2010, the Tourism Department announced that it would pay a local company £3000 each year to provide local forecasts between April and October. The Director of Tourism said that the investment would offset the potentially high losses that result from inaccurate weather forecasts deterring visitors. He was quoted as saying "*Tourism is too important to Bournemouth to have it spoilt by poor forecasts.*" He believed that the new forecast would be worth more than £2 million a year in increased visitors. .



<b>BOURNEMOUTH CLIMATE</b>	<b>Mean annual temperature</b>	<b>Mean annual rainfall</b>	<b>Mean annual sunshine</b>
<b>Years</b>	<b>(°C)</b>	<b>(mm)</b>	<b>(hours)</b>
Published records			
1862 to 1868		754.7	
1862 to 1879		721.2	
1867 to 1884	9.97	759.0	
1879 to 1884			1532
Official records			
1900 to 1909	10.36	807.4	1855
1910 to 1919	10.08	889.8	1766
1920 to 1929	10.24	729.4	1730
1930 to 1939	10.46	801.8	1671
1940 to 1949	10.58	741.3	1734
1950 to 1959	10.37	817.0	1783
1960 to 1969	9.98	845.2	1721
1970 to 1979	10.19	778.1	1785
1980 to 1989	10.45	789.2	1724
1990 to 1999	10.99	764.7	1858
2000 to 2008	11.50	764.6	1881
<b>1900 to 2008</b>	<b>10.47</b>	<b>739.5</b>	<b>1773</b>

Written by Louise Perrin, with a contribution on climate by Vincent May

#### **Additional Reading**

Dobell, Horace *The medical aspects of Bournemouth and its surroundings* 1885

Granville, Augustus B. *The Spas of England and principal sea-bathing places* 1841