



About the Talks

Privatising Public Space in Early Modern London

Everyone values green open space but who controls it can be a contentious issue in the modern city. Grand regeneration projects like Canary Wharf or Paternoster Square have turned public space with potential value to everyone into private, corporately managed and policed space from which the public could be excluded. But as David will show, the battle over access to, and control over, open space is centuries old. What to the modern eye were improvement schemes such as Moorfields, often thought of as London's first 'public park', or the creation of the early London squares, were not always seen as such, and were often fiercely opposed by contemporaries.

David Marsh, PhD, is Course Director for the MA in Garden History and an honorary Senior Research Fellow at the University of Buckingham and also supervises PhD students. Until very recently, David was a Trustee of the Gardens Trust, the national campaigning body for the protection and support of our historic parks, gardens and designed landscapes. He has been writing thegardenhistory.blog on aspects of garden history every Saturday morning since 2013. David gained his PhD on 'The Gardens and Gardeners of Later Stuart London' from Birkbeck in 2005. He was the first Chair of the Birkbeck Garden History Group, acting as Chair from 2002 to 2005.

People's Parks – the Proliferation of Urban Parks in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

As the country moved from being primarily rural to urban with the rapid growth of towns and cities as a result of the Industrial Revolution, the need for parks grew out of not just as places for fresh air, but as part of a wider social engineering concept known as rational recreation. This talk covers how the royal parks and eighteenth-century pleasure gardens all inspired the great parks movement of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. We visit bandstands, drinking fountains, lidos and aviaries along the journey.

Paul Rabbitts, MLA, DPhil, MPMA, MCIHort, FRHistS, FRSA, currently works full-time as Environmental Services Manager for Norwich City Council. Paul has over 35 years of experience in designing, managing and restoring urban parks across the UK. As well as being Founder and Chair of the Parks Management Association, he is a member of the government's MHCLG Parks Working Group, author of over 30 books, lecturer on public parks and a renowned expert on the Victorian and Edwardian bandstand. His latest book on *People's Parks: the design and development of public parks in Britain* (2023) is an update and re-evaluation of Hazel Conway's influential book published in 1991, adding and evaluating an extra 100 years of history. Paul is an avid and passionate advocate for the role public parks play within our communities.

Public Parks in the Twenty-first Century

We are living in extraordinary times and uncharted territory. A public park may still be an urban oasis, but parks are far from immune to the changes wrought by the financial crash, neoliberal attacks on the public sector, biodiversity collapse, climate change, and Covid. Indeed in many ways they are particularly vulnerable. The twenty-first century has seen parks struggling to adapt to organisational disruption and huge reductions in budgets.

There are however good stories to tell. Thousands discovered and celebrated the importance of parks during lockdown restrictions; as council maintenance shrinks, communities are stepping up to volunteer; and in response to global fears, communities are responding with their own local initiatives around gardening, habitat creation and food-growing.

David Lambert, MA, IHBC, FRSA, is a Director of the Parks Agency, a consultancy focused on the conservation of public parks. For ten years he served as Conservation Officer for the Garden History Society and wrote one of the first reports to draw attention to the state of public parks. He was closely involved in setting up the National Lottery's urban parks grants programme. He has lectured widely on garden history and conservation and served on numerous expert committees as well as advising three parliamentary inquiries. Since 2018 he has devoted much of his time to raising awareness of the climate and ecological emergency.

Wembley Way to Park Life – it's been a bit of a Blur

The transformation of Wembley Park

At the masterplan and infrastructure scale some bold foresight in the early years at Wembley Park is reaping greater environmental and placemaking benefits in the long term. A clear set of design principles that champion a 'Space Positive' approach have ensured that the public realm and residents' gardens are equally as important as the buildings. Whilst the emphasis and metrics in sustainability may have changed over the years the principles of 'People – Place – Property' have remained consistent to create and deliver added values across the economic, social and environmental spectrum. It makes no sense to be profligate with resources of any kind.

See also 'Pass It On' – Voices from Wembley Park. Click on [Wembley Park PASS IT ON.pdf](#) and the Greentalk trees of Wembley Park at <https://wembleypark.greentalk.io/>

Julian Tollast is Head of Masterplanning and Design for Quintain Limited at Wembley Park and has been working on the Wembley Park development project since 2005. A qualified architect, Julian has over 40 years' experience on projects from both the client and consultant side exploring and realising the potential of many opportunities and at many scales, 'from District to Doorknob'. Alongside his role at Quintain he completed a five-year term as a Founding Trustee of the National Park City Foundation. Established in 2015 and supported by Quintain, the Foundation has guided London to becoming the world's first National Park City in July 2019, connecting people with the natural environment around them, creating more 'Green and Blue' spaces and championing the values of the natural environment in London to the widest possible audiences.

Chair

Annabel Downs, MPhil, FSGLD, has been a landscape architect-garden designer for over 30 years and is also a writer, lecturer and archivist. She established the twentieth-century landscape drawings collection at the Landscape Institute and was archivist there from 1995 to 2009. She has edited a monograph on Peter Shephard for the Landscape Design Trust (2004) and has researched the stories behind Jellicoe's Kennedy Memorial at Runnymede. She was Chair of the Society of Garden Designers from 2009 to 2012 and is currently Chair of FOLAR (the Friends of the Landscape Archive at Reading).