

Lecture 28th April 2026

The Ark, Turners Hill - Doors open 10.15am



A Concise History of our Great public Parks

This really is a fascinating insight into the history of one of our greatest ever institutions - our Great British Public Park. We have all enjoyed them at some time in our lives, but what do we really know about them? What are their origins? This talk illustrates their origins from the great Royal Parks to the Pleasure Gardens of the eighteenth century, to their Victorian heyday. It discusses what makes a great park, it's 'parkitecture' with examples of lodges, lakes, bandstands, fountains, lidos, palm houses and to their wonderful floral displays, to their great decline in the sixties, seventies and eighties. However, the subsequent revival has led to a major shift in interest in our parks and once again we are very much in love with them.



Speaker: Dr Paul Rabbitts

Paul Rabbitts gained a PhD at the University of East Anglia on the subject of music and entertainment in public parks from the 1830s onwards. He is also a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, and a Member of the Chartered Institute of Horticulture and chair and founder member of the Parks Management Association. He is currently Head of Environment at the City of Norwich. Paul is a passionate advocate for public parks and in particular, the Victorian and Edwardian bandstand. Paul is a prolific author - his recent book *'People's Parks - The Design and Development of Public Parks in Britain'* is the definitive history of public parks.

