Contested public space and protest in urban Britain from the 18th century to today

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projects

www.protesthistory.org.uk

www.politicalmeetingsmapper.co.uk

www.historyofpublicspace.uk
To hold open air meetings in Debdale Park on 22nd August and 5th September, 1943, at 7.15 p.m. on behalf of the Gorton United Trades and Labour Council.

To hold meetings in Cringle Fields on Thursdays, 5th, 12th, 19th and 26th August, 1943, at 1.30 p.m. on behalf of the Communist Party, South Manchester Branch.

To hold open air meetings in Debdale Park at 7.30 p.m. on Sundays, August 8th, 15th, 22nd and 29th 1943, and also on Sundays September 5th, 12th, 19th and 26th on behalf of the Openshaw Communist Party.

To hold a meeting in Wythenshawe Park on Sunday, August 25th 1943 at 7.30 p.m. on behalf of the Communist Party, Wythenshawe Branch, Crossacrees House, Crossacrees, Manchester.

Manchester Parks Committee, 1943

map of Chartist Land Plan subscribers, 1847

http://www.kenningtonchartistproject.org/research/
What is public space?

Geographies of public space and property

Economic
Categorisation by exchange value

Legal
‘trespass/licence binary’

Planning
categorisation by population size or zoning

Customary
Categorisation by use
Economic: classic understandings of the production of space and resistance

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Privatisation of public space – 18th century and early 19th century ‘improvement’

Legislation relating to political meetings

1714 Riot Act
1795 Seditious Meetings Act
1799 Unlawful Societies Act
1817 Seditious Meetings Act
1819 Seditious Meetings Act
1838 Royal Proclamation against torchlit meetings
1839 Royal Proclamation against illegal assemblies and drilling
1888 bill for regulation of meetings in Trafalgar square
1888 bill to declare and regulate right of public meetings in open spaces
1908 Public Meetings Act
1963 Public Order Act
1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act
Kennington Park, south London, February 2018

CHARTIST DEMONSTRATION!!

"PEACE and ORDER" is our MOTTO!

TO THE WORKING MEN OF LONDON,

Fellow Men... The Press having misrepresented us and our intentions, the Demonstration Committees therefore consider it to be their duty to state that the grievances of us (the Working Classes) are deep and our demands just. We and our families are living in misery, want, and starvation! We demand a fair day's wages for a fair day's work! We are the slaves of capital—we demand protection to our labour. We are political serfs—we demand to be free. We therefore invite all well disposed to join in our peaceful procession on

MONDAY NEXT, April 10,

As it is for the good of all that we seek to remove the evils under which we groan.

The following are the places of Meeting of the CHARTISTS, THE TRADES, THE IRISH CONFEDERATE & REPEAL SOCIETY:

East Division on Stepney Green at 9 o'clock; City and Finsbury Division on Clerkenwell Green at 9 o'clock; West Division in Russell Square at 9 o'clock; and the South Division in Peckham Fields at 9 o'clock, and proceed from thence to Kennington Common.

Signed on behalf of the Committee. Jas. ... Jo...
J and F. Harwood, 'Kennington', 1842
http://www.kenningtonchartistproject.org/2018/06/04/the-horns-tavern/
“If we go back 30 years we shall see how the liberty of the subject has been tampered with. Kennington Common and every available space that could be got hold of have been converted into parks …

We don't want to see every bit of common enclosed with railings. Nor is it right that the right of public meeting should be edged about by endless restrictions.

What with the refusal, from time to time, on the part of many proprietors of halls in the metropolis, coupled with police interference, we are rapidly approaching despotism and the extinction of genuine public opinion.”

LCC Open Spaces committee: plans of political meeting sites, 1890s – Streatham Common

NOTE

Land coloured dark green may be enclosed by the Lords of the Manor.

Football Grounds Yellow

London Metropolitan Archives
LCC parks committee by-laws to restrict collections ‘for charitable purposes for the public good’, 1926.

Growing myth of the commons and of public space
### Development of ‘public’ commons through legislation and preservation movement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1833</td>
<td>Select committee on public walks</td>
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<tr>
<td>1836</td>
<td>General Enclosure Act – public interest clause in commons within 10 mile radius of London</td>
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<tr>
<td>1865</td>
<td>Formation of the Commons Preservation Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>1866</td>
<td>Metropolitan Commons Act</td>
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<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>Metropolitan Open Spaces Act</td>
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<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>Law of Property Act – public gained a legal right of access to commons and wastes in urban areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>Commons Registration Act</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### The battle over Boggart Hole Clough, Manchester, 1895-7

*Manchester Guardian, 15 June 1896*
Debates over restrictions during wartime

Manchester Archives, parks and cemeteries committee book, vol 54, 1940

Zenith of public land ownership 1880s-1970s

1880s local government reforms – encouraged purchase of land for public services
1946 New Towns Act
1947 Town and Country Planning Act
Kennington Park – gatherings and demonstrations

New enclosure by dispossession from the 1970s onwards
Current revival in scholarship on English land reform

the battle for St Agnes Place, Kennington, 1977