

Garden Group

TALK by Danny Wells on Tuesday 28 October 2025.

Danny is a history enthusiast and qualified historian and history teacher. His talk was about the social history of the English and gardening.

He began his talk by telling us that, in the 17th century, John Evelyn began to write a history of the English garden, but abandoned the project because he found the subject to be too large. Danny was able to give us an overview of gardens; its variety of uses: sacred, spiritual, meditative or botanical; its different sizes: cottage, walled or landscaped; formal or informal. Initially gardens were used by the wealthy and not until 19th century were gardens created for the general public; the first being opened in Derby in 1840. Garden designs were influenced by gardens in other countries such as China and Japan. Danny referred to 'Capability' Brown and Gertrude Jekyll and how formal gardens became more informal and even a little wild. Charles Darwin's research and ideas influenced horticulturalists and growing techniques. New technologies changed ways of working and cultivating, such as glass manufacture for greenhouses, and progressing to lawn mowers, which could be used by women gardeners.

Danny gave us an excellent summary of his in-depth knowledge of the subject, giving us a very interesting history of the English garden.

Louise Kevill