

Hyde Park is one of the largest parks in central London and one of the Royal Parks of London, famous for its Speakers' Corner.

The park is divided in two by the Serpentine. The park is contiguous with Kensington Gardens; although often still assumed to be part of Hyde Park, Kensington Gardens has been technically separate since 1728, when Queen Caroline made a division between the two. To the southeast, outside of the park, is Hyde Park Corner. Although, during daylight, the two parks merge seamlessly into each other, Kensington Gardens closes at dusk but Hyde Park remains open throughout the year from 5 am until midnight.

The park was the site of The Great Exhibition of 1851. It was one of the most important events to take place in the park.

For The Great Exhibition the Crystal Palace was designed by Joseph Paxton and constructed on the south side of the park. The public in general did not want the building to remain in the park after the closure of the exhibition, and the design architect, [Joseph Paxton](#), raised funds and purchased it. He had it moved to [Sydenham Hill](#) in South London.

The park has become a traditional location for mass demonstrations. The Chartists, the Reform League, the Suffragettes and the Stop The War Coalition have all held protests in the park. Many protestors on the Liberty and Livelihood March in 2002 started their march from Hyde Park.

History

In 1536, [Henry VIII](#) acquired the manor of Hyde from the canons of [Westminster Abbey](#), who had held it since before the [Norman Conquest](#); it was enclosed as a deer park and remained a private hunting ground until [James I](#) permitted limited access to gentlefolk, appointing a ranger to take charge. [Charles I](#) created the Ring and in 1637 he opened the park to the general public.

In 1689, when [William III](#) moved his habitation to [Kensington Palace](#) on the far side of Hyde Park, he had a drive laid out across its south edge, formerly known as "The King's Private Road", which still exists as a wide straight gravelled carriage track leading west from [Hyde Park Corner](#) across the south boundary of Hyde Park towards [Kensington Palace](#). The drive is now known as [Rotten Row](#).

Public transport entering London from the west paralleled the King's private road along [Kensington Gore](#), just outside the park. In the late 1800s, the row was used by the wealthy for horseback rides.

The first coherent landscaping was undertaken by [Charles Bridgeman](#) for [Queen Caroline](#); under the supervision of Charles Withers, the [Surveyor-General of Woods and Forests](#). It was

completed in 1733. Bridgeman's piece of water called [The Serpentine](#), formed by damming the little Westbourne that flowed through the park was not truly in the Serpentine "line of beauty", but merely irregular on a modest curve.

The [2nd Viscount Weymouth](#) was made Ranger of Hyde Park in 1739 and shortly began digging the Serpentine lakes at [Longleat](#). The Serpentine is divided from the Long Water by a bridge designed by [George Rennie](#).

Sites of interest

Sites of interest in the park include Speakers' Corner (located in the northeast corner near Marble Arch), close to the former site of the Tyburn gallows, and Rotten Row, which is the northern boundary of the site of the Crystal Palace. South of the Serpentine is the Diana, Princess of Wales memorial, an oval stone ring fountain opened on July the 6th 2004. To the east of the Serpentine, just beyond the dam, is London's Holocaust Memorial. Another memorial in the Park commemorates the victims of the terrorist attacks, in the form of 52 steel pillars, one for each of the dead.

A magnificent specimen of a botanical curiosity is the *Weeping Beech*, *Fagus sylvatica pendula*, cherished as "the upside-down tree".

Opposite Hyde Park Corner stands one of the grandest hotels in London, The Lanesborough.

In 1867 the policing of the Park was entrusted to the Metropolitan Police, the only Royal Park so managed, due to the potential for trouble at Speaker's Corner. A Metropolitan Police Station ('AH') is situated in the middle of the Park.

Hyde Park covers 142 hectares and Kensington Gardens covers 111 hectares, giving an overall area of 253 hectares, making the combined area larger than the Principality of Monaco. This park is one of the largest parks in London.