

= Vauxhall Gardens =

Vauxhall Gardens / ˈvɔːksəl / was a pleasure garden in Kennington on the south bank of the River Thames and accessed by boat from London until the erection of Vauxhall Bridge in the 1810s . The wider area was absorbed into the metropolis as the city expanded in the early to mid 19th century .

It was one of the leading venues for public entertainment in London , from the mid 17th century to the mid 19th century . Originally known as ' New Spring Gardens ' , the site is believed to have opened before the Restoration of 1660 , the first known mention being made by Samuel Pepys in 1662 . The Gardens consisted of several acres of trees and shrubs with attractive walks . Initially entrance was free , with food and drink being sold to support the venture .

The site became Vauxhall Gardens in 1785 and admission was charged for its many attractions . The Gardens drew all manner of people and supported enormous crowds , with its paths being noted for romantic assignations . Tightrope walkers , hot air balloon ascents , concerts and fireworks provided entertainment . The rococo " Turkish tent " became one of the Gardens ' structures , the interior of the Rotunda became one of Vauxhall 's most viewed attractions , and the chinoiserie style was a feature of several buildings . A statue depicting George Frederic Handel , erected in the Gardens , later found its way to Westminster Abbey . In 1817 the Battle of Waterloo was re-enacted , with 1,000 soldiers participating .

It closed in 1840 after its owners suffered bankruptcy , but re-opened in 1841 . It changed hands in 1842 , and was permanently closed in 1859 . The land was redeveloped in the following decades , but slum clearance in the late 20th century saw part of the original site opened up as a public park . This was initially called Spring Gardens and renamed in 2012 as Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens . It is managed as a public park by the London Borough of Lambeth . Vauxhall Gardens is depicted in a tile motif at Vauxhall tube station , done in about 1971 by George Smith .

= = Cultural significance = =

Eminent 18th century scholar John Barrell , writing in the Times Literary Supplement , brings out Vauxhall 's significance . " Vauxhall pleasure gardens , on the south bank of the Thames , entertained Londoners and visitors to London for 200 years . From 1729 , under the management of Jonathan Tyers , property developer , impresario , patron of the arts , the gardens grew into an extraordinary business , a cradle of modern painting and architecture , and ... music .... A pioneer of mass entertainment , Tyers had to become also a pioneer of mass catering , of outdoor lighting , of advertising , and of all the logistics involved in running one of the most complex and profitable business ventures of the eighteenth century in Britain . " References to Vauxhall are , for 150 years , as ubiquitous as references to " Broadway " later would be .

= = History = =

The Gardens are believed to have opened just before the Restoration of 1660 , on property formerly owned by Jane Fauxe , or Vaux , widow , in 1615 . Whereas John Nichols in his History of Lambeth Parish conjectures that she was the widow of Guy Fawkes , executed in 1606 , John Timbs in his 1867 Curiosities of London states for a fact that there was no such connection , and that the Vaux name derives from one Falkes de Breauté , a mercenary working for King John who acquired the land by marriage . Jane is stated to be the widow of John , a vintner . Perhaps the earliest record is Samuel Pepys ' description of a visit he made to the New Spring Gardens on 29 May 1662 . The then name distinguished the gardens from the Old Spring Gardens at Charing Cross ; however Pepys implies that there were both Old and New Spring Gardens at Vauxhall ; and indeed Spring Gardens appears to have been a longstanding appellation for a variety of entertainment enterprises .

The Gardens consisted of several acres laid out with walks . Initially admission was free , the proprietors making money by selling food and drink . John Evelyn described " the New Spring

Garden at Lambeth " as a " very pretty contrived plantation " in 1661 . John Aubrey , in his Antiquities of Surrey gives the following account :

At Vauxhall , Sir Samuel Morland built a fine room , anno 1667 , the inside all of looking @-@ glass , and fountains very pleasant to behold , which is much visited by strangers : it stands in the middle of the garden , covered with Cornish slate , on the point of which he placed a punchinello , very well carved , which held a dial , but the winds have demolished it .

A plan of 1681 shows the circular central feature planted with trees and shrubs , and the formal allées that were to remain a feature as long as the Gardens lasted .

Sir John Hawkins , in his General History of Music ( 1776 ) , says :

The house seems to have been rebuilt since the time that Sir Samuel Morland dwelt in it . About the year 1730 , Mr. Jonathan Tyers became the occupier of it , and , there being a large garden belonging to it , planted with a great number of stately trees , and laid out in shady walks , it obtained the name of Spring Gardens ; and the house being converted into a tavern , or place of entertainment , was much frequented by the votaries of pleasure . Mr. Tyers opened it with an advertisement of a Ridotto al Fresco , a term which the people of this country had till that time been strangers to . These entertainments were repeated in the course of the summer , and numbers resorted to partake of them . This encouraged the proprietor to make his garden a place of musical entertainment , for every evening during the summer season . To this end he was at great expense in decorating the gardens with paintings ; he engaged a band of excellent musicians ; he issued silver tickets at one guinea each for admission , and receiving great encouragement , he set up an organ in the orchestra , and , in a conspicuous part of the garden , erected a fine statue of Mr. Handel .

The ' supposed ' last night of the gardens was on 5 September 1839 when it attracted 1089 people . Vauxhall was sold at auction on 9 September 1841 for £ 20 @, @ 000 , following bankruptcy of the owners , after which it re @-@ opened , but it was permanently closed in 1859 , and most of the land sold for building purposes .

= = The Spring Gardens and the Rococo in England = =

The Spring Gardens were the most prominent vehicle in England for the public display of the new Rococo style . The earliest pictorial representation of Tyers ' Spring Gardens , Vauxhall , is the " Vauxhall fan " ( 1736 ) , an etching printed in blue designed to be pasted to a fan ; it shows the earliest groups of pavilions , in a sober classical taste , but the interiors of the supper boxes were painted by members of Hogarth 's St. Martin 's Lane Academy , prominent among them Francis Hayman . Hayman provided most of the subjects , which were rapidly executed by students and assistants ; Hubert Gravelot provided designs for two others , and Hogarth 's designs were pressed into service in hastily dashed @-@ off copies that filled the back of every box . At a certain hour , all the paintings were let down at once , to offer some security to the companies at supper and a suitable backdrop , one observer thought , for the live beauties of London . Frederick , Prince of Wales , who had come to England with his father George II in 1728 and who was a prominent patron of the Rococo , took sufficient interest in the Gardens to have his own pavilion built from the very first .

The first fully Rococo structure erected at the Spring Gardens , Vauxhall , was the " Turkish Tent " that was still a novelty in 1744 ; " this fantastic structure introduced that element of frivolous impermanence which became so characteristic of Vauxhall , " David Coke has remarked . In the course of the 1740s it was joined by other examples of Rococo chinoiserie and above all by the Rotunda , with the most @-@ viewed Rococo interior decoration in England , designed by George Michael Moser , another member of the St. Martin 's Lane Academy ; the ornaments were " Executed by French and Italians " George Vertue noted .

= = The experience = =

Enormous crowds could be accommodated at Spring Gardens , Vauxhall . In 1749 a rehearsal of

Handel's Music for the Royal Fireworks attracted an audience of 12 @, @ 000 , and in 1786 a fancy @-@ dress jubilee to celebrate the proprietor's long ownership was thronged with 61 @, @ 000 revellers . Many of the best known musicians and singers of the day performed at the Gardens , for example Sophia Baddeley . In 1732 , their fashionable status was confirmed by a fancy dress ball attended by Frederick , Prince of Wales . At that time access from the West End was by water , but the opening of Westminster Bridge in the 1740s made access easier though less charming .

The main walks were lit at night by hundreds of lamps . Over time more features and eyecatchers were added : additional supper boxes , a music room , a Chinese pavilion , a gothic orchestra that accommodated fifty musicians , and ruins , arches , statues and a cascade . An admission charge was introduced from the beginning and later James Boswell wrote :

Vauxhall Gardens is peculiarly adapted to the taste of the English nation ; there being a mixture of curious show , ? gay exhibition , musick , vocal and instrumental , not too refined for the general ear ; ? for all of which only a shilling is paid ; and , though last , not least , good eating and drinking for those who choose to purchase that regale .

The unlighted ' dark walks ' or ' close walks ' were known as a place for amorous adventures . Thomas Brown in " Works Serious and Comical in Prose and Verse " ( 1760 ) says :

The ladies that have an inclination to be private , take delight in the close walks of Spring @-@ Gardens , where both sexes meet , and mutually serve one another as guides to lose their way ; and the windings and turnings in the little wildernesses are so intricate , that the most experienced mothers have often lost themselves in looking for their daughters . "

A great part of the entertainment was offered by the well @-@ dressed company itself . Pauses between pieces of music were intentionally long enough to give the crowd time to circulate the Gardens anew . M. Grosely , in his Tour to London ( 1772 ) says , relating to Ranelagh Gardens and Vauxhall :

These entertainments , which begin in the month of May , are continued every night . They bring together persons of all ranks and conditions ; and amongst these , a considerable number of females , whose charms want only that cheerful air , which is the flower and quintessence of beauty . These places serve equally as a rendezvous either for business or intrigue . They form , as it were , private coteries ; there you see fathers and mothers , with their children , enjoying domestic happiness in the midst of public diversions . The English assert , that such entertainments as these can never subsist in France , on account of the levity of the people . Certain it is , that those of Vauxhall and Ranelagh , which are guarded only by outward decency , are conducted without tumult and disorder , which often disturb the public diversions of France . I do not know whether the English are gainers thereby ; the joy which they seem in search of at those places does not beam through their countenances ; they look as grave at Vauxhall and Ranelagh as at the Bank , at church , or a private club . All persons there seem to say , what a young English nobleman said to his governor , Am I as joyous as I should be ?

The new name Vauxhall Gardens , long in popular use , was made official in 1785 . After Boswell's time the admission charge rose steadily : to two shillings in 1792 , three @-@ and @-@ sixpence in the early 19th century , and 4 / 6 in the 1820s . Season tickets were also sold . Entertainment in this period included hot @-@ air balloon ascents , fireworks , and tightrope walkers . In 1813 there was a fête to celebrate victory at the Battle of Vitoria , and in 1827 the Battle of Waterloo was re @-@ enacted by 1 @, @ 000 soldiers .

The contributor to the Edinburgh Encyclopedia ( 1830 edition ) comments that :

the garden's great attraction arises from their being splendidly illuminated at night with about 15 @, @ 000 glass lamps . These being tastefully hung among the trees , which line the walks , produce an impression similar to that which is called up on reading some of the stories in the Arabian Nights Entertainments . On some occasions there have been upwards of 19 @, @ 000 persons in them , and this immense concourse , most of whom are well dressed , seen in connection with the illuminated walks , add not a little to the brilliant and astonishing effect of the whole scene .

Charles Dickens wrote of a daylight visit to Vauxhall Gardens , in Sketches by Boz , published in 1836 :

We paid our shilling at the gate , and then we saw for the first time , that the entrance , if there had been any magic about it at all , was now decidedly disenchanted , being , in fact , nothing more nor less than a combination of very roughly @-@ painted boards and sawdust . We glanced at the orchestra and supper @-@ room as we hurried past ? we just recognised them , and that was all . We bent our steps to the firework @-@ ground ; there , at least , we should not be disappointed . We reached it , and stood rooted to the spot with mortification and astonishment . That the Moorish tower ? that wooden shed with a door in the centre , and daubs of crimson and yellow all round , like a gigantic watch @-@ case ! That the place where night after night we had beheld the undaunted Mr. Blackmore make his terrific ascent , surrounded by flames of fire , and peals of artillery , and where the white garments of Madame Somebody ( we forget even her name now ) , who nobly devoted her life to the manufacture of fireworks , had so often been seen fluttering in the wind , as she called up a red , blue , or party @-@ coloured light to illumine her temple !

The Gardens feature in a number of other works of literature . They are the scene of a brief but pivotal turning point in the fortunes of anti @-@ heroine Becky Sharp in Thackeray 's 19th @-@ century novel *Vanity Fair* , as well as a setting in his novel *Pendennis* . Thomas Hardy sets scenes in his *The Dynasts* in the Gardens . In *Cecilia* by Frances Burney the Gardens are where the character Mr Harrell commits suicide .

The Gardens passed through several hands . In 1840 , the owners went bankrupt and the Gardens closed . They were revived the following year , and again in 1842 under new management , but in 1859 they closed for good .