

The Royal Parks

Interpretation signage in St James's Park

Brief

We were asked to devise interpretative panels for five historically significant sites in St James's Park and Green Park.

Solution

We designed custom display infrastructure for both balustrade and post mounted options, manufactured in powder coated steel. Content was written with a broad audience range in mind, and city archives both here and in Dusseldorf were trawled for contemporary images to illustrate these 'snapshots of time'.

The modular design allowed for a brushed stainless steel corner panel with logo and URL etched and infilled.

Result

Park managers report high levels of interest and satisfaction amongst visitors and staff alike.



**FOR HIS MAJESTY'S PLEASURE
BIRDS, BOATS AND BATHING**

About 350 years ago, workmen dug a canal in St James's Park for the enjoyment of the fun-loving King Charles II.

The King swam in the canal in summer and skated on the ice in winter. He spent many hours feeding his collection of water birds, which included a crane with a wooden leg. The Doge of Venice gave the King two gondolas to sail on his canal and the Russian ambassador sent a pair of pelicans.

Left: The canal seen from Horse Guards in 1798. We don't know for certain who designed the canal but it was probably the French landscape gardener, Andre Mollet © City of London (London Metropolitan Archives)



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GARDEN MAKEOVER

The canal was about 2,800ft (850m) long and 100ft (30m) wide and stretched the whole length of the park. It was part of a redesign of St James's Park which began soon after Charles II became King in 1660. He wanted a pleasure park like ones he had seen in France. As well as the canal, there were avenues of trees and courts to play the new game Pelé Mele. The courts became known as Pall Mall and The Mall.

DUCKS FOR THE KING'S TABLE

At one end of the canal, there was a duck decoy: a series of narrow linked channels where wild ducks were lured into cages. The ducks were then killed and cooked for the King.

The decoy was later removed to make way for Horse Guards but the site is near the present-day Duck Island facing you. The island was created in the 1820s when John Nash redesigned the park and turned the canal into the lake you see today.

Above left: View of the Mall, St James's Park in 1753 © City of London (London Metropolitan Archives)



**DUCK ISLAND COTTAGE
SWISS CHALET FOR A BRITISH
BIRD-KEEPER**

This pretty cottage was built in 1841 as the home of the bird-keeper in St James's Park. It also had a club room for the Ornithological Society of London, which once helped to look after the park's ducks and geese.

The design, like a Swiss chalet, was intended to be a contrast to the grand architecture of government buildings nearby.

The cottage has been altered several times and its use has also changed: it was once a store for bicycles confiscated in the park but it is now used as offices.

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Far left: A view of the cottage in 1844. © City of London (London Metropolitan Archives)

