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ANNUAL LECTURE

Thursday, 28th July 2022

6.30 p.m.

Room 1.08, The Marshall Building (LSE), 44 Lincoln's Inn Fields WC2A 3LY

(to be preceded by the Annual General Meeting at 6.00 p.m.)

HORTICULTURAL UTOPIAS FOR VICTORIAN WORKING-CLASS LONDONERS

MARGARET WILLES

ADMISSION FREE. OPEN TO ALL. PLEASE REGISTER IN ADVANCE

<https://flifannuallecture2022.eventbrite.com>

In 1800 London was the most populous city in Europe, already overcrowded, and became ever more so as the century progressed, with many arriving as a result of the agricultural depression. Not the ideal conditions for gardening endeavours, yet records show that all kinds of opportunities were seized, as **Margaret Willes** discovered when she was researching *The Gardens of the British Working Class*.

Allotments were cultivated on the urban fringes, raised beds installed in backyards, and window gardening developed. London clergymen were particularly keen on encouraging gardening as a recreation to keep at bay the temptations of the tavern and the gin palace. One particularly interesting example was fostered with regular competitions and flower shows in the parish of St George's Bloomsbury, which contained one of the poorest localities of the metropolis.

Margaret Willes spent her working career in book publishing, latterly as the publisher at the National Trust. Since her retirement she has written several works on cultural history, beginning with *Reading Matters: Five Centuries of Discovering Books*. Her publisher, prompted by her interest in horticulture, proposed she took up the challenge of a history of working-class gardens. The result was *The Gardens of the British Working Class*, described by John Carey in *The Sunday Times* as 'a virtually inexhaustible source of pleasure. Just like a garden, in fact'. Her latest book, *In the Shadow of St. Paul's Cathedral: The Churchyard that shaped London* was published in March.