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Park in English place-naming

1. Introduction

This paper reports a diachronic semasiological study of the word *park* through the stages that have enabled it to become one of the most frequent elements in English urban microtoponymy. I will first deal briefly with its lexical history, and then present a case study on the increasingly diverse set of ways in which it has been used in naming places, mainly in the early-modern and modern periods. As far as I know, this has not been done before. The paper concentrates on the set of names within the city of Bristol, topped up with a number of unsystematically selected instances outside the city boundary but within the conurbation.¹

2. The etymology of *park*

The most recent modern thinking, as represented by the online edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* [OED], takes the word as probably originating in post-classical Latin *parricus* ‘fence’ (cf. *parracus* in the Frankish *Lex Ripuaria*, 8th century but probably earlier), ‘pen for animals’ (9th century), ‘park, enclosure’ (12th century in a British source; from 13th century as *parrocus*). OED speculates that it originates in an unattested post-Classical Latin **parra* ‘pole, rod’, comparing Spanish *parra* ‘artificially supported vine’, Catalan *parra* ‘(type of) vine’, Portuguese *parra* ‘grapevine leaf’, perhaps ultimately related to the base of Old French *barre*, + the unstressed suffix *-icus*. In its previous (second) edition, OED had followed *Französisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (VON WARTBURG 1922: 663–664) in identifying the etymon with West Germanic **parruk*, from *parricus*, yielding OE *pearruc*, which results in the dialectal and otherwise obsolete Modern English *parrock*. (*Paddock* is a late phonological variant of this.) On that second account, therefore, *parrock* and *park* are an etymological doublet. The two accounts appear to be compatible, with an Iberian Latin **parra* being the base of *parricus*, and the

¹ The names for analysis are drawn from a large range of documents in Bristol Archives [BrArch], from local maps of various periods from 1800 onwards illustrated on the web resource Bristol Know Your Place [BKYP], from the local newspaper the *Bristol Post*, from A. H. SMITH (1964) and from V. SMITH (2002), (with caution) from information freely available online, and from personal observation coupled with site visits. See also entries in COATES (2017, 2019). Full lists are given, partly annotated, to emphasise the large scale of the onomastic phenomenon.



descendants of *parricus* having flourished especially in more northerly latitudes, but there is no universally accepted complete solution.

Whatever its origin, the word passed into Old French, including Anglo-Norman. In its most familiar English usage, it was adopted from Anglo-Norman *parc*, which began as a legal and administrative term. The French word denoted an evolving concept: firstly an area enclosed and reserved for various purposes, notably for aristocratic hunting (first 1160–1174; English 1222), then for growing fruit trees (c.1220–1278), then ‘mobile enclosure where one keeps livestock when they sleep in the fields, area thus enclosed’ (1269; in English, now regional, and more generally ‘enclosed field’ c.1393; adopted in that sense into Cornish (PADEL 1985: *s.v.*) and Scots (*Dictionary of the Scots Language* [DSL], *s.v.*), and ultimately ‘large enclosed area of land or woodland maintained for the decoration of a castle or country house, or for pleasure or recreation, etc.’ (1337; English c.1325).²

Much later, *park* acquired various military senses to which I shall not make any further reference, since they appear to have no onomastic consequences, although they are relevant to the lexeme *car park*.

3. *Park* in English toponymy

Park appears in 2024 to be the generic of choice in the toponymy of many kinds of urban estate. The reasons for its explosion are grounded, as we shall see, in a sequence of intellectual and social practices. Specifically, it appears in a base of inherited rural toponymy, modified by social pretensions consequent on the dissolution and secularisation of major landed estates, by Romantic and post-Romantic conceptions of rurality, and by a type of philanthropy inspired by these. The outcome is a term that became so appealing in its connotations that it is now the “go-to” or default element in macro-urbanonymy (and arguably perhaps bleached of its earlier connotations). It shares this developmental path with *green/Green* and other less frequent originally rural or pastoral elements not considered in this study, such as *wood* and *grove*, though it is the one that is now by far the most widely found. It is also the one that has had the greatest denotational flexibility, going well beyond its original rural connotations into industrial and commercial lexis and thence into toponymy in a way no doubt

² There are references to a park in the bounds of a very early Anglo-Saxon charter relating to Egham, Surrey (Sawyer document no. 1165), but they have clearly been inserted in the course of transcription during the Middle Ages. The dates given for the appearance of the word in French are taken from OED and checked against *Anglo-Norman Dictionary* [AND]. Specifiers in English microtoponyms mentioned in *Middle English Dictionary* [MED], e.g. *Parkfeld* (1278), also attest the existence of the word in the 13th century.

aided by its original legal-functional status, as compared to the merely topographical *green*.

3.1. *Park* in local names: rural beginnings

As a lexical word, *park* is frequent in texts from the Middle Ages and Early Modern periods. But it does not appear unambiguously as a generic in place-names in any of its contemporary applications until quite late in its history. All of those applications are consequent on cultural, commercial and technological change. As a toponymic generic it emerged when owners of country seats that possessed, or had formerly possessed, a hunting park embraced the new fashion of landscape gardening in the early 18th century (whose major practitioners were Lancelot Brown and Humphry Repton). Those owners then saw that such a landscape could be the prime asset of their estates, and reflected this in names, which typically consisted of a village-name + the generic (cf. WRIGHT 2020: 51). The first instance known to me of such an estate name is (the atypical, unrelated to a village name) Nonsuch Park in Surrey (1750, OED), which is the remnant of a deer park belonging to Henry VIII's Nonsuch Palace. The development of the usage is clear: from a descriptive term for one of the assets of an aristocratic estate, by synecdoche to such an estate itself, and thus to a name-element for an estate. Its social desirability in names was established very quickly; a good pointer to this is the title of the novel *Mansfield Park* (1814) by the socially acute Jane Austen.

An indicator of the success of the new fashion is that 25 of the historic landed estates maintained by the British heritage charity the National Trust [NT], many of which acquired their current appearance in the 18th century, have the element in their current names.³

*Parke; Attingham Park, Basildon Park, Buscot Park, Charlecote Park, Clumber Park, Croome Park, Dinton Park, Dyrham Park, Fell Foot Park, Gatton Park, Hatchlands Park, Ilam Park, Lyme Park, Morden Hall Park, Netley Park (Abinger, Surrey), Newark Park, Osterley Park, Prior Park, Sheffield Park (Sussex), Sheringham Park, Tatton Park, Uppark, West Wycombe Park, Woodchester Park*⁴

³ As a generic in the names of landed estates, *Park* shares the field with *House*, *Hall*, *Place*, *Court*, *Manor* (all alluding to the main domestic building or the legal function of the estate rather than the physical grounds), or a term denoting ecclesiastical status (*Abbey*, *Priory*), or one denoting dependent status (*Grange*). *Park* is the only onymic element in the set of alternants which alludes to the geographical or aesthetic aspect of the estate.

⁴ This is a list drawn from official NT materials. For more, including non-NT, see the incomplete list at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_country_houses_in_the_United_Kingdom (accessed 2024-08-28), which includes 11 others in Gloucestershire alone, and 13 in Sussex.



Two *Parks* in my home city of Bristol are survivals of such hunting parks that became country estates, namely Pen Park (*parc' de Pen*, 1299) and (Old) Sneed Park (*parc' de Sned*, 1374), the latter formerly belonging to the Bishop of Worcester. It has been gently transformed into the expensive modern *Sneyd* Park residential estate of the 1870s. Stoke Park in Stoke Gifford and Stapleton parishes is a creation of the 1740s and 50s (EVANS 2008: 157), and has therefore not been found so named before then.⁵

3.2. *Park* in local names: urban contexts, with a focus on Bristol

In early 19th-century Bristol, *Park* as a name element was already beginning to urbanise. There are clear signs of the element being used in street-names before or alongside district names. The distinction between those two concepts may not always be easy to operationalise since streets planned by architects and developers may well have been conceived as social unit(ie)s amounting to districts, or places in their own right.⁶

Tyndall's Park, close to the city centre, had been created in 1753–1767 and redesigned in 1799, but it began literally as a new ornamental park, i.e. it represented a late flourish of the rural tradition, though here it was definitely *rus in urbe*. Unusually, it is named from the landowning family's surname, and it is first referred to by its current name no later than 1791. It started to be developed for housing in 1825–1833, by which time it had already had a small impact: the street-name *Park Place*, situated to its south-west (1828, Ashmead's map [BKYP]), was no doubt inspired by the adjacent gate to Tyndall's Park. (Park Place itself is a triangular development with an enclosed garden or parklet in the middle.) This small beginning appears to have provoked the trend of naming developments in the nearby prosperous suburb of Clifton which make use of the element *Park*. Developers were likely to opt for names "hinting at connections with the landed gentry, even where there was no sign of an actual park" (MALPASS 2018: 279). The earliest manifestation of this trend could not be more transparent; we have documentary reference to the transformation of cultivated fields:

⁵ A second *Stoke Park* appears only on the first edition of the Ordnance Survey (1843–1888), and is not otherwise recorded before 1846 (HARFORD 1909: 128). This was formerly Stoke House (1669) in Stoke Bishop. It adjoined (Old) Sneed Park (see above), but there seems to be no warrant for it as the name of the house. The *Park* name disappears from the second edition of the larger-scale Ordnance Survey, having left its mark only in Stoke Park Road, the drive encircling the property, which now appears anomalous. Today the house is generally referred to by the title of one of the theological institutions that have occupied it since the 20th century, and the grounds are not separately named.



⁶ *Place* is used here in the sense now generally current in cultural geography, namely 'location imbued with human significance'.

a close of ground formerly 2 closes, the one called Broadmoors and the other called Laridge situate in the parish of Clifton, now laid out for building and called Richmond Park 1839 [Bristol Archives [BrArch] reference no. 45602/1]

That is, it was the notional *area* that was first or prospectively so called, not any of the houses in it or the street(s), and it had not been in any sense previously a park. Others followed soon. It would be over-ambitious to try to deal with them individually in a conference paper, so here is a simple list, with the date of their earliest documentation:

Victoria Park (in Clifton) 1852, *Clifton Park* 1855, *Durdham Park*, street or group of houses pre-1855, *Wellington Park*, which was actual open land 1855, *Redland Park*, group of houses 1855, *Royal Park*, Ordnance Survey [OS] mapping, first series, post-1855, pre-1874, *Woolcott Park*, c.1863–1868, *Westbury Park* 1860s, *Elgin Park*, 1866–1867

These areas, all relatively small and compact, and in some cases a block within a street, acquired their names as follows:

from dedicatees – Queen Victoria, Elgin (the 8th earl, colonial administrator), Wellington (the 1st duke, soldier and politician)

from landowners/donors/philanthropists – uncertain, but possibly including William Woolcott, master cabinet maker

from toponyms (all existing area-names) – Clifton, Durdham, Redland, Westbury

3.3. *Park* in (sub)urban names nationally

The two strands of social and cultural change, involving the rural idyll and its urban analogue, came together most powerfully in London's suburbia in the later Victorian period. There were three great aristocratic estates in Middlesex named with *Park*, namely Gunnersbury, Osterley and Syon Parks, and these probably served as the inspiration and model for the next great trend in the toponymic usage of the term. Within four miles of all three of them is what has been described as the world's first *garden suburb*, though it may be found surprising that that was the chosen term rather than *park suburb*. This upper-middle class development was named *Bedford Park*,⁷ after Bedford House, which had existed on the site before its redevelopment by Jonathan Carr (FLETCHER 2016). He conceived it as an antidote to rigid classically-inspired

⁷ At the relevant time there was no culturally validated onomastic model of the appropriate scale for a possible alternative **X Garden(s)* as there was for *X Park*, though individual instances of *X Gardens* could undoubtedly be found at the level of the street, e.g. *Steine Gardens* in Brighton (c.1793).



and formally-planned developments such as those seen in the terraces and squares of Bath and Bristol, and planned it aesthetically so as to offer the apparently informal appeal of a park. The previous housing on the site had not been park-like in any previous sense before the creation of the suburb, so this case could be seen as a major driver of modern naming practices for larger residential areas that make use of *Park*. The concept caught on immediately. John Innes' Merton Park estate in south-west London (1870–1904) was advertised as “the original and most unique garden suburb” (to quote the estate company's advertisements, though this was not strictly true because its development was outstripped by the completion of Bedford Park).

Another important influence on the use of *Park* in residential settings must have been the development of former royal parks in the London area as public assets with prestigious housing on their periphery, notably Richmond Park in the 18th century and Regent's Park in the 1810s. The fact that Bristol's first planned residential “park” named as such was *Richmond Park* cannot be a coincidence. Urban public parks also had the potential to provide posh street and district addresses because many were financed by the erection and sale of comfortable houses around their edges. These addresses could be manifested in street-name specifiers, e.g. *Park Lane* along the east side of London's Hyde Park, with many other instances, and almost innumerable instances of couplings of *Park* with *Drive* and other generics (143 *Park Drives* on www.streetmap.co.uk (accessed 2024-08-28); cf. ROOM 1992: 52, 70, 199, 203).⁸ In Bristol, as elsewhere, the most conspicuous trend has related to the naming of districts with or without an eponymous street.

3.4. *Park* in (sub)urban names: Bristol

The relatively formal developments described in Bristol, from Richmond Park to Westbury Park, precede London's deliberately informal Bedford Park, but both types of development are in their own way what University of Michigan urban planning professor ROBERT FISHMAN (1987) called “suburbs of privilege”, of which onymic *Park* became an indicator. However the naming model rapidly became pansocial. In late-Victorian Bristol we find semi-detached lower-middle class villas:

Mayfield Park, Fishponds (1880s), *Chester Park* (1890s)

These are named from a toponym and a Tudor-period landowning family respectively. And whilst there is no contemporary Bristol parallel, an estate affordable by the skilled working classes was created at Shaftesbury Park, Battersea, London in 1872–1877, named after the prominent contemporary



⁸ *Park Drive* was also the name given to a popular brand of cigarette (made by Gallaher's, 1902).

social reformer Lord Shaftesbury. Accordingly, developing usage tended to suggest, if not riches, then at the very least that Victorian benchmark, respectability.

As Bristol expanded south of the river Avon in the 20th century, a number of further *Parks* as district-names appeared on the map, mostly for working-class estates planned on garden-city principles (HOWARD 1898) for people affected by slum clearance (post-WW1) or bomb damage (post-WW2):

Filwood Park, Headley Park, Kensington Park, Knowle Park, Novers Park, St Anne's Park

Without exception these take their names from previously named locations: *Kensington Park* from a now demolished grand 18th-century house, *Filwood Park* alluding to the genuine medieval Filwood Chase, and the others with *Park* appended to the names of pre-existing lands or districts. *Filwood Park* is especially interesting in that it has offered an opportunity for *Park* to be engaged in a case of euphemism; for many administrative and other purposes it has edged out *Knowle West*, the name of an estate regarded by some as socially problematic.

North of the river the planned garden suburb now called *Sea Mills* (directly from a farm of that name) was initially, in the early 1920s, intended to be called *Sea Mills Park*. It was still referred to by that name in City Council documents of the 1930s to 1950s.⁹

The use of *Park* in district-names continues unabated. It is so widely established as a toponymic generic now that *Century Park* (Lawrence Weston) was so named as the result of an unguided public competition in 2019. The latest (2023/4) are the residential estates *Brooklands Park* and *Beaufort Park*, the latter partly from the aristocratic title of the historic local landowning family and partly perhaps from an adjacent garage which also owes its name ultimately to the family.¹⁰

There is clear evidence that the name element has been applied to ever smaller pieces of townscape, and with decreasing focus on space, exclusivity and wellbeing. This trend is manifest in the potential ambivalence of *Park* names between built area and built street mentioned earlier. It has resulted in the use

⁹ E.g. BrArch HBA/4643/6 (1932), 40307/1/51 (c.1950); MILTON (2021: 6).

¹⁰ Beyond the city boundaries we find *Duchess Park*, which is part of Stoke Park mentioned above, *Filton Park Estate* (1904–1931, and c.1934–), *Frenchay Park* (grounds of the formerly well-known hospital), *Kingswood Park* (from a house named *The Park*, now built over), *Little Park*, *Page Park*, *Stonebridge Park*, and most recently (now under development) *Brooklands Park*.



of *Park* as a street-name generic which we have no space to analyse fully here. There are at least 80 such names in the conurbation of Bristol:

Albert Park, Alexandra Park, Arley Park, Ashley Park, Avon Park, Begbrook Park, Brighton Park, Bushy Park, Cambridge Park, Carlton Park, Cedar Park, Chelsea Park, Chepstow Park, Clyde Park, Cote Lea Park, Cotham Park, Crowther Park, Dennon Park, Downend Park, Downs Cote Park, Downs Park, Durdham Park, East Park, Eastcote Park, Elgin Park, Elm Park, Elmgrove Park, Florence Park, Fromeside Park, Glen Park, Glenavon Park, Glenside Park, Goodeve Park, Grange Park, Greenway Park, Grove Park (x 3), Hampton Park, Hartington Park, Haytor Park, Henleaze Park, High Park, Highridge Park, Kensington Park, Kingscote Park, Kingsdown Park, Kingsleigh Park, Langton Park, Lingfield Park, Manor Park, Maycliffe Park, Mayfield Park, Milton Park, Montrose Park, Nigel Park, North Park [in postcode BS15], Oakmead Park, Old Park, Old Sneed Park, Pendennis Park, Pensfield Park, Redland Park, Remenham Park, Roseberry [sic] Park, Royal Park, Royal Victoria Park [in the park-like grounds of a large house], St Matthias Park, St Michael's Park, St Nicholas Park, St Werburgh's Park, Sandringham Park, Stanley Park, Stonebridge Park, Thingwall Park, Trendlewood Park, West Park, West Town Park, Westbury Park, Westfield Park, Westleigh Park, Wootton Park

In this list, the familiar patterns are apparent of incorporating established local toponyms, other place-names especially with royal and aristocratic connections, and occasional personal names, again mostly those of significant public figures.¹¹ One, *Henleaze Park*, perpetuates the name of a private house/estate. A few names in this group include topographical- or toponymic-descriptive elements (*Cedar Park, Fromeside Park, Glen Park*). A very few are named by copying the names of horse-racecourses (*Chepstow Park, Lingfield Park*).

3.5. *Parks in towns*

By the middle of the 19th century, a different but related form of landscape planning was emerging. This was also grounded in the notion of the park as an area of aristocratic wellbeing and recreation, but it was embedded in a philanthropic movement to provide recreational spaces for the urban general public. Some of the philanthropists were aristocrats, some were prominent public figures and some were successful industrialists. Among the first such parks was Royal Victoria Park in Bath (1830), 12 miles from Bristol.¹² A



¹¹ *Roseberry* is in error for the name of the Victorian prime minister Lord Rosebery, or perhaps a rationalisation or prettification of it.

¹² The term *public park* is recorded first in 1822 in a work of the botanist John Loudon (OED).

goodly number of such parks were actually named *The People's Park*, either officially (in Halifax in 1857, Luton before 1879, Grimsby 1881–1883, Banbury 1910 (originally private, 1890)), or unofficially in the case of Victoria Park, Tower Hamlets, London, in 1845). As a result of this social movement there are now about 27,000 designated public parks in the UK (HoC 2017: 11), mostly municipally run. The term *park* in this new sense passed into common onomastic use. It gave rise to a long-lasting trend, beginning with e.g. *Prince's Park* (Toxteth, Liverpool, 1842/3), and *Peel Park* (Salford, 1846). Specifiers were drawn from the same categories as those in residential area names: dedicatees, landowners, locations. On the development of such parks in general, see CONWAY and RABBITTS (2023).

Let us now turn to Bristol's municipal parks. The city has 29 designated parks of which 18 contain the element *Park* in their name (one as an alternate), and one of the others includes two historic named (sub-)parks. The 19 thus identified on the Council's website (see Bristol City Council) are shown with the condensed descriptions given there to indicate the range of their functions:

Begbrook Green Park, modern community park; children's play areas and sports pitches; *Canford Park*, Victorian; children's play park, bowling green, tennis courts and football pitches; *Castle Park*, post-WW2; large green space in the city centre; *Dame Emily Park*, community park with children's park, skate park and green space; *Dundridge Park*, community park in St George with children's playground and football pitches; *Eastville Park*, Victorian city park with children's playgrounds and green space; *Greville Smyth Park*, community park with green space and children's play area; *Hengrove Park*, large open space with adventure play park and wheels park for skateboarders and BMX riders; *Kings Weston Estate* (previously *Kings Weston Park*), historic landscape with historic buildings and garden features; includes *Great Park* and *Little or Shirehampton Park*; *Luckwell Park*, inner city park with a playground and grass area; *Netham Park*, park and green space with leisure, sport and recreation facilities; *Redcatch Park*, neighbourhood park with children's playground, tennis courts and football pitches; *St Agnes Park*, community park with playground; *St Andrews Park*, classic Victorian neighbourhood park; *St George Park*, c.1890 Victorian suburban park; *St Paul's Park*, small park in the city; *Stoke Park (Estate)*, historic park and garden (see above); *Vassall's Park*, alternatively and more usually called *Oldbury Court Estate*; *Victoria Park* (Bedminster, 1891), Victorian park with children's play area and grassy space.¹³

These 19 parks run by the city acquired their names as follows:

¹³ Despite its name, Ridgeway Park (1887) is a cemetery in Eastville.



from dedicatees – 1 (cf. Queen’s / Victoria Park everywhere)

from landowners/donors/philanthropists – 3, Greville Smyth and (his wife) Dame Emily, Vassall’s (cf. *Adderley*, *Calthorpe* and *Muntz Parks* in Birmingham (all 19th century; CHINN 2012: esp. chapters 2 and 3), and *Philips Park* (1846; MCGARR 2013: 241) in Manchester; so also *Sparke Evans Park* and *Page Park* outside Bristol’s city boundaries in Staple Hill)

from locations, i.e. areal toponyms (14, the majority), streets (3, Dundridge, Luckwell, Redcatch, beginning a trend) – or historic buildings (1, Castle, from the site of the castle demolished in the 17th century, and on the site of the historic city centre destroyed during WW2)

Etymologically descriptive names are absent, except for the sub-parks of the King’s Weston Estate, (*the*) *Great Park* (obsolete) and (*the*) *Little Park*, now, with its golf course, generally known as *Shirehampton Park*. A striking absence in this Bristol municipal group is that of modern names taken from the sites or grounds of individual houses with large estates (contrast e.g. *Summerfield Park* (1876) and *Rookery Park* (1903) in Birmingham (CHINN 2012: 78, 120)).¹⁴

The city council recognises an additional category of “Park with play equipment”, exemplified by 24 locations:

Argyle Place Park, Arnos Court Park, Ashley Street Park, Avonmouth Park, Barnard Park, Barton Hill Urban Park, Bellevue Road Park, Brandon Hill Park, Fishponds Park, Gainsborough Square Park, Gaunts Ham Park, Gores Marsh Park, Hillfields Park, King’s Head Lane Park, Mancroft Park, Mina Road Park, Montpelier Park, Mowbray Park, Old Quarry Park, Owen Square Park, Rawnsley Park, Springfield Park, St Anne’s Park, Withywood Park

Almost all of these are named from toponyms, mainly hodonyms [including *Old Quarry Park*, from Old Quarry Road], with a few directly after identifiable individuals (*Barnard* from one Frederick Barnard “an upright man – 1848–1936”;¹⁵ *Rawnsley* from the social reform campaigner Hardwicke Drummond Rawnsley, active in Bristol in the 1870s). These offer clear evidence that the name element has been applied to ever smaller pieces of land, and with increasing emphasis on amenities of various sorts, mostly for play.

¹⁴ The model gave rise to the (?) humorous *Magpie Park* for a small public space right in the city centre, from the adjacent offices of a satirical journal called *The (Bristol) Magpie* (1882–1911). The toponym lasted in popular use till the 1950s.

¹⁵ Named in 1971; BrArch 42054/1/03132.

There are also (or have been) some parks by name in the city that are not run by the city council (e.g. *Arno's Court Park*, *Hartcliffe Community Park Farm* [now renamed *Hartcliffe City Farm*]), and at least one other that appears to be municipal but for which the city appears not to claim responsibility (*Riverside Park*). There are a few others in the immediate neighbourhood, just outside the city boundary (e.g. *Conham River Park*, *Durley Park*, the deerpark of the demolished stately home Chandos House). This is not an exhaustive list.

There appear to be names of other small areas of land in both of the last two categories, especially at street level, where usage vacillates between inclusion and exclusion of *Park* (see also footnote 19). In recent years the terminology of city planning departments appears to have led to the use of *Open Space* in the name-like designations of places that might in earlier times have been named *Park*, e.g. *Crow Lane Open Space*, *Stockwood Open Space*. These are entities free of buildings, some including nature reserves, which are essentially green “lungs” without facilities for refreshments or sports.

3.6. *Park* in the 20th century: other lexical and onomastic applications

I have dealt above with the names of actual parks in the sense of ‘public open spaces’ in the Bristol area, and then with the further development of the term in the names of areas, notably residential suburbs. I shall focus lastly on the life of the word *park* as it has exploded lexically and thence onomastically, especially in the 20th century, and as exemplified in Bristol. Since the advent of intendedly rural-like urban parks, the denotation of the term has widened in various ways to become the generic element in phrasal expressions serving to some extent as hyponyms of *park*,¹⁶ exemplified below with dates of earliest records taken from OED. The typology of such spaces now includes:

spaces for free-time recreation in one of the two forms implicit in the municipal parks project, permanent sites for an escape to nature and for play or sport (OED):

terms: *national park* 1851, *country park*¹⁷ 1888, *amusement park* 1890, *tourist park* 1927 [competing with *camp site*], *theme park* 1960 (originally US usage), *wildlife park* 1965, *safari park* 1969, and in the names of sports stadiums (*Celtic Park* in Glasgow 1888, *St James' Park* in Newcastle 1892, *Villa Park* in Aston,

¹⁶ Not always. A national park is likely to be understood as a park, but a car park is not.

¹⁷ The grounds of the major former private estate Ashton Court are now touted as a public amenity called *Ashton Court Country Park*.



Birmingham 1897; *Shaftesbury Park* just outside the city of Bristol in Frenchay appears to be modern¹⁸)

Note also *linear park* for a disused railway line often reclaimed by nature and left free for public enjoyment, which also occasionally finds its way into names such as *Culcheth Linear Park* in Warrington (Lancashire, now Cheshire).

memorial park 1927 (absent locally, but note the similarly designated *Kingswood Remembrance Park*, and the onomastically noteworthy *Ridgeway Park Cemetery* 1887)

spaces connected with transport, in which the word *park*, probably in its military application ‘area reserved for artillery vehicles, stores [etc.]’ from 1683 (OED) may have played a role:

terms: *car park* 1926, *caravan park* 1930 [competing with *caravan site*], *coach park*, *lorry park* 1968

spaces connected with commerce and industry in the broadest sense:

terms: *industrial park* 1949 (originally US usage [competing locally in Britain with *industrial estate* ...]), *research park* 1956, *business park* 1957 (originally US), *science park* 1961, *office park* 1963, *retail park* 1973 (originally US), *wind park* 1980, *enterprise park*, *trade park*, *distribution park*, *office park*

The first major group contains what are probably understood as hyponyms of lexical *park*, but the last two groups do not. These two trade on the status of the first. However, a surprising onomastic interest has arisen in the third group. Firstly, note that there has been a considerable growth in the creation of names including them as if a compound generic, specifically in Bristol:¹⁹

Avonside Industrial Park, *Douglas Road Industrial Park*, *Lawrence Hill Industrial Park*, *Liberty Industrial Park*, *Wadehurst Industrial Park* (5)

Abbey Wood Business Park, *Bowling Hill Business Park*, *Bristol Business Park*, *Burnett Business Park*, *City Business Park*, *Eagles Wood Business Park*, *East Cliff Business Park*, *Eden Office Park* (sic; a.k.a. *Eden Business Park*), *Filwood Green Business Park*, *Glenmore Business Park*, *Gordano Gate*

¹⁸ Shaftesbury Park is the present home of Dings Crusaders rugby union club. Its name is complexly linked to the fact that the Victorian industrial suburb of The Dings, where the club originated, was singled out as a slum in an article in a publication by the Shaftesbury Crusade of social reformers in the 1850s (note by IAN HADDRELL, <https://shaftesburypark.com/sports-facilities/>, accessed 2024-08-28).

¹⁹ Note that in texts mentioning these places the (compound) generic is not always consistent, for example *Cabot Park* or *Cabot Distribution Park*; *Harlequin Office Park* is sometimes *Harlequin Business Park*.

Business Park, Great Western Business Park, Hanham Business Park, Hawkfield Business Park, Long Ashton Business Park, Middle Bridge Business Park, The Oaklands Business Park (within which is *Apollo Park*), *Portishead Business Park, Sampson House Business Park, South Bristol Business Park, Unicorn Business Park* (within which is *Unicorn Park Ave*) (22)

South Bristol Trading Park, St Philips Trading Park (2)

Brislington Retail Park, Cribbs Causeway Retail Park (2) + *Abbey Wood Shopping Park* (sic; 1)

(*Cabot Park* or *Distribution Park*), *Western Approach Distribution Park* (2)

Bristol & Bath Science Park (1)

Harlequin Office Park (1)

Most of these have a descriptive-locative element or toponym(s) as their specifier, but a few have a commercial name or brand name in that function (*Glenmore, Great Western, Harlequin*, and probably *Unicorn* and *Wadehurst*), whilst three are commemorative (*Cabot, Liberty* and *Great Western*).²⁰ One appears whimsical, possibly commercial (*Unicorn*, though a unicorn is one of the bearers of the arms of the City of Bristol).

Secondly, in the 21st century a trend has emerged for such an expected transparent compound classifying generic to be reduced to its simplex quasi-hyperonym, i.e. without a specifier; as a result we find *X Park* appearing as the name of a range of business etc. parks. This could be easily explained as associating the newly developed out-of-town commercial estates with the large list of residential and quasi-rural idylls mentioned above. Such names noted recently in the Bristol area, especially Avonmouth and nearby Severnside, include:

Cabot Park (competing with *Cabot Distribution Park*; see above), *Central Park, Constellation Park, Emerald Park, Panattoni Park, St Modwen Park, Templegate Park* (across the river Avon from Templegate Works), *Tungsten Park and Carbide Park, Vertex Park* (in Lyde Green)

No novel typical pattern has emerged decisively. In some cases these may be temporary names allocated by developers, which may be replaced by more permanent names in due course. Some of these include the names of speculative developers whose brand is duplicated elsewhere in England (*Panattoni, St Modwen*), others those of their commercial tenants (*Constellation*, wine importers). Some are commemorative (the explorers John and Sebastian

²⁰ *Liberty* commemorates the defunct South Liberty coal mine in Bedminster, and therefore could be taken as belonging to the toponymic type.



Cabot), others descriptive-locative (*Central*, *Templegate*; metaphorically possibly *Vertex*—no connection is known with similarly named parks in India and Azerbaijan). *Emerald Park* may allude phonologically to the host community *Emersons Green* whilst referencing a hard, expensive and precious substance. The hardest to pin down are *Tungsten* and *Carbide Parks* on Severnside, sited adjacent to each other, awaiting development and together clearly nominally alluding to tungsten carbide, the hard compound used in cutting tools and industrial abrasives.

4. Other considerations

As noted above in section 3, other words in the same semantic field have shared a similar but less intense onomastic development, especially *Green*. Pre-existing toponyms of this form have been repurposed as urban estate names (as in the Bristol-area cases *Longwell Green* and *Emerson's Green* and *Lyde Green*), and others have been created using the analogy of existing names in the area (for example in neighbourhood-names of Crawley New Town in Sussex such as *Furnace Green*). Other words that have found their way into urban toponymy from an originally feudal-legal base are *place*, used in the names of aristocratic or manorial dwellings and, following Continental practice, in honyms for town squares or *piazze*, and then cul-de-sacs (OED **place** n[oun].1, II and **place** n.2); and *court*, of similar pedigree (EPNE I, 110), now used also in names for blocks of flats (OED **court** n.1, sense III.15.b).²¹

5. Conclusion

Park has taken a long and complex lexical and onomastic journey, from a legal term for an enclosed rural landholding to a name for the local successor to these, to an urban name-element for a suburb of privilege and a green lung, to more democratised versions of both of these, and after that to an element in words, and then in names, for commercial spaces. It has followed ME *place* in denoting ever more diverse places. Despite a heavy workload as one of the 5000 most frequent words in contemporary written English (OED), it shows no sign of getting tired.



²¹ Note that *place* and *court* are never used lexically in these senses – as such, they are onymic elements only.

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Abstract

This paper explores the development of the word *park* as an English place-name element, from its origin as a word for practical arrangements for livestock management, through the great social changes of early-modern times by which the possession of a park became a symbol of wealth and status, via the impact of the ruralism of the Romantic period and consequent municipal philanthropy, up to the present-day ubiquity of the word in the naming of suburbs and estates. In parallel with the last of these developments comes the explosion of the word into compounds in the common vocabulary, such as *car park*, *industrial park*, *science park*, *business park*, *theme park*, some of which in their turn develop uses as toponymic generics. Topics central to this paper embrace the conference themes of people's relation to their environment from the standpoint of toponyms and other place-related names, and urban toponymy in smart and sustainable cities.

Keywords: Urban toponymy, urbanonyms, *park*, semantic development, social change, onomastic innovations

