



## Matthew Beaumont

It is a busy summer lunchtime in Bloomsbury, and we are within a ‘stone’s throw’ of where Charles Dickens once lived. **Andrew Stuck**, Producer of *Talking Walking*, is in the company of **Matthew Beaumont**, a scholar and Professor in English Literature at University College London and author of the bestselling book called “*Nightwalking, a Nocturnal History of London*”. His research interests go far beyond literature as he is also Co-Director of the University’s Urban Lab where he is responsible for the Cities Imagined strand.

Notes from the podcast interview by **Andrew Stuck**: Recorded in June 2016 in Tavistock Square. Published in July 2017 on <http://www.talkingwalking.net> 22.17 10.4MB

Night Walking, a Nocturnal History of London (from Chaucer to Dickens): Published by Verso Press: <https://www.versobooks.com/books/2157-nightwalking>

Professor Matthew Beaumont - University College London profile: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/english/people/matthew-beaumont>

University College London’s Urban Lab: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/urbanlab>

1285 King Edward I introduced the “Nightwalker” Statute to police itinerants in the cities that broke the night time curfews. Technically speaking it remained well into the 20th century!

Public lighting was introduced in London in the late 17th century, with a culture of night life evolving in the 18th century, coincident with the emergence of professional poets and writers. “Grub Street” poets writing by the word, paid for quantity as much as quality.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grub\\_Street](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grub_Street)

Writers included Johnson [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel\\_Johnson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_Johnson) , Goldsmith [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oliver\\_Goldsmith](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oliver_Goldsmith) and Savage [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard\\_Savage\\_\(poet\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Savage_(poet)) who deliberately travelled on foot. “Walking became an affirmation of the city.”

‘Pedestrian’ starts as a description of prose and then migrates to be used to describe people going about on foot. <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/pedestrian>

Romantic poets Coleridge <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/samuel-taylor-coleridge> and Wordsworth <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/william-wordsworth> walked much for inspiration.



Will Self <http://will-self.com/>

Charles Dickens - was a compulsive walker <http://www.dickensfellowship.org/life-charles-dickens>

Tavistock Square [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tavistock\\_Square](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tavistock_Square) to Gad's Hill Place [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gads\\_Hill\\_Place](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gads_Hill_Place) .

Extreme durational walkers and runners:

Eddie Izzard <http://www.eddieizzard.com/>

Captain Barclay [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert\\_Barclay\\_Allardice](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Barclay_Allardice)

'Flaneurs' in 19th century Paris <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fl%C3%A2neur>

Matthew Beaumont separates night walkers into two types: 'noctivigants' (lower class, common night walker, vagrant, itinerants) and 'noctambulant' (upper or middle class walker who can perambulate at their leisure).

**Matthew Beaumont suggests a walk at night** following either the rivers Tybrun or Westbourne, both of which rise from Hampstead Heath and flow to the Thames, through the Royal Parks. Previous *Talking Walking* interviewee Tom Bolton is the author of a handy guide: *London's Lost Rivers: A walker's guide*. <http://strangeattractor.co.uk/shoppe/londons-lost-rivers/>