



ANNUAL REPORT

2021 / 2022



WHAT DOES THE BLACKHEATH SOCIETY DO?

The Society can claim many achievements since its foundation in 1937. We work with local councils, residents, amenity groups, traders, police and national bodies - with everyone who can contribute to the enhancement of Blackheath

We aim to preserve and enhance for the benefit of the public the features of Blackheath of particular beauty or historical

and architectural interest; to protect its open spaces from disfigurement or encroachment, particularly the Heath; to encourage high standards of planning and architecture in its new buildings; to promote improvements to the amenities of the area and to encourage appreciation of its character and history.

BLACKHEATH VILLAGE

We work with other community organisations and local traders to enhance the Village and organise and support local events, such as talks and visits to places of local interest.

THE HEATH

We work to preserve the health and enjoyment of the Heath, but oppose commercial exploitation and damage from over-use.

TRAFFIC AND TRAVEL

We monitor major developments that have an effect on the traffic in Blackheath. We campaign for better railway and bus services and for station improvements.

PLANNING AND CONSERVATION

We encourage good modern design, while preserving our existing heritage. We scrutinise planning proposals, advise local councils and appear at public inquiries.

HISTORY AND EDUCATION / EVENTS

We maintain a unique archive of more than 20,000 images of Blackheath. We sponsor talks, exhibitions and publications about the history of the area, organise local walks and publish guides.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

JOIN THE SOCIETY

Keep up to date with local news and have a voice in future developments..

JOIN OUR ACTIVITIES

Whether you have expertise in our areas of interest or time to give practical help, along with other people involved in Village life.

For general information and advice on matters concerning the activities and work of The Society apply to:

The Secretary, The Blackheath Society,
Studio 2, The Old Bakehouse,
11 Blackheath Village, London, SE3 9LA

- 📞 020 8297 1937
- ✉ office@blackheath.org
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- 📘 [BlackheathSociety](https://www.facebook.com/BlackheathSociety)
- 🐦 [@BlackheathSoc](https://twitter.com/BlackheathSoc)



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CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION



Society Chair Paul Watts

What a difference a year makes. The unwinding of pandemic restrictions in the summer of 2021 enabled the Society slowly to resume some in-person events, as well as continuing the alternative ways of communicating with members that we have developed over the pandemic.

We were also very pleased to be able finally to organise a Kite Day on the Heath in early October 2021 (*see next page*). We held numerous Walks and Talks, in person and online, and our Meet and Eat events in pubs. One of the first in-person events was the annual cricket match with the Greenwich Society in July in Greenwich Park which ended in a rare tie. We were also pleased to take on the activities of the former Architecture group of the Friends of Blackheath Halls, following changes to that organisation, and we now have a full programme of architectural talks and visits.

The Planning Group again had a busy year and reviewed a record 641 planning applications in 2021. It also published a "Prospect for Blackheath", a vision for the Village and surrounding residential areas for the next 10 years, and commented on the new Lewisham local plan.

Our representatives on the Blackheath Joint Working Party were busy dealing with Heath matters. Several projects were supported from funds donated earlier by the OnBlackheath pop festival and we held a successful Heath clean-up day in June, working with members, councillors and volunteers.

We continue to digitise our considerable archives and are grateful to our President for his continued supply of material, which Allan Griffin and the team are recording for the future. Village and transport matters also featured. We met local councillors regularly and were happy to help local groups with applications for awards to help fund projects such as a play space on the Heath.

We welcomed over 70 households as new members in 2021. We thank you all for joining and look forward to hearing more from new and existing members about your ideas and the ways you can help, as the Society goes from strength to strength on many fronts. I would like to conclude with my thanks to our volunteers, to the Management Committee and fellow trustees, and particularly to our secretary Sacha Bright for her continued hard work during another challenging year.

KITE DAY



EVENTS AND TALKS

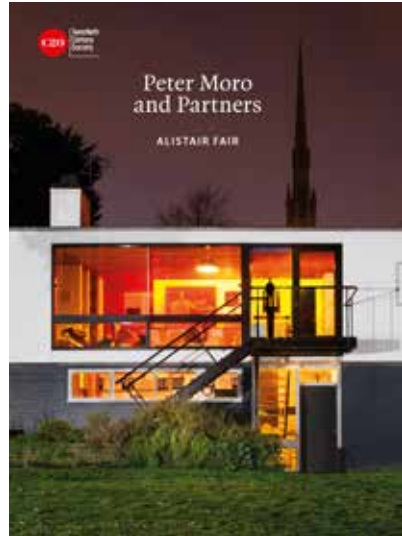
This year saw members getting together on-line and, now Covid is passing, increasingly also in real life, and it is great to be part of such a friendly, active community. The revived Blackheath Kite Day in October was a resounding success with families and friends having a good day on the Heath (*see page 4*).

Our Walk and Talk programme stretched to Soho, Kings Cross and Charing Cross, one of Blackheath's main gateways to the West End. We also took an entertaining Zoom walk round "London without the Lawyers".



Allan Griffin updated us on the state of the Society's archives via Zoom, and Matthew Cahill of The Prince Philip Maritime Trust gave a taster of the excellent work it does locally and the treasures it holds in its new buildings in Kidbrooke. Eltham Palace has been refreshed by English Heritage and an enthusiastic and knowledgeable volunteer David Sleep told us about the changes and the lives of the Courtauld family in Eltham.

The Architecture Group, originally attached to Blackheath Halls, has come under the aegis of the Blackheath Society and its events are open to all. This has proved very popular, with trips to the Design District in North Greenwich and the new John Morden



Centre of Morden College. We have been fortunate that the group's annual lecture is to be given by Dr Alastair Fair on Peter Moro (*above*), who was an important member of the team designing The Royal Festival Hall and some of the houses on the Cator Estate.

Society members have also met to enjoy evening lectures. By popular request Roger Johnson, of the Sherlock Holmes Society, repeated his excellent talk on the many connections Conan Doyle had with Blackheath and how he used local knowledge in the Holmes stories.

Maureen Corcoran and Paul Wright drew together a wealth of information to provide a fascinating and richly illustrated insight into the various popular rock stars (*see left*) associated with the Blackheath area from 1950 to 2000.

As we go to press, the Society is set to coordinate the lighting of the Beacon on June 2 on Blackheath, which will form part of a chain around the United Kingdom and Commonwealth to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. A truly historic event.

THE VILLAGE

Despite the issues caused by the coronavirus lockdowns, and many shops and restaurants being forced to close throughout the UK, Blackheath Village has bounced back with new businesses opening during the year.

Blackheath Yoga and Space NK moved into their new premises just as Covid hit, but they survived and are a popular addition at the old Selectric site. Selectric is also doing well at its new premises at the top of the Village.

We also welcomed solicitors Judge and Priestly to the centre of the Village and Snack Heath to the corner opposite All Saints church on the Heath.

Next to the station, the old minicab office closed and has been replaced by Glam Cars.

More recently, Buddha Taste opened on Royal Parade introducing bubble tea to Blackheath and, for all the new dog owners, Pets Corner is already well established on Montpelier Vale.

The former Cafe Rouge site is now The Blackheath Creatives Pop-Up, selling a wide range of goods from local artisans. It also has a café.

The Society has been working for some time with Lewisham Council to try to resolve the problem of so many HGVs using the Village as a short cut (*shown right*).

Our road is the B212, not designed for such traffic, and it is very busy with pedestrians and cyclists. We will continue to report on our progress as this is an important focus for 2022.

We are also working on a project to replace all the Christmas lights in time for the 2022 season and we have new sponsors. We will update members as the project progresses as the ceremony of switching on the lights has been sadly missed these last two years.





The Society is very fortunate to have a formidable group of volunteers assisting in the scrutiny of plans for development in Blackheath, and our very sincere thanks are due to them for their hard work.

The strength of this group enables us to scan the more than 600 planning applications submitted each year to Lewisham and Greenwich councils. It enables us to review the complicated area of applications for work on trees, and to examine plans for areas peripheral to Blackheath, which could have an indirect impact on Blackheath and often suffer from lack of representation of their own.

We can be pleased with the results of our efforts for the Conservation Area. We support plans for appropriate development, but we contest those we believe are out of scale or keeping with the area, or which involve serious impact on neighbours, including from construction and the removal of decent trees.

Councils have generally supported our submissions, resulting in the rejection of plans for excessive development in diverse parts of Blackheath, including Morden Road, Church Terrace and Corner Green. In the case of the Gables in Blackheath Park

(*seen above*), this has resulted in a much improved scheme coming forward.

The Village presents particular issues in terms of access, construction and car use. Again, Lewisham has supported our efforts to ensure improved schemes for Pares in Tranquil Vale and for Collins St.

Major developments planned for surrounding areas such as Kidbrooke and Leigate present a more difficult challenge, with councils wrestling with the political imperative of building more affordable homes, as well as our plea for quality development for the community. The approval of the huge 1,500-home project for the very restricted Morden Wharf site in Greenwich is the prime example in 2021.

A small but interesting and controversial application for the permanent replacement of the Tea Hut remains outstanding at this point.

It is clear that a special and complex challenge for our group in coming years, working with councils, is going to be how to embrace the need to significantly improve the energy efficiency of new and existing buildings without compromising the character of our precious area.

THE HEATH

The Society continues to play a very active role in the Blackheath Joint Working Party (BJWP), which advises on the management of the Heath. In the second year of the COVID pandemic, there were fewer commercial events than usual on the Heath but we have been more aware of the great value of this vital natural resource to the local community.

The BJWP oversees the joint events policy adopted by the two boroughs responsible for the Heath, Lewisham and Greenwich. This was reviewed during the year and allows up to 90 days of commercial events a year on each side of the Heath. It does not include filming the popular TV series *Bridgerton* at The Rangers House, and we think it should.

The BJWP is responsible for the Community Fund charitable money donated by the OnBlackheath Festival, and the following projects were funded during the past year:

New flowering bunds were constructed on Prince Charles Road to enhance the edges of the Heath and protect it from parking cars. To safeguard the natural ecology of the area, collection and redistribution of seeds from existing native wild flowers will be attempted this autumn.

Non-native broom has been removed from Whitfield Mount and this will be replaced with native gorse.



A professional entomology survey has been carried out to map the numbers and distribution of a wide range of insects on the Heath. Species are known to require different types of grassland, for example our local acid grass. So far 386 species have been identified on the Heath and 29 are classified as scarce or rare, including the Phoenix Fly, of prime importance for conservation. The *Chrysolina Marginata* (*below*) is nationally rare and has near-threatened status.



The information from both this and the butterfly survey, completed in 2021, will inform the management, and particularly the cutting, of the Heath. For example, refuges and access corridors will be left during the autumn meadow cuts where necessary to sustain wildlife habitats.

These surveys are a valuable source of information about environmental issues such as air quality and pollution as well as their importance for bio-diversity.

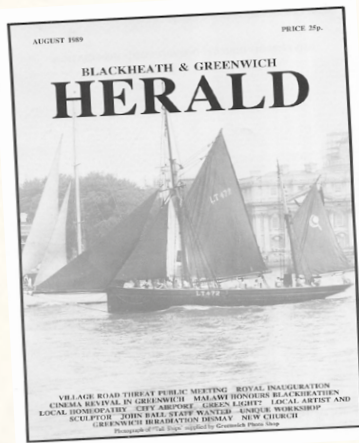
There has been no progress on plans for the future of the Tea Hut and, following staff changes at the Crown Estate, there was no further response to our proposals.

Sadly, we have to record the retirement of Lewisham Councillor Kevin Bonavia from the chair of the BJWP following eight very productive years. We wish him well with all his plans for the future.

The pandemic did little to prevent the continuation of the work begun the previous year on Neil Rhind's legacy to the Society of Blackheath memorabilia, as a lot of the work is carried out at home by volunteers.

The cataloguing, scanning and digitising is slow, but the results are increasingly accessible on www.blackheatharchive.org, the sister site to the Society's main website at www.blackheath.org.

Last year we reported there were more than 20,000 page images of Blackheath magazines dating from 1902. Over the past year, we have added many more, including



copies of the Blackheath & Greenwich Gazette from 1990-1992, Blackheath Reporter from 1959-1966 and 1986-1989, the Blackheath & Greenwich Herald 1989, and records of the Friends of Greenwich Park.

In addition to Neil's archive, we have added a lot of the work that Pam Schweitzer has done in Blackheath over the past 40 years. This includes a film of a play, *Down Memory Lane* about living in Collins Street, performed and recorded in the Bakehouse in

Blackheath in 2002, and based on the pre-war reminiscences of long-term residents.

We benefited from a small but significant archive from Alfred Wood, who died aged 100 in 2021, after 75 years of service to St Margaret's church in Lee. Part of his legacy included two major publications - *Leland Duncan's History of Lewisham* of 1908 and F.H. Hart's *History of Lee* from 1882. Both are being digitised to go on the website. (*Below is a view of Blackheath, looking towards Lewisham, from about 1750*).



Due to the increasing volume of material, we reorganised the website, and we hope this makes it easier to find items of specific interest. Archive contents are now in three separate main areas - photographs, films and archive publications. We are aware the site's search facility is not the best, but unfortunately are unable to improve it as changing to a more accommodating, professional website is far too expensive.



TREASURER'S REPORT - YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

The Society's result on unrestricted funds, before gains or losses on investment assets, was a surplus of £852 compared with a surplus of £10,662 in 2020.

The surplus on unrestricted funds includes costs associated with the Society's transfer to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) and costs relating to books and events held during the year.

The Society's annual income, mainly from membership fees and investment income, covers routine office and other overheads. Expenditure on additional projects and activities is generally funded by reserves, or from donations and other sources.

There was, however, an increase in total funds as a result of the gain on investments and receipt of historical funds relating to the OnBlackeath music festivals. The Society saw an increase in total funds of £37,551 for the year, compared with a decrease of £21,387 in 2020.

Our membership saw an increase to 855 households (818 in 2020) and it has since increased to 889 in May 2022. The membership fee remains at £20 per annum

for 2022 and this has been unchanged since 2018.

With the Covid-19 pandemic continuing during much of the year, the Society continued many of its endeavours online in order to continue to provide entertainment to members. All monies received to support these projects and the relevant expenditure is shown under our unrestricted funds in the accounts.

Our Equities Investment Fund for Charities (Charifund) investments included within fixed assets rose to £177,968 (£156,968 in 2020), and the Charifund generated income for the year was £8,469 (£7,662 in 2020).

We continued to hold a property investment asset, the freehold of Tranquil Hall in Blackheath Village, which was revalued in 2017. It continues to be held at £390,000 in the accounts and the property is rented to Heath House, a local preparatory school.

The Society's total funds were £631,463 at 31 December 2021, against £593,912 a year earlier, and we remain in a strong financial position.



An aerial view of the Heath, taken by Tim Keeler from the top of St Michael's Church, with the Shard and new buildings in the former Docklands in the distance

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

	Unrestricted Funds (£)	Restricted Funds (£)	Total Funds 2021 (£)	Total Funds 2020 (£)
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM:				
Donations and legacies	18,233	20,499	38,732	21,515
Charitable activities	8,830	-	8,830	5,785
Investment income	28,469	-	28,469	27,678
Other income	1,600	-	1,600	1,769
Total income	57,132	20,499	77,631	56,747
EXPENDITURE ON:				
Charitable activities	(56,280)	(4,800)	(61,080)	(45,185)
Total expenditure	(56,280)	(4,800)	(61,080)	(45,185)
Gains/losses on investment assets	21,000	-	21,000	(32,949)
Net movement in funds	21,852	15,699	37,551	(21,387)
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS				
Total funds brought forward	578,012	15,900	593,912	615,299
Total funds carried forward	599,864	31,599	631,463	593,912

BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2021

Registration number 259843

	2021 (£)	2020 (£)
FIXED ASSETS		
Investments	567,968	546,968
CURRENT ASSETS		
Stocks	6,972	500
Debtors	8,881	17,109
Cash at bank and in hand	59,952	39,901
	75,805	57,510
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(11,360)	(9,569)
Net current assets	64,445	47,941
Total assets less current liabilities	632,413	594,909
Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year	(950)	(997)
Net assets	631,463	593,912
THE FUNDS OF THE CHARITY:		
Restricted income funds		
Restricted funds	31,599	15,900
Unrestricted income funds		
Unrestricted funds	599,864	578,012
TOTAL FUNDS	631,463	593,912

TRANSPORT

REDUCING HGV TRAFFIC - VILLAGE AND LEE ROAD

Over the past year we have been attempting to persuade Transport for London (TfL) to lift the 7.5 tonne weight restriction on the southern section of Kidbrooke Park Road. The original need for this was largely addressed by strengthening the bridge over the railway at Kidbrooke Park station. The derestriction is to enable HGV traffic to use the A2 and Kidbrooke Park Road south in preference to Prince of Wales Road and Blackheath Village/ Lee Road for north-south movements.

TfL's response was negative, saying it did not wish to overburden the right turn at the traffic light junction at Kidbrooke Village, or to increase HGV traffic through Kidbrooke Village. TfL is completely oblivious to the much greater negative impact of HGV traffic through Blackheath Village and along Lee Road, a much more residential and shopping area than the mostly non-residential southern section of Kidbrooke Park Road.

An additional setback was the Royal Borough of Greenwich saying Lee Road was wholly under Lewisham - meaning it had no interest - despite the eastern side of Lee Road, and its residents, being in Greenwich and suffering HGV nuisance just as much as the houses on the western side in Lewisham, where the



council is being reasonably positive about trying to address the problem.

With TfL opposed and RBG not interested, we dropped this initiative and have decided to approach the problem head on by requesting the installation of a pinch-point on Montpelier Row just south of the Clarendon Hotel (*see photo below*). With the existing pinch-point at the top of Tranquil Vale, this will prevent HGV traffic passing through the Village.

HGVs requiring access to the Village for deliveries or construction work will have access from the south from Lee Road and Lee Terrace, but this will be a very small fraction of the HGV traffic currently passing through.

This is a simpler and more effective solution and is wholly within Lewisham's jurisdiction. We have submitted our request to the Council and hope to enlist the active support of the three Blackheath councillors.

This will also require a huge amount of vocal local public support, which we hope will be forthcoming from residents and Village users.

LANDSCAPING AT BLACKHEATH GATE'S DUKE HUMPHREY ROAD SPUR

The proposed Blackheath Gate to Eltham cycle way has now been dropped by Greenwich. We fear that with it the scheme to dig up the Duke Humphrey Road spur at Blackheath Gate and convert it to much narrower cycle and pedestrian paths between the A2 traffic light crossing and Greenwich Park has also gone.

The freed-up area would have been returned to Heath. Funding for the cycle way was coming from TfL which is in a funding crisis, so this project is no longer affordable.

This news will be welcomed by many of the residents affected by the proposed camera-enforced gate on Kidbrooke Gardens, but with disappointment by cyclists using this route.

SOCIETY MANAGEMENT

PRESIDENT

Neil Rhind MBE

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

CHAIR

Paul Watts

John Bartram

Allan Griffin

Sarah Mansfield

VICE-CHAIR

Dame Helen Reeves

Nick Patton

Nicola Peers

John Schofield

Howard Shields

TREASURER

Andrew Westbrook FCA

Diane Summers

David Walker

Liz Wright

SECRETARY

Sacha Bright

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Registered Charity number 1196292.

PHOTO CREDITS

The Society would like to thank our member Tim Keeler for his photograph of last October's Kite Day on the front and back covers, and for the one on page 10. The photographs on page 4 were taken by Sacha Bright, Tim Keeler and Stephan Magne.

Thanks also to Howard Shields, David Walker, Paul Watts and Liz Wright for permission to use their photographs.

All the historical photographs come from the Society's archive collection. This report was produced by John Bartram and designed by Pippa Stanton.



Blackheath Village in 1901-1902

