



ANNUAL REPORT

2019 / 2020



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 the Christmas lights and Village Day.

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

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CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION



I am pleased to report on a successful year for the Society. The period since the year-end has been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, and the impact of this on the Society is covered throughout this report.

2019 was a year when the Society introduced a new cloud-based IT system to assist with the increasing levels of communication arising from planning and licensing applications, transport issues, our archive projects, office management, social media and member engagement.

This was perhaps long overdue but has been of great benefit, not least at the current time when normal face to face communications are not possible.

The planning group goes from strength to strength, screening some 835 applications in the last year, and now has a dedicated database of applications, including those for trees. We are extremely fortunate to have such a group and I am grateful for the continued hard work and dedication put in by its members.

Our membership of The Blackheath Joint Working Party (BJWP) continues and it has been reviewing the annual events programme on the Heath, as well as considering applications for the community funds provided by the On Blackheath festivals in 2018 and 2019 to be spent on projects on the Heath.

The Society has also held some well-received events this year, including a wide range of talks, walks and “meet and eat” opportunities, giving members more chances to meet and informally discuss areas of interest.

My thanks are due to all those who are involved with the Society - our President, Trustees, the many volunteers helping us with all aspects of our work from planning, licensing, archiving, events, office help, social media, Newsletter delivery, gardening and other Village projects - not forgetting the excellent hard work by our Secretary, Sacha.

Paul Watts

CORONAVIRUS

At the time of finalising this report, the UK is in the 8th week of lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic and this inevitably will have an impact on the Society in 2020. Many of our events have been postponed or cancelled, but we look forward to resuming our programme when it is safe to do so, following Government advice.

We have also had to arrange to hold our AGM on Wednesday 17 June by video call to deal with the formal matters required. This will be followed by a general meeting for members when circumstances allow for large gatherings, hopefully later in the year.

Our office has been closed since the lockdown started. But our one employee, our Secretary Sacha Bright, has been able to work remotely, having full access to our IT systems. We have issued a PDF Spring newsletter by email, as well as sending regular electronic communications to members.

Despite the devastating impact the lockdown will have on some of the businesses in the Village, there has been some better news in the past year: Selectric stayed with us and moved to a new site, the Copper & Ink restaurant opened as did Avocado Garden and we had pop-up shops and a new deli in Montpelier Vale.

We have been living through one of the greatest health challenges for 100 years and, as we said in our Spring newsletter, we would urge members to keep to social distancing, look after your neighbours safely and support local businesses whenever possible. Please follow our Twitter, Facebook, email and website posts for regular updates, and make sure we have your up-to-date email address, which is vital for communication.

The photos below show Blackheath staying at home under a spring Super Moon and a very Tranquil Vale.



EVENTS AND TALKS

Throughout the year the Blackheath Society offers its members plenty of opportunity to meet. The Events Committee organises a programme of talks, 'Meet and Eat' sessions at our local pubs every two months and regular 'Walk and Talks' locally and further afield. If you have any suggestions or would like to join the Events Committee, please get in touch with us through the office.

Last autumn we held three very well attended and interesting lectures: 'Blackheath in World War II' by Neil Rhind at Blackheath Halls; 'Mary Quant, a revolutionary designer' by the curator of the Mary Quant exhibition in the V&A, together with Blackheath High



School and the Friends of Blackheath Halls, and 'Road Rage' by Paul Wright, about 20th century plans to drive a motorway straight through Blackheath. Paul's talk can be downloaded from the Society's website.

In the last 12 months our walks included trips to Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Club, the Museum of Docklands, the Hidden Jewels of Lewisham (*lower photo right*), the south side of the Heath, Prince Philip's Maritime Collection at Kidbrooke, the Law Courts in Fleet Street, Literary Hampstead and an evening stroll along the Thames.



Our annual events also included the Society's AGM at which the manager of Greenwich Park, Graham Dear, gave an illuminating talk about its future plans.

As always, we were part of the organising committee for switching on the Christmas lights on Village Day on December 1, which was a festive occasion for all to join in.

Unfortunately, due to the Coronavirus, we have had to cancel our events since March, but we are looking forward to resuming our programme in due course. Details of all our planned events can be found on the Society's website at www.blackheath.org.

THE VILLAGE

The Society has identified some of the key issues that need attention such as the mix of businesses, public signage and street furniture, cleanliness, planting, traffic, parking, air quality and the appearance and feel of the Village.

In a busy year the Society's gardening team brought some tired and overgrown areas in the Village back to life, planting flowers and nurturing and maintaining the raised beds in Tranquil Vale (*right*) and the new garden in Montpelier Vale (*below*). We were rewarded with some beautiful spring flower displays.

We monitored rubbish on the streets and are looking into designs for enclosed bin shelters to present to the councils.

We continued to check on businesses and empty properties, making contact with new traders and discussing with landlords the need to maintain the variety and vibrancy of the Village.

And, after many years of frustrated efforts, more than half the old Christmas lights have now been removed following discussions with the various freeholders.

The Society also takes an active interest in licensing matters, which are important for keeping a balance between the pressure for a lively Village economy and the interests of Village residents.

We scrutinise individual applications to extend hours and are concerned for the future of the Cumulative Impact Zone in the Village. This has been suggested as unnecessary in a recent Lewisham Council consultation paper and is likely to come under review later in 2020.



PLANNING

The Society's efforts on planning extended further in 2019 and, in addition to our core role scrutinising building applications in the Conservation Area, we were able to extend considerably our activity on trees, thanks to new volunteers.

This is proving challenging as the rules and governance around tree applications are much weaker than for buildings, and council resources are a big issue, but we have made a considerable difference.

A number of major developments peripheral to Blackheath needed Society scrutiny, not least since there has been little challenge from other stakeholders.

In 2019 the major Gateway scheme in Lewisham Town Centre (*above top*) and revised plans for the Carpentright site scheme were finally approved and we continued to review plans for the Tesco Car Park site, with its 34-storey tower, which culminated in Secretary of State approval in early 2020.

In Greenwich, we devoted huge effort to scrutinising plans for the Kidbrooke Station Square site.



All these schemes now have the go ahead. For all these huge developments we still have considerable reservations about issues of scale, as collectively they will transform the views from the Heath for the worse, and about the lack of affordable housing, inadequate infrastructure provision and community amenity. But we can be satisfied that, without our challenge, things would have been much worse.

In the Conservation Area, we can be very pleased that many of our comments and objections to schemes were accepted by officers and/or in appeal judgements, for example our resistance to overdevelopment behind Tranquil Vale.

We are also pleased to be working often alongside residents. For example, the longstanding effort to secure the future of No 8 The Glebe (*lower photo above*) in the face of delay and obstruction has required great dedication and tenacity.

THE HEATH AND TRANSPORT

During the past year many things did not happen on the Heath and the transport front.

The promised landscaping at the Blackheath Gate entrance to Greenwich Park did not take place before Christmas, as was anticipated last year, and is now presumably stuck in the Coronavirus blockage. We have asked Greenwich Council for an update but received no reply in time for this report.

On January 7 the iconic Tea Hut on the Heath on the Lewisham side of the A2 was destroyed in a car accident. Four months later no solution had been found to its redevelopment, but the Society is working with all parties involved to ensure its safe future development, including the possibility of moving it across the road to Greenwich into the disused former toilet block next to the park wall, owned by the Crown Estates.

The Southeastern rail franchise was extended again, this time for two years, and all rail franchises were also suspended in response to the collapse in revenue caused by reduced travel from Coronavirus disruption. Last year the London mayor Sadiq Khan called Southeastern “a disgrace”.

Rail services were reduced in the lockdown, with only essential workers meant to travel, and most Southeastern lines ran only four trains an hour. Franchise extensions since 2014 have totaled eight years, the same length as the initial eight-year franchise.

For users the real problem with these continued extensions is that no new investment in trains is specified, as each extension is temporary for just two years, with the expectation of a new long-term franchise to follow.

Some of the Networker trains common on our services date back to 1991 and on average they will be 30 years old when the current extension expires in 2022.

The existing trains are now showing their age and lack full refurbishment due to the continual delays, as can be seen in the photograph on the right.

But, in more promising news, Network Rail, in partnership with Transport for London and Lewisham Council, secured £5.5 million from the Department for Transport to fund the early design and development stage of a potential upgrade for Lewisham station.

This would provide an interchange fit for the future, including the possible arrival of the Bakerloo Line extension from 2029.

It remains to be seen whether this goes ahead in the light of government finances after the Coronavirus lockdown, but it has not been formally cancelled and it is a big achievement, crowning at least two years of campaigning by the Lewisham Station users Group in partnership with local MPs. An upgrade at Lewisham should be of benefit to Blackheath residents. The existing trains are now showing their age and lack full refurbishment due to the continual delays, as can be seen in the photograph below.



ARCHIVE

We have increased the number of publicly accessible online images by more than 1,500 to over 7,000 this year and are increasingly widening the focus of our archive from the centre of the Village towards The Standard and the Blackheath/Greenwich and Blackheath/ Lewisham areas.

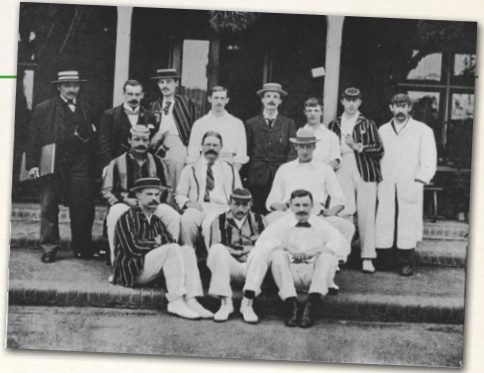
We are adding more images to the central Village and Heath archives and have revisited some images previously available online and improved their quality and captions, making them more easily accessible.



War damage in March 1945 when a V2 rocket hit Blackheath Grove



George Wilson, the Blackheath Pedestrian who walked 1,000 miles around the Heath in 1815



Blackheath Cricket Club in 1896

We continue to scan and digitise the numerous slides and negatives and the hard copies of photographs which form the digitised core of the online archive. Digitising the legacy of the negatives from the Stephen Moreton-Prichard collection is slow and painstaking, but rewarding, work.

We have almost 3,000 images which comprise what we call the 'Modern Archive' – photographs taken mainly since the turn of the millennium. Their core centres on the longstanding contributions of David Warren and Frank Smith, which we hope to make publicly available.

Again many thanks to our ever hard-working and reliable volunteer team of Hilary Weedon, Jo Swadkin, John Sabido and Rosemary Clements, who show never-ending patience.



Riding on the Heath in 1846

TREASURER'S REPORT - YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2019

The Society had a net increase in total funds of £51,200 for the year (2018: decrease of £43,155) and we remain in a strong financial position.

The key factors were legacy donations totaling £10,000, the receipt of £15,000 from OnBlackheath, held in restricted funds on behalf of the Blackheath Joint Working Party, and an increase (representing a reversal from 2018) in the valuation of investments in fixed assets in The Equities Investment Fund for Charities (Charifund) of £27,065. This has fallen again since the balance sheet as a result of Covid-19.

Membership was marginally lower at the year end at 822 households (2018: 848) but has since risen to 856. The membership fee increase in 2018 was held at £20 per year from the start of 2020.

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.

The one-off increase in legal and professional expenditure

was a result of flood damage incurred at our investment property during early 2019 which resulted in the Society incurring essential surveyor and legal support, giving rise to the increase in expenditure of £8,781 for 2019 (2018: £270).

The Society again helped organise the popular Village Day in December 2019 and hosted a number of increasingly popular walks and talks. All funds received to support these projects and relevant expenditure is shown in the accounts under our unrestricted funds.

Our investment portfolio comprises funds held in Charifund which generated income for the year of £9,492 (2018: £9,034). We continue to hold a property investment asset, the freehold of Tranquil Hall in Blackheath Village, which was revalued in 2017. This is still held at £390,000 in the accounts and is rented to Heath House, a local Preparatory School. The Society's total funds were £615,299 at 31 December 2019 (2018: £564,099).

The Trustees regularly review our requirements for reserves in the light of the main financial and operational

risks to the organisation. The annual income is derived from members' subscriptions, donations, investment and rental income received on Tranquil Hall.

The Trustees aim to ensure that annual running costs are controlled carefully and are met from annual income, and expenditure budgets are set accordingly. For special projects, external grants and donations are sought and raised wherever possible, but always in conjunction with the use of the Society's own designated funds.

The possibility always exists that a situation might arise where the Trustees would feel it right to incur significant professional and other costs to meet the objects of the Society.

For these reasons it is considered vital to hold sufficient unrestricted reserves to draw on in periods of emergency and cash-flow difficulty in order to protect the Society from the risk of insolvency or serious disruption to its work and to allow it to mount any major campaign thought appropriate. The Trustees thus consider the reserves held were at an appropriate level at 31 December 2019.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2019

	Unrestricted Funds (£)	Restricted Funds (£)	Total Funds 2019	Total Funds 2018
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM:				
Donations and legacies	25,191	15,000	40,191	18,000
Charitable activities	5,746	-	5,746	1,360
Investment income	29,507	-	29,507	29,050
Other income	1,317	-	1,317	870
Total income	61,761	15,000	76,761	49,280
EXPENDITURE ON:				
Charitable activities	(52,626)	-	(52,626)	(67,430)
Total expenditure	(52,626)	-	(52,626)	(67,430)
Gains/losses on investment assets	27,065	-	27,065	(25,005)
Net movement in funds	36,200	15,000	51,200	(43,155)
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS				
Total funds brought forward	564,099	-	564,099	607,254
Total funds carried forward	600,299	15,000	615,299	564,099

BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2019

(Registration number 259843)

	2019 (£)	2018 (£)
FIXED ASSETS		
Investments	579,918	552,853
CURRENT ASSETS		
Stocks	1,000	2,000
Debtors	5,777	4,232
Cash at bank and in hand	34,795	18,175
	<u>41,572</u>	<u>24,407</u>
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(4,813)	(11,642)
Net current assets	<u>36,759</u>	<u>12,765</u>
Total assets less current liabilities	616,677	565,618
Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year	(1,378)	(1,519)
Net assets	<u>615,299</u>	<u>564,099</u>
THE FUNDS OF THE CHARITY:		
Restricted funds	15,000	-
Unrestricted income funds		
Total unrestricted funds	<u>600,299</u>	<u>564,099</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>615,299</u>	<u>564,099</u>



SOCIETY MANAGEMENT

PRESIDENT

Neil Rhind MBE

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

CHAIR

Paul Watts

VICE-CHAIR

Dame Helen Reeves

TREASURER

Andrew Westbrook FCA

John Bartram

Nicola Peers

Diane Summers

Allan Griffin

John Schofield

David Walker

Sarah Mansfield

Alex Schweitzer

Liz Wright

Nick Patton

Howard Shields

Helma Zebregs

SECRETARY

Sacha Bright

PHOTO CREDITS

The Society would like to thank our member Tim Keeler for the cover photograph taken from Hare and Billet pond and for several other photographs used in this year's annual report.

Thanks also to the following people for permission to reproduce photographs: James Hazlerigg-Kinlay, Nick Patton, Nicola Peers, Helen Reeves, Howard Shields, Paul Watts, Liz Wright and the From The Murky Depths website. All the historical photographs come from the Society's archive collection.

This report was produced by John Bartram and designed by Pippa Stanton.



Tranquil Vale in 1905

