



ANNUAL REPORT
2020 / 2021



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



Like many other organisations, the Society has had to adapt considerably in the last year because of the Covid-19 pandemic. It is pleasing to report that we have managed to meet the various challenges we faced.

Our planning group has been busy on both Greenwich and Lewisham matters, and has again reviewed a large number of planning applications, including the increased number of major high-rise schemes in Lewisham and development proposals on Blackheath Hill and in Kidbrooke.

Given the circumstances, there were relatively few organised events on the Heath for us to consider via our membership of the Blackheath Joint Working Party (BJWP), but there were different challenges last summer as the first lockdown was relaxed and large numbers of people gathered on the Heath.

We worked with the BJWP and local councillors on temporary toilet facilities at Talbot Place and took a close interest as local councils sought to introduce traffic measures such as the temporary closure of South Row to through traffic.

Our Archive project continues to go from strength to strength. The pandemic restricted the ability of volunteers to come to the office to scan the various materials, but many new images have been added in the last year.

We were fortunate in that our President, Neil Rhind, very generously donated a large part of his archive to the Society, and this is being catalogued and will be made available. Much work took place on this and on Volume III of his book *Blackheath Village & Environs*, published in early 2021.

Thanks are due to all those involved with the Society - our President, the management committee, the many volunteers who help us with all aspects of our work from licensing, planning, archiving, events, work in the office, social media, *Newsletter* delivery and gardening - and to all our members, new and old. I am extremely grateful to our secretary Sacha Bright for her unstinting work this year, especially when working from home. Let us hope that we can meet again at physical events soon when I will look forward to catching up with people in person.

PAUL WATTS

CORONAVIRUS

It was pleasing to see our various activities reorganise themselves through the innovations of Zoom and other remote working methods.

The thoughts of the Society and the management committee are with those members and their families and friends who have suffered physically, mentally or financially during the Covid-19 pandemic, and we look forward to better times for all during the rest of 2021.

The Society's events programme was an early casualty of the pandemic.

However, we enhanced communication through our weekly *News for Members* emails containing details of online information services and cultural events, and also through the continued publication of the *Newsletter*.

We relaunched events in the form of a

season of early evening educational Zoom talks in late 2020 and early 2021. Not only were these well attended in numbers we would not normally see at a physical event, they also attracted a significant number of new members. We will hold the 2021 AGM by Zoom on June 23 with a Q&A session for members, and we look forward to resuming in-person events as soon as we can.

The UK is in now slowly emerging from lockdown and, as described above, the Covid-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the Society in 2020. Our office was closed to visitors for most of the year but our Secretary has been able to work remotely, having full access to our IT systems.

The photographs below show the quiet streets in Blackheath Village during the lockdown.



EVENTS AND TALKS

Opportunities for members to meet and socialise this year have been very rare and we had to postpone many planned events and regular meetings. However, we adapted well and we are now gradually introducing new events into the calendar. One example is our planned Kite Day, postponed from last October, which is scheduled for October 10.

During the “Rule of Six” periods members met and enjoyed guided walks locally in Greenwich Park, the Cator Estate - including the Quaker Meeting House on Lawn Terrace, pictured below - and further afield in King’s Cross.



As the third lockdown came into force, members adapted their excellent walks into Zoom presentations. These proved very popular, reached a wide audience and brought in new members. Topics included The Birds and History of Greenwich Park, Modern Architecture of the Cator Estate, the continuing History of the Huguenots, the new restaurant Copper & Ink and various aspects of the Society’s activities.

Although we were unable to chat face-to-face and see many friends, we were able to keep in touch in this new digital age.



We are now planning new walks, lectures and Meet and Eats which will be advertised on our website, on Twitter, in the *Newsletter* and in emails. Please be sure the office has your up-to-date email address.

The Society organised the switching on of the Festive Lights in the Village to celebrate Christmas, but these are falling into disrepair and urgently need member support.

We were very grateful for the two Christmas trees we placed in the Village, donated by Flowers in Bloom and Jimmy Botton’s Family Fun Fair. There were also superb decorations provided by children from All Saints School.

As restrictions ease, we will look forward to meeting you in person at our first talk by Blake Morrison on Blackheath and Greenwich in Literature. This will be on Thursday July 1 in the Great Hall at Blackheath Halls, where social distancing will be possible.

We would like to thank Helma Zebregs, a Committee member who stood down in February, for contributing her ideas and for assisting with events during the last six years. She will be missed.

THE VILLAGE

Covid-19 lockdowns have forced businesses to close and caused financial difficulties. But there are some good news stories from firms that have opened in the Village since the start of last year and the Society wants to help lift the gloom by highlighting them.

Blackheath Vintners is an independent family-run wine and beer merchant. Owner Robin Eadon said: “We’ve been looking for an opportunity since we opened in Dulwich, and Blackheath has such a strong community feel. All the local residents have been very welcoming over the last eight months and we can’t wait to get back into the swing of things with tastings and events.”

Jennifer Brazell says: “The Blackheath Pantry, an independent specialty food store, is passionate about locally-sourced, organic produce that focuses on providing the local community with the best that London and surrounding counties have to offer. We carry specialty British cheese, charcuterie, wine, locally-roasted coffee, freshly-baked goods.”

The Workers League provides workspace for creative companies and individuals. Director Matt Kemp said there was a pressing need for neighbourhood offices for freelance and employed workers. “Two directors live in the local area, so Blackheath seemed an obvious choice. Our mission is to provide totally flexible workspace to people who have been trapped in their kitchens and bedrooms.”

We approached several other firms that have arrived in Blackheath since the start of the pandemic, but had not heard from them by the time the annual report went to press. They include Green Machine, GRILL bro’s, postmark, SpaceNK, The London Bath Co and the Voewood.



PLANNING

The Society's effort on planning issues widened still further in 2020 in a surprisingly active year.

Our ability to deal effectively with this agenda is a tribute to the excellent team of dedicated and enthusiastic volunteers we are fortunate to have, although we reluctantly said goodbye to longstanding volunteer David Kerr, who retired.

We believe we developed an excellent system for screening some 600 applications (including trees), for focusing on the important issues and applications (about 10% of the total), for sharing and working with member residents and other amenity societies, and for commenting and objecting in as constructive manner as possible.

This year we reviewed and commented extensively on impending legislation, which could dramatically change the way planning works.

Our concern is to ensure that development, particularly in Conservation Areas, remains open to local scrutiny, so that the need for more housing, and more flexibility on change of use



provisions, can be balanced against preserving the character of the Village and the Conservation Area.

We have dedicated much time to commenting on a new Local Plan for Lewisham, where similar concerns apply, and we have also been busy in respect of Greenwich Council plans for the "Climate Emergency".

We are happy that most of our suggested improvements and objections to applications in the Conservation Areas and the Village, including for trees, were accepted by the councils.

Examples include an excessively large development in Morden Road and proposed amendments to proposals for the Pares site in Tranquil Vale (*seen above*) to be turned into a supermarket, where we seek to retain the Village character.

We also devote considerable effort on developments peripheral to Blackheath. Here the pressure to deliver housing tends to override all other concerns.

Our involvement has led to improvements in some projects, such as developments in Kidbrooke.

Our one significant disappointment was the outcome in plans for the business estate on Blackheath Hill, where we felt that the planning process did not do justice to the issues and tradeoffs involved.

THE HEATH AND TRANSPORT

In January 2020 the Blackheath Tea Hut on the Heath was demolished in a traffic accident. This has encouraged the owner, Adam Furze, to explore the possibility of relocating his business to the north side of the A2 into the abandoned building located near the Folly Pond by the gate into Greenwich Park.

His old site was in Lewisham but the new location is in Greenwich, necessitating a fresh start for the licensing and planning process, and agreeing a lease with Greenwich council. A further complexity is that the owner of the new site and building is the Crown Estate.

We understand that good progress is being made and Greenwich Council and the Crown Estate are both receptive to the idea. The Society is wholly in favour, and we hope the directly interested parties can reach agreement as soon as possible.

The building, a former toilet block, may not look like much at present (*see photo below*) and it is in need of complete refurbishment. But the owner is very committed and this is a much better location for providing refreshments and light snacks to visitors to the Park than his previous location.

Low Traffic Neighbourhoods in and around Blackheath started in June 2020 with no



notice given. The initial scheme closed the junction of South Row and Prince of Wales Road, leaving the narrow and tortuous Wemyss Road as the only western access point for local residents. This scheme caused chaos on Paragon Place and in Wemyss Road, and it was effectively abandoned in mid-July.

The closure has been taken up by Greenwich as part of its Eltham to Greenwich Park strategic cycle route, with the proposal of a camera-enforced gate on Kibrooke Gardens to bar motorized traffic, apart from buses, emergency vehicles and motorcycles (*photo below*). This remains alive and Greenwich has promised to consult on its final scheme.



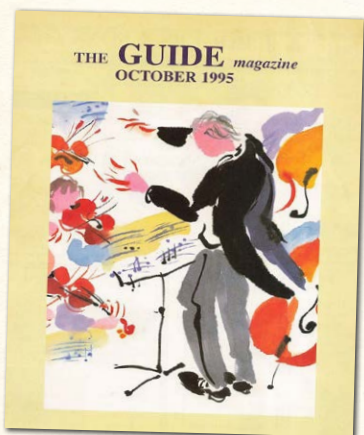
In August 2020 Greenwich implemented the West Greenwich Hills and Vales traffic reduction scheme, barring all through north-south motorized traffic, except motorcycles, from the residential area west of Crooms Hill. This was welcomed by many local residents, but many opposed it on grounds of greatly impaired accessibility.

An entirely foreseeable impact was to increase traffic on Maze Hill. The Society supports reductions in through traffic in residential streets, provided residents' access can be maintained and reasonable provision can be made for visitors, especially carers, tradespeople and delivery vans.

ARCHIVE

Despite, or perhaps because of, the lockdown the archive team has had very active year. The most important event was our President, Neil Rhind, passing his lifetime collection of Blackheath memorabilia to the Society.

Neil's legacy is remarkable for its breadth and depth and is too lengthy to detail here. It covers Proprietary School alumni in the 1860s to a panoply of magazines about Blackheath life from 1902 until 2015. It also includes walks and talks he led since the 1970s and detailed individual house histories.



Celebrating The Halls Centenary 1995

The archive team has been involved in the lengthy task of cataloguing, scanning and digitising his work. None of this was seriously impeded by lockdown, as work continued virtually uninterrupted at home, and the results can be seen on the website at www.blackheatharchive.org, or through the Archive section of www.blackheath.org.

We have added almost 20,000 page images of Blackheath magazines, and members can now peruse the Society's annual reports from the very first meeting of the Society in 1937.



Films under the heading of “Blackheath Memories” are another major addition.. These are based on interviews carried out by Pam Schweitzer in the early of 2000s, with residents who remembered Blackheath life in the last century. We are immensely grateful to Pam, responsible for the pioneering establishment of the Age Reminiscence Centre in the Village, for allowing us to marry her sound recordings with archive images.

We continue to scan and digitise photographs, slides and negatives - the core of the online archive - and have added over 1,000 images. Photos from Neil's *Blackheath Village & Environs, Volume III* are also available.

Many thanks to our ever hard-working, patient and reliable volunteer team of Hilary Weedon, Jo Swadkin, John Sabido, Sue Shields, Helen Doris and Rosemary Clements.



Chiesmans TV sales in 1955

TREASURER'S REPORT - YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020

The Society is in a strong financial position. Though our investments in The Equities Investment Fund for Charities (Charifund) fell by 17% year on year, it is pleasing to report they have recovered somewhat in value since the year-end.

The Society's result on unrestricted funds, before gains or losses on investment assets, was a surplus of £10,662 (2019: surplus £9,135).

However, the Society saw a decrease in total funds of £21,387 for the year (2019: increase £51,200). This was a result of the unrealised loss on investments, a reduction in donations to £5,265 (2019: £10,335) and the OnBlackheath festival not being held in 2020.

Charifund investments, included within fixed assets, were held at £156,967 (£189,917).

Society membership was largely unchanged at 822 (2019: 822 households), but has since increased to 856. The membership fee remains at £20 per annum for 2021, unchanged since 2018.

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 comparative figure for 2019 includes legal and professional expenditure resulting from flood damage incurred at our investment property during early 2019.

With the Covid-19 pandemic ongoing the Society moved much of its work online, including limited investment in technology.

This included Zoom software and improved hardware for the office and allowed us to continue to provide virtual events for our members.

Our investment portfolio comprises funds held in Charifund, which generated income for the year of £7,662 (2019: £9,492).

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

The Society's total funds were £593,912 at 31 December 2020 (£615,299).

The Trustees regularly review the Society's requirements for reserves in the light of the main risks and they aim to ensure annual running costs are controlled carefully, are met from annual income, and that 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 funds.

It is considered vital to hold sufficient unrestricted financial reserves to be drawn on in periods of emergency and cash-flow difficulty in order to protect the Society from the risk of insolvency and from serious disruption to its work.

This also enables us to mount any major campaign thought appropriate.

The Trustees therefore consider that reserves held are at an appropriate level at 31 December 2020.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020

	Unrestricted Funds (£)	Restricted Funds (£)	Total Funds 2020 (£)	Total Funds 2019 (£)
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM:				
Donations and legacies	19,515	2,000	21,515	40,191
Charitable activities	5,785	-	5,785	5,746
Investment income	27,678	-	27,678	29,507
Other income	1,769	-	1,769	1,317
Total income	54,747	2,000	56,747	76,761
EXPENDITURE ON:				
Charitable activities	(44,085)	(1,100)	(45,185)	(52,626)
Total expenditure	(44,085)	(1,100)	(45,185)	(52,626)
Gains/losses on investment assets	(32,949)	-	(32,949)	27,065
Net movement in funds	(22,287)	900	(21,387)	51,200
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS				
Total funds brought forward	600,299	15,000	615,299	564,099
Total funds carried forward	578,012	15,900	593,912	615,299

BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2020

Registration number 259843

	2020 (£)	2019 (£)
FIXED ASSETS		
Investments	546,968	579,918
CURRENT ASSETS		
Stocks	500	1,000
Debtors	17,109	5,777
Cash at bank and in hand	39,901	34,795
	<u>57,510</u>	<u>41,572</u>
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(9,569)	(4,813)
Net current assets	<u>47,941</u>	<u>36,759</u>
Total assets less current liabilities	594,909	616,677
Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year	(997)	(1,378)
Net assets	<u>593,912</u>	<u>615,299</u>
THE FUNDS OF THE CHARITY:		
Restricted income funds		
Restricted funds	15,900	15,000
Unrestricted income funds		
Unrestricted funds	<u>578,012</u>	<u>600,299</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>593,912</u>	<u>615,299</u>

COMMUNITY WEBSITE

For more than a year, a small group of local traders have been working on www.blackheathvillage.co.uk, a new website aimed at promoting Blackheath as an attractive venue for shopping, eating and entertainment.

As the project developed, all the local traders and relevant businesses have agreed to be listed, and a phone app is being developed which should provide booking and shopping facilities and carry promotions and special offers.

The organisers were keen for the Blackheath Society to be involved, and we are delighted to announce that a new “Community” page will now be added to the site. We have agreed to curate this and are inviting Blackheath Halls, The Conservatoire, Age Exchange and the Arts Society, who were the partners in our 2017 booklet, “Arts and Culture in Blackheath,” to join.

The page will have a description of each organisation taking part, showing how to become involved. It will carry a link from each charity to take you to individual websites.

We want to introduce residents and visitors to the great work and activities in our voluntary sector and the various events and activities in which they can take part. Events that we want to publicise can be added to the “Things to Do” page, and the Society has already advertised recent Zoom talks here.

Funding for the site and the app has so far come from the small tech company owned by local businessman Nick Coxon, with support from Sparkly Smile dentist, Everest Inn and the Clarendon Hotel.

The Dyers’ Livery Company, which owns a large number of the business properties in the Village, is providing financial support and the local Chamber of Commerce is supporting the initiative.

Commercial companies will eventually pay to use the app, but no money will be involved for charities on the Community page.

The organisers are planning a relaunch of the site as the Village recovers from Covid closures and are hoping that the Community page will be part of the relaunch. We shall keep members up to date with developments.



SOCIETY MANAGEMENT

PRESIDENT

Neil Rhind MBE

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

CHAIR

Paul Watts

John Bartram

Allan Griffin

Sarah Mansfield

Nick Patton

VICE-CHAIR

Dame Helen Reeves

Nicola Peers

John Schofield

Howard Shields

Diane Summers

TREASURER

Andrew Westbrook FCA

David Walker

Liz Wright

Helma Zebregs (who
resigned in February 2021)

SECRETARY

Sacha Bright

PHOTO CREDITS

The Society would like to thank our member Dusty Gedge for his photo on the front and back covers. Dusty has been walking the Heath watching wildlife and taking pictures for 33 years. He was past Chair of Lewisham Biodiversity Partnership and is also a leading authority on green roofs.

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 Hill in 1906

