

INVISIBLE PALACE

Trustees' Report



For the period from: 1st April 2023
To: 31st March 2024

Charity Name: Invisible Palace

Charity registration no.: 1165888

Registered address: 23 Dulwich Wood Avenue
London, SE19 1HB

Trustees

Michael George Sylvester Doiley	resigned & reappointed	24 th February 2020
Rosalind (Rosie) Hunter	resigned & reappointed	2 nd January 2019
Julianne (Jules) Hussey	resigned & reappointed	26 th August 2020
Gail Rowe	appointed	26 th August 2020
Abigail Lilly	appointed	1 st November 2022
Ayesha Begum	appointed	1 st November 2022
Eyo E Oku	appointed	1 st November 2022
Sarah Patterson	appointed	1 st November 2022
Isabelle Mae Skelly	appointed	1 st November 2022

The Trustees have pleasure in presenting their Report for the charity's eighth full year of operation.

Introduction

Context

The suburb of Crystal Palace straddles boundaries of five London Boroughs causing fragmented services, conflicting priorities, and underinvestment. There is a loss of value for both people and place; cultural offers and services are centralised within each borough leaving boundaries lacking provision. Invisible Palace works with multiple communities to minimise barriers to participation in arts, heritage, and nature.

What we do

Invisible Palace create accessible and welcoming activities where a broad range of people can come together through shared interests for collective activity.

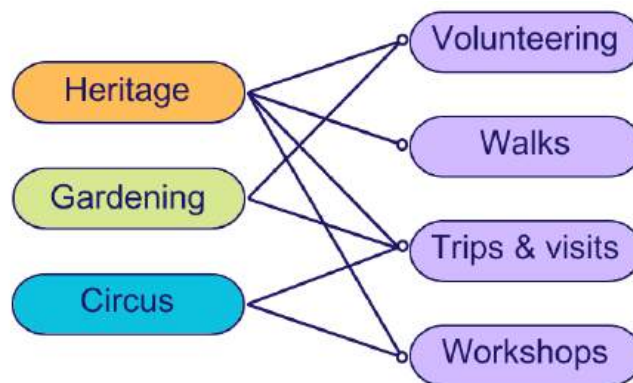
We believe in a place where arts, heritage, and green activities are available, affordable, and accessible to everyone.

Invisible Palace is a charity based in South East London that works across the five boroughs of Bromley, Croydon, Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham, in the neighbourhoods that surround Crystal Palace Park.

We create activities with an emphasis on experiential learning that is rooted in the story of the local area and people's place within it.

The work of Invisible Palace takes a participant led approach, with the small team developing and running activities championing the needs of those taking part and creating programmes which respond to this need on a local and individual level. People are brought together in a community of interest rather than having their demographic background or life stage be the main factor in defining them.

There are currently three strands of work heritage, gardening, and circus - these offer volunteering, creative sessions, trips and visits, and walks and talks.



This year Invisible Palace offered over 185 hours of activity to local communities with over 500 people getting involved

Heritage

47 hours of heritage activity across 22 events with over 250 people taking part
Including artist led sessions, a performance event and 3 visits to the Dulwich Picture Gallery

Gardening

86 hours of gardening activity across 41 events, including 3 visits & 2 plant sales
19 people got involved with volunteering and a further 8 people joining in with trips
Up to 160 additional people attend each of the plant sales

Circus

30 hours of after school Circus Club
8 hours of Summer Intensive
6 hours of aerial circus taster sessions for youth groups
Further classes were offered at My Aerial Home for children at a subsidised rate
107 children got involved

4 hour Mental Health Awareness Training for 8 staff

The year April 2023 to March 2024

Sculptures of Crystal Palace Park - National Lottery Heritage Fund and Mayor of London

Text in this section is drawn from a report written for the National Lottery Heritage Fund by Chloë Bird, written in March 2024.

The Sculptures of Crystal Palace Park project had the ambition to reveal the hidden histories of the sculptures in Crystal Palace Park through a co-creative process involving local people and targeted participants who may have become isolated during the pandemic and may have lost confidence in social or cultural settings. The project built on a successful social media series developed for lockdown that began raising the profile of overlooked sculptures in Crystal Palace Park.

The project began in August 2021 but from spring 2023 a series of events began that were led by creative practitioners. This Phase of the project also included additional work funded by Untold Stories through the Mayor of London.

Within this reporting period 19 events were run as part of the Sculptures project and over 240 people got involved

- Secrets of the Sculptures Walk - led by Dawn Pereira
- The World on the Upper Terrace Walk – led by Manasi Pophale
- Secrets of the Sculptures Walk x 2 - led by Andrea Vail
- Creative Words poetry event x 3 inspired by Hollow Woman statue - led by Theresa Lola
- Printmaking inspired by Psyche statue x 4 - led by Fae Kilburn
- The Silent Observer and Too Many Heads sessions inspired by Dante statue - led by Mikey Lynam
- Untold Stories session - led by Manasi Pophale and A Little History of the Sikhs
- Untold Stories session - led by Manasi Pophale and Halal Tourism
- Untold Stories development sessions for IRIE! dance theatre students – led by Manasi Pophale and Sue Giovanni
- Untold Stories performance event by IRIE! dance theatre students

The recruitment of a team of Creative Facilitators at the outset of phase two of the project created new capacity for interpreting the sculptures through engagement activities, but equally importantly, also provided the opportunity for creative practitioners to develop new skills and capabilities in heritage engagement and interpretation through targeted training and support.

Activities were offered specifically to target groups and through open calls to the wider public as a part of collaborations with initiatives including Summer of Play and London Festival of Architecture. Invisible Palace was able to secure additional funding from the GLA's Untold Stories Grants to enrich the public programme through three additional sculpture walks focusing on community histories previously less told. In the second phase of the

project the emphasis was placed on playful approaches to interpreting and recasting the stories of the sculptures through creative activities.

Participants to Invisible Palace's programmes in phase two of the project came from local South London boroughs primarily, with some London wide visitors attending public events. Those who engaged ranged in age from pre-school to late 80's, underlining the broad and inclusive appeal and reach of the Sculptures of Crystal Palace offer.

Snapshot surveys were used to gather participant responses in relation to their experience by asking them to rate a series of statements. Responses from 137 participants are outlined below.

**98% of participants agreed with the statement
'I enjoyed myself'**

**96% of participants agreed with the statement
'I have learnt something new'**

**90% of participants agreed with the statement
'I have a greater understanding of the heritage of the local area'**

**85% of participants agreed with the statement
'I feel inspired'**

**88% of participants agreed with the statement
'Taking part has made me feel uplifted'**

Participant feedback highlights how the methodology used in engagement activities successfully blended the acquiring of new knowledge in parallel with leaving room for participants' own self-expression. The quality of content, welcome and research were also recurring themes in feedback. Many participants reflected how the activities they had been involved in had made them think differently or inspired them to act differently as a result of trying new things in a non-judgemental and inclusive setting.

Other comments and themes

Looking across the other comments participants made both within the snapshot survey responses and during interviews with the project team, a number of common aspects emerge and build on the themes from phase one of the project:

- Building a sense of **pride in the local area** and enabling people to look anew at where they live with optimism.
- The **inclusive nature of activities** across generations and backgrounds with a shared interest in the local area.
- An **appetite for creative and practical activities** to take part in locally.
- The **value of social opportunities** which are relaxed and informal in their tone.
- The role of the statues in **creating a portal into wider conversations** about Empire, change, repair, decline and care.
- The opportunity to **explore less visible histories** through the historic environment.
- The appetite for **more regular activity of the same nature** in the park and local area.

The Sculptures of Crystal Palace project has effectively engaged communities throughout its delivery, with participants universally citing how much they valued a less well-known aspect of their local heritage being explored in a way which is inclusive, creative and has reached across the community connecting people together. There has been an extraordinary level of sustained impact in relation to the relatively small investment. The core Invisible Palace team's deep commitment to revealing the sculptures of Crystal Palace Park in all of their dimensions through a unique and inclusive engagement practice model has been central to the project's success. Resources created and programmes run since September 2021 have created a profile for a group of overlooked heritage assets. Key strengths of the project have been:

- The **development of an iterative programme** based on ongoing learning, meaning the project is responsibly rooted and flexible to participant need.
- **Breadth of participation** in the project and all involved being treated the same and valued equally.
- The creation of **opportunities to slow down, notice what is in the local area and connect to others through shared interests**.
- Fostering collaboration in **participatory research and co-creation from many sources** of the community, joining together residents who have a general academic, or specialist interest, and resulting in deep research, rich insight and responses to the sculptures.
- **Supporting the wellbeing of those taking part** through warm, audience led opportunities for people to share their experiences, meet new people, feel rooted in their sense of place, feel they can make a contribution and are valued.
- Providing **supported opportunities for people to travel outside their locality** and experience heritage and culture collectively with others.

- **Drawing attention to heritage locally overlooked**, resulting in a new valuing and recognition and harnessing the power of sharing this with neighbours.
- Team expertise **facilitating the varied dynamics of participants** and picking up on vulnerabilities so they can support the equitable and confident participation of everyone.
- Supporting **upskilling and talent development** of creatives through training in heritage interpretation and creating opportunities to share with peers.
- **Making connections with different bodies locally and London wide**, creating a bridge between these at the same time as leading the way locally in terms of actively inclusive practice.

The project has consistently built inclusive engagement both in terms of who it has reached and the histories it has drawn attention to. A strength of the project has been the balance of academic rigour with accessible and ethical approaches at its heart: a practice rooted in community engagement with participation as its driving purpose across all activity. It is important that the knowledge held by the Invisible Palace core team is recognised and valued as an asset for the local area and used in the future.

With the wider regeneration of the park currently in development there is an opportunity for Invisible Palace to deploy their expertise to delivering impactful community engagement as a central part of this cultural, community and educational ecosystem, but with multiple agencies and trusts present in Crystal Palace Park there is a disconnect at times with organisations not being as joined up as they could be. This limits the scope of cohesive provision for local people. The team would benefit from some additional expert capacity in terms of business planning and fundraising to explore a route to sustaining programmes in the longer term to build on the work that has already raised the profile of heritage locally and captured the imaginations of so many local people.





Photos by Sue Giovanni and Liz Clayton Vail

Gardening

The gardening project based at the Vicar's Oak offers a drop in volunteering opportunity on a Friday morning. People of all ages, from a range of backgrounds, come together in the heart of Crystal Palace, through a common interest in gardening. Volunteers build connections, learn skills, and improve the local area both for people and wildlife. The project is supported by a professional gardener who leads the volunteering sessions. Sessions during this financial year were funded by Building strong Communities – Mayor of London.

Invisible Palace continued with the same model of delivery since 2021:

- fortnightly volunteer sessions over the winter months
- weekly sessions from spring till autumn
- two plant sales per year
- trips to other gardens or museums for volunteers and friends

Between April 2023 and March 2024 Invisible Palace ran 41 different gardening-related sessions, 28 people got involved in one or more session, with a core group of 8 gardeners. This year for the first time we were joined by corporate volunteers using their individual volunteering days.

Feedback gathered at May plant sale

"We love the garden - walk past it every morning and is such a nice way to start the day. Hella bees and insects! Warms the soul - thanks!"

"Great little group - a real asset to the community. Friendly, helpful and concerned for less able people around them."

"The flower beds are terrific. Well done."

"The most beautiful entrance to Crystal Palace Park with alliums, California poppies, understated, low maintenance. Just gorgeous."

"I LOVE the flowerbeds! They bring joy to my day.."

"We love the flowers! The beds are always so nicely taken care of, and it really lifts your spirits to see them every day - such a great way to take care of the area and it's a treat for the eyes!"

"Love the flower beds outside the park - I look at them every morning :-) 🌸"

"Amazing and beautiful garden, lovely plants, such a lovely spot to cheer you up on your walk."

Feedback from a visit to the Garden Museum

"Thank you very much for organising our excellent day out on Friday to the Garden Museum."

"Matt Collin's guided tour and historical context was fascinating."

"It was great to meet friends with you over coffee in their lovely cafe, and then to be able to explore all their beautiful exhibitions free of charge."

"Thanks for the visit to the Garden Museum today. Not been since they did it up."

"Last months inspired visit to GardenMuseumLDN was a perfect antidote for January 🧑🏻💚🧡"



Photos by Jules Hussey and Sue Giovanni

Defy Gravity Social Circus in partnership with My Aerial Home

Text in this section is drawn from a report written for the National Lottery Community Fund by Niki Lavithis and Sue Giovanni.

The Defy Gravity Social Circus programme began in Summer 2019 with a pilot project in partnership with My Aerial Home though a small grant from Mayor of London Culture Seeds. The project was inspired by the circus heritage of Crystal Palace and had the aim to offer accessible high-quality arts to under-served young people while activating under-used spaces in Crystal Palace Park. Since then, the programme has developed and responded to feedback from those taking part.

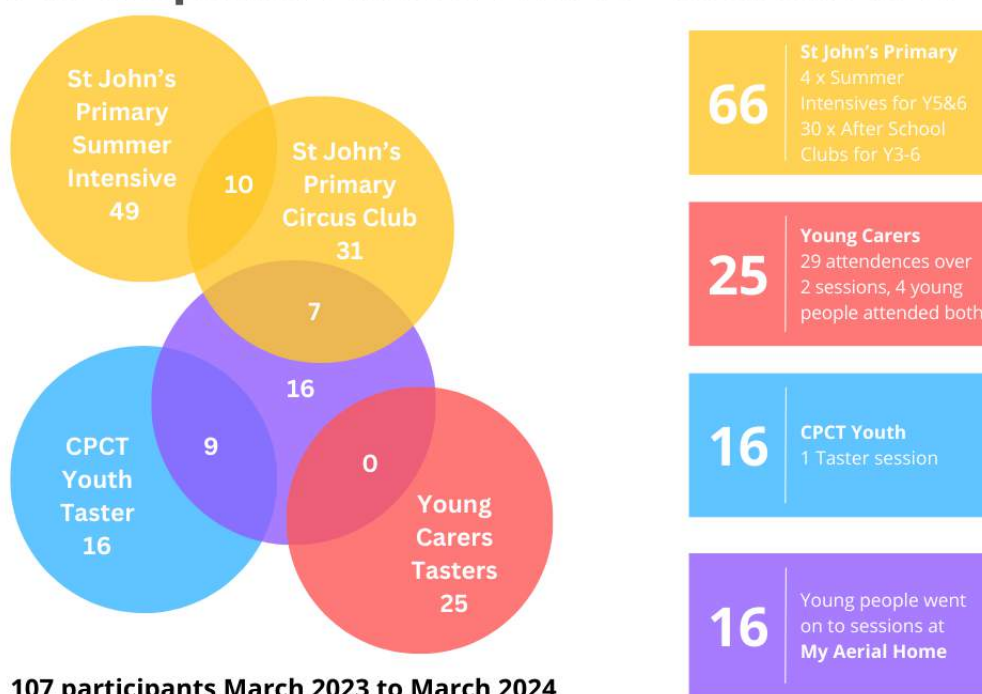
The pilot programme was picked up by Crystal Palace Community Trust (CPCT) for their three-year youth provision scheme The Power of One (2020-23) funded by Mayor of London through Young Londoners. CPCT Youth Club joined as a partner at this time and St John's CE Primary School the following year.

The current Defy Gravity Social Circus programme draws on learning across previous 4 years of delivery and is currently funded by Reaching Communities, National Lottery Community Fund.

Year 1 March 2023 to March 2024 has seen:

- 30 Circus Club after school sessions at St John's CE Primary School
- 3 Aerial Taster sessions for youth groups at My Aerial Home
- 4 Summer Intensive sessions for years 5 & 6 at St John's CE Primary School
- 16 funded places at My Aerial Home's Monster Club classes or Summer School

Participation March 2023 - March 2024



The project aims to offer accessible high-quality arts – in this case circus - to under-served young people, and within this, four key areas of impact were identified for reporting:

- Increased participation in physical activity
- Increased strength, flexibility, and balance
- Have improved confidence, resilience, tolerance of others
- Increased social inclusion

Four teaching staff and one senior staff member at St John's CE Primary School reported that children were more willing to take part in **physical activity** following the Summer Intensive in 2023.

"There is a child who is very shy and tries to withdraw from physical activity when possible. She has shown massive improvement and especially enjoyed the aerials."

"Lots of boys who think they are "too cool" for activities like this. All loved it and got involved. All were sad when it ended!"

- St John's CE Primary School staff

Circus teachers use a scoring system is used to measure gains in **strength, flexibility, and balance** at after school Circus Club. Each term most participants would improve by 20% or more in each area.

"I've seen physical changes in all of the participants, whether big or small increases, they are all so much stronger than when they started and can do moves they found difficult and couldn't do when they first came."

- Circus Facilitator, Defy Gravity Social Circus

Four teaching staff and one senior staff member at St John's CE Primary School were asked to comment on changes in **confidence, resilience, tolerance of others** following the Summer Intensive in 2023.

In all 3 areas most staff surveyed felt that children showed improvement with the greatest change seen in **resilience and tolerance of others**. A teacher commented that even the quiet children were able to push themselves further than they thought they could. A parent described how attending Circus Club "was scary for him at the beginning, but coming gave him confidence" a sentiment echoed by other families.

Increased social inclusion can be seen for children who take up places directly at My Aerial Home. In this setting children mix with new people of different ages from a range of backgrounds.

Four teaching staff and one senior staff member at St John's CE Primary School were asked to comment on changes in sociability, four of the team saw improvements.



Summer Intensive 2024 photos by St John's CE Primary



Youth Group Taster photos by Sue Giovanni

Summary

At the time of completing this work members of Invisible Palace would have felt quite optimistic about the future with continued upskilling of the team particularly through the Heritage Compass programme which built on previous training from Getting On Board.

From the point of writing now in January 2025 the climate for small arts and heritage charities only gets harder. Developments in the park also mean that there will be significant overlap in delivery of heritage activity from a much larger and more sustainable organisation than Invisible Palace.

Financial Review

The charity's Financial Statements form pages 16 and 17 of this report.

The Receipts and Payments accounts show total receipts of **£48,839** during the financial year reported on; total payments of **£65,011** and a year-end position of **£31,133** held in assets (cash at bank).

The charity received ongoing project funding of **£35,326** The National Lottery Community Fund. **£6,370** came from Greater London Authority and **£2500** in anonymous donations.

The total restricted funds received by the charity for the year were **£46,200**. **£64,267** of restricted funds payments were made during the period. At the end of this period **£24,978** of restricted funds are held which includes the opening balance of **£24,266**.

The total unrestricted funds received by the charity were **£2,639**. Of this **£744** of unrestricted fund payments were made this financial year. At the end of this period **£6,154** of unrestricted funds are held which includes the opening balance of **£4,259**. The unrestricted funds at end of period are reduced from last year.

The finances this year were again independently examined by Stefan Bort a Chartered secretary for Bort Corporate Solutions Ltd.

Declarations

The trustees declare that they have approved the Trustees' Report above and the Financial report on pages 16 and 17.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees:

Signature(s)



Full name(s)

Ayesha Begum

Sarah Patterson

Position (e.g. Chair)

Trustee

Trustee

Date

29/01/2025

26/01/2025

Invisible Palace	Registered Charity no. 1165888			
Receipts & Payments Account				
for the period 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024				
The charity holds no endowment funds at present				
There were no sales or purchases of assets or investments.				
		Restricted Funds	Unrestricted Funds	Total
Receipts		£	£	£
Donations		1 238	125	1 363
Crystal Palace Park Trust - CPPT		1 203	500	1 703
CAF Donate		2 000	500	2 500
Easy Fundraising		0	334	334
Local Giving		63	41	104
Marsh Charitable Trust		0	500	500
Gift Aid		0	33	33
Greater London Authority - GLA		6 370	0	6 370
National Lottery Community Fund - NLCF		35 326	0	35 326
Tickets		0	539	539
Interest Received		0	68	68
Total net receipts for the period		46 200	2 639	48 839
Payments		£	£	£
Artists' and Project Management Fees		50 111		50 111
Equipment and Materials		6 068		6 068
Training		1 466		1 466
Volunteers' Expenses		736		736
Staff Expenses		389		389
Publicity & Promotion		3 595		3 595
Event Costs		576		576
Administration / Overhead		1328	428	428
Bank Charges			60	
Fundraising Costs			256	256
Total net payments for the period		64 267	744	65 011
		Restricted Funds	Unrestricted Funds	Total
		£	£	£
Opening Balance		43 046	4 259	47 305
Cash Funds at end of period		24 978	6 154	31 133

Invisible Palace	Registered Charity no. 1165888			
Statement of Assets and Liabilities				
for the period 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024				
Assets		Restricted Funds	Unrestricted Funds	Total
		£	£	£
Funds held		24 978	6 154	31 133
Other monetary assets		0	0	0
Investment assets		0	0	0
Assets retained for the charity's own use		0	0	0
Liabilities				
Any invoices outstanding at 31 March 2024		0	0	0
Total Assets at end of period		24 978	6 154	31 133
ACCOUNTS PREPARED BY				
Marcella Caramba-Coker				
MACC Services				
APPROVED BY THE TRUSTEES ON				
Signed  Ayesha Begum Date 29/01/2025				
Signed  Sarah Patterson Date 26/01/2025				



Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/
members of

Charity Name
Invisible Palace

On accounts for the year
ended

31st MARCH 2024

Charity no
(if any)

1165888

Set out on pages

17

(Remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets.)

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31/03/2024.

Responsibilities and
basis of report

As the charity's trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent
examiner's statement

~~[The charity's gross income exceeded £250,000 and I am qualified to undertake the examination by being a qualified member of [insert name of applicable listed body]]. Delete [] if not applicable.~~

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination (other than that disclosed below *) which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

* Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.

Signed:

Date:

17 Jan 2025

Name:

STEFAN BORT ACG

Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body

Associate of the Chartered Governance Institute.

(if any):

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Address:

3 DULWICH WOOD AVENUE
LONDON SE19 1HB

Section B

Disclosure

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight material matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.

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