

# The Bewitching Legends of Blackheath: Exploring the Dark History of Blackheath Witches

Nestled amidst the picturesque greenery of southeast London, Blackheath conceals a haunting past that has left an enduring mark on its history—the tale of the infamous Blackheath Witches.

## Origins of the Witchcraft Accusations

The seeds of witchcraft accusations in Blackheath were sown during the tumultuous 16th century, a time of rampant religious persecution and superstition. As fear and paranoia spread throughout Europe, allegations of witchcraft reached fever pitch, and England was no exception.



### Blackheath (The Blackheath Witches Book 1)

by Gabriella Lepore

★★★★☆ 4.1 out of 5

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In 1563, the English Parliament passed the Witchcraft Act, making it a capital offense for anyone to practice or claim to practice witchcraft. This

act provided a legal framework for the widespread prosecution of alleged witches.

### **The Trial of Joan Peterson**

Among the countless individuals caught up in the witch hunt that followed was Joan Peterson, a healer and wise woman who lived in Blackheath. In March 1594, she was accused of causing the death of a local man, Daniel Goudwine, by bewitching him to fall from his horse.

Peterson's trial was a harrowing affair. She was interrogated, tortured, and stripped of her clothing in search of the "witch's mark." Despite her denials, she was found guilty of witchcraft and sentenced to hang.

### **The Execution of Joan Peterson**

On May 13, 1594, Joan Peterson was hanged on Blackheath Common, a grim spectacle witnessed by a vast crowd. Her execution marked a turning point in the witch trials, igniting a wave of terror throughout the region.

### **Other Victims of the Witch Hunts**

Joan Peterson was not the only alleged witch to suffer a tragic fate in Blackheath. In the years that followed, several other women were accused, tried, and executed for witchcraft.

One such victim was Anne Davey, who was hanged in 1602 for allegedly causing the death of a baby. Another woman, Joan Perrot, was accused of practicing witchcraft during the English Civil War and executed by Parliamentary forces in 1644.

### **The Legacy of the Blackheath Witches**

The witch trials of Blackheath left a profound impact on the community. For centuries, the area was associated with witchcraft and superstition. Even today, the legend of the Blackheath Witches continues to be recounted.

In 2004, a memorial was erected on Blackheath Common to commemorate the victims of the witch hunts. The memorial serves as a poignant reminder of the dark chapter in Blackheath's history.

## **Exploring the Sites of the Witch Trials**

Visitors to Blackheath can explore several sites associated with the witch trials, including:

**Blackheath Common:** The site of Joan Peterson's execution and the location of the memorial commemorating the victims of the witch hunts.

**Morden College:** A former almshouse built on the site of a supposed witchcraft gathering. The college chapel is said to be haunted by the ghosts of the alleged witches.

**Blackheath Halls:** A former school believed to have been built on the site of Joan Peterson's cottage. The halls are rumored to be frequented by her restless spirit.

The story of the Blackheath Witches is a chilling reminder of the horrors that can arise from fear, superstition, and mass hysteria. It is a tale that continues to fascinate and haunt visitors to Blackheath.

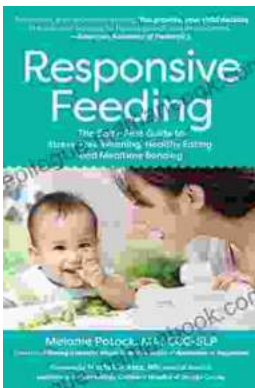
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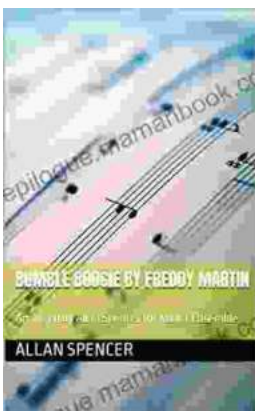


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