



## **A Bexhill ‘commemorative plaque’ scheme (progress report)**

### **Introduction**

Bexhill has a rich, interesting but often overlooked history. Our history and heritage are evident in the buildings and streetscapes of both the ‘old’ and ‘new’ towns. Heritage societies and local museums can play a major role in revealing and celebrating the past and thereby promoting a sense of place to secure and enhance their community’s future.

There are relatively few commemorative plaques in Bexhill, but there are numerous suggestions, most recently from Bexhill Heritage members, about who and what might deserve such recognition.

Bexhill has been home to many people who have had a considerable impact on their community and beyond. Of these, John Logie Baird is commemorated with a blue plaque while Ruth Gipps, the prominent composer is not.

Bexhill Heritage, Bexhill Old Town Preservation Society and Bexhill Museum have joined forces to implement a commemorative plaque scheme.

### **What should be the focus and scope of a commemorative plaque scheme?**

Most heritage societies use a commemorative plaque scheme to celebrate places rather than people. See Stamford (Lincolnshire) and Burwash (East Sussex).

Most use plaques as part of a town trail or walk. Burwash’s Historic High Street Walk is a particularly good example. See [Blue-Plaques-Grant-claim-report-FINAL.pdf](#)

In Knaresborough (North Yorkshire) blue plaques are used by the Civic Society to celebrate places **and** people. See [Blue Plaques – Knaresborough Civic Society](#)

In Stamford, a comprehensive scheme has engaged shop owners by celebrating the history and heritage of their shops. The locations of the plaques can be found on the civic society’s [interactive map](#) of Stamford, together with **pictures** of each plaque. See [Plaques in Stamford - Stamford Civic Society](#)

### **What does the planning authority think?**

Rother’s Chief Planning Officer has already been approached. (See Mike Hughes’ very positive responses to the questions below which are in red)

1. Would you wish to be consulted about the overall design for scheme plaques? **No – we know that you know what you are doing here.**

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2. Would you wish to be consulted about the number of plaques proposed for each year and their content? **Yes, please. Telling us for our information would be helpful. I'm not looking to delay you here. I am thinking that you would simply inform us what you have planned and then we'd shout within a couple of weeks in the (no doubt unlikely) event there are any issues.**

3. Would you wish us to apply for planning permission for plaques proposed within conservation areas? **Probably not, but it really would depend on their size. If you can advise on size, likely material and colour (blue?) I'll let you know but all else being equal I am keen to avoid these needing PP (the size will be key here).**

4. Would you wish us to apply for planning permission for plaques outside conservation areas? **As above.**

### **Colour, size and material.**

Most plaque-makers use blue as this references the plaques in English Heritage's scheme. We would need to balance the cost of bespoke plaque colouring against the distinctiveness and relevance of our own colour scheme to be used for buildings, open spaces and as waypoints on heritage trails.

English Heritage's plaques currently have the following size specification: 495mm (19½ inches) in diameter and 50mm (2 inches) thick. This is larger than most of the commercially produced replicas which tend to be smaller.

English Heritage plaques are made by highly skilled artisan craftspeople, Frank and Sue Ashworth of [London Plaques](#), who have been creating them since 1984. They are made of clay. The surface is slightly domed to encourage self-cleaning, and the lettering, because it is hand piped, is slightly raised. If the plaques are protected during any building works, they will last for as long as the building they are attached to.

The plaques are set into existing walls and this requires existing brick or stone surfaces to be slightly hollowed out.

See <https://youtu.be/BAmnwsVfu1U>

There are several makers who use cast-aluminium. These are far less expensive than clay at around £250 but should be placed in the shade. Aluminium may also oxidise if any part of the surface becomes exposed. Regular maintenance and very careful cleaning will prolong their life.

Commercially made replica blue plaques are likely to be significantly smaller than the English Heritage versions at between 200 to 300mm wide. The better ones are made of cast recycled aluminium with raised lettering and are available in a range of colours. One UK-based maker is [Personalized Fun Blue Plaque With Your Choice of Wording - for Outdoor or Indoor Use - Handmade in England - Etsy UK](#)

Our scheme's blue plaques commemorating individuals, groups and events must be similar in design to the plaque erected recently by Bexhill Museum in Sackville Road.

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Stamford Civic Society has provided vinyl blue plaques to adhere to the inside of shop or house windows facing out. They are 250mm wide and made by *Here Before Us*. See [My Home's History. A Blue Plaque For My Home](#).

These are at eye-level and may be removed as necessary. Shop owners and leaseholders accept them readily unlike wall-fixed plaques where sensitive negotiation and fixing will be needed. They cost around £100.

### **First phase, permissions and funding**

In the first year, it would seem realistic to aim for 12 commemorative plaques for Bexhill's most prominent citizens

Individuals should only be commemorated twenty years after they have died to enable the significance of their contribution to be better understood in context.

In addition, at least one 'shops' scheme' and heritage trail should be planned in the 'new' town for execution in 2027.

We should keep the planning department informed (see above) and ask for blanket permission based on size and colour. The Planning Department will probably be happy if the plaques proposed for external fixing are no bigger than the English Heritage plaques.

Permission from house and building owners, leaseholders and tenants will be necessary. They must be consulted sensitively at an early stage. Plaques should usually be fixed at 3 metres above ground level, with stainless steel encapsulated security screws. Fixing must be carried out by an experienced member of the Bexhill Heritage restoration team or an approved contractor. Advice on caring for the plaque will be given to all property owners, leaseholders and / or tenants. A generic 'agreement' has been drawn up to cover all external fixed installations.

Each of the town's two heritage groups have agreed to contribute £1000 to cover phase 1 of the scheme. Approaches should be made to external funders to help fund other parts of the scheme and subsequent phases. Potential funders include but are not limited to: **Bexhill Town Council**, Bexhill Chamber of Commerce, the Neighbourhood Board and the Community Fund administered currently by Rother District Council and, not but not least, sponsorship by individual business owners and tenants.

### **Who to commemorate**

The group will seek to commemorate the following people in phase 1. We are currently seeking the appropriate permissions by consulting property owners and tenants at the addresses highlighted in red.

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Joyce Lankester Brisley 1896 – 1978 Author  
52 London Road birth to 1901  
61 Wilton Road 1902~1908  
*11 Channel View 1909-1912*

**Fanny Cradock** [Phyllis Nan Sortain Pechey] 1909–1994 Cook and first TV chef.  
*29 Cooden Drive Brief stay...Johnny died 1987 Basingstoke. Fanny living in Hailsham nursing home 1991 to death in 1994*

**Ruth Dorothy Louisa Gipps** MBE 1921 - 1999 Musician and composer  
*14 Parkhurst Road birth to 1937*  
1937 the family at 15 De La Warr Road [now #45 A-D]

**Albert Goodwin** 1845-1932 Artist  
Ellerslie Ellerslie Road 1906~1926 *Now #25, a modern building*  
*Little Ellerslie Ellerslie Lane 1927-1932*

**Gustavus Green** 1865-1964 Engineer  
5 Western Road 1898~1908  
35 Reginald Road 1909~1914  
*Victoria Road Workshop 1902~1914 (at far end)*

**Desmond Wilkinson Llewelyn** 1914–1999 Actor  
*Linkwell High Street 1965~1999*

**Kate Marsden** (1859 – 1931) Explorer  
*61 Dorset Road 1913-1918 Now 73 & 73A*  
13 Cooden Drive 1919- 1921

**Maharaja Nripendra Narayan**  
*22 Marina Court Avenue 1911*

**Minnie Pallister** (1885–1960) Broadcaster  
*4 High street 1932-1958*  
4 De La Warr Road 1960 *No longer exists*  
**Orrell Alexander (Alex) Sanders** (1926–1988) Witch  
*Chantry Cottage High Street 1973~1986*

**Henry James Sargent** (1891–1983) Curator  
Audrey 49 West Parade 1925-1933  
Hazelwood 19 Pages Lane 1934-1983  
*Bexhill Museum*

**John William Webb** (1840–1922) Builder of Bexhill's sea wall and many properties in the western town  
Devonshire Hotel Devonshire Square 1888-  
21 Albert Road 1893  
*Brockley House 10 Endwell Road 1894-1901*  
The Pages Collington Lane 1902-1921 *No longer exists*  
Wickham Lodge 2 Cooden Drive 1922 *No longer exists*

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**Bob Marley** (1945 – 1981) Jamaican reggae singer, songwriter, and guitarist  
First UK performance

**John Logie Baird** (1888 – 1946) Inventor of television

**Baird House. Sea Road**

Plaque already exists but is in poor condition and difficult to read. (We could replace)

**Terence Alan (Spike) Milligan** (1918 – 2002) Writer and comedian

**'Forces Corner' (Sydenham Court)**

We are investigating Alec Guinness, (1914 – 2000) Actor, went to school in Bexhill.

Patrick Cargill the actor is a 'reserve' at this stage.

### The 'shops and premisses scheme'

We're planning to initiate a 'shop and commercial premisses scheme' by initiating a pilot phase in Bexhill Town Centre.

(A town centre trail based upon the history of shop premisses was chosen as the first 'enhanced town trail'. There had been a successful museum project in the past for which material remained available. This traced the history of shops in the Town Centre Conservation area up to 2005. An archive contained historic photos. The project was popular with shopkeepers.)

Removable vinyl plaques be produced using Bexhill's red, green and white colours.

Commemorative plaques do not have to be blue. Alexis Markwick of Bexhill Heritage has suggested the use of Bexhill's own colours for the 'shop and commercial premisses scheme'. See the example below.



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Four shops / premisses would feature in the pilot scheme subject to their consent:

- Fox and Badger coffee house
- **Bexhill Town Council offices**
- Alfredo and Sue's café
- The Foot Clinic

The premisses' history would be described on the window-mounted vinyl with a QR code added for access to more detail. Historic photos would be made available to shopkeepers for display.

### **Support requested:**

1. Endorse and support the 'commemorative plaques' scheme
2. Agree to be one of the four premisses featuring in the '**shops and premises**' pilot project.
3. Join Bexhill Heritage and Bexhill Old Town Preservation Society in sponsoring the scheme. Councillors should note that a grant application is being submitted to the Town Council to contribute up to £3,000 to fund the plaques.

Steve Johnson 19.09.26