



ENGLISH HERITAGE

CELEBRATING PEOPLE & PLACE

GUIDANCE ON
COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUES
& PLAQUE SCHEMES

SOUTH STREET

PETER STREET

SOUTHMILL
STREET





FOREWORD

This guidance has been written by English Heritage's Blue Plaques Team as a key part of its national advisory role in support of existing and projected commemorative plaque projects and schemes across the country. Though produced by English Heritage, which administers the famous blue plaques scheme in London, it owes a great debt to the generous input of others engaged in plaque initiatives, including professional and civic societies, local authorities, and voluntary organisations.

Discussion of a draft of the document formed an important part of an English Heritage -sponsored national conference on commemorative plaque schemes – the first of its kind – held at the RIBA in London on 18-19 February 2010. The guidance has been amended in the light of comments and suggestions made at the conference and subsequently received in writing.

Every effort has been made to produce guidance which includes examples from across the country, reflecting the wide range of commemorative plaques, criteria and approaches that exist. There is no single way to put up plaques or administer plaque schemes and we hope that users will find it a helpful resource that can be drawn upon to achieve the best practice that suits particular circumstances. We will also be publishing the guidance on our website and will continue to amend the online version in the light of our own experience and feedback from the sector.

Finally, the recent conference confirmed what we already knew – that people are passionate about plaques. They are one of the best ways of highlighting the historical associations of buildings, and – time and time again – they have demonstrated an enduring ability to foster community interest in local history and the historic built environment. I hope that readers of this guidance will continue to develop their schemes in response to local circumstances and traditions – there is, for example, no reason why plaques should be coloured blue just because that works well in Greater London. Diversity, as in many things, is to be welcomed, reflecting as it does one of the essential ingredients of local identity and place making. I am sure this guidance will help in that process and I have great pleasure in commending it to you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Kathy Andrews'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Kathy' and the last name 'Andrews' clearly legible.

Baroness Andrews OBE
Chair, English Heritage

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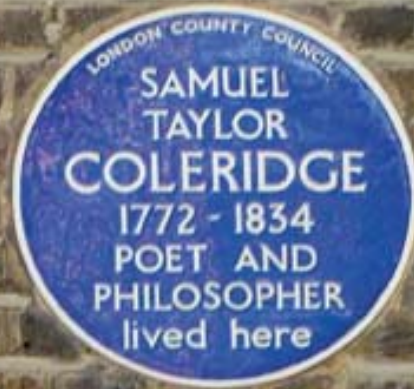
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1 Number 7 Addison Bridge Place, Kensington, London, and its plaque to Samuel Taylor Coleridge, put up by the LCC in 1950.

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INTRODUCTION

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Commemorative plaques, which can be found on buildings of all styles and dates, are one of the most effective – and visible – means of celebrating our history and the historic environment. Plaques connect past and present in an immediate, tangible way, and have numerous benefits; for instance, they can increase a sense of pride among local communities and can educate about history and architecture, making both more accessible to people of all ages and backgrounds. They can also play an important conservation role, helping to highlight buildings with historic associations and to preserve them for the future.

This document is based on the experiences of English Heritage, which works actively to encourage commemorative plaques nationwide and to celebrate their many benefits. This is in line with the organisation's concern to promote public participation in the historic environment. The document provides practical guidance in relation to all aspects of plaque work, which – as will be immediately clear – is more complex and time-consuming than is often imagined.

One of English Heritage's aims is to strengthen the links between the various individuals, groups and organisations around the country who are involved with plaques and plaque schemes, and to encourage the sharing of ideas, experiences and principles. Such national connectivity is increasingly important, reflecting the growing popularity of plaques. There are at least 300 plaque schemes existing in the United Kingdom at the present time; most of these are focused on particular geographical areas, though some are thematic. Such schemes are run by a range of different bodies and organisations, including local authorities, civic societies and local history groups. In London alone, English Heritage's blue plaques scheme works alongside initiatives run by groups and bodies such as Westminster City Council, the City of London Corporation, Ealing Civic Society, Southwark Council, the Heritage Foundation, and the Heath and Hampstead Society. In all, there are around 1,800 plaques in the capital, just under half of which form part of the scheme administered by English Heritage.

It is a common misconception that putting up one or more commemorative plaques is a straightforward task. The simplicity of plaques is, in fact, deceptive, and they should never be regarded as a quick and easy 'fix'. Instead, every effort should be made to ensure that they are adornments to the historic environment, that they are interesting and meaningful, and that, especially in terms of their inscription and positioning, they are accurate, clear and accessible to all.

Effective plaques are the result of a process of involved and detailed work, which will often be time-consuming and may also be costly. This reflects the fact that they are the product of joint effort. At a basic level, they will involve an individual or organisation who provides funding, an initial proposer, a researcher (and perhaps another responsible for selecting a building and composing an inscription), a person who handles the administration, the owner of a building who (all being well) gives their consent to the plaque, a representative of the local planning authority (who will need to be consulted), a designer, manufacturer, and a contractor responsible for the plaque's installation. Furthermore, the property concerned may be listed, a statutory designation that marks and celebrates a building's architectural and historic significance; in such cases, listed building consent for the plaque will need to be sought from the local planning authority.



2 The unveiling of a blue plaque to the football player and manager James Patrick 'Jimmy' Murphy (1910-89), erected at his former home, 43 Treharne Street, Pentre, Rhondda, Wales, in 2009.

© Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

Once in place on a building, a plaque may last for many years. It is, therefore, always important to ensure as far as possible that plaques will continue to have relevance and a sustained impact in the future. While a successful plaque can bring enjoyment to countless people, a plaque that has been poorly designed or placed, or commemorates a subject which seems to be unworthy of lasting recognition, can be surprisingly detrimental. As plaques will be experienced by so many – of both present and future generations – high standards are desirable in all aspects of the work involved; this is especially the case with regard to plaque design, positioning, inscription, and the identification of a suitable and appropriate building on which the plaque is to be placed.

As is discussed in this document, there will, in particular, need to be an investigation of appropriate design formats and materials. Often, the blue roundels used by English Heritage and its predecessors in London



3 The unveiling of the English Heritage plaque honouring Sir Douglas Bader at 5 Petersham Mews, Kensington, London, in 2009.

© English Heritage

have been adopted as a successful model for other schemes. However, the setting may not always be appropriate to this colour or design, and suitability will be affected by the nature of the building concerned, its special interest and character, and the type of subject that is being commemorated. It is vital that other options are considered, and that blue is not adopted because it is understood to be the only option or representative of a particular standard.

In all aspects of the work involved in a plaque, it is important to consider accessibility. With their direct appeal to the public at large, plaques have many positive effects, including the fostering of pride among particular communities and groups. However, they also have the capacity to be exclusive, especially where design, positioning and inscription make a plaque hard to read or understand, and where insufficient thought is given to the balance and range of subjects commemorated. It is best practice to ensure that a plaque scheme aims to represent people of different genders, ages, social and ethnic backgrounds, religions, beliefs and nationalities, and caters for people living with disabilities. For public bodies such as local authorities, it is a requirement that such considerations and actions are documented in the form of an equality impact assessment.



4 This guidance document focuses on plaques which mark buildings rather than those which mark other structures, are free-standing or are set into the ground. This plaque, dating from 2009, is set on a rock in Nursemaids' Green, Southwold, Suffolk. It illustrates the fact that blue roundels are not always appropriate.

© Emily Cole

THE FOCUS AND INTENTIONS OF THE GUIDANCE

This document aims to provide useful guidance with regard to all aspects of the work which goes into commemorative plaques. It is based on the experiences of the administrators – past and present – of the London-wide blue plaques scheme, run by English Heritage since 1986 (see below, pp. 9-11). For several years, EH's blue plaques scheme was national in scope, and the experiences gained during this period have also proved useful, as has advice and information provided by a wide range of individuals, many of whom were present at the two-day conference English Heritage held in London, 'Commemorative Plaques: Celebrating People and Place' (18-19 February 2010). This was attended by about 120 delegates, representing schemes, societies, local authorities, organisations and other bodies from across England and beyond (see Appendix I3).

Although the guidance is likely to be of widespread relevance, its particular focus is **plaques erected on buildings**, rather than placed in the ground or on other structures, such as posts. Indeed, for the purposes of this document, the latter are considered to be interpretative signs (commemorative plaques are not signs) and will be guided by rather different principles.

It should also be noted that, whilst the guidance relates to plaques celebrating a range of different subjects, its strength is the **commemoration of figures of the past**. This reflects the focus of the English Heritage scheme and that of many other plaques across the country. In addition, this document pays particular attention to the association of individuals with **authentic historic buildings** in which they lived or worked (rather than the sites of those buildings) – a fundamental element of the English Heritage scheme. That said, the general processes and practicalities, such as those involved in seeking consents and arranging installation, are likely to be applicable to plaques of various types and purposes.

The information contained within this document, whilst comprehensive, is general in its approach. Anyone requiring more specific or detailed advice about any aspect of plaque work is encouraged to contact English Heritage's Blue Plaques Team

directly (see p. 156). While advice and guidance are freely and readily given, English Heritage is not in a position to provide **endorsement** for plaques. This reflects the fact that principles and practices across the country – while broadly similar – vary depending on the needs of the particular locality and the motivations behind the plaque or scheme. Such plaques will almost always differ in some respect from those erected under the London-wide scheme. It is important to recognise this distinctiveness, and for those responsible for plaques to take due credit for their achievements.

For a similar reason, this document does not contain a list of **plaque manufacturers**. Not only is English Heritage unable to make recommendations, it is important that the individual, group or organisation interested in putting up a plaque considers the specific circumstances and makes a choice accordingly. That said, where a particular form of plaque is favoured – and examples of that are known to exist – it is always worth contacting those responsible for its installation, who will usually be able to provide further information and advice.

As English Heritage's Blue Plaques Team is not able to finance plaques which do not form part of its own London-wide scheme – the national scheme having been discontinued in 2007 (see below, pp. 10–11) – a special attempt has been made to explore a number of possible **funding options** in this document. It is worth noting, however, that other groups are far more experienced and knowledgeable about such issues than the Blue Plaques Team, and focused advice should always be sought where required.

As a result of the comments and suggestions received following circulation of the draft version of this guidance, we are confident that the document provides an adequate level and balance of information. That said, it is very likely that the guidance will need to change over time, as further principles and practices are brought to English Heritage's attention. Our role as the provider of formal advice and guidance is comparatively new, and there is still a great deal to learn. We hope to benefit from the experiences of readers of this document, and strongly encourage people with comments and additional information to get in touch with the Blue Plaques Team.



5 An undated photograph (probably of the early twentieth century) showing the plaque to scientist Michael Faraday (1791–1867) at 48 Blandford Street, Marylebone, London, erected by the Society of Arts in 1876.

© City of London, LMA

ENGLISH HERITAGE, THE BLUE PLAQUES SCHEME, AND THE NATIONAL ADVISORY ROLE

This document is based predominantly on the experiences of English Heritage, which has been responsible for running the blue plaques scheme in London since 1986. This, one of the earliest of its kind in the world, was first suggested in 1863 by the politician and reformer William Ewart (1798–1869). The idea received widespread support among the public at large, and in 1866 was formally taken up by the **Society of Arts** (granted royal patronage in 1908), which founded the scheme. The Society went on to put up 35 plaques in London; the first – both blue roundels – were erected in 1867 and commemorated the birthplace of Lord Byron (1788–1824) and a residence of Napoleon III (1808–73). The principal aim of such plaques was, from the outset, to draw

attention to and thereby help to preserve buildings with notable historical associations, as well as to educate the public and enliven London's streets.

In 1901, the scheme – which became known as the 'indication of houses of historical interest in London' – passed to the **London County Council**. The LCC was responsible for formalising selection criteria and administrative processes, and for developing the blue plaque design that is so well known today. The latter was not used consistently until the 1940s (Fig. 7); before that, plaques erected under the London scheme took a wide range of different forms and colours. When blue plaques – made of glazed ceramic – were made standard, it was with the specific needs of London and its buildings in mind.

On the disbanding of the LCC in 1965, the blue plaques scheme passed to the **Greater London Council**, before being inherited by **English Heritage** on the GLC's abolition in 1986 (along with the historic plaques archive, dating back to 1901). Today, the scheme embodies the principles and practices developed during a period of over 100 years, including selection criteria first formalised in 1954 (see Appendix I). It comprises well over 800 plaques; detailed in the book *Lived in London: Blue Plaques and the Stories Behind Them* (New Haven and London, 2009), edited by Emily Cole, these commemorate a wide range of subjects



7 The modern blue roundel was developed by the LCC around the time of the Second World War, specifically for use in London. This plaque, commemorating the architect George Basevi (1794-1845) at 17 Savile Row, Mayfair, dates from 1949.

© English Heritage



6 Various forms of plaques were erected by the LCC between 1901 and 1938. This example, made of lead, dates from 1914 and marks 22 Carlisle Place, Victoria, London, Manning's residence from 1873 until his death.

© English Heritage

and mark buildings of numerous types and dates. The London-wide scheme, driven by public suggestion, continues to grow by about 12 plaques each year and generates interest around the world.

In 1998, it was decided to extend the English Heritage blue plaques scheme, on a pilot basis, to certain cities and areas across the country. Between 2000 and 2005, just over 30 plaques were put up in Liverpool & Merseyside, Birmingham, Southampton and Portsmouth. These commemorated figures including the toy manufacturer Frank Hornby (1863-1936), the chocolate manufacturers George Cadbury (1839-1922) and Richard Cadbury (1835-99), and the actor and comedian Peter Sellers (1925-80). In 2004, it was agreed that the scheme be expanded on a region-by-region basis; it was duly launched in the East of England in that year and the East Midlands in 2005.



8 Bronze plaque to Sir Abraham Roberts (1784-1873), army general, and his son Field Marshal Earl Roberts (1832-1914), at 25 Royal York Crescent, Clifton, Bristol. It was installed by the Clifton Improvement Committee, and unveiled by Earl Roberts in c.1894.

© English Heritage

Following a review, however, it became apparent that the approach was untenable, and in 2007 the national scheme was discontinued, before any plaques had been erected in either the East of England or the East Midlands. This decision reflected a number of practical considerations, including a reduction in the resources available, as well as experiences and findings. In particular, the scale and number of existing plaque schemes was a factor. Accordingly, it was agreed that, instead of installing its own plaques across the country, English Heritage would develop an advisory role, reflecting the policies of the organisation as a whole and demand from existing schemes and local authorities.

The provision of advice and guidance regarding plaques was thus adopted as a formal English Heritage activity in 2007, and is aimed at anyone – whether an individual, society or an organisation – interested in or responsible for commemorative plaques. Over the last few years, the Blue Plaques Team has responded to hundreds of enquiries regarding plaques across the United Kingdom, and has begun to carry out an audit of existing plaque schemes across England. It is hoped that, in due course, information about such schemes will be placed on the English Heritage website, strengthening the dialogue between all those who carry out work in this important area.



9 Plaque at 30 London Street, Norwich Lanes, erected under the joint initiative of Norwich HEART and Norwich City Council as part of the regeneration the area. It commemorates 'Aeronautical Firsts': the late eighteenth-century founding near this site of a company that went on to develop the first all-metal framed aeroplane.

© Norwich HEART

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PROJECT MANAGEMENT, COSTS AND FUNDING

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One of the first tasks when planning to put up a commemorative plaque is to work out a project plan and budget and to find the necessary funds to pay for all the costs involved in the process. Fundraising for a single plaque can be relatively straightforward, but financing a new or revived scheme of plaques may seem a daunting prospect. The experience of plaque schemes from around the country, however, suggests that there is a wide range of funding options suited to meeting some or all of the costs involved.

As has been noted (see p. 9), the Blue Plaques Team of English Heritage is unable to provide funding for commemorative plaques that do not form part of its remit in London. Although a limited number of plaques were erected outside the capital as part of the pilot national scheme, English Heritage changed its approach in 2007 and now concentrates on offering information and guidance to individuals, groups and organisations wishing to put up commemorative plaques.

A common concern of those seeking advice is how much a plaque costs and how to go about securing sufficient funding. This section provides an overview of how to manage, cost and finance a plaque project and summarises the different types of funding available, giving examples of successful projects from around the country. The aims and criteria of a plaque scheme (see pp. 35-44) will affect the type of funding that can be applied for; for example, distributors of National Lottery funds may expect a high level of community involvement, whereas a tourism body may wish to see the encouragement of visitors to a particular location. Furthermore, plaques may form just one part of an integrated heritage interpretation project, which may involve a variety of activities and outcomes; in such cases, the costs associated with plaques may be subsumed within the larger costs of the project as a whole. Details of the organisations mentioned in this section can be found on pp. 156-158.

MANAGING A PLAQUE PROJECT

It is good practice for every plaque initiative – however large or small – to be treated as a project and to be run according to the principles of project management. Although procedures and terminology can seem technical and involved at first, the principles are based on common sense and have important outcomes. They encourage a thoughtful and methodical approach to planning, organising and delivering a project, and ensure systematic monitoring and recording at every stage.

There is much useful literature on project management. The following advice is based on the PRINCE2 process-based method that is used extensively by the UK government and within the private sector; this is set out in the publication *Managing Successful Projects with PRINCE2* (London, 2005). English Heritage has devised its own project management system, known as Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE). This draws on the principles set out in PRINCE2, and also on those of the Management of Archaeological Projects 2 (MAP2) project management system, which it supersedes.

At the start of any plaque project, it is important to work out a **project plan**, to establish the **costs** involved, and to draw up a **budget**. These tasks are essential in ensuring the success of a project and need to be completed before making a formal application for funding. Several of the major funding bodies have a pre-application process that helps the applicant plan and cost every aspect of the project before an application is submitted. In some cases, a funding body may recommend paying for a project

mentor – who has experience of other grant-aided projects – to advise how to plan the project and to identify suitable sources of funding. If an application proves successful, the grant-giving body may appoint a project monitor to ensure that the project goes to plan and stays on budget.

The essence of a process-based method of project management is a clear division of the project into definable stages that allow close management of each part of the process. It is envisaged that the driving force behind a plaque project – whether it be a local authority, a civic society, or a community or other group – will convene a committee or steering group to oversee the project and to appoint an individual to act as project manager. While the work and time involved in a plaque initiative will vary according to the scope and scale of the project, it is strongly recommended that this step-by-step approach is followed even for an initiative that results in a single plaque being erected, though some streamlining of the procedure may be appropriate.

The key stages are as follows:

START-UP

The first stage involves preparing a **project proposal**, a document that defines the aims, objectives, and intended audience of the proposed plaque or plaque scheme. This stage will involve consultation with all interested parties and a scoping of the probable costs and likely sources of funding. At this point, it is important to decide the **scope** and **scale** of the plaque project: is it an individual, one-off plaque, an ongoing plaque scheme that will require funding each year, or a concerted campaign to erect a number of plaques within a particular time-scale? For schemes – whether new or revived – it is important to balance considerations of **quantity** against those of **quality**, and to question whether the cheapest form of plaque is the most desirable option in terms of its durability, attractiveness and impact on the historic environment. It makes sense to debate these key issues during the start-up stage of the project and to make sure that the relevant local planning authorities, civic societies, amenity societies and community groups are fully consulted. Once the initial scoping exercise has been completed, and a document has been drafted, it is important to **review** the project

proposal to assess its viability and affordability. The proposal should be amended in the light of information gathered about costs and funding before approval is given to move to the detailed planning stage.

INITIATION

This is the stage at which a detailed **project plan** or **project design** is drawn up, setting out the agreed aims and objectives of the initiative and identifying the tasks to be carried out in a series of stages. Any problems and uncertainties need to be acknowledged as risks that may increase the cost and lengthen the time taken to complete the project; these potential risks are best stated clearly in a list, known in project management terms as a **risk log**. It is at this stage that key tasks are allocated to particular people to carry out – including third-party contractors – and that whoever is acting as the **project manager** takes charge of the day-to-day management and delivery of the project. When the detailed project plan (including a fully costed budget) has been prepared, it is a good idea to **review** the whole project once more and to make any changes if necessary. Following review and confirmation that the necessary funds are available, the project is approved and the main stages of work are begun.

CHANGE AND ADAPTATION

In working towards a plaque, circumstances can change that have a knock-on effect on costs, even in a one-off project. The proposal to commemorate the artist Ben Nicholson (1894-1982) at his birthplace in Denham, Buckinghamshire, suffered a setback when the cost of the manufacture of the bespoke slate plaque increased from £1,200 to about £2,200. The organiser of the plaque, Rosemary Temple, had secured sufficient funds to cover the cost as originally budgeted and was understandably reluctant to approach sponsors for more money. She instead succeeded in sourcing an alternative manufacturer, who was able to match the price originally quoted. It is hoped that the plaque will be erected during 2010.



10 Mervyn Allcock, General Manager of Barrow Hill Roundhouse, and Denis Dunstone, Trustee of the Transport Trust, at the unveiling of the first 'Red Wheel' plaque installed by the Transport Trust, in April 2009. It commemorates Barrow Hill Roundhouse, Staveley, Derbyshire, the last operational turntable-based engine shed in the UK.

© Transport Trust

CARRYING OUT THE WORK

The people involved in carrying out each element and stage of the plaque project can now begin working on their allocated tasks. Where possible, each task should be handled as part of a logical progression; for instance, it is obvious that the historical research supporting a particular plaque proposal will need to be completed before that plaque is designed and manufactured. A detailed discussion of the work involved at each stage of a plaque project is set out elsewhere in this guidance document. A routine **review** of progress is recommended; this allows for any unforeseen changes to be included in the overall project plan, ensures that the proposed aims and audience are monitored, and ensures that any projected increases in cost are acknowledged and, ideally, agreed.

CLOSURE

The final stage of any project is reached when all the main tasks and products involved have been completed. It is recommended that the project manager documents the history of the project, as well as its outcomes and any recommendations for future activity, in an **end-of-project report**. Following closure, the records associated with the project should be compiled and stored in a safe

and accessible repository, ideally a local archive centre (see pp. 120-121). Plans for ongoing and future work – such as maintenance and promotion of the plaque or plaques – should be put in place and responsibility for these tasks assigned to a member of the project team. For schemes, it will usually be necessary to treat each plaque as an individual project within the larger initiative and to bring work to a close on each case, while continuing the scheme as a whole.

COSTS

It is all too easy to underestimate the amount of work involved in erecting a commemorative plaque and the length of time it can take to complete the process. Both of these factors have cost implications and therefore it is vital to have a full breakdown of the financial outlay that may be incurred in each stage of the project. When calculating the overall cost of a plaque project, it is advisable to distinguish the **capital or hard costs** that involve an outlay of cash from the **operating or soft costs** that may be covered by voluntary contributions. For example, plaque design, manufacture and installation will almost always represent capital costs, requiring the commissioning of appropriate experts, while the administration of nominations may be handled by a volunteer, without charge.

For many plaque initiatives – especially those administered by voluntary bodies such as civic societies or community groups – it will be possible to meet some or most of the costs involved through **voluntary effort** or through **donations in kind**. Not all plaque initiatives, however, can draw upon volunteers and new initiatives that do not have links to an existing voluntary group may have to find funding to cover every aspect of the project. Moreover, it is always worth estimating the value of the total voluntary contribution in monetary terms, as it can be considered as match funding by grant-giving bodies such as the HLF when calculating the percentage of the total costs that can be offered as grant aid.

Where necessary, schemes may need to budget for additional staff and professional fees incurred by external parties, such as researchers, chartered building surveyors, architects, solicitors and publicity consultants. Staff and/or volunteer training, travel

THE VALUE OF VOLUNTEERS

The Ulster History Circle provides a good example of how significant a contribution can be made by volunteers. In a breakdown of the work carried out during the financial year 2008-9, the Circle estimated that the total voluntary input was equivalent to over £50,000. This figure allowed for 1,963 working hours (costed at £49,000), 1,919 miles travelled, 936 telephone calls and 264 letters. By comparison, actual expenditure – on items including plaque manufacture, installation and maintenance, IT services, equipment, printing and stationery – amounted to just over £12,000. In compiling these figures, it was noted that estimating the true extent of voluntary input was far from easy; still, members engaged in Ulster History Circle activities were encouraged to submit a rough estimate of their input each month. During the year in question, 6 plaques were erected and much preparatory work for a further 24 plaques was carried out, including the identification of locations and liaison with property owners.

expenses and administrative costs (photocopying, stationery, postage, internet charges, etc.) will also need to be factored into the budget.

In keeping with good project management, it is advisable to set out the projected costs of each stage when drawing up the project plan or design and before applying for funding. This will make it possible to decide which costs can and should be met by voluntary or in-kind contributions and which costs will need to be met by cash contributions from a source of funding.

To assist with this task, a list of the **twelve key stages** involved in putting up a plaque is set out below, together with the range of approximate costs that may be incurred and (as appropriate) the possible time-frames or time allocations relevant for each stage. Some stages have of necessity been handled differently from others, reflecting the nature of the work involved. For some stages, this may be finite, undertaken in a specific time slot (or time allocation), and may be unaffected by external factors. For others, the work may be carried out over a longer period of time or may even be ongoing, and will almost always be dependent upon factors which cannot be predicted or controlled. It should be noted that some of the stages may be undertaken concurrently.

Where possible, the figures given relate to work on a single plaque, but for certain stages (such as plaque maintenance and monitoring) it has proved more appropriate to relate them to multiple plaques. In general, the lower figure in the ranges of both time and cost tends to imply a smaller-scale initiative with a significant degree of voluntary input, while the larger figure generally reflects more ambitious schemes or initiatives with a greater level of capital outlay. It should be assumed that VAT has been factored in where applicable.

I. SCOPING AND CONSULTATION

If a plaque scheme is being proposed, this stage (undertaken during a project's start-up) will involve consultation with all interested parties, both at a local level – including the local planning authority, civic society, history or heritage society, community groups and local residents – and at a regional or national level, including English Heritage. Much of this work can be carried out through telephone calls, emails and letters, but it may be advisable to hold public meetings to ensure that local residents and businesses have an opportunity to contribute. It is recommended that a survey of existing commemorative plaques in the locality is carried out, assessing aspects such as design, condition, positioning and the subjects already commemorated. The consultation should encompass every aspect of the plaque project, including the selection criteria and the proposed design and material of the plaques. Additionally, legal advice should ideally be sought on key aspects such as the gaining of consents and ownership of the plaque once installed, although this is not factored into the cost range set out below.

Average time-frame: 2-6 months

Average cost: £10-£150

2. FUNDRAISING

Having agreed that the principle of a plaque or scheme is worthwhile and desirable, it will be necessary to investigate all avenues of funding and, where possible, to obtain pledges of support that will in turn confirm the scale of the plaque project.

If an approach is made to a public funding body, such as a local authority or a lottery distributor, a detailed project plan will need to be costed and submitted as part of the bid for funding, and a positive outcome is by no means guaranteed. Many of the grant-giving bodies will expect a degree of match funding to come from other sources, either through fundraising activities, voluntary input or by means of other grants. Once a plaque scheme has gained sufficient funding to start, it may be possible to attract further financial support once the scheme is underway, especially if the fundraising is targeted at potential donors who have a particular interest in a person or building proposed for commemoration. Fundraising can be very time-consuming and it may take many months to attract enough support for the plaque project to become a viable option; furthermore, where a scheme is involved, the need for fundraising may be ongoing. The principal costs are likely to be administrative, but if it proves necessary to appoint a professional fundraiser, rather than to rely solely on volunteers, then additional fees will need to be factored in; it should be noted that these are not allowed for in the cost range set out below.

Average time-frame: 1-12 months, or more

Average cost: £10-£50

3. PROJECT INITIATION AND ENCOURAGING NOMINATIONS

Once the consultation and fundraising stages have been completed successfully, it is then the task of the project manager to draw up or amend a detailed project plan that will guide all subsequent work. It may be necessary to appoint a consultant or to recruit a new member of staff to take on the role of project manager. The project manager – in collaboration with the project board or committee – will then distribute the work involved in putting up the plaque or plaques to the relevant experts. There may well be capital costs involved in the initiation stage, which is likely to include the first campaign aimed at generating nominations (whether from the public at large or from a particular group) and the selection and appointment of contractors. Examples of such costs are the purchase of equipment (computers, printers, digital cameras, etc.), and the commissioning and production of promotional material, including leaflets, posters, and a demonstration plaque. It may also be

necessary to design and develop a website, which may be the means of receiving nominations as well as generating interest in and providing information about the plaque project. The time-frame involved in this work will inevitably depend on the scale of the project and whether or not the plaque scheme is ongoing, but sufficient time must be allowed to attract enough nominations to proceed to the next stage.

Average time-frame: 1-8 months

Average cost: £50-£2,000

4. ADMINISTRATION OF NOMINATIONS AND SELECTION PROCESS

During the project initiation stage, a process will have been put in place for the receipt and administration of nominations. Such work might be taken on by a volunteer, or a specific person may need to be employed to undertake the tasks, perhaps in combination with those involved in the gaining of consents (see below, point 6). Also, project initiation will have identified a means of assessing nominations, perhaps involving the establishment of a selection committee or panel tasked with sifting plaque proposals (see pp. 47-49). It will be necessary to convene regular meetings of this group; while members are likely to offer their services on a voluntary basis, there may be related costs such as travel expenses. As with project initiation, the time-frame involved in the work will depend on whether the scheme is ongoing or whether it is being carried out on a more limited basis.

Average time allocated: 5 hours-2 days (per plaque)

Average cost: £1-£5 (per plaque)

5. HISTORICAL RESEARCH

It is most common for historical research to be carried out either by volunteers, such as members of a local history society, or by an archivist or specialist historian, often employed by the local authority. If neither of these are options, then a plaque scheme may need to pay a professional researcher to carry out the work needed to assess the importance of a particular proposal and to prove and document the historical associations of a particular building or

site. Fees for such commissioned work can range from £100 to £150 per day and, bearing in mind that each plaque nomination may take up to ten days to research and write up, this can prove a very costly part of the project. Ordering birth, marriage and death certificates and using online research tools involve fees which may also need to be factored into the budget. Additionally, the researcher is likely to incur photocopying and travel expenses, especially if he or she has to travel to carry out research and make site visits to prospective plaque locations. It may be more cost-effective to group together plaque cases for research, so that archive and site visits can be undertaken within a limited time-frame.

Average time allocated: 2-10 days (per plaque)

Average cost: £10-£1,500 (per plaque)

6. CONSENTS

Once a fully researched plaque proposal has been agreed (perhaps by a committee or panel), it will be possible to seek the necessary consents for installing the plaque at the suggested location. This stage is likely to require considerable administrative effort, as initial and final consents are sought from the property owner and (where relevant) from the local planning authority, and fees may be incurred in carrying out Land Registry searches. The work of obtaining owner consents can be protracted, but the costs involved in this stage are relatively low. That said, in certain instances planning fees may apply; these have not been factored into the cost range below.

Average time-frame: 1-12 months, or more (per plaque)

Average cost: £5-£25 (per plaque)

7. DESIGN AND POSITIONING

It is recommended that decisions about the general design and material of the plaque or plaques will have formed part of the early consideration and consultation process, and that the work involved at this stage will deal specifically with the needs of each individual plaque. A design of the plaque, complete with inscription, will need to be drawn up and a positioning photograph or

drawing created to show where the plaque will be placed on the building. These important tasks are best carried out by skilled professionals who have relevant expertise, such as a graphic designer and chartered building surveyor, and their fees will need to be factored into the budget if such expertise cannot be provided by volunteers. Copies of the design and positioning photograph will need to be printed out at full size and sent to the building owner and, where relevant, the local planning authority for their approval. There may be cases, however, where the standard plaque design is deemed inappropriate and where a bespoke design is preferred, which will increase both time and cost. Fees for design and positioning are likely to vary according to the complexity and originality of the design, the form and needs of the building on which the plaque is to be placed, and the need for any revisions. It may be possible to make savings by commissioning work on a number of plaques at any one time.

Average time-frame: 2 days-2 weeks (per plaque)

Average cost: £30-£250 (per plaque)

8. MANUFACTURE

The cost of manufacturing a plaque will have been considered at the outset of the plaque project, and may have been a factor in determining its design and appearance. This cost will vary according to the type of material used, the complexity of the design, and the number of words in the inscription. For example, a machine-cast aluminium or steel plaque may cost as little as £200, a hand-cut slate plaque may cost between £300 and £500, whereas a hand-made ceramic plaque may cost between £600 and £1,000. More elaborate plaques – especially those of an expensive material such as bronze – can cost £2,000 or more. The length of time required to make a plaque also depends on the material used; for example, an enamelled steel plaque may take a month or less to produce, whereas a ceramic plaque will usually take at least two months. It is best to allow additional time in case of problems; for example, ceramic plaques can develop cracks while being fired and may need to be re-made.

Average time-frame: 1-2 months (per plaque)

Average cost: £200-£1,500 (per plaque)

9. INSTALLATION AND UNVEILING

The cost of installing a plaque will depend on the type of plaque commissioned, the structure of the building to which it is to be fixed, and the plaque's position. The least expensive method of installing a plaque is to fix it to the surface of the building, which can cost about £100. The ceramic plaques used by English Heritage, however, need to be placed within the face of a wall and can cost between £1,500 and £3,000 to install, depending on the need to hire scaffolding or a mechanical boom lift (cherry picker). In either case, it will be essential to engage a skilled contractor – ideally one with experience of erecting plaques (see pp. 109-110). Unveiling a plaque will usually require the hire or purchase of unveiling equipment, which will need – like the plaque – to be put up by a skilled contractor. The event may also involve the hire or purchase of a PA system if a large audience is expected or if the unveiling is taking place on a busy street. Invitations will have to be designed, printed and sent out, and there will be additional costs if refreshments are to be provided as part of the unveiling ceremony and if assistance is required with crowd management. Organising an unveiling can be very time-consuming and should be planned months in advance, as various people will need to be involved, including the building owner(s), family members and the press.

Average time-frame: 6 weeks-6 months (per plaque)

Average cost: £150-£2,500 (per plaque)

10. PLAQUE MAINTENANCE AND MONITORING

It is important to consider who should bear the costs of maintaining a plaque once it has been installed on a building (see pp. 125-127). While it is usually understood that the plaque becomes part of the fabric of the building and thus becomes the responsibility of the property owner, there is nonetheless a duty for the individual or group which has put up the plaque to monitor its condition, to volunteer to clean or repair it and, where necessary, to replace a worn or damaged plaque. Consideration should also be given to keeping any nearby shrubs, climbing plants and trees in check, so that the plaque can be clearly seen and read from a public path. This work is well suited to volunteers who live locally and who can keep an eye on the condition of the plaque.



11 The Birmingham Civic Society plaque to Francis William Aston prior to its erection in Tennal Road, Harborne, in 2007. Shown from left to right are: Freddie Gick (the Society's Chairman), Andrea Barnes (local historian) and Professor Len Nokes (Cardiff University).

© Birmingham Civic Society

Any problems that arise will need to be addressed, ideally by a site visit and meeting with the property owner. The cost of cleaning, repairing or replacing a plaque will obviously vary according to the type and material of plaque and to its condition, while the time allocated to this work per year will depend on the scale of the scheme.

Average time allocated: 3 hours-3 days (per plaque, per annum)

Average cost: £1-£150 (per plaque, per annum)

11. PUBLICITY, PROMOTION AND OUTREACH

Publicity may be an ongoing task for most plaque projects, but outlay will peak at certain stages, notably when canvassing nominations and when unveiling a plaque. The work of drafting press releases, circulating them to relevant local, national and specialist media, and promoting the scheme as a whole is usually handled by the society, group or local authority responsible for installing the plaque, though it can be contracted out to a public relations company. Promotion of a plaque or plaque scheme may take a number of forms, ranging from heritage trails, leaflets and guided walks to printed books, exhibitions and lectures. The cost of producing promotional materials will vary according to the size of the publication and the number of copies

to be printed; perhaps the most popular and cost-effective method is to produce a leaflet both in hard copy and online. Such leaflets will need to be designed and printed, but the content can be drawn from the historical reports compiled for each plaque proposal. While promotional activities are generally seen as a desirable rather than an essential part of the process, outreach may be a core aim of the initiative. Costs will inevitably vary according to the scale and scope of the campaign.

Average time-frame: 1-6 months (for a limited initiative) or ongoing

Average cost: £50-£500 (per annum)

12. ENQUIRIES

When drawing up a budget for a plaque scheme, it must not be forgotten that plaques continue to attract attention after they have been installed. Indeed, it is the mark of a successful plaque that it stimulates interest and generates both specific and general enquiries from the public. Local authorities and public bodies may have the resources to deal with enquiries; these may be handled as part of their customer service role, or a specific employee may be appointed to carry out the work. Voluntary groups, however, are more likely to encourage enquiries via email. Schemes that have an ongoing programme of plaques are most likely to direct all enquiries to the person or team that is administering new nominations and installations. The number of enquiries – and thus the time spent on this work – will depend on the scale of the scheme. Typically, capital costs involved in the process will be low, though in some instances it may be necessary to pay for or part-fund a person's salary (an outlay which is not factored into the cost below).

Average time allocated: 1-10 days (per annum)

Average cost: £1-£10 (per annum)

SOURCES OF FUNDING

LOCAL SOURCES OF FUNDING

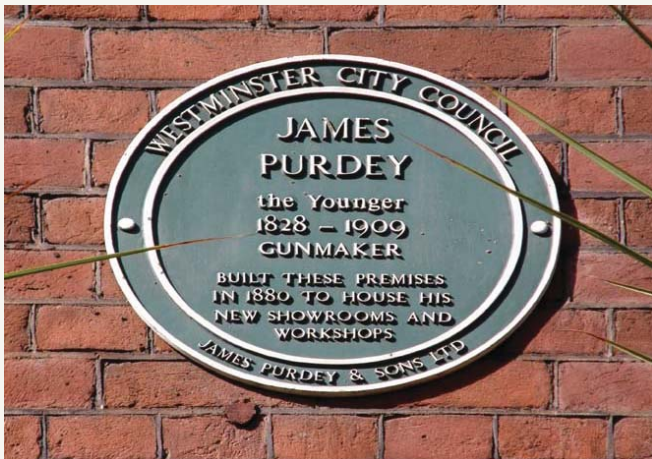
Commemorative plaques are most commonly funded by local organisations and individuals, rather than by regional or national bodies. This reflects the fact that the majority of plaque projects are local initiatives that result from people's interest and enthusiasm for the historical associations of the place in which they live and work. Plaque schemes work well when operated at a local level and local fundraising initiatives can emphasise the benefits of plaques to a local community.

It may be useful to canvass support from local councillors, who will be able to promote the plaque initiative at a political level. Many local authorities have nominated a **heritage champion** – a councillor who campaigns to keep the historic environment on the political agenda, both locally in their constituency and nationally at Westminster – and it is a good idea to consult this councillor and to gain his or her endorsement at an early stage of the project.

Local Authorities

There is general acceptance of the idea that commemorative plaques can enhance the environment and bring a sense of identity to the community. As a consequence, plaque schemes – both large and small – usually win the approval and support of local government and in many cases are initiated by local authorities. It is always advisable to discuss a proposed plaque with the local authority, so that plaque initiatives can be co-ordinated at a local level; it may be the case that there are plans to start or revive a plaque scheme in the area, which may provide an opportunity for joining forces. It is best to contact the planning department in the first instance, but the museums, arts and culture, archives and tourism departments may also be interested or involved in plaque initiatives.

Gaining the backing of the local authority may lead to the possibility of securing some level of funding for commemorative plaques.



12 This plaque to James Purdey is a good example of a local authority having gained sponsorship. Put up in 1992 at 57-58 South Audley Street, Mayfair, London, it was erected under the Westminster City Council Green Plaques Scheme with the support of James Purdey & Sons Ltd, gunmakers.

© Gerry Lambert

Where there is an active plaque scheme run by the local authority, it may be the case that all the costs are borne by the authority. This is the case, for instance, with the Tameside Blue Plaques Scheme in Greater Manchester, which is run by the Arts and Events Department of Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council. Alternatively, it is common for local authorities to fund and take on the administration of a scheme, but to ask the plaque proposer to arrange sponsorship to meet the costs involved in manufacture, installation and unveiling. In these instances, the sponsor's name and/or organisation may be included in the inscription of the plaque, as is the case with a number of the plaques erected under Westminster City Council's Green Plaques Scheme in central London (Fig. 12).

Where local authorities are unable to fund an ongoing commemorative plaque scheme, they may be able to offer a grant towards some of the costs. Experience has shown that plaques can form part of a range of council activities, and that funding may be forthcoming from a number of separate council departments, including planning and environment, arts and culture, museums and libraries, archives and tourism. A good example of how plaques can contribute to the tourism agenda of a local authority is provided by Hastings Borough Council in East Sussex, which has set up four blue plaques trails in Hastings and St Leonard's as part of its visit1066country.com campaign.

Other local authorities channel funding into a separate organisation – which in many cases collaborates with local businesses – to which plaque schemes and other community projects can apply for a grant. Often described as **initiative grants**, these are usually awarded annually and are aimed at projects that help improve the quality of life for local residents and visitors. A good example of this type of funding body is the Renaissance Knaresborough partnership in North Yorkshire, which operates a grant scheme with funds provided by Harrogate Borough Council. Among the beneficiaries of this small grants scheme is the Knaresborough Blue Plaques Scheme, which was awarded a one-off grant of £1,500 in 2008 to part-fund its scheme of 13 plaques.

Many large-scale local authorities have a system of **area committees** or **ward forums or assemblies**, which act as consultative bodies that offer residents the chance to express concerns about local issues, such as community safety, transport, parks and street improvements. Led by ward councillors, these bodies are allocated funds by the local authority for local improvements and may be able to fund heritage initiatives such as the maintenance of commemorative plaques in the area or ward.

Another potential source of financial support at local authority level is **Section 106 funding**. This relates to a clause of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 which allows contributions to be sought from developers towards the costs of providing community and social infrastructure, the need for which has arisen as a result of new development taking place. The local authority is responsible for drawing up agreements with developers and may wish to consider heritage initiatives, such as plaques, when seeking Section 106 funding from a developer.

Civic Societies

Together with local authorities, civic societies are responsible for the majority of active commemorative plaque schemes across the country (Fig. 13). Civic societies are voluntary bodies which campaign to maintain and enhance the local environment and to reflect the views of the local community about planning and development issues. Of particular relevance to commemorative plaques is the work that civic societies undertake in protecting and promoting historic buildings and associations



13 The Salisbury Civic Society is one of a number of such groups active in putting up commemorative plaques. Erected in 2007, this plaque commemorates A.W. N. Pugin at St Osmund's Church, Exeter Street.

© Salisbury Civic Society

in the locality. A civic society often has close links with the **local history society** and many successful plaque projects have been collaborative enterprises, with the history society providing the research and historical expertise, and the civic society overseeing the organisation and fundraising.

It should be noted that while civic societies are sometimes able to provide part of the funding for a plaque scheme – from the general income provided by the subscriptions of their members, both private and corporate – it is more common for them to co-ordinate a plaque scheme, and to secure funds from a range of sources. Thus, while civic societies are unlikely to be able to offer a grant towards a local plaque initiative that falls beyond any scheme that they run, they are often able to provide much-needed volunteer effort to administer and deliver a plaque project themselves.

A local authority is usually able to provide contact details for specific civic societies in a particular area. It is also possible to locate details of a society online, although it should be noted that not all civic societies have active websites. Alternatively, civic societies may be contacted via the website of the **Civic Society Initiative**, which was set up in 2009 following the demise of the national Civic Trust.

Civic societies that run their own commemorative plaque schemes include Birmingham Civic Society, which has been putting up plaques in Greater Birmingham since 1953 and aims to erect two new plaques each year (see Fig. 11). This long-established scheme can be compared with more recent initiatives, such as that of the Hunstanton Civic Society, Norfolk, which was launched in 2007. The Society received grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Countryside Agency – as well as sponsorship from the Nationwide Building Society – to finance 25 green plaques marking buildings of importance in the town's history.

Town and Parish Councils

It is important not to overlook the important contribution that can be made at the town and parish level, especially for a single plaque or for a small-scale scheme. Gaining the support and endorsement of the local town or parish council is a very effective way of engaging the local community with the proposed plaque or scheme and of recruiting volunteers to take the project forward. It is important to recognise that town and parish councils are not subject to the same financial restraints as single unitary authorities, the budgets of which are capped by central government; they may, as a result, be more flexible in apportioning funds. The scheme run by Loughton Town Council in Essex has involved the installation of some 25 plaques since the late 1990s and provides a good example of a scheme operating successfully at this level.

Although parish councils have comparatively limited funds at their disposal, they may also be able to make small grants towards plaques and, by so doing, may attract further funding from either private or public sources. For instance, a bid to mark the birthplace of the artist Ben Nicholson (1894-1982) in the village of Denham, Buckinghamshire, benefited greatly from a grant of £200 from Denham Parish Council at an early stage in the process and led to further funds being pledged for the plaque. Other parish councils have started their own commemorative plaque schemes and have co-ordinated fundraising efforts. One such example is Wilmington Parish Council, Kent, which is planning to erect a number of green plaques to help raise awareness about important people and places in the community's past.

REGIONAL SOURCES OF FUNDING

Regional Development Agencies may be able to include funding for commemorative plaques within their budget for a scheme of regeneration or redevelopment. In England, there are nine Regional Development Agencies that correspond to the government office regions, whereas Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have their own development agencies; details of how to locate the appropriate body can be found via the website of England's Regional Development Agencies (see p. 158). These government-funded organisations undertake large regeneration projects which aim to transform a locality's economy, infrastructure and environment; such projects are set out in a Regional Economic Strategy that identifies the priority areas for investment.

Heritage can often form a component of such large and complex development programmes, and commemorative plaques can sometimes be deemed a priority within the heritage component. For example, the East of England Development Agency (EEDA) awarded a grant to the Norwich Heritage Economic and Regeneration Trust (HEART) to fund an extensive programme of works that has included the replacement of existing commemorative plaques and the addition of information boards – known as 'heritage totems' – in the city of Norwich.

NATIONAL SOURCES OF FUNDING

Commemorative plaques may be eligible for funding from a national body, whether a government-funded agency or a voluntary organisation or charity. There are a number of funding sources that have a national remit, either across the United Kingdom or within each of the home countries. The principal sources of UK-wide funding are the lottery distributors, the Big Lottery Fund – aimed at local communities – and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Applicants should be aware that grants are often time-specific and that their criteria can vary from year to year. It is always a good idea – where the service is offered – to take advantage of the pre-application process that allows the applicant to discuss the proposal in detail with a representative of the grant body before submitting a completed application form. This enables the applicant to find

out whether or not the proposed plaque scheme is eligible for grant aid or not – and what conditions may be attached – and can be invaluable in ensuring a successful outcome to the application.

Heritage Lottery Fund

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) was established in 1994 to distribute money from the National Lottery, and awards grants to a wide range of projects with a focus on the local, regional and national heritage of the United Kingdom. During the last 15 years, the HLF has awarded more than £1.75 million to support over 70 commemorative plaque schemes across the UK; these include millennium plaque trails that were created in time for and during 2000.

The HLF considers funding projects that meet its criteria. In order to receive a grant a project must:

- Help people to learn about their own and other people's heritage.

The project must also do either or both of the following:

- Conserve the UK's diverse heritage for present and future generations to experience and enjoy.
- Help more people, and a wider range of people, to take an active part in and make decisions about their heritage.

The majority of recent HLF-supported commemorative plaque schemes have received awards from the **Your Heritage** grant programme, which makes one-off grants from £3,000 to £50,000. Applications can also be made to the **Young Roots** grant programme (grants ranging from £3,000-£25,000), providing initiatives have a specific focus on involving young people aged 13 to 25 in heritage. Young Roots projects should be youth-led and delivered in partnership between youth and heritage organisations. A number of plaque schemes that formed part of a wider capital or activity project have also been supported through the HLF's **Heritage Grants** programme (£50,000 and over).

Priority will be given to applications submitted by a not-for-profit body, such as a civic society; this can comprise a partnership between several organisations, such as a building trust and a community group. The HLF stipulates that applicants provide part of the project costs, either as cash or non-cash contributions (such as the donation



14 The unveiling of the plaque to the playwright George Farquhar (c. 1677-1707), placed at the Verbal Arts Centre, Stable Lane, Bishop Street Within, Londonderry, near the site of the Free School which he attended as a boy. The plaque was erected by the Ulster History Circle, with funding from the HLF, and its unveiling in 2009 was attended by members of the cast from a production of one of Farquhar's plays.

© Ulster History Circle

of materials) or as volunteer time. Potential applicants are strongly advised to gain such support before making an application, and all pledged support should be listed on the application form.

The first stage in the Your Heritage application process is to contact the HLF for advice by completing a **pre-application enquiry form**, which is available online, together with associated guidance documents. The relevant HLF team will respond to the pre-application enquiry and advise whether or not the proposed project is likely to meet its funding priorities and how to go about the next stage. In some cases, the HLF may suggest that the project would benefit from a **mentor**, who will give specialist and general advice about taking the project forward (but will not act as the project manager). The HLF may consider funding the cost of a mentor as part of the grant and can supply a list of possible mentors at the pre-application stage.

The second stage is to complete the Your Heritage **application form**, which requires a detailed account of the proposed project's purpose, content, aims, costs and project plan. The applicant needs to provide a clear statement of how the project will be managed and who will be responsible for it, and a detailed time-line for the life of the project. The applicant will also need to explain how the community has been involved in planning the project, and to identify which sections of the community will benefit from the initiative.

If the application proves successful, the project can start once written permission is received from the HLF and once all other funding is in place. The HLF will supply guidance about managing the grant and will usually pay the grant in instalments; the final payment will be made on completion of the project and submission of an evaluation report.

There are numerous examples of successful plaque schemes that have benefited from HLF funding. These range from large-scale projects – such as the Ulster History Circle Blue Plaques Scheme, which in 2007 received an award of £49,200 to extend the existing scheme with a further 50 plaques across Ulster (Fig. 14) – to small-scale projects, such as the Selsey Millennium Heritage Trail in West Sussex, which was financed in part by an award of £3,700 in 2000. The HLF can provide details on request regarding other commemorative plaque schemes which it has supported.

Big Lottery Fund

The Big Lottery Fund (known as BIG) was formed in 2004 as a result of a merger between two lottery distributors, the National Lottery Charities Board (trading as Community Fund) and the New Opportunities Fund. Its remit is to distribute lottery funds across the United Kingdom to community groups and to projects that improve health, education and the environment. A number of commemorative plaque schemes have received funding from the Big Lottery Fund's **Awards for All** grant programme in the past – which was run in collaboration with the Heritage Lottery Fund and the other lottery distributors – but the criteria were changed in March 2009. Potential applicants are strongly encouraged to discuss their proposals with the Big Lottery Fund before making an application, in order to check whether or not funding would be appropriate.

The Awards for All programme is open to voluntary or community organisations, including schools, parish and town councils, and health bodies. The Big Lottery Fund will consider funding projects that will be able to:

- Enable people to have better chances in life, by improving access to training and development to improve their life skills.
- Build stronger communities, by encouraging more active citizens working together to tackle their problems.
- Improve rural and urban environments, which communities are better able to access and enjoy.
- Encourage healthier and more active people and communities.

The Awards for All programme is able to make grants ranging from £300 to £10,000 to fund all or part of a proposed project. Not all costs are eligible for a grant, and prospective applicants are encouraged to consult the relevant guidance notes. The application form needs to be completed and sent to Awards for All at least three months before a project is due to start. If the application is being made on behalf of a voluntary or community organisation, it will need to include details of an independent referee willing to support the proposal; this person may be contacted by the Big Lottery Fund as part of its assessment of the application.

If the application proves successful, the grant will be made available to the applicant in a single payment. The project has to be completed within 12 months of receiving the letter confirming the grant. At the end of the project, the applicant will need to complete a report explaining how the grant has been spent and what was achieved as a result, and the referee may be asked to send in a written report as well.

To date, over 30 commemorative plaque schemes across the UK have benefited from Awards for All grants. These include the Cleethorpes Heritage Trail in Lincolnshire, which was set up by the Grimsby, Cleethorpes and District Civic Society with a grant of over £4,000 in 2008. This grant has funded plaques on some of the buildings of interest that formed a heritage walking tour around the town, as well as the costs of researching, writing and publishing an information leaflet about the tour. An Awards for All grant of just under £1,400 in 2008 enabled the Totnes and District Civic Society to install four slate plaques on historic buildings in Totnes, Devon, as part of the Totsoc Plaques Project.

Government Heritage Agencies

Of the four principal government executive agencies responsible for heritage across the United Kingdom – namely English Heritage, Historic Scotland, Cadw and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency – only one, Cadw, is currently able to offer grants towards commemorative plaques. As has been stated on pages 10-11, English Heritage concentrates on funding the London-wide blue plaques scheme and the national advisory role regarding commemorative plaques.

In 2008, a consultation undertaken by the Scottish Executive concluded that, rather than initiating a new Scotland-wide scheme, the best option would be to support existing and new local plaque schemes. Historic Scotland is planning to issue its own guidance documents to inform policy on commemorative plaques in Scotland, and in the future may be in a position to offer funding for plaque initiatives as part of its grant-giving programme.

Cadw – which is the historic environment service of the Welsh Assembly Government – administers the Civic Initiatives (Heritage) Grants Scheme that is able to provide funding for plaques in Wales. Voluntary organisations can apply for grants for plaques that commemorate historic places or people. The grants are intended to support local organisations carrying out projects that seek to promote understanding and appreciation of the historic environment. The maximum grant is £5,000, and this must be match funded from non-public sector resources. In 2009 Cadw provided funding to the Llandaff Society (a local civic society) to place a blue plaque on a former sweetshop that was a favourite childhood haunt of the author Roald Dahl (1916-90).

Memorials Grant Scheme

It may be possible for a commemorative plaque scheme to claim a grant equivalent to the VAT incurred on the works involved in designing, manufacturing, renovating and maintaining its plaques. The Memorials Grant Scheme was set up by the Treasury in 2005 with the aim of enabling charities and religious groups to reclaim the VAT on expenditure relating to the construction, renovation and maintenance of memorials bearing an inscription or plaques commemorating a person, animal or event.

The Memorials Grant Scheme is a temporary measure and will currently operate until 2011, unless agreement is reached in the interim by the European Commission on a permanent reduced VAT rate for memorial construction, renovation and maintenance. The scheme is administered by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) for the whole of the United Kingdom.



15 A large number of plaques have been funded by private individuals, including this tablet commemorating Lord Byron's stay at Newstead House, 76 St James Street, Nottingham. It was erected in the early twentieth century under the bequest of William Holbrook (d.1900).

© Pete Smith

PRIVATE SPONSORSHIP AND OTHER SOURCES OF FUNDING

Given that match funding is required by many of the public grant-giving bodies, it is important to consider additional sources of funding, especially the options for private sponsorship. Indeed, experience has shown that many individual plaques are put up without any public money and are organised and paid for by private individuals or by commercial companies. It is advisable for organisers of plaque schemes to take advantage of the full range of funding options available.

It should be remembered that a number of the oldest commemorative plaques in the country were funded by private individuals. One such benefactor was William Holbrook, who at his death in 1900 bequeathed £200 to Nottingham to erect 'tablets to mark several spots within the said city on which historical events have occurred' (Fig. 15). Fifteen plaques commemorating notable people as well as historical events were installed, of which only eight are *in situ* today; they testify to the generosity and initiative of one citizen who was proud of his city's history and heritage.

When seeking private donations and gifts towards the cost of a plaque, it is worth considering whether or not the **proposer of the plaque** would be able to contribute, especially if there are close

family or professional connections to the subject being commemorated. Likewise, if the proposal comes from the **owner of the building** where the plaque is to be placed, it may be appropriate to invite the owner to make a contribution. If the **family or descendants** of the subject to be commemorated have not been involved in proposing the plaque, it may be worth asking whether they would be willing to contribute to the costs when outlining the plaque proposal to them. It is also a good idea to see whether there is an **appreciation society or fan club** associated with the person or event being commemorated that may be willing to contribute financially. Such organisations are often the driving force behind plaque proposals and can play an important part in promoting the plaque once installed, both at the unveiling itself and via their newsletters, magazines and websites.

In instances where a **community group or cultural association** has particular interest in a plaque proposal, it may be able to offer a contribution or help in the fundraising campaign. Where relevant,

DRAWING UPON PRIVATE SPONSORSHIP

Many schemes rely on private sponsorship to cover the capital costs involved in putting up a plaque. The Oxfordshire Blue Plaques Board is just one of many initiatives that have successfully sought funding for plaques by approaching groups with an obvious connection to the subject being commemorated. For example, the plaque to the writer Barbara Pym (1913-80), which was erected in 2006 at her former home in Finstock, Oxfordshire, was financed jointly by the Barbara Pym Society, who paid for the plaque to be manufactured (at a cost of £227), and by the property owners, who paid for the plaque to be installed (at a cost of £119). In the case of the plaque to writer Elizabeth Goudge (1900-84), the fundraising campaign was led by her biographer and proposer, Sylvia Gower, who raised £400 from devoted fans within a month. Many of the donors were present when the plaque was unveiled at Goudge's former home in Rotherfield Peppard, Oxfordshire, in 2008. The administrative costs associated with each plaque (estimated at £40) were borne by the Oxford Civic Society, which oversees the scheme. In addition to these hard costs, the Secretary of the Oxfordshire Blue Plaques Board works on a voluntary basis, spending an average of two days a week researching and administering plaque proposals.

the **Royal British Legion** or a **trade union** may represent other possible sources of funding. **Local businesses** may also be willing to help, either by making a donation to the funds or by promoting a plaque or plaque scheme in other ways. For example, the local newspaper the *Southwark News* plays a major role in promoting the Southwark blue plaque scheme in London, by encouraging nominations from the public, by inviting the public to vote for the shortlisted nominations, and in raising awareness about forthcoming unveilings. Additionally, it may be a good idea to approach the local **Rotary Club** for sponsorship; this has proved a successful route for some plaque schemes (Fig. 16), such as the Chipping Sodbury Blue Plaques Scheme in South Gloucestershire, launched in 2009.

Finally, it is always worth contacting **national organisations or companies** that may be interested in sponsoring a plaque of particular relevance to their business. For instance, the Jaguar-Daimler Heritage Trust was delighted to sponsor the cost of a bronze plaque to honour the engineer and designer Malcolm Sayer (1916-70), placed at his birthplace in Cromer, Norfolk, in 2008. Installed on the initiative of the Challenger E-Type Owners Club, the plaque was a bespoke design, featuring images of the celebrated D- and E-Type Jaguars designed by Sayer, and cost £3,500 to manufacture.

Thematic Plaque Schemes

In recent years, a number of cultural groups and specialist organisations have started their own plaque schemes which have a national remit and offer a thematic approach to commemoration. Such bodies may be able to provide part or all of the funding required for a particular plaque and are well placed to promote plaques at a national level. All of the plaque schemes listed below welcome new suggestions and can be contacted via their websites (see pp. 156-158).

Anglo Sikh Heritage Trail

The Anglo Sikh Heritage Trail, which was founded in 2004, aims to increase knowledge and understanding of the Sikh presence in Britain. The web-based trail explores the shared Anglo Sikh heritage through historical figures, art treasures and the cultural landscape of the United Kingdom. To accompany the trail, a number of plaques have been installed at key locations across the country. Some of these



16 Local Rotary Clubs have proved a successful route of funding for some plaque schemes. Erected with the support of the Rotary Club of Lymington, this plaque commemorates a site associated with Wellworthy Ltd, one of the world's leading piston and piston-ring manufacturers.

© Peter R. Stone



17 The Directors Guild plaque to David Lean, unveiled at his birthplace – 38 Blenheim Crescent, Croydon, London – in 2008, as part of centenary celebrations.

© Gerry Lambert

take the form of simple markers, while others commemorate specific subjects, such as the plaque honouring Jind Kaur (1817-63), the Maharani of Punjab, at the Dissenters' Chapel in Kensal Green, London.

Directors Guild of Great Britain

Since 1998, the Directors Guild of Great Britain – in partnership with its sister charity, the Directors Guild Trust – has erected a limited number of plaques to celebrate the life and achievements of British film directors. These include plaques on the former London homes of Michael Powell (1905-90), Alexander Mackendrick (1912-93) and Sir David Lean (1908-91) (Fig. 17). The Guild welcomes suggestions from the public for future plaques for directors of film, television, radio or theatre in any part of the United Kingdom.

The Heritage Foundation

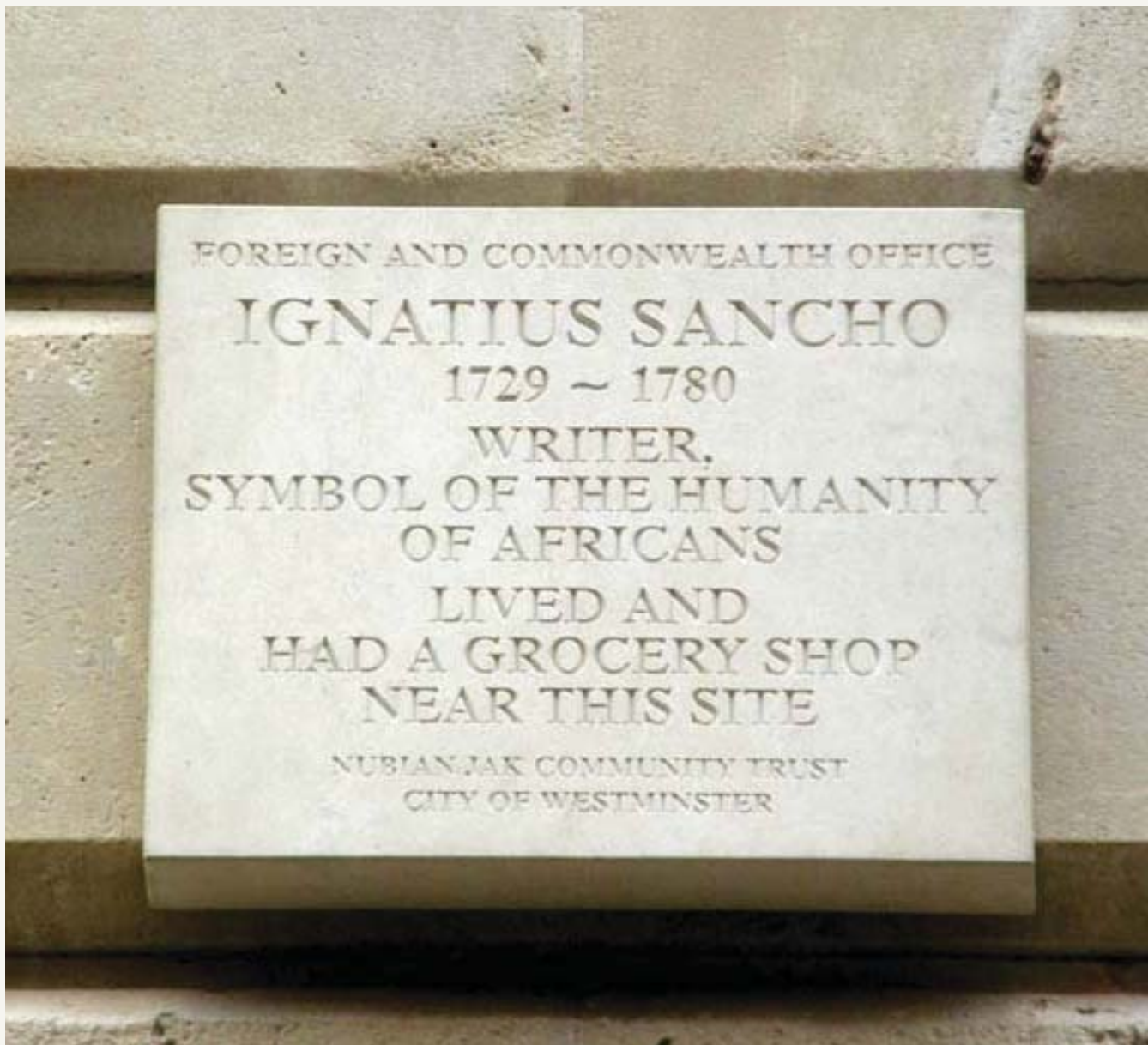
Since 1994, the Heritage Foundation – formerly known as Comic Heritage – has put up over 90 plaques to figures from the world of comedy, popular music, sport, film and television. The majority of these plaques are in London, but the Heritage Foundation will consider locations elsewhere in the United Kingdom. Figures to have been commemorated so far include the comedian Eric Morecambe (1926-84), the footballer Bobby Moore (1941-93) and the singer Dusty Springfield (1939-99).

Nubian Jak Community Trust

The Nubian Jak Community Trust was established in 2005 to honour black and minority ethnic figures in the United Kingdom. The Trust has worked in partnership with many local authorities around the country to erect a number of plaques and sculptures. These include the carved stone plaque to the African writer Ignatius Sancho (1729-80), placed on the site of his former home in Whitehall, which is now partly occupied by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Fig. 18).

Institute of Physics

The Institute of Physics runs a commemorative plaque scheme as part of its Physics in Society programme. The scheme honours outstanding figures who have contributed to the advancement of physics by their theories, discoveries or inventions. Nearly 40 plaques have been erected since 1995 across the United Kingdom, with the help of the relevant local branch of the Institute; these include the plaque to the astronomer Sir Fred Hoyle (1915-2001) at Bingley Grammar School, West Yorkshire, where he was educated. The criteria of the scheme are set out as Appendix 7 (see p. 148).



18 Carved stone plaque to Ignatius Sancho, placed near the site of his home in Whitehall, London. It was erected in 2007 by Westminster City Council in partnership with the Nubian Jak Community Trust.

© Gerry Lambert

Institution of Civil Engineers

The Institution of Civil Engineers is a good example of a national professional organisation that is able to offer funding for specific plaques and often works in partnership with local plaque schemes and other national bodies. So far, the Institution has sponsored over 50 plaques in locations across the United Kingdom. The plaques vary in design and celebrate both great engineers and historic events, such as the fiftieth anniversary (in 2008) of the opening of England's first motorway, the Preston bypass, Lancashire.

Railway Heritage Trust

Formed in 1995, the Railway Heritage Trust is concerned with the conservation and enhancement of railway buildings and structures which are listed, scheduled or of special architectural or historic interest and which are owned by its sponsor bodies, Network Rail and BRB (Residuary) Ltd. Since its formation, the Trust has administered a blue plaque scheme to commemorate events and locations on the mainline railway network in the United Kingdom.

Royal Aeronautical Society

In 2008, the Royal Aeronautical Society introduced an Aeronautical Heritage Award scheme, which is designed to celebrate people, places and things that have made significant contributions to the art and science of aeronautics. All aspects of aviation, both technological and operational, are eligible. The aim of the scheme is to erect bronze plaques on sites that are open to the public and that are related to the achievement being commemorated. Among the ten plaques erected so far is the plaque at Muswell Manor on the Isle of Sheppey, Kent, that marks the site of the world's first aeroplane factory.

Royal Society of Chemistry

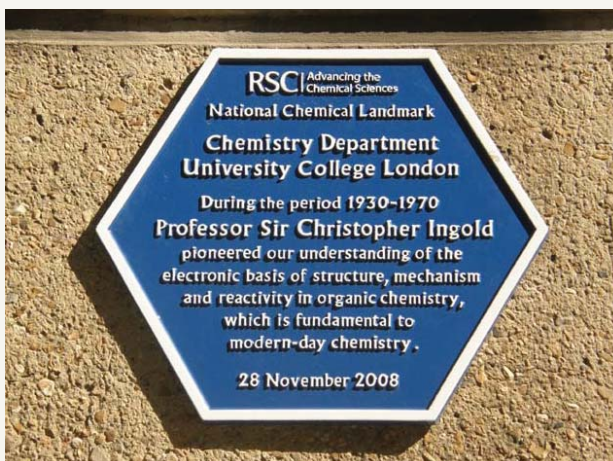
Since 2001, the Royal Society of Chemistry has run a programme of National Chemical Landmarks, which awards commemorative plaques to historical sites associated with significant chemical discoveries or research (Fig. 19). So far, 30 plaques have been erected across the United Kingdom, including a plaque on the premises of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Newcastle; this celebrates the first demonstration of the incandescent light bulb by Joseph Swan (1828-1914) in 1879. The criteria of the scheme are set out as Appendix 9 (see p. 149).

Royal Television Society

In 1989, the Royal Television Society began compiling a list of buildings associated with the history of television across the United Kingdom and has since commemorated a number of these buildings with plaques. These include a plaque to the television pioneer John Logie Baird (1888-1946) at 132-135 Long Acre, Covent Garden, London, which marks the site where he broadcast the first television programme in 1929.

The Transport Trust

In 2009, the Transport Trust launched the Red Wheel plaque programme, which aims to mark hundreds of transport heritage sites in the United Kingdom with red circular plaques. The first Red Wheel plaque was unveiled at the Barrow Hill Roundhouse, near Chesterfield, Derbyshire, which was the last operational turntable-based engine shed in the country (see Fig. 10).

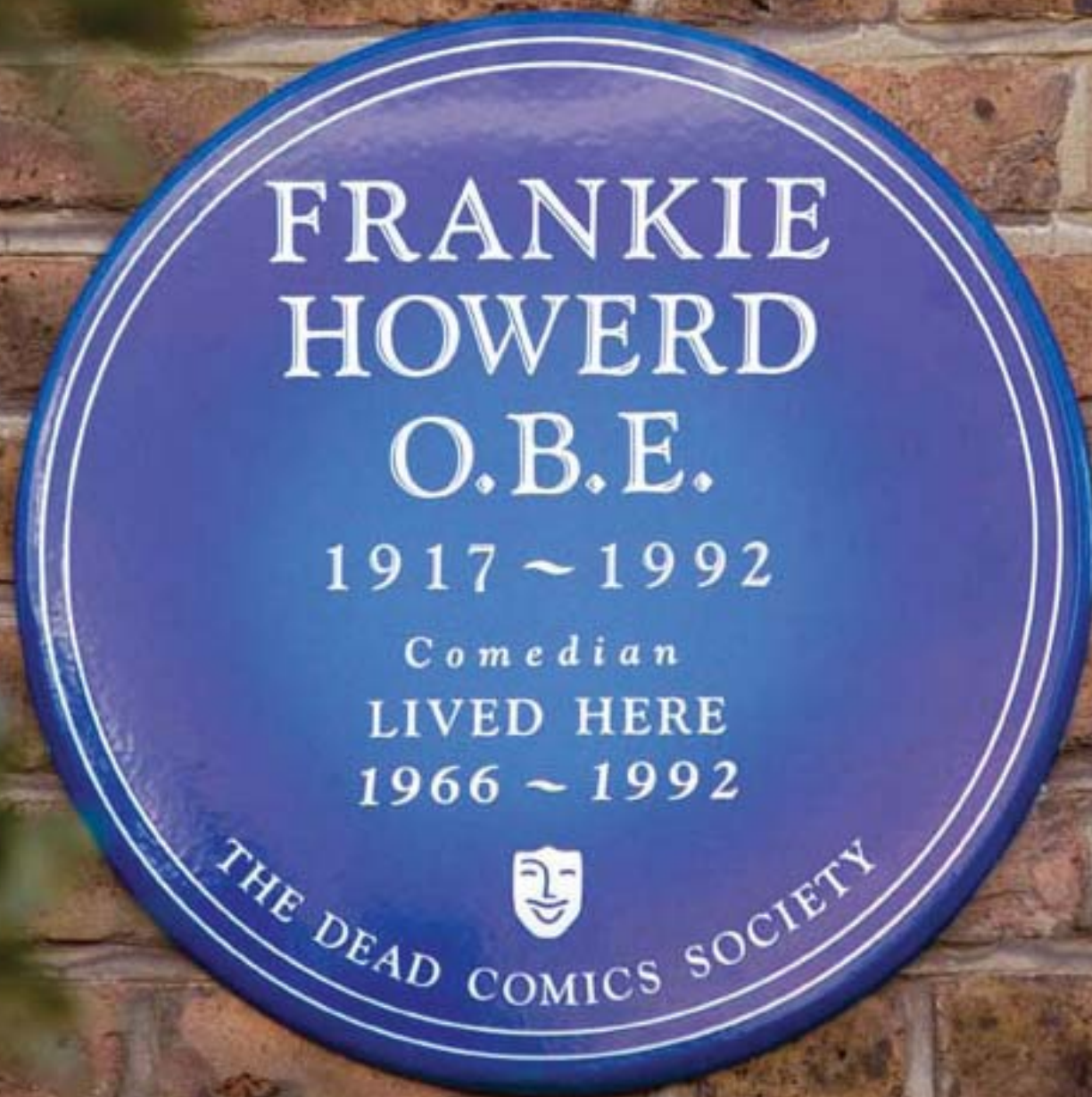


19 One of the 'National Chemical Landmark' plaques erected by the Royal Society of Chemistry. This example commemorates Sir Christopher Ingold (1893-1970), and is located next to the entrance to UCL's Chemistry Department in Bloomsbury, London.

© Gerry Lambert

20 Plaque to Frankie Howerd at 27 Edwardes Square, Kensington, London. It was erected in 1993 – just a year after Howerd's death – by the Dead Comics Society, now known as the British Comedy Society.

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3

AIMS, SELECTION PROCESS AND CRITERIA

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The process of nomination and selection is a fundamental element of all plaque schemes. Even in one-off cases, a procedure is followed; at its simplest, this includes the raising of a suggestion and the decision that a plaque is worthwhile (or not, as the case may be). In general, it is likely to involve a wider group of people than those directly responsible for plaque work; notably, one or more proposers (often members of the general public), and a group which is responsible for deciding which proposals are taken forward. The latter may take the form of a committee or advisory panel, and the consideration of plaque nominations may be just one of its functions.

In the majority of instances, the selection process will be assisted and informed by selection criteria and/or guidelines. These provide a framework for the fair and consistent consideration of nominations, and set out the parameters of the plaque scheme in question: what kind of proposals are eligible for consideration, what is and is not possible, and the requirements for commemoration. The criteria are usually the chief expression of the fundamental aims of the scheme.

In particular, criteria are likely to require that a certain level of significance is demonstrated by the plaque proposals. As plaques represent a change to a building, it is vital to be convinced – and to be able to convince others – that there is a strong justification for each case. It has been the experience of English Heritage that plaques work best when their subjects continue to have meaning for people; as plaques bring a part of history into the day-to-day world – connecting past and present – they become a great deal more effective when the subject being honoured can be recognised and appreciated, rather than seeming irrelevant. Brief associations and subjects of only minor importance should, therefore, be considered with particular care.

The selection criteria which underpin English Heritage's blue plaques scheme in London were first formalised by the LCC in 1954, though many of the rules had then been in

operation for some time. For instance, the 'twenty-year rule', which states that a person should have been dead for a minimum of 20 years before they can be considered, had been a guiding principle for the scheme since the nineteenth century. These criteria have clearly proved of widespread practicality and use. In an adapted form, they have been used as the basis for the selection criteria of a number of different schemes, such as those run by the Birmingham Civic Society, Guernsey Museums and Galleries, Leeds Civic Trust, and Newcastle City Council.

The criteria of English Heritage and a number of different other schemes are set out as Appendices I-I2. These have been selected



21 Plaque erected by the Woodbridge Society to commemorate the artist Isaac Johnson's residence at 7 Market Hill, Woodbridge, Suffolk.

© Emily Cole

as being indicative of the range of approaches in practice. However, it should be noted that such documents are liable to change; indeed, the criteria of some well-established schemes are not represented in this document as they are currently in the process of revision. Where appropriate, detailed and up-to-date information should be sought from the groups concerned.

THE AIMS OF COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUES

Before selection criteria can be formalised, there needs to be a consensus about the aims and intentions of the plaque scheme concerned. The criteria are, essentially, practical tools to enable those specific aims to be met, and will – once finalised – reflect the scheme's *raison d'être*. They help interested parties to understand, at a glance, what the scheme sets out to achieve.

There are a number of possible aims and intentions for plaques and plaque schemes, which are by no means mutually exclusive. For instance, it may be hoped that they will **enhance a local community** by generating interest in the history of a specific town or area and adding to and encouraging a sense of local pride. Where they succeed in doing this, there may be an increase in visitor numbers, the potential benefit of which is reflected by the fact that many schemes are run by the tourism departments of local authorities.

Also, it will often be hoped that plaques will stimulate interest not only in a specific building, achievement, event or person but in a particular realm of endeavour or period of history, and will therefore have an **educational and motivational** role. They can ensure that particular subjects are more widely remembered, and that there is a greater understanding and appreciation of the buildings and physical context in which history was enacted.

ALTERNATIVES TO PLAQUES

In considering a proposal, it will always be important to consider whether or not a conventional wall-mounted plaque is the best way of commemorating the subject concerned. There are a number of alternative approaches, all of which have proven to be successful means of raising awareness about people, events, buildings and associations. For instance, pavement plaques, statues and other sculptural interpretation (such as that undertaken in Coventry to mark the positions of ancient burgrave plot boundaries), the founding of historic house museums, the creation of trails, podcast tours and exhibitions, and the awarding of names to streets, buildings and even buses (as in Brighton & Hove). Norwich HEART has particular experience in this area, having initiated an integrated heritage interpretation project in the city; along with commemorative plaques, this has included audio guides, audible signs, street plates, interpretation boards, murals, and the use of mobile technology. In some cases (notably, where a subject's association with a building or area is not of special significance), a memorial may not need to form part of the historic environment. For example, the publication of a biography or the founding of an appreciation society are successful and valid forms of commemoration, and may be more effective means of raising awareness about certain subjects.

The figures, events and historical associations named on plaques may or may not be positive; although the majority of plaques aim to be **celebratory**, others choose not to take a moral stance on the people, occurrences and practices of the past. It should be noted, however, that the general perception is that plaques seek to honour the subject to which they draw attention. As is reflected by the term 'commemorative plaque' and the name applied to a number of early plaques – 'memorial tablets' – they seek to commemorate and perpetuate the memory of people, events or associations, and bring an element of the past into the present and the future. For many, they work best when they give rise to interested curiosity or a smile, something unlikely to happen were a plaque to name a murderer, for instance. Sometimes, it may be relevant to mark a site where something tragic or unpleasant took place (Fig. 22), but thought should always be given as to how this is best done, and whether or not a conventional plaque is appropriate.



22 Not all plaques are celebratory, as is shown by this example marking the site of the assassination of George Villiers (1592-1628), Duke of Buckingham – Buckingham House, 11 High Street, Old Portsmouth. Its design is clearly based on the plaques erected in London by the Society of Arts between 1866 and 1901.

© Jane Biro

Commemorative plaques can represent a forcible demonstration of the power of self-belief and how an individual or group can realise their dreams or ambitions. In this sense, the plaques' subjects can prove **inspirational**, especially to young people, and may encourage individual and collective self-esteem. Plaques can also draw attention to elements of history that are not widely known or appreciated, and to people and groups whose contribution has been unfairly overlooked. In this way, as in others, they can provide a sense of **recognition and inclusion**, appealing to people of all ages and from all walks of life and backgrounds, and reflecting the historical and modern make-up of local communities. Where appropriate, this aspect of plaques may be used to help delivery of the wider objectives of a particular group or organisation, such as a local authority.

Plaques, however, relate not just to the subject commemorated, but also to the structure to which they are affixed – where someone may have lived or died, or where something of note may have taken place. This is even more the case where plaques provide an account of the history of a particular building; they will, in all cases, point to its historical significance. Plaques can, therefore, be understood as **connecting people (or history) and place**; they have no life in their own right, but form half of a partnership, and will need to be removed (and perhaps replaced) should the building to which they are affixed be radically altered or demolished (see pp. 128-129).

For English Heritage, plaques are as much about these buildings as they are about the subject being commemorated, and help a structure to tell a tale; as one writer has put it, commenting on the London-wide scheme, plaques 'make our houses their own biographers'.¹ This approach has been upheld throughout the history of the London-wide blue plaques scheme, emphasis being placed on the connection between people and place and how those two interrelate. The form of a building can say a great deal about the character of a particular person who lived or worked there; it can confirm assumptions or, in other cases, come as a complete surprise, casting a new aspect on the individual concerned. Where the building has been radically altered or demolished, this important relationship is seen to have been broken.

Therefore, from the outset, the London-wide scheme has aimed to encourage the **preservation of buildings of historical interest**, and – by marking authentic buildings (rather than their sites) – to educate the wider public about architecture and the historic environment. When the idea of a scheme of commemorative plaques was first mooted in the 1860s, one correspondent felt that the value of marking 'in a permanent manner' the houses of notable persons would be 'the means of saving many a relic which will otherwise be ruthlessly swept away'.²

A number of London's buildings – comparatively unexceptional from an architectural perspective – have been listed on account of the associations commemorated by the plaques that they bear; for instance, the former homes of Vincent van Gogh (1853-90) in Stockwell, of Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) in Chelsea and of D. H. Lawrence (1885-1930) in Hampstead (Fig. 23), as well as the workshop of John Logie Baird (1888-1946) in Soho. In other instances, a strong historical association may lead to one building being listed at a higher grade than those it adjoins or to which it relates; for example, the birthplace of W. E. Gladstone (1809-98) in Rodney Street, Liverpool, is listed at grade II*, while the adjacent houses in the terrace are grade II.

In this sense, plaques – as signifiers of a building's significance – can play a notable role in the **regeneration** of a street or area, and in its future **conservation**. Even where they do not encourage designation of one form or another (including statutory listing as well as local listing), they may provide an incentive for restoration or repair. Still, while plaques may generate interest, they

1 *The Times*, 4 September 1873, p. 5

2 *The Builder*, vol. XXII, 16 July 1864, p. 533

cannot – in themselves – actually prevent demolition; over 100 of London's blue plaques and the buildings they marked have been lost through redevelopment over the course of the past 145 years or so.

One of the most notable features of commemorative plaques is their power to **surprise** and, through this, to educate. They serve to draw out historical associations which would not otherwise be evident, bringing aspects of history before people who may not otherwise have sought or found it out. For English Heritage, this is a key consideration. Where a link is already found to have been marked or celebrated (perhaps by a museum or a pre-existing tablet), the need for an additional plaque is felt to be negligible. With this in mind, it is interesting that the Transport Trust, in assessing nominations for plaques, ranks a 'hidden gem' higher than a site already nationally recognised. As is outlined elsewhere (see pp. 77-78), it is the obligation of all those who erect plaques to ensure that they are sensitive to the historic environment, and to question the appropriateness of erecting a plaque, especially where it constitutes an addition that duplicates existing information. The chief aim should be the commemoration of a particular subject, rather than the erection of a particular plaque, and the means by which this is best done should be carefully explored.



23 Buildings listed on account of their historical associations include 1 Byron Villas, Hampstead, London, the former home of the writer D. H. Lawrence (1885-1930).

© English Heritage

DEVELOPING SELECTION CRITERIA AND GUIDELINES

The compilation of selection criteria and guidelines will include consideration of the aims outlined above, and will also take account of other desired results. These documents serve as crucial mechanisms of control, placing restrictions on the number of plaques that might be erected and the type of subjects that can be commemorated. The level of this control will differ depending on the scheme in question and the needs of the historic environment.

The specific form and length of criteria and guidelines will likewise vary from scheme to scheme, reflecting their different scales and purposes, as is emphasised by the examples set out as Appendices 1-12. Where a number of initiatives are active in a particular geographical area, it may be that their rules are made complementary to each other, thereby avoiding a proliferation of similar plaques. However, there will always be certain points in common. In general, such documents will address some or all of the following key issues, which are discussed at greater length below:

- The type of subjects that are eligible for consideration (e.g. people, events, sites of historical significance).
- The type of buildings that are eligible for commemoration.
- The level of significance required of the subjects proposed for commemoration.
- The nature – positive or otherwise – of the subject's historical contribution.
- The association of the subject with a particular geographical area and/or building.
- The period of time that has elapsed since a person's death or since an event took place.
- The number of plaques that can be erected per person/subject/building.

Other points and requirements which might be raised are as follows:

- The level of financial support required of the plaque proposer.
- The need for outline consent from the building owner(s) and perhaps from relatives of a person proposed for commemoration.
- The size and form the plaque will take.
- The rules which apply to resubmission (for instance, where a proposal is rejected under the English Heritage scheme, it cannot be reconsidered for a period of ten years).
- The rules regarding the handling of successful nominations (for instance, whether they will be immediately progressed towards plaques, perhaps in the order in which they were received or considered, or whether they will be added to a longlist or shortlist, for action at a future point).

In addition, some choose to clarify the future ownership of the plaque itself. For instance, the guidelines in use by Aberdeen City Council state that the Council 'will retain ownership of the plaque', while those of Guernsey's Blue Plaque scheme state that 'The plaque will belong to the Museum [i.e. the administrator of the scheme] after its fixture to the building'. Care should be taken in making such statements, and they should ideally be based on legal advice. As is discussed elsewhere in this document (see pp. 99-100), it is usual to find that – once a plaque has been installed – it is viewed as having become part of the property to which it is affixed.

Once selection criteria have been compiled and agreed, it is important to ensure that they are upheld and applied consistently, ensuring that each proposal is treated fairly and equally. Nevertheless, rather than being static, the criteria should be revisited and reviewed at regular intervals, to ensure that they remain relevant and functional. The application of selection criteria will usually be the responsibility of a group of people, such as a committee or panel (see pp. 47-49), and will enable decisions to be justified and defended, where necessary.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is inevitable that the criteria will, to a certain extent, be influenced by practical considerations – notably, the amount of money that has been identified and the number of plaques that this can

fund. Many schemes operate a limit of one plaque per subject, both for this reason and as part of a desire for variety; for instance, those operated by Cambridge City Council, Southwark Council and Guernsey Museums and Galleries (on behalf of the Blue Plaques Panel). The one plaque per subject rule is also a policy for English Heritage, and relates less to the overall aims of the London-wide scheme than to the need to balance the large number of subjects who are proposed with the limited funds available.

In general, English Heritage aims to install about 12 plaques in London each year, while most others fix lower targets, usually erecting no more than 5 plaques per annum. This will generally be more than sufficient, particularly in small towns and villages, where sensitivity of the historic environment is an especially important factor; it guards against an unwelcome proliferation of plaques.

Another means of avoiding such proliferation is, with each proposal, to consider the need for a plaque. It may be felt that the subject is already adequately commemorated – perhaps a museum is dedicated to their life and work, for example – or that a form of commemoration other than a plaque would be more suitable (see boxed text on p. 35). This will reduce the number of proposals that can potentially be taken forward, and ensures that the needs of the historic environment are considered in the selection process.

Ideally, in weighing up the worth of each particular case, notice will also be paid to the national context. For instance, rather than commemorating a brief (and perhaps somewhat insignificant) association simply because it falls within the geographical remit of a particular group or body, it may be more appropriate – where the subject is more strongly connected with another part of the country – to refer the case to another scheme.

The target audience of the plaques is likely to be another important practical consideration. Almost invariably, this will (and should) be the general public, and thus it is vital to install plaques in positions which will be readily visible and legible to passers-by. This requirement is made explicit in the criteria and guidelines of a number of schemes, including those run by English Heritage, Aberdeen City Council, the Institute of Physics and the Ulster History Circle.

TYPES OF SUBJECTS ELIGIBLE FOR COMMEMORATION AND TIME REQUIREMENTS

Another vital consideration – strongly reflective of the scheme's aims – will be the type of proposals which are eligible for commemoration. Most notably, whether a scheme will commemorate just people (either at residences, workplaces or both), or whether nominations may also be made for historical sites, where notable events may have taken place or which might be important in their own right. Where both of these categories are relevant, it may be that specific criteria are drawn up for each, as with the schemes run by Cambridge City Council and the City of London Corporation (see Appendices 4 and 5).

A fundamental issue is whether plaques will commemorate figures who are still alive, or whether they have to be dead. In the latter case, and also with regard to proposals concerning events or specific achievements, the criteria will usually state that a certain period of time should have passed before a proposal can be considered.

The London-wide blue plaques scheme has long stipulated that a suggested figure has to have been dead for a minimum of 20 years. This criterion – known as the 'twenty-year rule' – fulfils certain key objectives: it allows a breathing space in which a person's reputation can mature, and helps to ensure that their achievements can be assessed dispassionately with proper historical perspective and that the resultant plaque is therefore fully justified. The GLC, which ran the London scheme between 1965 and 1986, found it particularly useful when considering 'less eminent persons whose reputation may alter fairly rapidly after their death'.³ Guernsey's Blue Plaque scheme is among those that operate the same rule and time period, on the grounds that it 'means that a nominee's career is complete, work evaluated and reputation established. It guards against short-term sentimentality shortly after a nominee's death or transitory popular enthusiasm for a living person whose future actions and achievements cannot be predicted'.⁴

In some cases, it may be found that even more than 20 years is needed for an accurate, unbiased assessment to be made. For example, where the person concerned died young, where many of their colleagues and contemporaries

remain alive and active, and where information relevant to their work and reputation is not yet complete (documents may not have been identified or released).

In other instances, it may be clear that – even though 20 years have not passed – a subject's reputation is well established. With this in mind, the GLC introduced the 'centenary provision' into the London-wide scheme in 1971; this permits the consideration of figures who were born over 100 years ago, even if they have not yet been dead for 20 years. However, the provision does not entitle a candidate to be appraised equally with those who have been dead for more than 20 years. In introducing the criterion, it was recommended that it be used in cases where a person was 'of indisputable fame and of exceptional longevity'. It is, therefore, used only in exceptional circumstances, where a person's fame and/or significance were outstanding and can be demonstrably proven at the time of their consideration.

Such longevity of significance is a key means of limiting the number of plaques that can be erected, and is likely to be a requirement in certain specific circumstances; for instance, where a place is especially rich in historical associations (like London), where the geographical scope of a scheme is broad, and/or where plaques are inset into the face of a building. As such plaques have a considerable degree of permanence, it will be especially important to be stringent in selecting subjects for commemoration and to limit the number of proposals that can be made (and therefore the number of plaques that can be put up). For others, a consideration of long-term significance may simply be irrelevant. For instance, it may be that a plaque's material is known to have a limited life-span, or that it is consistent with the scheme's aims to commemorate someone who is still alive or has died only recently.

Practices therefore vary widely with regard to the necessary time that should elapse before a person is eligible for a plaque, and this is clearly shown in the various criteria set out as Appendices 1-12. In some cases, such as the schemes run by Cambridge City Council, Leeds Civic Trust and the City of London Corporation, 10 years from death is deemed to be sufficient, while the scheme operated by the Institute of Physics has a qualification period of at least 10 to 20 years from death. Others are less specific;

³ Quoted in 'Commemorative Plaque Criteria: The Twenty-Year Rule', presented to the London Advisory Committee on 3 July 1992 (EH blue plaque file)

⁴ Guernsey Blue Plaques Guidelines, June 2009, p.1

for example, the rules of Westminster City Council's Green Plaques Scheme simply stipulate that 'sufficient time has elapsed since [a person's] life to show their lasting contribution to society'.

Meanwhile, whilst it is usual to find that figures need to be dead, schemes such as that run by Southwark Council enable the commemoration of subjects who are still living; in 2003, the actor Michael Caine (b.1933) was awarded a Southwark blue plaque on his birthplace in Rotherhithe, an honour which he said meant more to him 'than a star in the Hollywood walk of fame ever would'.⁵ In such cases, the primary aim of the scheme concerned may be to increase local pride, to encourage tourism and to educate and inspire residents and visitors. In this, the plaques may well prove effective, though there is the possibility that, as the years pass, their subjects may have less and less meaning to people.

For subjects other than people, such as events and other significant moments in history, a period of time may also be fixed. Under the criteria used by Cambridge City Council, this period is 10 years – as with proposals which focus on people – while for the Leeds Civic Trust 'a sufficient period of time must have elapsed for the subject commemorated to be truly regarded as part of history'; it is stated that, in general, this period should be at least 50 years.

Additionally, the question of commemorating fictitious characters or sites may be considered in the preparation of selection criteria. Somewhat inevitably, for instance, there is a plaque to Sherlock Holmes at 221B Baker Street, Marylebone, although it does not form part of the London-wide scheme, which rules out the honouring of people or buildings solely because they figure in works of fiction (as do schemes such as those run by the City of London Corporation and Guernsey Museums and Galleries). Another example is the plaque erected in 2008 on a newly built block of flats in Ashbourne Road, Derby; it commemorates the site of the office in which Lara Croft, heroine of the computer game Tomb Raider, was 'born' in the mid-1990s. It will be for each scheme to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of considering such proposals. Certainly, they are of interest, and often make for popular plaques, but a scheme as a whole – especially one with serious aims and an emphasis on high-quality historical research – can be devalued by the commemoration of such subjects.

TYPES OF BUILDINGS ELIGIBLE FOR COMMEMORATION

Aside from the requirement that a building is visible from the public way (see p. 38), it may be that the selection criteria place no restriction on the types of buildings that can be commemorated. These may include former residences and workplaces, sites of historical interest or importance, places of worship, educational buildings, railway stations, and structures such as bridges and viaducts. As with other elements of the criteria, it is likely that the aims of the scheme will dictate the specific approach. For instance, where a scheme sets out to draw attention to figures of the past, former residences and workplaces are likely to be the focus.

A related consideration is whether or not the scheme will allow the commemoration of sites of former buildings, or whether the structures have to be authentic. Again, this is likely to be dictated by the aims of the scheme. For instance, as the London-wide scheme places so much emphasis on the link between people and place and aims to preserve historic buildings for the future (see p. 36), English Heritage requires that there is a surviving building directly associated with the subject of the plaque proposal. The general rule of thumb is that, were the person being commemorated to find themselves outside the relevant building today, they would still recognise it as their home or place of work. Sites of former buildings are ruled out altogether, and this has the advantage of avoiding certain problematic issues; notably, as site plaques are not connected with any specific building, there may be a need to re-erect them in cases of radical alteration or demolition (see pp. 128-129), possibly on more than one occasion. Other schemes to follow the English Heritage model include those run by Guernsey Museums and Galleries, the Institute of Physics and the Leeds Civic Trust, the criteria of the latter clarifying that 'A major element of the scheme is celebrating the city's built heritage'.

However, the majority of schemes across the United Kingdom take a different approach, and numerous plaques can be found marking sites of former buildings (Fig. 24). Such plaques may be particularly appropriate in areas of widespread redevelopment, and – whilst the focus on the building is undoubtedly greatly diluted or lost altogether – they can achieve a number of important aims; for instance, educating

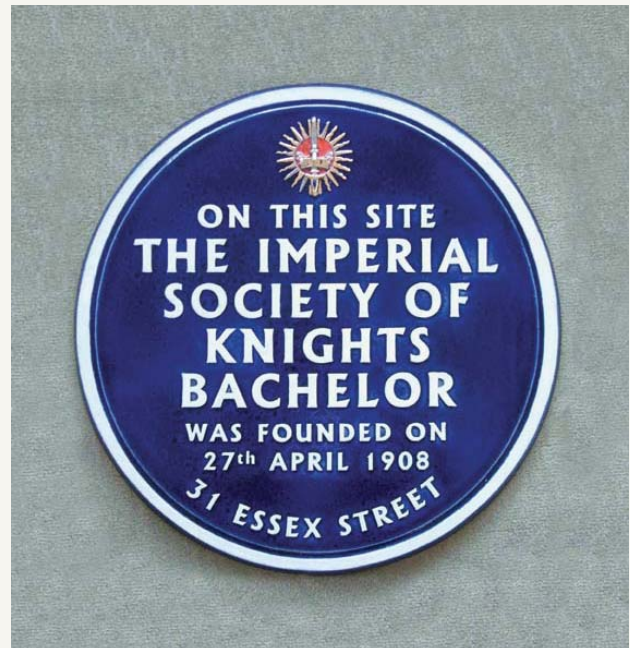
⁵ Information on website of Southwark Council (www.southwark.gov.uk)

the public about little known people, aspects and moments of history, inspiring residents and visitors, and reflecting social and urban change.

Where the commemoration of sites is permitted under the selection criteria, it may be that other rules are introduced to limit the number of potential plaques. Focusing on the historic environment as it survives today is a form of limitation; with the commemoration of sites, the possibilities will be endless, depending on the nature and history of the area and subject concerned. One method of curbing such possible proliferation would be to increase the level of significance required in order for a plaque to be agreed (see below, pp. 41-44).

Wherever possible, though, it is worth aiming for the commemoration of authentic structures, and perhaps using the criteria to allow the commemoration of sites only in certain exceptional circumstances. If a historic connection is thought significant enough to justify a plaque, then it naturally follows that the building concerned must be deemed important too, and should (ideally) be preserved for future generations. A site plaque is no substitute for retaining and conserving a historic building.

Some groups of buildings may require specific mention in the criteria. In particular, buildings which were associated with a large number of people should be approached with great care; these might include hotels, boarding houses, schools, colleges, libraries, public houses, shops, churches, hospitals and care homes. Where one association is commemorated, it can open the way to further plaques, which in turn can have a detrimental effect on the appearance and character of a building, street or even area. With this in mind, the English Heritage criteria generally rule out the erection of plaques in Whitehall and the commemoration of educational or ecclesiastical buildings and Inns of Court. Obviously, there will be times when it is appropriate to mark such buildings with a plaque – notably when one association is particularly strong – but it is always worth considering whether such connections can be more suitably commemorated in other ways (see boxed text on p. 35).



24 A great many schemes across the country permit the commemoration of sites where notable buildings once stood. An example is this plaque, unveiled in 2008 to commemorate the founding of the Imperial Society of Knights Bachelor. It is located at 28-31 Essex Street, just off the Strand, London.

© Ned Heywood

THE LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE REQUIRED

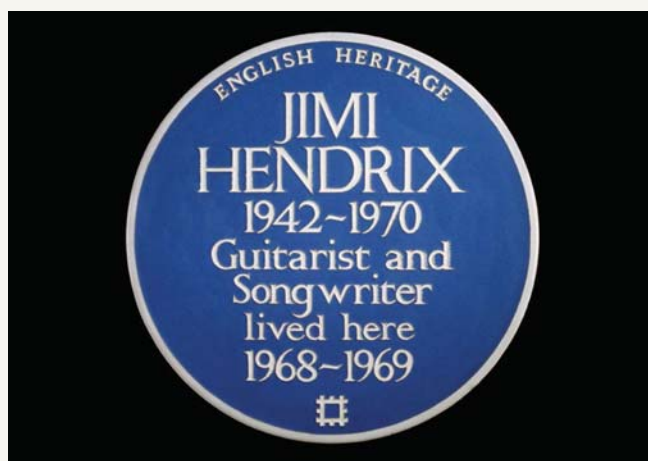
The selection criteria will play a major role in ensuring that a plaque is justified and that it will have meaning to people, both of present and future generations. With this in mind, the requirements in terms of significance should be explicitly stated. For schemes focused on particular geographical areas, the criteria will almost always stipulate that an association with the area concerned should be of importance. The criteria applied by Leeds Civic Trust, for instance, state that the 'event, person, institution or building commemorated must be of very special importance in the history, heritage or shaping of Leeds', and that people 'should have lived or worked in Leeds for a period sufficient for the city to have had a significant influence in forming their character or shaping their activities'. Similarly, the English Heritage selection criteria require that 'a person's residence in London should have been a significant period, in time or in importance, within their life and work'.

This is a means of limiting the number of plaques (and therefore the costs associated with a scheme), and ensures that the number of plaques in a particular geographical context is controlled. It also relates to the importance of the connection between people (or history) and place. Where this was strong, there will be a full justification for erecting a plaque on almost any type of building. On the other hand, where this was fleeting, a plaque may not be justified and alternative options should be explored. Consideration of this issue is likely to be particularly relevant for schemes in places which were, historically, dominated by hotels, lodging houses and second homes; notably, fashionable spa towns and/or other places associated with leisure (such as Bath, Harrogate, Blackpool and Brighton). Likewise, it may be relevant for university towns – it is notable that the Oxfordshire Blue Plaques Board does not erect plaques on colleges – and areas associated with particular industries or trades, such as Nottingham and Birmingham. Given the number and range of historic associations that such areas may have, there has to be a particularly effective mechanism by which to sift proposals for plaques.

A few schemes make stipulations such as the following, which forms part of the criteria used by the Birmingham Civic Society: figures proposed for plaques should 'have been born in Birmingham or have lived in the city for a period of at least

IS A PLAQUE JUSTIFIED?

It is always worth questioning whether a particular association is important enough to justify a plaque. This is especially relevant when considering whether or not to commemorate a person's stay at a hotel or guest house, which may have lasted only for one or two nights' duration. A case in point is the plaque erected in 2006 by Dartford Borough Council on the site of The Bull and George Inn in Dartford, where the novelist Jane Austen (1775-1817) occasionally stayed on the way to visit her brother at Godmersham Park, near Canterbury. Drawing attention to such a slight connection with a particular place – which of course would have been shared by hundreds if not thousands of other guests who stayed at the inn – can undermine a plaque's primary purpose, which is to mark places and associations of special historical significance. Spa towns and resorts, such as Bath, present particular problems in this regard for they have welcomed innumerable visitors, many of whom spent only a few weeks or months at a particular address.



25 A factor in considering nominations for plaques will be the popularity of a particular subject, as well as their significance. This plaque, erected by English Heritage in 1997, honours Jimi Hendrix, who lived at 23 Brook Street, Mayfair, London, for several months in 1968-69, a period of importance within his life and career.

© English Heritage

five years'. However, it is usual to find that no specific limitation is placed on the amount of time a person, group or organisation should have spent at an address or in a particular locality. Instead, the significance of that time – be it 4 months or 40 years – is established through careful historical research (see pp. 66-67). In general, though, the connection should be as long as possible (certainly running into months and years, rather than days and weeks). It is suggested that – where it totalled less than two years – the nature of the link should be carefully assessed before a plaque is deemed to be suitable. It may be, in such instances, that a case is instead referred to a scheme active in an area of greater relevance to the subject proposed for commemoration.

It will almost always be the case that, in addition to the importance of the connection, the criteria will call for scrutiny of the significance of the subject of the proposal (the means of ascertaining such significance are discussed on pp. 53-56). The way this is approached will vary with the focus of the scheme. Where this is limited to one particular profession, it will be possible to be highly specific; for instance, the criteria used by the Royal Society of Chemistry stipulate that a site should have seen 'a major contribution to the development of chemical science', while those of the Institute of Physics state that the person to be honoured 'must be recognised as an outstanding physicist, scientist, astronomer etc. who has contributed to the advancement of physics by his/her theories, discoveries or inventions'.

In other instances, requirements will be more general in nature. The criteria are likely to state, for instance, whether a subject should be of international, national, regional or local importance, and the mechanisms that might be used to ascertain the level of this significance (such as the consultation of experts). For the English Heritage scheme, which is focused on historical figures, the criteria require that:

- i. There shall be reasonable grounds for believing that the subjects are regarded as eminent by a majority of members of their own profession or calling.
- ii. They shall have made some important positive contribution to human welfare or happiness.
- iii. They shall have had such exceptional and outstanding personalities that the well-informed passer-by immediately recognises their names.

or

They deserve national recognition.

Under point iii, the first criterion refers to figures who could broadly be defined as popular (Fig. 25), while the second takes into account figures who may have been of special significance, but whose names are not necessarily well known to the public at large (Fig. 26). It therefore allows plaques to play a truly educational role by drawing attention to people such as inventors, pioneers and others who perhaps worked behind the scenes. It should also be noted that the English Heritage criteria require a subject to have made a positive contribution, ruling out the consideration of notorious criminals such as Dr Crippen (1862-1910). In addition, the English Heritage criteria state that overseas visitors to London should be of international reputation or of significant standing in their own countries.

A number of other schemes have followed a similar approach (and, indeed, wording), both with regard to a figure's significance and the need for a positive contribution. However, while the criteria of English Heritage require that figures, events or institutions be of national (or even international) significance – an approach that reflects the historical richness of London and the national remit of EH – such considerations may not be applicable to other schemes, especially those focused on particular geographical areas.



26 Plaques may play an educational role by drawing attention to subjects who were of significance, but whose names are not necessarily well known. An example is Elizabeth Fry, prison reformer, commemorated at the Friends Meeting House, Upper Goat Lane, with a plaque erected under the joint initiative of Norwich HEART and Norwich City Council.

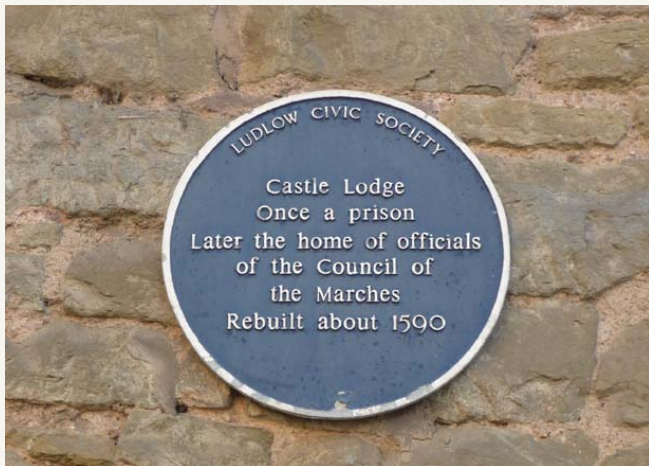
© Norwich HEART

Instead, the criteria are likely to be made relevant to that area, requiring local or regional significance; a good example of this is provided by Guernsey's Blue Plaque scheme (see Appendix 6).

While such principles will remain broadly the same for the consideration of historical events and institutions, a different approach may be needed for plaques which draw attention to the history and interest of certain buildings; for instance, their architect, date and original function (Fig. 27). Considerations in defining their worthiness for a plaque may include the following:

- The building's significance within the history of an area, or within the country as a whole.
- The importance of its structure or design.
- The building's associations.
- The building's prominence within the streetscape.
- Whether or not the building's significance can be adequately and succinctly relayed by a plaque inscription (see pp. 88-90).

In these cases, in particular, thought should be given to the appropriateness of a plaque, and whether the history and importance of a building – especially where it has a public use – would be better relayed via alternative means, such as an information board or booklet (see boxed



27 Many plaques seek to draw attention to the history of certain historic buildings, and not solely to their historical associations. For instance, this plaque erected by the Ludlow Civic Society, Shropshire, to commemorate Castle Lodge, Castle Square.

© Emily Cole

text on p. 35). A specific association or event is easily conveyed by a plaque, but a building's intrinsic interest often requires a fuller explanation than is suitable for a plaque inscription. Furthermore, where a building is in itself of significance, a plaque may detract from its design, special interest and character.

SPONSORSHIP AND CONSENTS

A great many schemes rely upon the proposer for more than just the plaque nomination. Not only are they asked to provide full details about the subject proposed for commemoration, but they may also be required to arrange at least partial funding for the plaque, and the amount needed may be stated in the selection criteria or guidelines. Furthermore, the administrators of the scheme may need to see evidence that the owner(s) of the building concerned have given their outline consent to the plaque proposal. A minority of schemes also ask the plaque proposer to provide evidence that surviving relatives of the subject concerned approve of the nomination; for instance, this is the case with the schemes run by Aberdeen City Council and Westminster City Council.

Although the consent of relatives is usually seen as desirable rather than necessary, and owner consent will need to be confirmed later on in the process (see pp. 99-102), it is common to find that such issues are included within selection criteria and guidelines.

The principal criteria of Leeds Civic Trust, for instance, state that 'The owner of the structure needs to be amenable to the erection of the plaque' and that 'There must be a sponsor or group of sponsors prepared to meet the cost of the plaque'. These matters are discussed in more detail below (see pp. 45-46).

SELECTION PROCESS

NOMINATIONS FOR PLAQUES

The process of encouraging and handling nominations may be formal or informal. At one end of the spectrum would be a specific campaign calling for plaque proposals from members of the general public, with a set nomination form and stipulations about information to be provided; at the other end of the spectrum would be the sporadic suggestion of names, perhaps by neighbours, friends or colleagues, with few further details. In the latter instance, it may be that members of the general public are not involved at all, and that the plaque process is driven entirely by one particular organisation, such as a specialist society or history group. This may also be true where a proactive approach is taken to plaque nominations, usually with the aim of commemorating a particular group of people or of achieving greater variety in terms of both the subjects and locations of plaques (see pp. 139-140).

The approach that is chosen with regard to plaque nominations will relate to factors including the scale of the scheme, the nature of the group or body responsible for it, the size of its geographical remit, the amount of time and funds available, any conditions of sponsorship or grant aid, and the scheme's aims; for instance, where community engagement is a major component, then public nomination should always be possible. It is suggested that, the more ambitious the scheme and the broader its coverage (considering both the type of nominations and the physical area), the more there is a need for a formalised system of handling nominations. It should be noted that, even where an informal approach is adopted, suggestions raised from within the relevant organisation should always be subject to the same scrutiny that would apply to public nominations.

The initial step is, of course, to call for and encourage nominations in the first place. Once a scheme is well established, proposals are likely to come in unprompted, driven by the existence of the plaques themselves, by promotional events and material, and by knowledge about who is responsible for the scheme's administration. However, where a scheme has been recently set up, there is usually a need to be more proactive – to make a conscious and concerted effort to invite suggestions, and to make people aware of the initiative. This should aim to reach as wide and diverse a group as possible – people of different ages, genders, religions, ethnic and social backgrounds – albeit that they may be based in a particular geographical area. Even when a scheme is well underway, proposals from such a diverse group should be actively encouraged (see pp. 139-140).

The precise means of encouraging public nominations will vary with the individual scheme, but is likely to include some of the following:

- Sending targeted mail-shots to buildings in a particular area.
- The placing of information in sites such as railway stations, local museums, libraries, community centres, religious buildings, schools and colleges.
- Producing a press release and contacting local radio stations, television, newspapers, magazines and relevant publications.
- The creation of a website (see pp. 137-138), and the use of existing local news websites.
- The sending of 'e-flyers' and information to interested parties (including specialist societies and community groups).

It is invaluable to contact, at an early stage, key local groups and organisations, such as the local planning authority, any local civic or historical society, and the local record or archives centres – many of whom may have been involved in the project planning and fundraising – while direct contact with local schools, colleges and universities can be an excellent means of encouraging participation.

Nominations can be invited on an ongoing basis – if the scheme hopes to run into the foreseeable future – or to a given deadline. It will be important to be specific about the background and aims of

the scheme, the selection criteria or guidelines, the information that should be provided, and the way in which nominations should be made. There could, for instance, be a nomination form – as with schemes such as those run by the City of London Corporation, Lewisham Council and the Royal Society of Chemistry – placed online and/or given out as a hard copy.

The kind of information to be provided as part of a formal nomination will be along the following lines:

- Biographical or historical information about the subject of the plaque proposal.
- Further relevant information, such as details of exhibitions, publications and ongoing studies.
- The reasons the subject is thought to deserve commemoration with a plaque, considering the selection criteria.
- The buildings associated with the proposal (perhaps residences or places of work).
- One or more photographs of the building suggested for commemoration, and a location plan.

A number of schemes place additional onus on the proposer by asking for them to arrange sponsorship for the plaque or to make a financial contribution. The guidelines of the Guernsey scheme, for example, state that 'The cost of plaque manufacture and installation will need to be covered by sponsorship, and the proposer should consider the availability of likely sponsorship when making the proposal', while proposers for a Westminster City Council green plaque are asked to provide 'a written offer of sponsorship for the cost of the plaque'.

Furthermore, the proposer may need to obtain the approval of surviving family members of the subject of a proposal and seek outline ('in principle') consents from the owner(s) of the building concerned. Under the scheme run by Aberdeen City Council, the proposer has to include 'evidence that the owners and those residing or working within that building approve of the proposed mounting of the plaque', while the Royal Society of Chemistry even stipulates that nomination forms for plaques should carry the signature of 'a senior representative from the site denoting site support for the nomination'.

This approach will only be possible where a proposal is, from the outset, focused on one particular building (rather than on one subject associated with a range of addresses). The provision of such information helps to ensure that the case runs smoothly, although the consent of the owner(s) concerned will always need to be confirmed later on, and they will need to be given the chance to comment on the proposed design and positioning of the plaque (see pp.99-102).

It should be noted that, for schemes which aim to engage with particular communities or the public at large, these stipulations may not be appropriate. In such cases, it is important to be as inclusive as possible, understanding that – for many people – the prospect of arranging sponsorship, owner consents, identifying and contacting family members, and/or compiling large amounts of information may be daunting. Instead, it should be possible for a nomination to comprise a simple letter or form, though this may have consequences for the amount of historical research, fundraising and other work required later on.

Usually, once a nomination has been raised or received and its eligibility for consideration has been confirmed, acknowledgement will be made and the proposer will be informed about the next steps; for instance, when their nomination will be considered, and when they will be informed of the outcome. This involves an important element of managing expectation and potential disappointment (see p.49), especially where it is known that many nominations may be unsuccessful, perhaps due to financial limitations. The person or people responsible for handling the nominations will log them, and will probably like to keep a regular tally on numbers. In some cases, this might prompt a renewed campaign of inviting nominations; in others, it will prompt the arrangement of a meeting of the group responsible for considering suggestions for plaques, especially where that group likes to consider a maximum number at a given time.

Before such a meeting takes place, historical research may be carried out into plaque proposals (see pp.53-56). Under the English Heritage scheme, about 100 nominations are made each year for plaques in London. Around 30 cases are taken to each meeting of the Blue Plaques Panel, the historians being given an average of a day to investigate each nomination and to establish its general worth for a plaque. Cases will take less or more time depending on the amount of information provided by the proposer.

METHODS FOR DECIDING WHICH NOMINATIONS ARE TAKEN FORWARD

This is perhaps the most crucial element of the selection process, and constitutes a consideration and assessment of the various nominations. It assumes, of course, that not all nominations can be progressed towards plaques, and that a process of selection is necessary or appropriate. This will almost always be the case, to ensure that all plaques meet an agreed standard of significance and, perhaps, on account of limited resources.

In some instances, the process will be informal, especially where there are no fixed selection criteria; cases may, for example, simply be discussed by two individuals, in person, by email or on the telephone. Certainly, more than one person is usually involved in the decision-making process, and it adds strength to the process (and scheme) to open the matter up for discussion by a wider group.

It may be that limitations are imposed upon the number of nominations that can be agreed at any one time. Although English Heritage does not operate such a system – shortlisting proposals according to their worth – it may have benefits where only a very limited number of plaques can be erected each year. For instance, under the Guernsey Blue Plaque scheme, the panel – at each of its twice yearly meetings – shortlists a maximum of five nominations, and does so in order of preference. Other nominations are either unsuccessful or are placed on a 'long list', to be considered at some future point.

What tends to be the most popular means of reviewing nominations – through the use of a specific group of people (such as a committee) – is discussed below. An alternative method is the use of a system of **public vote**. One of the most prominent schemes to follow this approach is that set up in 2003 by Southwark Council in London (Fig. 28). A shortlist of proposals is drawn up from a longer list of public nominations, following discussion by a steering group, and this is then published for public voting; for instance, online and in the local newspaper.

The strength of such an approach is that it is inclusive, directly involving members of the public and adding an element of transparency to the selection process overall. However, it has its pit-falls; for instance, people tend to select names that are well known to them, and this can undermine a scheme's educational role. Also, a level of public

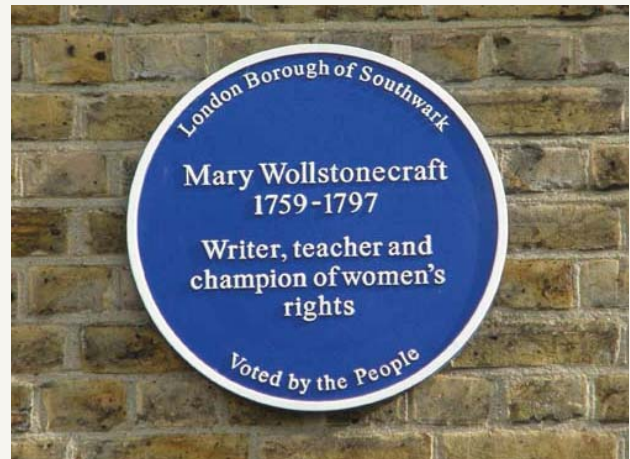
expectation is raised, and this may prove impossible to fulfil where consent is refused by the owners of the relevant buildings.

Committees and Advisory Panels

Where a scheme is set up on a semi-permanent or permanent basis, where there are fixed selection criteria and/or where there are a fair number of nominations, it will usually be thought appropriate to present plaque proposals to a group of people – such as a committee or advisory panel. The consideration of plaque suggestions may form only part of its work and remit. This may be particularly relevant for local authorities and civic societies, where committees will already be in existence, or in instances where plaques can be grouped together with other forms of memorials.

Since 1989, English Heritage has drawn upon the expertise of a specially formed advisory panel, known as the Blue Plaques Panel. This meets three times a year, and considers all plaque nominations which meet the basic criteria, together with any other relevant issues. The Panel takes special heed of the impact plaques have on the historic environment. In some cases, it may be relevant and advantageous to involve such a group even more closely in this aspect of a scheme's work. Under the LCC, in the early twentieth century, the relevant committee went to visit at least one site to discuss plaque positioning, and also considered issues to do with design, criteria and overall aims.

Whether the group is formal or informal, and whether its remit is focused on plaques or has a wider range, it will be important to ensure that **relevant expertise** is represented. For instance, where a scheme concentrates on a particular geographical area, it will always be beneficial to include at least one local historian or expert, and also an officer of the local planning authority. Other members of the group or committee are likely to be chosen where their skills and/or backgrounds have particular relevance to the scheme in hand, and the nature of the nominations. For example, where an area or scheme takes in a number of sites relevant to the armed forces, a military historian may form part of the group. Where funding has been awarded to a scheme by a local (or even national) organisation, a representative may also form one of the members of the committee or panel.



28 Some schemes use a system of public vote to decide which nominations should be taken forward. For instance, this approach is followed by Southwark Council, which has erected plaques including that to Mary Wollstonecraft at 45 Dolben Street, London. The aim of the plaque – not clear from its inscription – is to commemorate the fact that she lived in a house on the site in 1788-91.

© Gerry Lambert

It is advisable that the group as a whole aims to **reflect the community** at large in terms of the age, gender, social backgrounds and ethnicity of its members. Of necessity, a chair of the group is likely to be selected first, a process which may involve the chair or president of the organisation or group responsible for the scheme. The chair of the committee or panel can then work with the administrators of the scheme in selecting additional members. Names may have been formally proposed (by colleagues, or others involved in the scheme), people may have volunteered, or places may be advertised. It is good practice for this process to be above-board and transparent, and this will be a necessity where the scheme is run by a public body, such as a local authority.

As the group will play such a key role in the selection process, it is important to consider (and, where possible, plan) its **overall effectiveness**. Members should be chosen not only on an individual basis, but because they complement the skills of others, so that the resulting committee or panel represents as broad a range as possible of expertise, experience and backgrounds, though specific experts can – in addition – be consulted as necessary or appropriate (see pp. 55-56). It is worth noting that members are most likely to be prepared to serve on a voluntary basis, though costs of travel may need to be met.

A PANEL IN PRACTICE

The means of assessing plaque nominations varies from scheme to scheme, though it is common to find that a group is tasked with selection. A good example of a formally constituted selection committee is provided by the Guernsey Blue Plaque scheme, which in 2009 instituted a Blue Plaques Panel to consider new suggestions (Fig. 29). Chaired by the current Bailiff of Guernsey, the five-member panel includes representatives of the Culture & Leisure Department Board, the Council of La Société Guernesiaise, the Museums Society and the Arts Commission, together with a further member co-opted to act as Secretary. The Guernsey scheme aims to put up one or two plaques a year and judges each nominee against a set of criteria (see Appendix 6). In the words of its first Chairman, Bailiff Sir Geoffrey Rowland, the scheme aspires 'to be very selective, just as English Heritage is'. Nominations are either rejected, shortlisted or placed on a 'long list' of eligible nominees awaiting commemoration in the future.

There are a number of **advantages** to constituting a group of this kind, aside from the obvious expertise that it brings to bear on the nominations made for plaques. For instance, members can involve themselves in other stages of plaque work, perhaps representing and promoting the scheme at events such as unveilings. Where they are prominent or influential figures, this can serve to increase the scheme's profile and encourage interest among both press and public, although it may mean that they are lobbied about particular nominations. The group can also serve to depersonalise the important decision-making process almost always involved in awarding plaques, and take collective responsibility for outcomes. Disappointed proposers and others will often find a considered, collective decision easier to accept than one that has been taken by an individual.

Formal committees and advisory panels will normally be governed by **terms of reference**. These will outline the working of the group – its general function, how often it meets, the number of members, the number that is considered a quorum (ensuring the effective consideration of nominations), and the nature of its authority: whether the group is responsible for making the final decision, whether it advises others, or whether its recommendations need to be endorsed. The document will also set out the roles of its members – for instance, the extent of their terms and whether or not they can be

reappointed – and may state that members are not permitted to engage in correspondence with plaque proposers. Additional details may cover the role and terms of specific officers of the group, who may include a chair and a vice-chair, as well as a secretary, who will usually be connected with the scheme's administration and can work to ensure the selection criteria are upheld.

Careful thought should be given to preparing these terms of reference, for the document can have an important impact on the business of a committee or panel and, therefore, on the plaque scheme concerned. In particular, the time-frame of members' terms should be thought through and discussed, and decisions should be made regarding the maximum amount of time that members, and the chair, can serve. While it can be invaluable to have a continually replenished reservoir of knowledge and expertise, it is also important to have consistency and familiarity with the work of a scheme, in addition to that of the people responsible for its administration.

The business of the committee or panel will usually be governed by the plaque scheme's **selection criteria** or guidelines, and informed by **historical research**, presented either in person, as written reports, or both. Such reports may make recommendations, or may suggest particular matters for discussion (see pp. 69-70). The result



29 The Blue Plaques Panel responsible for considering nominations made under Guernsey's Blue Plaque scheme. Shown from left to right are: Deputy Gloria Dudley-Owen (Culture and Leisure Board), Edith Le Patourel (La Société Guernesiaise), Bailiff Sir Geoffrey Rowland (Chair), Dr Jason Monaghan (Guernsey Museums and Galleries) and Helen Glencross (Secretary to Panel).

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will (or should) be fully informed decisions, taken with awareness of all the issues relating both to the case in hand and the scheme overall. The group should take care that the selection criteria are applied consistently and fairly; this will ensure public confidence in the scheme, and will provide it with a sense of unity and distinctiveness.

Finally, it should be noted that the business of formal committees or panels will ideally be documented in the form of **minutes**. These provide an invaluable record of the members that were present, the matters that were discussed, the decisions that were made, and any actions that resulted from the meeting. Where they exist, such minutes will form a vital part of the paper archive for each plaque and the scheme overall (see pp. 120-121), and will capture comments and suggestions which may prove useful later on – for instance, concerning the proposed wording of a plaque inscription. As with other paperwork generated by the plaque process, the public should ideally be able to have access to these minutes, though data protection and other issues (and potential exemptions) will obviously be relevant. For public bodies, such as local authorities, minutes are likely to be one of the key documents requested under the Freedom of Information Act (FOI), since they document the various decisions that have been made.

MANAGING DISAPPOINTMENT

There are two outcomes of the decision-making process for commemorative plaques. A nomination may be approved – in principle or in full, depending on the nature of the information considered – or it may be turned down, based on summary or (in certain instances) more detailed advice and information. In the former case, everyone is pleased, and the case moves on to the next stage, the gaining of consents (see pp. 99-108). The latter case is harder to manage. Naturally, where nominations are unsuccessful, there is often disappointment on the part of the proposer and any others who have supported the proposal, and it is important to be understanding about this and to explain the reasons for the decision in clear and sympathetic terms.

On account of the scale and popularity of the London-wide blue plaques scheme, and the fact that many more nominations are made than can be approved, English Heritage has extensive experience in this area. It has found that it is useful to research and suggest alternatives when contacting a proposer; for instance, there may be another active plaque scheme in the area, or it may be possible for the proposer to arrange for the installation of a plaque under their own initiative. The time that is taken to manage this part of the process will depend on the size of the scheme and the number of nominations which tend to be received.

However, its importance should not be underestimated for schemes which find that a comparatively high number of nominations have to be turned down on a regular basis. If it is not managed, the standing of the scheme overall could be negatively affected; for instance, by a gradual decrease in popularity and by the publication of critical articles in the press. These can be tempered, not only by maintaining good relationships with proposers, but also by being open and clear about the selection process and criteria, the limitations of the scheme (perhaps imposed by budget), and by emphasising and promoting its successes.

With all plaques, it is important not to raise expectations, and to ensure that proposers understand the process that needs to be followed. Most notably, that plaques can only be erected with the consent of the relevant property owner(s) and, where relevant, the local planning authority. It can take time to secure the owner's approval, and it may be that such consent is withheld altogether, an outcome which can be enormously disappointing and frustrating to all, especially to the plaque proposer.

CURTAIN
ROAD E.C.2.



THE SITE OF THIS
BUILDING FORMS
PART OF WHAT
WAS ONCE THE PRECINCT
OF THE PRIORY OF S. JOHN
THE BAPTIST, HOLYWELL.
WITHIN A FEW YARDS STOOD
FROM 1577 TO 1598, THE
FIRST LONDON BUILDING
SPECIALLY DEVOTED TO
THE PERFORMANCE OF
PLAYS, AND KNOWN AS
"THE THEATRE."

30 The rectangular bronze LCC plaque erected in 1920 to commemorate the site of the Priory and The Theatre at 86-90 Curtain Road, Shoreditch, London. The identification of the site was underpinned by extensive historical research.

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4

HISTORICAL RESEARCH

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All commemorative plaques involve a degree of historical research. Such investigation serves to illuminate the worth of a person, group, institution, event or historical site proposed for commemoration, and to identify the building (or site) with which the subject of the proposal is connected. In certain instances – as with the English Heritage scheme – historical research underpins the whole process of commemoration, ensuring that the building selected is correct and of special significance. It feeds directly into the inscription of a plaque, and can also inform publicity and promotional activities, such as trails and booklets.

Although it may seem surprising, the amount of research that is carried out should be closely linked to the form of plaque erected at the end of the process. Ceramic plaques – like those erected by English Heritage – call for particular care: once installed, set into the face of a building, they tend to remain as permanent additions (see pp. 79-80). Unlike a book or an online publication, they almost always offer no opportunity for revision; spelling mistakes or factual errors are literally immortalised for all to see. Likewise, the people, events or sites being commemorated will live on through their plaques, so it is vital to be sure that they deserve this honour, and that the correct location for the plaque has been selected.

Plaques made of materials such as enamelled steel, aluminium or wood will generally be more transient in nature – fixed to the face of a building, they can have a comparatively limited life-span and can be easily removed. In these cases, therefore, there may be opportunities to update information or, if necessary, to correct mistakes in plaque inscription or location. Still, getting things right first time around undoubtedly saves time and money in the long run, and ensures that plaques do not mislead the public, propagating what an early twentieth-century Clerk to the LCC referred to as ‘false history’.

For this and other reasons, it is vital that research of the highest quality is carried out, and that the skill involved in the work is not underestimated. Although a number

of individuals (and even the wider community) may be involved in the initial research, the final, detailed work should always be undertaken (or at least verified) by an experienced archivist or historian. This person may be connected with the individual or group responsible for the installation of the plaque concerned (for instance, a local history society), and may therefore provide assistance on a voluntary basis, or their services may be bought in (perhaps via the local archive centre).

This section will consider the nature of relevant historical research, and how it might be carried out. It draws upon the experiences and practices of the London-wide blue plaques scheme, and thus has particular strengths. Notably, it has a focus on the **commemoration of people** (rather than events, institutions or historical sites) and the identification of **surviving buildings** associated with particular subjects (rather than structures which occupy their sites).

It should be noted that the information given is intended as a general summary, that there may be additional sources for particular localities, and that – as the digitisation of historical records continues – more material is becoming widely available all the time. For detailed and focused guidance, it is always advisable to contact the local archive or record centre at the earliest possible stage, to check what information has been recently published online, and to consult the list of online resources which is set out on pages 156-158. Relevant publications will also

be able to provide further information; these include Nick Barratt's *Tracing the History of Your House* (2nd edn, Richmond, 2006), Stephen Porter's *Exploring Urban History: Sources for Local Historians* (London, 1990) and Colin Thom's *Researching London Houses* (London, 2005). Also of use is the website compiled by Jean Manco and entitled 'Researching historic buildings in the British Isles' (see p. 158).

INITIAL RESEARCH: INVESTIGATING THE WORTH OF A PLAQUE PROPOSAL

For most schemes, it is not possible to further every proposal made for a commemorative plaque. A process of selection – involving criteria – is almost always in operation, and serves a number of functions; for instance, it ensures that consistency and standards are maintained, and keeps work on plaques within bounds which are financially and logistically viable.

Research can play an important part in this process, serving to illuminate whether or not a case meets certain selection criteria, and helping to weigh one proposal against another. A number of schemes stipulate that subjects proposed for commemoration should be eminent and well known within their profession or calling; in addition, they are often required to have a measure of popularity or accepted significance or should be deemed to be deserving of recognition (being important, but not necessarily widely known). For schemes focused on a particular area, local significance may be an important factor (see pp. 41–42).

There are a range of methods for establishing the worth of an individual proposal – for establishing a sense of the history and achievements of the person, group, institution or event, their level of significance, and their enduring legacy or reputation. Some will vary with the case in hand,

but many are generic and useful time and time again. Adaptation is an important part of all historical research, but – in dealing with plaque suggestions – it can be useful to build up a regular approach to sources, ensuring that cases are dealt with fairly and consistently.

Where a proposal concerns a historical person, perhaps the best first port of call is the *Dictionary of National Biography*. This invaluable reference work was first established in 1882, and was published in 63 volumes between 1885 and 1900; supplements were issued, generally each decade, throughout the twentieth century. In 2004, under the initiative of Oxford University Press, a revised *DNB* was published in print and online, the latter resource being updated three times each year. Available through libraries across the world, the *Oxford DNB* includes biographies of nearly 60,000 figures connected with Britain or British history. Entries, written by experts in their fields, give information including dates of birth, marriage and death, parentage and education, and are notable for their accuracy on such basics as a person's vital dates; some are revisions of earlier *DNB* biographies, while others are newly written. A reference section at the bottom of each biography sets out primary and secondary source material together with details of relevant archives, likenesses, and wealth at death, and a number of entries feature portraits from the National Portrait Gallery. It should be noted that, in addition to individual figures, the *Oxford DNB* sometimes takes in groups, such as the Vorticists (a group of artists and writers active in 1914–19).

The information provided by the *Oxford DNB* will often be of great use in researching a plaque proposal, and the inclusion of a person in the dictionary can, in itself, be telling. However, despite the expansion of the resource over the last ten years, there are still notable absences, with some people of historical interest or importance not being featured. Where relevant entries are included, it should be noted that – concentrating on the chronology of a person's life – they may not provide a strong sense of a person's overall legacy or reputation.

In this regard, they do not replace full-length, published **biographies and biographical studies**, the forewords, introductions and conclusions of which can be especially useful in gaining a sense of overall significance, providing pithy assessments of worth and often including quotations from notable

people. Where there are a range of biographies, it is worth consulting as many as possible; writing styles have changed over time, and the most recent in date are not necessarily the most thorough or valuable. A useful means for establishing the range and dates of biographies and related studies is to search the British Library's Integrated Catalogue, while many articles and other works may be included in the online Bibliography of British and Irish History (BBIH), hosted by the Royal Historical Society and the Institute of Historical Research and available on a subscription basis. Again, as with the *Oxford DNB*, the publication – or otherwise – of biographical studies can in itself be telling; subjects who have been studied on a number of occasions, over a long period of time, often have more long-term relevance to the public at large.

In addition to individual biographies and biographical studies, there are general sources which might be of use. For instance, for the nineteenth century, there is Frederic Boase's multi-volume *Modern English Biography* (first published in 1892-1921), which includes 30,000 short memoirs of notable people who died between 1851 and 1900. More comprehensive is the *British Biographical Index*, the most recent edition of which was published in eight volumes in 2008. This – the key to the British Biographical Archive – represents a cumulation of hundreds of reference works published in English between 1601 and 1929, and has been digitised as part of the World Biographical Information System Online. Both the index and the archive are available in references libraries, including the British Library.

The reference work **Who's Who** – published annually by A&C Black since 1897 – is another useful source of information on noteworthy and influential individuals. This compilation of short autobiographical entries – based on information supplied by the subjects themselves – sets out key dates, details of education, career, publications, honours and recreations. At regular intervals, entries are amassed into retrospective volumes entitled **Who Was Who**, first published in 1920. *Who's Who* and *Who Was Who* are generally more comprehensive in their coverage than the *Oxford DNB*, and include individuals from across the world. Like many other reference works, they are now available online on a subscription basis.

In terms of establishing a sense of a person's achievements and reputation, it is always worth consulting **obituaries**, especially those of *The Times*, which can be viewed online via library websites

(with an up-to-date subscription). The Times Digital Archive covers the dates 1785 to 1985, while – for figures of an earlier generation – there is also the *Gentleman's Magazine*, the first 20 volumes of which (covering the years 1731-50) are available via the website of the Bodleian Library, Oxford. Other obituaries in newspapers can be easily located via the British Library's British Newspapers website – which includes around 50 papers dating from between 1800 and 1900, and is free through many library subscriptions – and the Newspaper Archive website, which allows users to search newspapers from all over the world, dating from 1753 to the present day.

The **internet** has revolutionised historical research, and – when looking into a plaque proposal – a general search almost always bears results. An especially wide-ranging and informative resource is Wikipedia, the online encyclopaedia created in 2001; this includes over three million articles, taking in people, institutions, events, buildings and many other subjects from across the world. However, as anyone with web access can add or edit entries, the content should be taken with a pinch of salt and, if necessary, verified through other sources (such as the *Oxford DNB* and the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, which is also available online).

The range of additional **reference works** available will depend on the profession, subject area and chronological period of the plaque proposal, and may be extensive. For example, with regard to sculpture, the widely accepted reference work is Rupert Gunnis's *Dictionary of British Sculptors, 1660-1851*, first published in 1951 and recently expanded and reissued by Yale University Press; this includes sculptors active in Britain during the period, regardless of their nationality. For the fine arts as a whole, the *Grove Dictionary of Art* will be useful, even though coverage is far from exhaustive; this runs to 34 volumes, and can be viewed online with an active library subscription. An associated resource is the 29-volume *Grove Dictionary of Music* (also available online), while for researching architects useful sources include H. M. Colvin's *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600-1840* (first published 1952) and the *Directory of British Architects 1834-1914* (London and New York, 2001), edited by Antonia Brodie *et al.* Meanwhile, for business leaders active between 1860 and 1980, there is the five-volume *Dictionary of Business Biography* (London, 1984-86), edited by David J. Jeremy. Also of general use is *The Oxford Companion to Black British History* (Oxford, 2007), edited by David Dabydeen, John Gilmore and Cecily Jones.

Specific **archives and libraries** can be invaluable, including those of the Royal Institute of British Architects, the Royal College of Physicians, the Royal Academy, the Victoria & Albert Museum, the Royal Geographical Society, the Wellcome Trust, the Royal Aeronautical Society, the Royal Horticultural Society, the Imperial War Museum, the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, the Institution of Civil Engineers, and the British Film Institute. The libraries of such institutions – generally based in London – are often able to provide information including obituaries, biographical studies and assessments.

If the proposal is connected with a particular geographical area, as will usually be the case, it will always be worth consulting the relevant **local record office or archive centre** (a useful list appears on the ARCHON page of The National Archives). The subject under investigation may well be mentioned in published local histories, and the record office may have relevant biographical collections, newspaper cuttings, obituaries and other information.

In many cases, once basic details have been established, it will be necessary to critically examine the continuing relevance of a person, group, institution or event proposed for commemoration, in order to assess the longevity of their contribution. As the selection criteria are likely to make clear, not all historical subjects – regardless of their importance at the time – may be worthy of being perpetuated into the present and future.

A sense of continuing interest and longevity of significance – looking both at the present and into the future – can be gleaned by posing some or all of the following questions:

- Has a biography or historical study been published recently?
- Has the person, group, institution or event formed the subject of an exhibition, theatre production, conference, etc., or have they been featured in recent programmes on radio or television?
- Have they been commemorated with a memorial such as a statue, or (somewhere across the country) by a plaque?
- Has a building, museum, institution, lecture series, award or similar been named in their honour?

- Has a society been founded to promote their work?
- Are their works still in print or available on CD/DVD?

In all cases, the following questions should be kept in mind:

- Is a plaque really appropriate?
- Is it deserved, or would the subject be better commemorated in a different way? (see boxed text on p. 35).

The consideration of such issues, and the consultation of some or all of the sources outlined above, will build up a picture about each proposal, and about its worth for a plaque. They will provide – or help to provide – dates of birth and death, a list of achievements, and a sense of overall significance, legacy and reputation. Depending on the selection criteria in force, this information may be enough to make a decision about whether a plaque is appropriate or not, and to inform the inscription of such a plaque. In other instances, however, further information may be needed.

Personal contact with **experts** can be valuable in this regard. Biographies are, of course, intended as general summaries of a person's life and career. An expert can draw upon this information to form an opinion as to whether or not a plaque seems appropriate, judging by the selection criteria. Having a sense of the wider picture can also be important – it is one thing to know about a person's life in detail, and another to know how that person fits within a wider historical context. Experts on a whole field, or chronological period, should be able to place relevant subjects in order of importance and priority, suggesting how they relate to each other. They may make clear, for instance, that one person was a pioneer, and that others built on those foundations. This can be a very useful exercise for plaques in towns and cities – with which many figures from a particular profession may be associated – and for schemes which focus on groups of people linked by their careers.

There are a number of ways to identify and contact experts: most obvious are the authors of biographies (including *Oxford DNB* entries) and relevant publications, who can generally be contacted via their publishers. Freelance authors/experts may have their own websites,

while others are likely to form part of academic departments or specialist societies, institutions or libraries. Where relationships with such experts are established, they can prove useful and rewarding over a period of years, and can be another means of achieving consistency of approach and wider engagement.

HISTORICAL RESEARCH INTO BUILDINGS AND SITES FOR COMMEMORATION

The level of research involved in this part of the plaque process will vary, depending on the selection criteria in operation. Some schemes (including that run by English Heritage) will only commemorate the actual building connected with a person, group, institution or event, while others are happy to mark the building's site. Some will only award one plaque per person – meaning that all addresses have to be looked into and assessed before a plaque can be erected – while others are happy to honour particular subjects with numerous plaques, meaning that research for each case can be more focused (and, in general, less time-consuming). In all instances, however, a certain amount of investigation will be involved.

At the most basic level, research will seek to prove and illuminate the connection between a building and the subject of the plaque proposal. This is important, as traditions about the associations of particular buildings are not always based on fact. The type and range of sources used will vary with the period concerned. In general, the earlier the date, the more difficult it will be to establish a connection beyond doubt, especially where the selection criteria insist that the commemorated building must be authentic (rather than marking its site). Many documents have simply not survived, particularly in certain geographical areas, such as Coventry and Portsmouth, which were heavily bombed in the Second World War.

It should be noted that, especially where the selection criteria allow the commemoration of figures still living, **oral history** may play a part. Speaking to friends and relatives of the person concerned – or even to the person themselves – can be an invaluable way of finding out about their former homes and workplaces. However, it is not wise to accept such testimony as evidence in itself and therefore justification to place a plaque on a specific building; memories can be deceptive, and long-held beliefs may prove to be untrue (see boxed text on p. 58). Instead, such accounts should be used as a research tool, and should always be backed up by other evidence.

Generally, there are two ways in which to carry out research into possible buildings and sites for commemoration. The first is to start with a building, and to look into its history. The second is to start with a person, group, institution, event or historical site, and to seek to identify one or more addresses associated with them.

TRACING THE GENERAL HISTORY OF A BUILDING

Identification of a particular building immediately opens up a large number of possible sources, most based on the history of architecture, towns or areas. A brief summary of sources is given here; for more extensive information, it will always be best to visit the local archive centre and/or relevant libraries.

Published sources which are categorised geographically include:

- The **Pevsner Architectural Guides** (Buildings of England, Scotland, etc.) (Fig. 31). This series of guides was begun in 1951 by the architectural historian Sir Nikolaus Pevsner (1902-83), and continues to be revised and expanded on a regular basis. Guides are generally arranged by county, although there are also city guides (for instance, those covering Bath and Liverpool). It should be noted that the guides include a selection of buildings – rather than everything in an area – and detail surviving buildings only. Information is, in general, focused on the architecture (architect, style, date, and so forth), rather than the occupancy or social history.

- The **Victoria County History** series, founded in 1899 and still active today. These volumes are arranged by county, although not all areas are covered, as yet. Unlike the Pevsner guides, the VCH may include information on demolished buildings, and can be explicit about social history (ownership, use, and so forth). Still, approach and coverage are both inconsistent, and the indexes can be difficult to navigate. Most of the VCH volumes are available to view via British History Online (see p. 156).
- For the capital, there is the **Survey of London**, founded in 1894 and now run by English Heritage. These well-illustrated volumes are arranged by area/parish, and provide detailed architectural information on buildings of all types, including those which have been demolished. Particularly useful for the plaque researcher are the lists of occupants of particular buildings, with dates, which are often given. It should be noted, however, that coverage of the city is not complete, work continuing all the time, and that some of the volumes – especially those published in the early twentieth century – are somewhat out of date. Most of the volumes are available on the internet via British History Online.

Other sources include the inventories and other studies – arranged by area or building type – published by the RCHME and English Heritage, list descriptions (available online; see p. 103), and specific area histories, studies and records, generally available at local record offices and archive centres.

Also worth consulting are local authority records, generally known as **Building Control records**, which constitute planning documentation. Since 1858, it has been a requirement that plans accompany applications for new buildings and conversions or additions, and many such documents – with associated drawings and correspondence – survive, generally in the hands of the local planning authorities concerned or in local archive centres. Some have been placed online; for instance, those associated with Plymouth (on the website of Plymouth City Council). Such documents can be invaluable in illuminating the history of a building, and may also detail ownership. In addition, there may be Building Act case files – which may include house plans and elevations – and drainage and sewage



31 The Pevsner Architectural Guide to Shropshire, published in 2006.

Courtesy of Yale University Press

plans. Maps are a particularly valuable source – at least in terms of establishing the footprint of a building – and are discussed below (see pp. 61–62), together with means of establishing occupancy.

Archive collections across the country can be searched via the Access to Archives (A2A) website hosted by The National Archives, while information at a national level is represented by English Heritage's National Monuments Record (NMR). This includes information on thousands of sites, including articles, photographs, drawings, plans and specialist reports, many of which are listed on the NMR's PastScape website. Further information of this sort is held by local and

MEMORIES CAN BE DECEPTIVE

When carrying out research to identify a suitable address for a plaque, it is wise to use caution in relying upon non-official sources, such as personal reminiscences, and to always make site visits. The case of the detective novelist Agatha Christie (1890-1976), who occupied at least seven different addresses in London, offers a cautionary tale to anyone embarking on plaque research. In her autobiography, published in 1977, Christie made clear her affection for one house above all others – 48 Sheffield Terrace, Kensington – where she lived with her second husband, the archaeologist Max Mallowan, from 1934 to 1941. However, a site visit to the address raised doubts, for number 48 did not match her description of the property. Subsequent consultation of electoral registers and Post Office directories revealed that Christie had, in fact, lived at 58 Sheffield Terrace (see Fig. 37). On inspection, number 58 proved to be a double-fronted house with a central staircase, just as she had described. Further corroboration was provided by Christie's daughter, and it was surmised that Agatha had probably confused the number of the Sheffield Terrace house with one of her other addresses in London, either 47-48 Campden Street, Kensington, or 48 Swan Court, Chelsea.

national Historic Environment Records (HERs) or Sites and Monuments Records (SMRs). For more on these and related resources, visit the Heritage Gateway website (see p. 157), which is hosted by English Heritage, the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC) and the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers (ALGAO).

CONNECTING A PERSON WITH AN EXISTING BUILDING

A different approach to research is to look at a person first, and to try and establish a link between that individual and a particular address. Once the link has been established, its precise length and importance can be ascertained. This work naturally focuses initially on biographical rather than architectural sources. All of the material set out above (see pp. 53-56) remains relevant – including the *Oxford DNB*, obituaries and biographies – though it is worth noting that details given about addresses in biographical works can be misleading or inaccurate and will require substantiation. Further information could be provided by autobiographies, contemporary letters (both published and manuscript), and surviving family members or experts.

It should be noted that – as with renumbering and renaming (see pp. 64-65) – care should be taken when dealing with people with a common name, such as John Smith or Mary Jones. Effort should be made to establish that the person identified is, in fact, the subject of the research – for instance, by checking their age or place of birth.

Letters and other manuscript records can be located via the National Register of Archives (NRA), maintained by The National Archives' Historic Manuscripts Commission, and through ArchiveGrid, while **family members** can usually be reached through biographers, experts and specialist societies. In most instances, such people are pleased to be of help and to be consulted about a planned commemorative plaque; they can be useful contacts for an unveiling ceremony, should a case reach that point. However, experience has shown that people's memories can be deceptive (see boxed text), and it is good practice to verify an assertion about a particular address with information set out in records, such as letters or those mentioned below.

Who's Who and **Who Was Who** (see p. 54) are a useful source; these volumes list a person's address at, respectively, the time of compilation/publication or at the time of their death. Meanwhile, addresses at those crucial moments of people's lives – birth, marriage and death – will (where they took place in England and Wales after 1837) be recorded in registers. Excerpts from these documents, in the form of **certificates**, are available (at a cost) from the General Register Office or the local register office where the event took place, though index references are needed to place an order; indexes can be searched online via sites such as Ancestry. It should be noted that the original registers are those held in the local offices, and these are known to be significantly more reliable and accurate than the national, consolidated registers which are held centrally and on which the online indexes are based.

For birth and death, certificates will list the address concerned, as well as the address of the person registering the details. This means that, where someone was born or died at a hospital, their residential address may also be recorded, depending on the nature of the informant. For marriage, the addresses of both bride and groom will be recorded on the certificate, along with the details of where and when they were married (Fig. 32). As evidence regarding residences, certificates should be treated with caution. Information given is not always reflective of the true facts, and can be misleading;

192. 40. Marriage solemnized at the Parish Church of All Saints, Penarth in the County of Glamorgan

No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
12	Nov 23 rd	Guy Penrose Gibson	22	Bachelor	Flight Lieut R.A.F.	The Grange, Welwyn, Essex	Alexander James Gibson	Civil Servant
	192. 40	Evelyn Mary Moore	28	Spinster	—	21 Archer Road, Penarth	Ernest Edward Moore	Aviation Engineer

Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Church of Wales by Ernest E. Moore or after Banns by him.

This Marriage was solemnized between us, Guy Penrose Gibson and Evelyn Mary Moore in the Presence of us, Ernest E. Moore and Thomas James Wilson.

32 This marriage certificate dates from 1940 and records the marriage – and addresses – of the RAF fighter pilot Guy Gibson (1918-44) and Evelyn Mary Moore.

for instance, where couples wanted to conceal their marriage from their families, they may have arranged a temporary lodging in a particular parish, away from that of their family homes. With this in mind, evidence should be used to build up an overall picture, and should be confirmed by other documents.

Wills are another source that can be useful in linking a person to a building, and in illuminating the descent of property. The Church of England was responsible for wills from the medieval period until 1858; of the several Church courts, the most prestigious was the Prerogative Court of Canterbury (PCC; covering the south of England), the records of which are held at The National Archives. For courts other than the PCC, The National Archives also holds death duty registers (series IR26); these are available online for the period 1796-1811. They can add to the information found in wills, and are often easier to interpret. It is, however, important to remember that not all wills survive and, where they do, that they mainly relate to wealthy men. In order to locate a will, you will generally need to know the name of the person and when they died, though you can now search The National Archives' collections online. Since 1858, wills have been registered by the Principal Probate Registry, which has a London search room (the Principal Registry Office) and a name index from 1858 to the present; local Probate Registries usually have indexes covering at least the last 50 years.

It is always worth thinking carefully about **where a person's address may have been recorded**, at various points in their lives. Sources could include records held by schools, universities, libraries, judicial courts, the Inns of Court, the armed

forces, and specialist institutions, societies and companies. For instance, exhibitors at the Royal Academy of Arts provided details of their studio or place of residence. Information covering the years 1769-1970 has been published in the form of the following two works (each of four volumes): Algernon Graves, *The Royal Academy of Arts: A Complete Dictionary of Contributors and their work from its foundation in 1769 to 1904* (Trowbridge and London, 1905-6), and *Royal Academy Exhibitors: 1905-1970* (Calne, 1985). Records of this type are usually still vested in the organisations concerned – for instance, the British Museum has an archive relating to members of its library – although official records, including those of the judicial courts and the armed forces, are usually held by The National Archives.

If a person was a writer, musician or artist, it can be useful to consider works which were produced during the years under consideration. The early (or even final) versions of such works may include notes providing details of an address. For instance, a typescript copy of Jomo Kenyatta's *Facing Mount Kenya* (c.1937), in the collections of his family, has the address 95 Cambridge Street (in London) handwritten on the inside cover. With other evidence, this helped to prove Kenyatta's residence at the address, which was marked with an English Heritage blue plaque in 2005 (see Fig.73). As this example shows, a broad range of research tools can be particularly useful where the subject was not a British citizen, and was therefore unlikely to be listed in the sources outlined below.

Of particular use for plaque research of all types are **historical directories**. These began in the eighteenth century, but only provided detailed information from around the 1840s. The format

USING PRIMARY SOURCES

The importance of carrying out full research is well illustrated by the plaque to the actor Eric Portman (1903-69), put up by Halifax Civic Trust in 1997. This was installed at 20 Chester Road, Akroydon, Boothtown, and proclaimed the house to be Portman's birthplace. However, in the run up to the fortieth anniversary of the actor's death, local historian David Glover decided to look further into Portman's life. Simply by obtaining a copy of the birth certificate he discovered a number of important facts: that Eric was born in 1901 rather than 1903 (the date given in sources such as the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*), that his middle name was Harold rather than Harrison, and – crucially – that he was born at 71 Chester Road, rather than number 20. It was only later, after 1908, that the Portman family moved to the latter address, a fact confirmed by the 1901 census. Very often, actors were creative self-publicists, taking years off their age and giving incorrect information about their places of origin. For instance, Greer Garson (1904-96) – born in east London – claimed to be four years younger and to hail from Ireland, while David Niven (1910-83), born in Belgravia, London, stated that he was from Scotland. Thus, such cases call for special care.

and coverage of directories varies with geographical area and publisher – they are generally more useful for urban areas. In their fully fledged form, directories usually list addresses on a street-by-street basis, providing details of occupants (or sometimes owners) (Fig. 33). They also include alphabetical lists of private residents (continuing to do so until c.1970) and businesses. The most successful publisher of directories was Frederic Festus Kelly, who compiled his works with the aid of the Post Office; initially covering London and the south of England, Kelly's directories expanded to the north of the country in the middle of the nineteenth century.

There are points to bear in mind about directories: they were not always updated every year; may not list all occupants/addresses; do not include short-term visitors, and can be inconsistent in their coverage. However, on the whole, they are an invaluable resource, providing a history, year by year, of the occupancy and status of particular buildings and streets. Additionally, the alphabetical lists by street enable the researcher to gain a fuller grasp of a building's physical context at a given time; for instance, they usually mention the intersections between roads, and the positions of pubs and post boxes. The lists of private residents often enable the researcher to start

with only a person's name, and to end with an overall picture of that person's various addresses – for a given period, if not for their entire lifetime. Using the list of businesses and trades, a similar exercise can be undertaken for places of work. Some directories have been published online (see p. 157), but the most comprehensive reference sets are available at local record offices, generally on microfilm.

Directories become even more effective when used in combination with four other sources: census returns, rate books, electoral registers, and Ordnance Survey maps. The **national census** has been taken every ten years since 1801, although only contains detailed information from the mid-nineteenth century. There is, for reasons of data protection, a 100-year closure act covering the documents, which means that – at the time of writing – the returns available in full date from 1901 and earlier. It should be noted that the census of 1841 is far less detailed than later returns, and that of 1911 has been only partially released; it will be available in full from January 2012. Census returns provide a snapshot of a particular address on a particular

<p>Commercial street, Whitechapel (E.), 105 Whitechapel High street (Nos. 3 to 161 & 2 to 152 are in Borough of STEPNEY & after 161 to the end are in Borough of SHOREDITCH). MAP OS, P 8, P 9.</p> <p>WEST SIDE.</p> <p>1 Gresham Life Assurance Society Ltd 5 Van Praagh Benjamin, loan office 5 Straker John, stencil cutter 5 Ginsburg Henry, job buyer 7 & 13 Green Green Arthur, grocer 9 Topilowsky & Shapiro, hebrew bookellers 11 Phillips Mrs. Leah & Co. wholesale clothiers 13 & 7 Green Green Arthur, grocer 15 Shara Harris, tailors' trimmings 15 Trounman Myer Carew, artificial teeth maker 17 Klunder August, hairdresser 19 Sampson Misses Rebecca & Rosa, milliners 21 Farrow Arthur, Hastings, vet. surron 25 & 30 Wholesale Fittings Co. Ltd 27 Millhoff J. & Co. Ltd, cigrette. mkr 29 & 31 Greenlees Bros. whisky distillers 33 Taylor Daniel & Sons, wine & spirit merchants 35 Rose Edward John & Co. wine & spirit merchants 37 Wright & Greig Lim. whisky mers 37 Rylands & Sons Lim. shirt manfrs 39 & 41 Victoria Homes, Percy Grugeon, genl. managr ... here is Wentworth street ... 43 Van Oestren Michael, cigar manfr 43 Dare, Stockman & Co. cigar imprs Jens' Infant School</p>	<p>129 May Alfred Q. fruit salesman 131 Bunting & Maskell, fruit salm ... here is White Lion street ... Peabody Donation Fund Dwellings 135, 137 & 155 Anderson James T. & Sons Lim. sack manfrs 135 & 155 Marendaz & Fisher, russiamat importers 137 Anderson Jas. T. & Sons Lim. horticultural sundriesmen 139 Gardner James, scale maker 141 Schorr Morris, boot maker 143 Goldstein Isaac, auctioneer 143 Cloake Miss Mary Elizabeth, teacher of music 147 & 149 Silverstone Philip & Son, tailors 151 Sowerbutts Thomas Henry & Son, fishing tackle makers 153 Trubitsky Jacob, newsagent 155 Cohen Nathan, hairdresser 155 Trubitsky Jacob, restaurant 155, 135 & 137 Anderson James T. & Sons Lim. sack manfrs 155 & 135 Marendaz & Fisher, russiamat importers 157 Osman & Co. Ltd, horticultural sundriesmen ... here is Fleur-de-Lis street ... POLICE STATION ... here is Elder street ... 161 Clarke George Henry & Co. leather merchants 161 Burr W. J. & Co. writers & grains 161 Orfeur Chas. E. Ltd, joinery mfrs 167 Singer Isaac, tobacconist</p> <p>EAST SIDE. 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 & 12 Venables T. & Sons Limited, linendrapers 14 Halperin Solomon, hosier London County Council School</p>
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33 Of particular use for plaque research of all types are historical directories. These often list addresses on a street-by-street basis, providing details of occupants (or sometimes owners). This example dates from 1910, and covers London.

night, showing all the people then in residence or staying over. As their content is so specific to a point in time, they are not always a reliable means of providing general information about residents and building uses, but remain an invaluable source. Census returns list name, age, marital status, relationship to the head of household, occupation and place of birth. They are available on CD-ROM, on microfilm at record offices, and online (at a charge) via websites such as Ancestry and that of The National Archives.

It should be noted that, where information is not provided by directories and census returns, **rate books** can be extremely useful. Although these tend to be particularly relevant for earlier periods (see below, p. 63), they continued to exist in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. An associated source is **valuation books**, which date predominantly from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; produced every five years, they list properties, the names of the people responsible for them (usually the occupiers), and an approximate value. Such documents, where they survive, will generally be held by the local archives centre.

Electoral registers were produced annually from 1832, after the Reform Act, though it should be noted that most women were only awarded the right to vote in parliamentary elections in 1918, and universal suffrage was introduced ten years later. A fair proportion of men had also been excluded, though all men over the age of 21 were given the right to vote from 1918. A reliable source of information – related to poll books (see p. 64) – electoral registers list occupiers eligible to vote. In terms of plaque research, a connection between person and address must already be established for the register entry to even be located – in general, there are no indexes by name, books being arranged by area and, within that (from the early 1900s), by street. Electoral registers are most useful in establishing how long a person lived at a particular address and, in doing this, they work particularly well alongside directories and rate books; care should be taken to note the exact date that the electoral register was compiled. It should be borne in mind that each person was usually only allowed to be registered at one particular address for a given year, so the documents tend to indicate a primary residence; they will generally not record places of work.

Ordnance Survey maps have been produced at a large scale, in various editions, since the mid-nineteenth century (Fig. 34). These were generally produced at 25 inches to 1 mile (1:2500), although some towns and cities were additionally represented in maps of 5 ft to 1 mile (1:1056) and 10 ft to 1 mile (1:500). Using such maps alongside directories can help to build up a fuller picture of a street at a particular time – the directories set out the numbers and occupants of individual buildings, the intersections of roads, etc., while the maps show you how those buildings were laid out. Paper copies of OS maps are widely obtainable (a local archive centre should be the first port of call), and there are also digital versions – usually with a charge attached – from services such as the Landmark Historical Maps Pack, the Digital Historic Map Archive, the Digital Archives Association and British History Online.

A comparison of different editions of OS maps can be extremely illuminating, showing how a footprint of a building and its wider context have changed over time. OS maps can also be compared with historic photographs and



34 Ordnance Survey maps have been produced at a large scale since the 1860s and 1870s. This excerpt from a map of 1869 shows streets around Holloway Road, Islington, London; it is drawn at a scale of 1:2500.



35 Buildings in British towns and cities, particularly those in commercial and industrial areas, may be included in the detailed Goad Fire Insurance Plans, produced between the 1880s and 1970 by the firm of Charles E. Goad Ltd. This example shows part of the Old Kent Road in London; the map dates from 1903, with revisions of 1952 and 1967.

illustrations (see p. 67) – an invaluable source of information about the appearance of streets and buildings, both externally and internally – and other types of maps, where they survive. For instance, the detailed **Goad Fire Insurance Plans**, produced between the 1880s and 1970 by the firm of Charles E. Goad Ltd (Fig. 35). These cover British towns and cities (principally commercial and industrial areas), and were intended to help companies assess the risk of fire. They are less extensive than OS maps, but are at a larger scale (40 ft to 1 inch; 1:480), and can give structural details such as the number of storeys, the location of windows, and the building material. Copies are held at local archive centres across the country and in the Map Room of the British Library.

Maps of England and Wales were also produced as part of the **tithe apportionments** created following the Tithe Commutation Act of 1836, which remained in force until 1858. A tithe was a tax on the profits from farming, and therefore is of particular relevance to buildings in rural areas. Apportionments consist of a map showing the properties liable to tithes (series IR30 in The National Archives) and an apportionment schedule (series IR29). The schedules detail ownership and

occupancy, and give a brief description of the land or premises. Coverage is notable in being national in scope. These documents can be consulted not only at The National Archives but also at relevant local archive centres.

Another national source worth bearing in mind is the **Valuation Office Survey** of 1910-15, which – initiated by the Finance Act of 1909-10 – aimed to find out the value of property across England and Wales; it is sometimes known as ‘the new Domesday’. Maps were produced, on which property units were each assigned a number (series IR121 and IR124-35 in The National Archives). Data was then entered in bound field books (series IR58 in The National Archives); it generally included the names of owners and occupiers, and sometimes descriptions of a property, sketch plans and even construction dates. Approaches to the information were not consistent, and not all documents survive. However, the survey is a major tool in illuminating properties in the early twentieth century.

For the later part of the 1900s, the records of the **Land Registry** really come into their own. Founded in 1862, the Registry details land transfers,

though the deposit of records was not compulsory until the later twentieth century. Where they exist, records – available online – include information on sales and may include ownership history and maps/plans.

USING SOURCES OF THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY AND EARLIER

As will be seen, the most useful sources for detailed address research date from the 1840s and later. It can be very challenging to prove a connection with a building before that date, and a search often relies upon a good grasp of historic handwriting, especially that dating from before c.1700. Online palaeography tutorials are available (such as that on the website of The National Archives) and can help enormously, though it is worth remembering that most official documents pre-1733 were in Latin (except during the Interregnum in the 1650s). A search also depends upon the survival of documents.

1814	1821	1825
Henborough	Geo Chester	1. Japhet Warwick
Thos Stevens	Alto Gibbon	2. Wm Pope
J. Cope	Chas Rugg	3. Jm Scott
S. Warrington	Wm Rugg	4. Chas Gauding
F. Stone	Wm Rugg	5. Jm Bouverie
W. G. Farman	Geo Rugg	6. Art Waller
Thos Gresty	Wm Rugg	7. Jm Bouverie
Jm Croker	Wm Rugg	8. Chas Windeller
Wm Campion	Wm Rugg	9. Wm George
Jm Thick	Chas Everett	10. Jm Bouverie
M. C. DeCoster	Chas Windeller	11. Sam Crossley
Sam Reel	Art Windeller	12. Penicely
	Hy Brown	13. Am York
	Thos Rugg	14. Hy P. Hurler
	Jm Glemmy	15. Andrew Miller
	Jm Rugg	16. Reed, Mudge
		17. Rich. Kope
		18. Bathie Bouch
		19. Jm Wallis
		20. Hy Lynam
		21. Wm Glemmy
		22. Rev E. Paulson
		23. Jm Glemmy
		24. Wm Taylor
		25. Peter Bouch

36 These notes, taken as part of preparation of a Survey of London volume, use local rate books to trace early nineteenth-century occupants of Northampton Square, Clerkenwell.

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Local **rate books** can be extremely useful, especially in combination with sources such as letters and early directories, and – on account of their official nature – tend to be highly reliable (Fig. 36). Although rate books go back to the 1590s, surviving examples date mainly from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; they record the payment of rates levied on occupiers or owners by local authorities to fund public services. Where they survive (in local archive centres), documents – produced every quarter – list occupants, the property number (from the nineteenth century onwards), the rateable valuation of the property, the amount of rate charged and the payments made; sometimes, they may also give information on the form of the property, and its use. The amounts can help to clarify a phase of rebuilding, as they may rise sharply, and give an idea of the relative size of properties in a street or area.

Comparable records include those of: the **land tax**, introduced in 1696 and abolished in 1963; the **hearth tax**, introduced in 1662 and repealed in 1689; and the **window tax**, charged on occupiers, which existed between 1696 and 1851. However, survival of such documents is far from complete, and – for plaque research – they are generally much less useful than other sources.

One such source is **title deeds**, which detail the transfer of land or property from one owner to another. These can be extremely illuminating, and may include items such as leases, copies of wills, site plans, estate maps and even house plans. It is always worth searching for such documents, but it should be noted that they are not always easy to find; although some are held by local archive centres and The National Archives, many remain in private hands. The location of title deeds can be greatly aided by indexes and by deeds registers, set up before the formation of the Land Registry, including the Middlesex Deeds Register of 1709-1936.

Comparable resources are **estate and manorial records**. The former may include sale catalogues, leases, plans and correspondence, while the latter – particularly important if a property is built on copyhold land – may include minute books, surveys and descriptions of property transactions. Where they survive, they are generally held by the local record office or archive centre, while others are in The National Archives (which has a manorial documents register, set up in 1926).

Poll books are another source worth bearing in mind. These date back to the late seventeenth century and record voters in parliamentary elections, usually providing details of addresses (or at least parishes); their survival, however, is patchy. In addition, address details may be found in **fire insurance records**, which date mainly from the eighteenth century to the 1850s and give the name, status, occupation and residence of the policyholder. Places of residence were, by the nineteenth century, also widely included in **parish records**, which detail baptisms, marriages and burials, though some earlier documents contain such information. Again, though, survival of such documents is far from complete, and coverage and approach may be somewhat inconsistent.

Maps of all sorts can provide welcome clues and information. There are a number of bird's eye views of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which show some buildings in elevation; for instance, James Millerd's map of Bristol, published in 1673, which was the first of the city to be based on a measured survey. There are also enclosure maps, connected with certain parliamentary acts; drawn at large-scale, these date mostly from before the mid-1800s, and concentrate on rural areas. There is an online catalogue of the maps which survive (see p. 157), and an associated book, *The Enclosure Maps of England and Wales, 1595-1918* (Cambridge, 2004), by Roger J. P. Kain, John Chapman and Richard R. Oliver.

In general, however, maps pre-dating the mid- to late nineteenth century lack detail. That said, there are notable exceptions, especially for towns and cities. For instance, the centre of Birmingham was depicted in a map by William Westley in 1731 and, between 1850 and 1855, was surveyed following concerns raised by the Board of Health regarding its sanitary condition; the results are known as the Pigott Smith map and can be viewed in the local archive centre. London was shown at large-scale in the maps produced in 1747 by John Rocque and in the 1790s by Richard Horwood (with later editions of 1807, 1813, 1819); the latter is particularly valuable in providing street numbers. These and several other early maps of London have been placed online, and are available on CD-ROM, from MOTCO (see p. 157). For the façades of buildings in London in the early nineteenth century (and house numbers), a unique source is John Tallis's *London Street Views, 1838-1840* (republished 1969).

RENUMBERING AND RENAMING

Once a link with a particular building has been established, the next step will be to identify it with a structure surviving today, or – where the selection criteria are more lenient – with a structure on its site. In very few cases can the 7 Panton Street (for example) of yesteryear be identified with the 7 Panton Street of today. Many buildings and streets have been renumbered, and sometimes renamed, especially in cities such as London, which have been continually expanded and redeveloped. It is vital that such changes are investigated in every case, to be sure a connection is correct and that the appropriate building is commemorated.

The unravelling of renumbering and renaming relies upon certain sources – in particular, rate books, street directories, census returns, electoral registers and large-scale maps – which generally date from the 1840s and later, though rate books extend back to the late sixteenth century (survival naturally being patchy for the early period). The starting point is, of course, the details of the address as they existed during the occupation of the subject under investigation.

In London, there is one publication which documents the history of renumbering and renaming within the key chronological period. This is the LCC's *Names of Streets and Places in the Administrative County of London*, produced in various editions between 1907 and 1955; it was based on a work of 1887 by the Metropolitan Board of Works (the predecessor of the LCC), and a supplement was issued by the GLC in 1967. The book lists all streets in the former county of London alphabetically, and generally gives a date for the directive (or order) which created a street's numbering and, where relevant, renumbering. A reference number is given which identifies a numbering or renumbering plan; these are held by the London Metropolitan Archives, and reveal what changes were made, showing (where relevant) both old and new numbering. The book also includes details of the changing of names; for instance, in the 1929 edition, there is an appendix entitled 'Abolished Street Names', giving former name, 'present name' and parish.

London is fortunate in having these resources, however. Although similar publications exist for a few areas – for instance, there is a volume detailing the renumbering of streets in Chelmsford, Essex, in 1922-75 – the process of identification will



THE HOME OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN?

The importance of checking for street renumbering and renaming became evident early on in the history of the London-wide plaque scheme. In 1869, the Society of Arts commemorated the American statesman and writer Benjamin Franklin (1706-90) at 7 Craven Street, south of the Strand (shown here). Franklin occupied this address, as the lodger of Mrs Margaret Stephenson, between 1757 and 1762, and again from 1764 to 1772. However, in 1903 the LCC uncovered evidence that the wrong house had been selected. Close comparison of the sequence of residents listed in rate books and street directories revealed that the numbering of Craven Street had been changed twice, and that number 7 survived as number 36. The Society of Arts was forced to admit its mistake publicly in 1913, when attempts were being made to save 7 Craven Street from demolition on account of its supposed historical associations. The LCC proceeded with its own plans to commemorate the correct house and erected a bronze plaque to Franklin at number 36 in 1914. For a time, until 7 Craven Street was redeveloped, the two plaques stood on opposite sides of the street, and must have been the source of some confusion and mirth.

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generally be more time-consuming. The best approach is to follow the chronology of the relevant address in historical directories (and, if necessary, electoral registers and rate books) – if not annually, then at regular intervals.

With regard both to directories and rate books, it can be extremely useful to note – in addition to the property under study – the details of those buildings nearby, in the same street (in particular, the names of occupants). Where one person's name changes, another may stay the same, showing that the numbering of the street overall has remained static (or, as may prove the case, has changed). Noting down the details of certain fixed elements in a street's geography – such as post boxes and pubs – can also prove useful. This analysis aims to achieve an overview of the history of a particular address, bringing it forward – as close as possible – to modern times; generally, it is sufficient to go up to the 1970s, for only a minority of buildings and streets have been renamed or renumbered after that date.

Maps can be a useful tool in this process. An analysis of historical directories and rate books, together with OS maps, may make it

possible to identify a building as it was during the occupation of the person under study. For instance, it may become clear that 7 Panton Street was three blocks south of the King's Arms public house, on the corner of Cavendish Street and Randolph Road. Consulting modern maps – or visiting the site – will clarify the details of the relevant property today (its number, the street name, etc.), although care should always be taken, in case a new building has been erected on an older site. Where a person occupied a house that, during their residence, had a name rather than a number, it can be particularly useful to visit the building concerned. A surprising amount of these original names survive, inscribed on façades or painted onto windows above front doors, serving to identify a building even where the details of the number and street may have changed.

VERIFYING AUTHENTICITY AND SELECTING A BUILDING FOR COMMEMORATION

The matter of choice in the selection of a building for commemoration will be greater for some than for others. It may be that, once a connection has been proven through research, the plaque suggestion is progressed to the next stage. In other instances, the outcomes of the research may be considered in depth before a decision is made about the location of a plaque. For instance, under the English Heritage scheme in London, which allows the erection of only one plaque per person, this element of consideration and selection is extremely important.

Where a person lived or worked at a number of properties, there are various means of weighing up one against another. The most obvious is the length of connection; a residence of many years is usually considered more significant than one of short duration. There are, however, other considerations. Questions which might be posed are:

- Was the person productive during their time at this address?
- Did they produce any notable works there, or did the address inspire/inform any such works?
- Were they happy during their time at the address?
- Who, if anyone, did they share the address with, and who visited them there?
- Did they have a long-standing connection with the area as a whole?
- How does the person's time at the address equate to their time in the town/city/country as a whole?
- Is the building easily visible from a public right of way, and will it be viewed by a broad range of people?

Important factors in favour of a particular building may include: the completion there of, say, a famous novel, symphony or painting; a significant meeting or encounter; and birth, marriage and death, which

are obviously key moments in a person's life. In such instances, a comparatively brief connection – even if it is of five months or less – may be viewed in a favourable light.

For this reason, English Heritage does not stipulate a minimum term of residence before commemoration is justified. Cases are considered on an individual basis, as patterns of residence are almost always unique. For a person who lived in London for 65 years, a one-year connection with a particular address may seem insignificant (with good reason). However, for a visitor to the city, who only spent two years in London overall, a residence of three months may have been crucial – for instance, to their experience of British culture, and to the development of their life and/or career overall (see boxed text). In certain related instances, a series of short visits to one particular address may also be viewed favourably. Under the English Heritage scheme, there is, for example, a plaque to

BRIEF ASSOCIATIONS

Where a residence was brief, it does not necessarily follow that it was insignificant. For instance, the revered French poets Paul Verlaine (1844-96) and Arthur Rimbaud (1854-91) lived for just over a month – between late May and early July 1873 – at 8 Royal College Street, Camden, London, but this period was of crucial importance within their lives and careers. It saw the death throes of their tempestuous relationship – which had scandalised society – and was captured in Rimbaud's poem *Un Saison en Enfer* (A Season in Hell; 1873), which has proved of enduring influence. In all, the couple spent just under a year in London, but number 8 is the only one of their residences to survive. It was marked with a rectangular stone plaque, privately erected, in 1954, the centenary of Rimbaud's birth.

© English Heritage





37 The process of selecting a building for commemoration may not always be straightforward. For instance, Agatha Christie had at least seven different London homes. That singled out for an English Heritage plaque was 58 Sheffield Terrace, Kensington, where she was both happy and productive.

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the Hungarian composer Béla Bartók (1881-1945), who stayed at 7 Sydney Place, South Kensington, at least a dozen times between 1922 and 1937.

The authenticity or architectural integrity of the various properties is an additional consideration. Under the London-wide blue plaques scheme, the general rule of thumb is that a building should be considered broadly recognisable to the person being commemorated. That is, it should not have been radically altered, though more modest changes made over the course of time are acceptable, such as the replacement of windows and doors, and the building of small-scale extensions. This stipulation emphasises the link between a person and a building, helps to champion its future preservation, and serves to inform passers-by about architectural history – the building commemorated being understood to pre-date the residence of the person or institution being honoured (see p. 36).

There are various means for establishing the appearance of a building at a relevant point in history, and thereby understanding the scale of rebuilding. The property could, for instance, be compared with other houses in the same street,

where differences should become obvious.

In terms of documentation, **historic photographs and illustrations** – where they survive – are the most valuable source, and can be compared with modern photographs to reveal levels of change (Fig. 38). Such photographs and illustrations are generally held by local archive centres and record offices, though it is also worth consulting national sources such as: The National Archives, the British Library, the NMR (some of the photos of which are on the ViewFinder website; see p. 158), professional institutions and libraries such as the RIBA, and picture libraries and archives such as the Mary Evans Picture Library, the Francis Frith collection and Getty Images (which includes the Hulton Archive); a full list is available through BAPLA.

As well as photographs and illustrations, detailed analyses of the history of a building are worth consulting (where they exist), as are list descriptions and specialist reports, while larger changes to a building may be captured on maps; a comparison of various editions of OS maps may well show that the footprint of a building has changed.



38 Historic photographs reveal whether or not a surviving structure has been altered over time, and can also help to identify the site of a building which has been lost through demolition. This photograph records Broomwood House (formerly Broomfield), Battersea, London, a residence of William Wilberforce (1759-1833), shortly before its destruction in 1904.

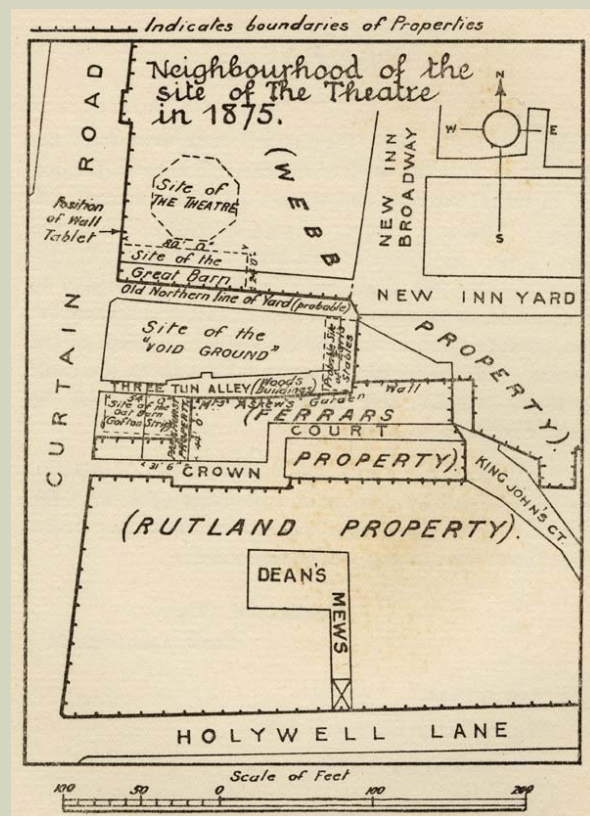
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The commemoration of **sites of buildings** is, as is discussed on page 40, not permitted under the English Heritage scheme. However, a limited number of such sites have been marked over the course of the scheme's history, and on the basis of this experience – and of that of other plaque schemes – it is clear that selecting an appropriate building for a plaque is not always a straightforward process. Identification of the precise site of the former building is likely to involve considerable research (see boxed text); this will draw heavily upon sources such as maps and rate books, and may require or be aided by archaeological and architectural investigation.

Sometimes, there may be an obvious contender for the plaque; usually, this will be the building closest to the site of the original structure, and perhaps incorporating fragments of it. However, where the site of an original structure is occupied by numerous smaller buildings, it can be difficult to single out one

IDENTIFYING A HISTORICAL SITE

When commemorating a site of a building, the location of the original structure is likely to involve considerable research. For instance, around the time of the First World War the LCC put a great deal of effort into identifying the site in Shoreditch of Holywell Priory, a twelfth-century foundation, and The Theatre, a sixteenth-century playhouse built on part of the priory precinct. This was enabled by the use of documents including leases, indentures, deeds, wills, letters and maps, and resulted in the production of a plan (shown here), which illustrated the probable location of the buildings in relation to the modern streetscape. One property – a showroom and warehouse at 86-90 Curtain Road, built in c.1892 – was then selected as the most appropriate place for the plaque, as the rear of the premises extended over part of the site concerned. The plaque, rectangular in shape and made of bronze, was erected in 1920 (see Fig. 30). Interestingly, nearly 90 years later (in 2008-9), the LCC's findings regarding the general position of the buildings were confirmed through archaeological excavation.



of these for commemoration. It may also result in competition between building owners, though the installation of more than one plaque should always be avoided, and a clear argument should be framed as to why one particular property has been selected. There are no hard-and-fast rules about approaching

such cases, but the process of selection may be aided by posing some of the following questions:

- Which of the buildings on the site is most visible from a public right of way?
- In terms of architectural design and structure, which of the buildings on the site is best suited to a plaque?
- Is the centre or entrance of the original property represented by one of the buildings on the site?
- Was there a particular room or area of the original building associated with the person, group or event, and is its location represented by one of the buildings on the site?

In all cases, a building should not be selected for commemoration simply because the owner concerned is keen to have the plaque. Although such enthusiasm greatly facilitates the process of gaining consents, the key consideration should be the identification of a building which is most appropriate in terms of the particular proposal in hand.

WRITING HISTORICAL REPORTS

In many instances, historical research for a plaque will be presented to a larger group of people – perhaps a committee – in the form of one or more written reports. These reports will include details of the findings, and may make certain recommendations; for instance, that a particular person and/or building is commemorated with a plaque, and the inscription that the plaque might bear.

The report, or reports, may be divided into two main sections: the first dealing with the subject of the proposal, about their importance and, where relevant, their life and achievements; the second focusing on the building that has been selected for commemoration, the reasons behind that choice, and recommendations about the position and

perhaps the inscription of the plaque. It can be efficient to treat these two sections as separate stages, an approach which has been followed for many years under the English Heritage scheme. The policy is that a decision in principle is taken on the worth of a proposal, based on a short report, before any detailed (and probably time-consuming) historical research is carried out.

Together with biographical details and a brief assessment of worth, such preliminary, **short reports** might include an initial suggestion about the plaque inscription (see pp. 88-90) and, where relevant, brief quotations from biographies or experts. If support has been given to the case by specific individuals or institutions, that might be mentioned. For a scheme of a larger scale, the report may also contain a summary of comparable cases, with details: subjects may have been rejected under the scheme, may be awaiting detailed research, may already have been honoured with plaques, or may not yet be eligible. The consideration of such information ensures that decisions are never made on an individual basis, but are informed by experience and previous practices. This helps to maintain overall consistency and standards and to ensure that only the most appropriate subjects are singled out for commemoration at a given time.

Where a proposal is agreed in principle, more detailed and focused research is likely to be carried out and this can be presented in the form of a **longer report**. A good approach would be to break this down into three parts:

- **One:** A summary, outlining the address that is being recommended for commemoration and the proposed inscription of the plaque.
- **Two:** A fuller account of the life/history and achievements of the subject than was given in the short report. This may be chronologically arranged, with a concluding paragraph providing a summary of the subject's overall significance and legacy.
- **Three:** Details of the address research. Based on the researcher's findings, a summary can be given of the buildings associated with the subject, with dates and further details. Reasons for the choice of a single building should then be set out, including information on the length and nature of the connection, and why it is deemed appropriate for

commemoration. Key information on the building can also be given; for instance, its date, architect (if known), whether or not it has been altered, whether it is listed (and, if so, at what grade), and whether it forms part of a conservation area. Typically, the report will end with a recommendation about where the plaque should be positioned on the building (see pp. 91-95), though this is confirmed or revised at a later stage, following wider consultation.

It should be noted that there is another possible function of this detailed report. It may be that, after the completion of research, it is found that there is no suitable building for commemoration – usually, under the English Heritage scheme, because a person's addresses have all been demolished or altered beyond recognition. In such cases, the report would outline the findings, which may prove of use for research into future cases.

As the chief record of a researcher's work, such reports are of great importance, informing the subsequent administrative process (for instance, the gaining of consents), the design and positioning of the plaque, and the preparation of a press release. As a report's usefulness will live beyond the installation of the plaque to which it relates, consideration should always be given as to how it is archived and indexed for future reference (see pp. 120-121). It may be that such reports prove an invaluable point of reference in cases where a plaque needs to be re-erected (and, perhaps, an alternative location chosen), or where a plaque is proposed to the same subject, but for another address. The content of such a report can also be used to inform press releases, publications, local history trails and other promotional material and activities, increasing the profile of the scheme overall (see pp. 130-139).

OUTCOMES OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH

On the completion of research for a plaque – and the consideration of one or more reports – certain key objectives should have been met, and particular questions will have been answered. These will vary in line with the relevant selection criteria, but are likely to include some or all of the following:

- The nature and importance of the proposed person, group, event, institution or site.
- The significance of their achievements at the time, and their legacy into the present and future.
- The nature of their association with a particular area.
- Considering these issues, their worth for commemoration – whether or not they are significant enough to warrant the installation of a plaque.
- The nature of the buildings associated with the proposed person, group, event, institution or site – their date, the length of the connection, and whether or not they survive.
- Whether those buildings have been renumbered, renamed or physically altered.
- Whether there is an existing building appropriate for commemoration with a plaque.
- A possible position and inscription for the plaque, including details such as correctly spelled names and accurate vital dates.

Before proceeding further, in whatever direction, it is essential to take time to consider the outcomes of this historical work, which – if fully and appropriately carried out – will prove invaluable to the whole plaque process.