

BEXHILL HERITAGE MEMBERS MEETING MINUTES
Thursday 2nd October 2025 7pm
At ST BARNABAS CHURCH, SEA ROAD, BEXHILL

Committee attending:

Steve Johnson	(SJ)	Chair/ outgoing Treasurer
Simon Allen	(SA)	Projects Coordinator
Alexis Markwick	(AM)	Deputy Chair/IT Support Officer/Historian
Yolanda Laybourne	(YL)	East Parade monitoring
Clive O'Brien	(COB)	Incoming Treasurer
Christina Muskin	(CM)	Membership officer
Edmund Bird	(EB)	Planning Officer

A minute's silence was observed for Derel Merkle founder of the Bexhill Mens Shed

- 1. APOLOGIES** – Lorraine Parkes, Jeanette Eason, Samantha Barber, Christine Nee, Andrea Etheridge, Angela Hart, Phil Howard-Knight, Robert Brown. Judith Fuhr, Margaret Hayles, Justin Walker, Caroline Cotterell. Lance and Alison Slade, Mike Barnard.
- 2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE APRIL MEETING:** No matters arising. Minutes were approved.

3. Conservation Area and draft local plan update. Steve Johnson

SJ explained that Rother District Council were working through Bexhill Heritage's proposals to extend the existing conservation area to include the De La Warr Estate.

Meanwhile the Neighbourhood Board had engaged consultants to produce a draft place plan. SJ had met with the consultants and was able to report that he had made a case for the restoration of heritage assets at risk including the West Station and Shelter 2. He had also promoted Bexhill Heritage's position on East Parade i.e. that it should retain its character free from commercial development or obstructions to the current open vistas. However, he had suggested that simple modifications such as pavement games, a heritage and / or dinosaur trail, and a maze or labyrinth could add interest especially for families with children.

The consultation was necessarily completed quickly – much of it during August – but the draft place plan was helpful overall and focused on the significance of heritage in developing a clearer 'sense of place' for the town.

SJ explained that the theme of the place plan would be 'Bringing Bexhill together'. To this end, much thought had been given to creating jobs, especially for young people, and for improving north / south communications. It was likely that Beeching Road would be further developed for housing and employment. There were also likely to be important enhancements for the town centre to make it a more attractive 'destination' and improve trade.

An early priority was likely to be the reinstatement of the Colonnade fountain.

SJ had been asked to contribute to the work of a proposed employment and skills sub-committee. His focus would be to promote the skills needed to upgrade and conserve Bexhill's Victorian and Edwardian homes.

SJ was asked to describe the composition of the Neighbourhood Board and likely time scales. SA explained that good work was already taking place at the Old Ambulance Station on Beeching Road.

4. Other updates

- **Shelter 3 seating**

Work to renovate and re-paint the benches in Shelter 3 was almost complete and would be completed by the end of the month – weather permitting.

- **Bus shelter renovations**

- A. The George Herbert Gray Memorial Shelter, De La Warr Road. SA reported that it had been difficult to find a suitable contractor to remove paint from brickwork, repair the roof and restore appropriate drainage. The contract had now been let to local builder, Lee Botting. Bexhill Heritage would complete 'cosmetic work' and produce an appropriate information board to describe the origins of the shelter and its history including its role as an air raid shelter.
- B. Shelter at the junction of Hastings Road and Third Avenue. Repairs had been made to the flat concrete roof which, as a result, was now waterproof. Icklesham Joinery have installed new windows to match the originals apart from the glazing which is now scratch-resistant polycarbonate. Work to remove old paint and repaint with more appropriate material has started. A mural is planned for the rear wall depicting a 1960s Maidstone and District single decker bus.

- **Tree Survey**

SJ reported that a survey of the streets in the proposed Eastern Conservation Area had been completed by a team of six Bexhill Heritage volunteers. A further session of the group had been arranged to study the history of street-tree provision in the area and agree a set of recommendations.

- **Plaques**

SJ thanked members who had already suggested names of those with Bexhill connections who might be commemorated with a 'blue plaque'. There was scope also to use plaques for significant buildings and to form part of a heritage trail. Rother District Council's Chief Planning Officer has given support for the scheme and planning permission will not be required. The next step is to meet with the Chair of the Bexhill Old Town Preservation Society and representatives of Bexhill Museum to establish a 'research and scrutiny group' to get the scheme underway.

4. Merchandise decisions. Make your choices. Lorraine Parkes

This item was deferred until the next meeting.

5. Christmas cards. Yolanda Laybourne

YL described the range of Christmas cards on offer this year. New for 2025 was a cartoon of Santa arriving at Shelter 4 kindly donated by Steve Hall. The popular 2024 card depicting a model of Egerton Park in the snow had been reprinted and was on sale in Bexhill Museum as well as being available from Bexhill Heritage.

Cards can be purchased at our next members' meeting on Thursday 27th November (3.30pm at St Barnabas Church) or at the Town Centre Xmas Market in the late afternoon / evening of Saturday 29th November.

Refreshments and raffle

6. Guest Speaker – Edmund Bird

Edmund gave a fascinating and detailed talk about the development of the London Underground and its many heritage buildings. He described some major successful restorations several of which he had led as part of his role with Transport for London.

Edmund answered questions from members on a range of subjects. John Gardner pointed out that some former London Transport rolling stock was preserved on the Kent and East Sussex Railway.

Edmund was thanked for his talk and for his critical role in achieving 'listed status' for Bexhill War Memorial.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS – None

DATE OF NEXT MEETING - Thursday 27th November – 3.30pm – ST BARNABAS CHURCH

Guest speaker will be Daryll Holter. Daryll's theme will be Heritage Crime.

SJ thanked everyone for attending. The meeting closed at 21.10