



BRISTOL BLUE PLAQUES SCHEME

What is a Blue Plaque?

“Blue Plaques” commemorate individuals, organisations or buildings. A plaque is placed on the part of a building with the best public visibility and gives enough basic information to inform the passer-by about the subject of commemoration and their connection to the site.

Bristol’s Blue Plaques increase awareness among both Bristolians and visitors about the city and its people. Plaques can celebrate figures who are well-known, but can also draw public attention to people whose contributions may have been overlooked, as well as to aspects of our history that are less widely known.

Plaques can provide a sense of recognition and inclusion, appeal to people of all ages and from all backgrounds, and add character and pride to a neighbourhood.

The Bristol Civic Society Blue Plaques Panel

Bristol’s Blue Plaques Scheme is administered by the Blue Plaques Panel of the Bristol Civic Society. The Panel can only consider blue plaques in the Bristol city boundaries, but can offer advice on bespoke plaque design and manufacture to people considering plaques in neighbouring district authorities.

The Panel does not itself nominate people; its role is to approve plaque nominations and provide advice and support to plaque sponsors in installing them.

The Panel approves the design of the Blue Plaque. Please see Appendix I below regarding the wording on the plaque. Plaques are made to a standard design, with a specific typeface, as it is important for our plaques to be readily identifiable by conforming to a strict design style.

The Civic Society does not have a budget for plaques, but its Blue Plaques Panel can advise on design, manufacture and placement on facade. The Panel can also seek estimates for the work, which is currently in the region of £790 to £840, depending on plaque size, and whether an unveiling curtain is specified.

The criteria for a Blue Plaque

Blue Plaques celebrate individuals, organisations and buildings of significance.

Individuals may be 'unsung heroes' of Bristol or may have made an important contribution to the life of the city and/or the wider world. They may have achieved national or international prominence in any field. Or they may have made a major contribution to the development of Bristol, or the well-being of its citizens. But just being highly regarded in their immediate area is not a sufficient qualification for a plaque.

Organisations may have made a collective, rather than an individual, contribution. Plaques can also honour a building where a significant event took place.

BCS Blue Plaques will normally only celebrate

- A named individual or named individuals
- An organisation: organisations are only applicable if they satisfy at least one of the following criteria
 - It has achieved a single significant event
 - It has been pioneering in its field
 - It has a long-lasting history
- A building: buildings will only be considered if they satisfy at least one of the following criteria
 - an historic event or event of demonstrable significance took place in the building
 - it is of unique architectural significance (e.g. first building to be constructed by a particular method of construction). The bar for this is high as standing buildings are to a large degree their own monument

Individuals or organisations named on a Blue Plaque must have a direct and substantial relationship to the building.

The Panel will not approve plaques for fictional or legendary characters, or for people still living. The subject of the plaque should have been dead for at least five years. This allows for calm reflection and an objective evaluation of the importance of the subject.

There is no limit on the amount of time a person, group or organisation should have spent at an address or in a particular locality. In general, though, the connection should be as long as possible or, if only short presence in the city, be of great significance.

Blue Plaques should focus on one named individual or organisation as the subject of the Plaque. *See Appendix 1.*

How can I get a plaque put up?

Any organisation or individual can propose a person to be honoured with a plaque.

The Panel will require evidence that the individual being honoured had a connection with the building for which the plaque is proposed. You will also be asked to state your views as to why the person deserves a plaque.

Plaques must be placed in accordance with local planning laws and other regulations, and only one plaque will normally be placed on any building.

Before a plaque can be erected, the owners of the building in question have to give their written consent and any other relevant permissions need to be obtained. This may involve approaching more than one party: the owner of the freehold as well as the tenant.

The building must survive in a form that the commemorated person would have recognised and if it is listed, a 'certificate of lawfulness' is required from Bristol City Council. The Panel can assist with the process.

Once a plaque has been installed, it becomes part of the property to which it is affixed and is thus owned by the property owner.

Groups or individuals proposing a plaque will need to cover the cost of its manufacture and installation. If the funds are not immediately to hand, you can consider fundraising or sponsorship [see Appendix II].

What is on a Blue plaque?

The wording on the plaque is of vital importance. The purpose of the plaque is to explain clearly to the passer-by the reason for the commemoration of the subject, and to perhaps leave them wanting to find out more.

APPENDIX I *Wording on plaques*

In essence, 'less is more' – vigorously expressive text: a succinct summary in a sentence is most effective. For this reason, the words on the plaque must

- be about the subject only
- focus on the most important thing they did, rather than list a diverse variety of achievements. A plaque is not a CV: it cannot represent *all* of the achievements of a life well-lived
- make a clear connection between the person/organisation and the specific location of the plaque

The wording needs to be legible to the passer-by from the pavement. Generally, a 15-inch diameter plaque will be required for this. If the façade is at the pavement edge or is fronted by a small front garden then a 12-inch plaque may suffice.

We do not accept logos or pictures on the plaque. And a plaque must not advertise any company, product, organisation, website or app. The plaques will last for many years, the products or organisations advertised may not.

We ask applicants to consider ideas for wording at an early stage. We will discuss the working with you at our first meeting and work with you to agree the final wording. We now have extensive experience of how to make the best impact and tell a strong story in the minimum number of words.

Below are some examples of effective plaques in Bristol.



The wording on this plaque tells in a single sentence the reason for honouring the person.

Jacob's Wells Theatre

The wording on this plaque is short and clear. Although the plaque is set back from the main road it is legible from the street.



Suffragists

This plaque identifies an organisation and its relationship to a place; and highlights why this was important.



Troubadour

This plaque identifies the location of a significant place in Bristol, and adds information about its local context.



APPENDIX II *Suggestions for funding plaques*

The Blue Plaques Panel has no funds with which to pay for plaques. It is therefore necessary for applicants to pay for the plaque they propose. This may involve fundraising. We recommend that you wait until an initial discussion with the Blue Plaques Panel and agreement of the property owner before you start publicising the project with a view to raising funds.

Below are suggestions of possible sources of funding for plaques:

- Consider what are the links between the subject of the plaque and organisations, e.g. commercial enterprises, professional bodies, clubs, charities etc. These bodies can be approached to fund the plaque, or support applications for funding.
- Local businesses may be prepared to assist, particularly those with an interest in improving the area or nearby property developers.

- In some cases local residents may be willing to contribute.
- Crowd funding is a possibility.
- The proposal might be circulated to people or organisations with a connection or interest in the subject.

Fundraising can seem daunting, but small contributions can quickly add up to enough funds.

Please note that while a plaque cannot bear a funder or sponsor's name, the unveiling of the plaque can be a significant and formal ceremony carried out by the Lord Mayor or another prominent figure. The status to the occasion and the connection with the worthy achievement of the subject can make the attractive for an organisation or company's public relations department.

Members of the Blue Plaques Panel may be able to advise about possible options for funding, and in some circumstances may be able write letters of support for applications.

APPENDIX III *The unveiling ceremony*

We gather at the plaque location and a Master of Ceremonies welcomes everyone and introduces the VIPs and speakers. A Panel member then outlines the plaques scheme and makes a brief reference to the subject. Then one or two speakers talk specifically about the subject. We recommend one person to give a brief summary of the subject's achievements, and the reason for the plaque; and the other, if applicable, some personal memories; or if celebrated for a special subject, an expert on the subject explaining their significance e.g. for an artist, then say an art historian / critique explaining their significance. Each contribution is typically five minutes in length, or up to a maximum of eight minutes. The total length of the speeches should not exceed 20 minutes. Speakers may wish to refer attendees to sources of further information, if this is available.

Rather than just dispersing after the event, it is worthwhile to convene for refreshments. This can be in the building bearing the plaque or in a nearby coffee shop or pub. Some guests may have travelled some distance and they appreciate the chance to adjourn indoors.

How to apply

The first step in applying for a plaque is to fill out the form below and send it to the Panel.

BRISTOL CIVIC SOCIETY BLUE PLAQUES SCHEME PROPOSAL FORM

1 Person, organisation or building to be honoured:

2 Name of person(s) or group proposing this plaque:

3 Contact details:

Email address:

Telephone:

4 Who or what is your proposed plaque honouring ('the nominee')?:

5 Nominee's (person or organisation) dates of birth and death or dates of occupancy/activity/significant event in this location for a building or organisation

6 Please give brief biographical/ organisation details:

7 Please give **at least three sources** of further information on him/her/it (books, websites, entries in reference works such as the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, etc.):

8 What evidence do you have that the nominee resided at or operated from this address? You will be asked to provide reliable documentation on this, including the date span of residency. The Blue Plaques Panel will be able to advise on research.

9 *Why do you believe your nominee deserves a plaque? What was their contribution to Bristol or the wider world?*

.....

10 *Please give the exact location of the building on which the plaque should be installed, including postcode:*

.....

11 *Have you secured the consent for a plaque with the property owner?*
If not do you know the owner, we can advise you about how to get details from the Land Registry if needed.

.....

12. *Is this a Listed Building? If so, you will need a Certificate of Lawfulness for the plaque. We can assist with this process.*

.....

*Please feel free to provide your responses to the questions in a **1** to **12** list.*

Email or post to:

Gordon Young 5 Branksome Road, Redland, Bristol BS6 7LL yogordo@hotmail.com

.....