



WAKEFIELD CIVIC SOCIETY

Building Interest in Wakefield

Registered Charity No 236034

OUR BLUE PLAQUES PROGRAMME



Wakefield Civic Society erected its first blue plaques in 1995. These were paid for by a grant we received from the National Lottery. We then put up a second batch of plaques in the year 2000, this time funded by a special Millennium Lottery grant. Since then, we have continued to put up plaques in and around the city centre and now have nearly 80 plaques in place.

We put plaques up to commemorate the lives of deceased people who in their lifetimes contributed something to the community in Wakefield and perhaps also on a wider, regional, national or even international, basis. We also erect plaques to tell the stories of important buildings and historic events.

As you might imagine, we regularly receive nominations for additional plaques to add to our collection and we are keen to encourage these. However, we do have a process that we follow on the receipt of a nomination and not all nominations will result in a new plaque. When a nomination is agreed, the minimum period we need to commission and take delivery of a new plaque is around 6 weeks, but it can take longer, and there are several things that need to happen.

We can only consider nominations for the city of Wakefield and surrounding area – we don't cover the other towns in the Metropolitan District.

The Blue Plaque Process

1. **Nominations:** Nominations can be made by post (to Wakefield Civic Society, PO Box 380, Wakefield, WF1 3WT) or email (to info@wakefieldcivicsociety.org.uk). You can use our nomination form if you wish.

When a new nomination is received, we will ask whoever is making the nomination to provide as much factual background information as possible to help the Society's committee to reach a decision on the suitability or otherwise of the person, building or event being nominated. If the nomination is for a person, the Society will look for evidence of 'worthiness' and a connection to Wakefield. The person may not have been born in Wakefield but should have spent some part of their life in the area or have performed some significant act worthy of commemoration while visiting the city. We will look for facts to support the nomination and want to know why the person is judged worthy of nomination – did he or she benefit the Wakefield community and/or achieve wider recognition for their work or other activity? While we will welcome nominations for people with interesting stories, we would not usually consider a plaque to commemorate notoriety! We now also have regard to advice from [English Heritage](https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/) to allow a gap of around twenty years following a person's death before considering a plaque.

Nominations for a building or event will be subjected to similar scrutiny to ascertain the local, regional and/or national interest.

2. Location, location, location: We will need to find somewhere for the plaque to go.

If the plaque is to commemorate the life of an individual, we would ideally like to find a building that has a close association with the individual being nominated – for example, a building in which the individual lived or worked (or was born/died). Sometimes, the original building may have been demolished and a new building erected on the site and sometimes the original building may have been demolished and not replaced – it might, for example, have been demolished to allow for a new road or similar development. Where there is no obvious building, we will need to see if there is another building that will be an appropriate location for the plaque but if there is no suitable location, the nomination may fail at this point.

If the nomination is for a building, priority will be given to nominations for buildings with interesting histories that help to tell the story of Wakefield and its development. We are particularly interested in nominations for buildings which have seen a change in their original use.

Should the nomination be for an historic event, particularly one which happened outside, we will need to think about how that event can best be commemorated by a blue plaque.

There are a number of things to consider in choosing a location for a plaque:

- Is there already a blue plaque on the building? It is most unusual (and therefore unlikely in future) to see more than one plaque on a building.
- Is there a more worthy or suitable nomination for the building being considered? As already mentioned, the Society has a long list of nominations and it may be that the building someone wishes to nominate a plaque for has already been nominated, or that there is more than one person associated with a given building. The Society would use its own discretion in deciding which plaque to put forward.
- Is there somewhere on the building to which a plaque can be affixed? Sometimes, because of decorative embellishments or the position of windows and doors, there may not be a satisfactory position on the building to affix a plaque. Where possible, we do prefer to lift plaques higher up the elevation of a building so that they cannot easily be tampered with and to prevent accidental damage.

3. Permissions: Before we can proceed with a blue plaque, we will need to sort out some permissions.

The first of these will be permission from the owner of the property. Sometimes, this is not the person or business that is occupying the property. If a building is tenanted, we will need to find out who the actual owner is and it may be possible that the terms of any tenancy agreement will require both the owner and tenant to agree. Agreement will then also need to be reached on exactly where the plaque should go on the building. (Our plaques are screwed to the wall – where possible, we will endeavour to ensure that screws go into mortar courses rather than brick or stonework.)

Listed building consent: If the building identified for a new plaque is listed, we will need to liaise with the Council over obtaining listed building consent. This can take up to 12 weeks.

Family: Where the person being nominated has surviving family members, we may need to seek their agreement to a plaque.

Wording: We will need to agree the exact form of the wording on the blue plaque with all parties.

4. Funding: The Society will need funds to pay for each new plaque

A new plaque will cost something in the region of £1,000. This includes VAT and delivery but the exact price will depend on the size of the plaque (usually 18 to 20 inches in diameter,) and the amount of text – the more words, the higher the cost. As a small charity, the Society cannot afford to pay for all the blue plaques we receive nominations for so we always seek donations to cover the cost. If you are putting forward a nomination, we will ask you to cover the cost of the plaque or to help us to find the funding from other sources. No plaque can be ordered until the Society has received the funding in advance. Sometimes, the owner of the building will be prepared to pay for the plaque but this cannot be assumed.