



# Stepping Out to Explore Bexhill's Heritage, Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> May 2:00pm

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Welcome to the Stepping Out walk on Bexhill's Heritage. I'm Alex, one of the museum's volunteers and trustee for Bexhill Heritage; and this is Simon Allen Bexhill Heritage's project coordinator and also a trustee. We'll be assisted by David and others who will act as backmarkers so you'll always be kept in the group.

Just before we begin, just a show of hands of how many have heard of the charity Bexhill Heritage? And keep your hand up if you're already a member?

For those not in the know, Bexhill Heritage is a society for the conservation, protection and improvement of Bexhill's built environment caring for the past, present and future. During this 2 hour walk we'll be visiting at some of the projects BH has been involved with and had an influence on, as well as looking at some historic buildings. The walk is just less than 2 miles, looking to finish at Bexhill Museum.

It's all on the flat but as usual please be careful when crossing roads and be aware of other users on busy pavements.

## Introduction

BH was formed in October 2017 as a result of concerns about the neglect of Bexhill's historic built environment over a period of many years; this has led to a loss of sense of place. Our founder Raymond Konyn urgently set about putting together a team of people, a robust constitution and applying to be recognised as Small Charity. BH's view is an utterly transparent stance, all information; projects; papers; minutes of meetings, documents & so forth are publically viewable on our website. We are very much a member-led organization with a strong professional committee of volunteers and trustees who are the willing slaves to our members – not its masters.

Most of you are more than aware that Bexhill is fortunate in having a legacy of surviving Victorian, Edwardian and later 19th Century buildings including a nationally important art-deco building which has had a real influence on design of our built environment. This all adds up to our collective memory, and central to how we see ourselves as individuals and as a community. These assets form the backbone of the town's character and integrity.

## Route

*Bandstand shelter, East Parade – Cast iron shelter, East Parade*

📍 **Bandstand shelter.** [\[IMAGE 1\]](#) This shelter was originally built as bandstand in the mid 1890's. Converted to the shelter you see today in the 1900's once the Kursaal (located where the Sailing Club is) became the premier entertainment venue. The Kursaal in turn was replaced by the De La Warr Pavilion in 1936. It's interesting to note the small service road here would have been made to serve as a drop-off point for those people visiting the Kursaal.

*[Simon: talk about the current status of structure]*

**Missing shelter.** [\[IMAGE 2\]](#) There were once two Victorian cast-iron shelters on East Parade built circa 1894, only the more distant one remains. The one where we now stand was removed in WW2 and replaced by an Observation Post, disguised as a seafront shelter.

① **Cast iron shelter.** All four shelters along East Parade are Grade II listed, which means they have to go through a specialist renovation process. This one is the most original with its ironwork supports. By looking at the plaques at the bottom of the supports you may be able to read it was built by Henry Young & Co. Engineers London, who also upgraded Sackville Arch from a cattle arch 1892 - more about that later.

*[Simon: talk about the current renovation]*

*Cast iron shelter, East Parade – St. Barnabas Church, Sea Road*

② **St. Barnabas Church.** [\[IMAGE 3\]](#) Opened in 1891, Grade II listed and is on the Historic England's at Risk Register, the reason will be apparent as we look around the window glass and stonework.

The architect was Sir Arthur William Blomfield, and was built to give more accommodation to the Anglican Church as Bexhill expanded from down from St Peter's and the Old Town. In 1908-9 this south isle was added. These windows were severely damaged by a German bomb in May 1942 – there's a bit of history on the wall about what happened.

I'm sure many of you have noticed the blue plaque dedicated to Canon Basil Davies, a man who led a double life – a priest who kept his motorcycle journalism a secret right up until his death.

*[Simon: BH meet here the last Friday of each month, 11am-1pm]*

*St. Barnabas Church, Sea Road – Bexhill Station, Sea Road*

③ **Bexhill Station.** There have been three separate stations here since 1846; one was located where Sainsbury's carpark is now, the second was on Devonshire Square 1891, and in 1902 – just one month after the West Station opened – they amalgamated to form the long station platforms and station we see today. The station is a Grade II listed building and a lavish restoration project to the platform canopies and to the booking hall was completed in the summer of 2008.

**Clock House.** [\[IMAGE 4\]](#) Built in 1888, it is a mystery to why it has the name. The earliest record I can find refers to the Clock House as a wine merchant in 1906, which may be linked to another wine merchant in Hastings who owned a building of the same name. The original use of the building is unknown, but looking at the photo - its wide entrance and proximity to the station would have made it an ideal hotel.

**Baird Court.** [\[IMAGE 5\]](#) This is the former site of the last home of John Logie Baird (1888-1946). Born in Scotland and studied at Glasgow University until the outbreak of the First World War, where he worked as an electrical engineer in munitions work. Although many inventors worked on the development of television, in 1925 Baird was credited as the first to produce a moving television image. Baird's other developments include a thermal undersock, fibre-optics, infrared night vision and radar - the latter still somewhat conjecture as it is still 'classified information'. In 1944 he moved to Bexhill and here at 1 Station Road. The house was demolished in 2007 and the site is now apartments named Baird Court, you can see a plaque that commemorates the television pioneer on the corner of the building.

*Bexhill Station, Sea Road – Bexhill Youth and Community Centre, Station Road*

④ **Bexhill Youth Centre.** [IMAGE 6] Celebrating their 131<sup>th</sup> year, the building was opened by the 7th Earl De La Warr during 1888 as the Jubilee Memorial Institute, to commemorate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. It contained a reading room, smoking room, committee room, card room, bar parlour and, later, a billiards room. There was a terra cotta medallion of Queen Victoria over the eastern doorway with the inscription *Bexhill Jubilee Memorial Institute 1887* cut into the stonework, this is barely visible today. The Centre's 1965 clock was given by friends of Richard J Toleman, a Medical Officer of Bexhill from 1948-1964 in commemoration of his devoted services to the youth of the borough.

*[Simon: Talk about the restoration of the clock]*

*Bexhill Youth and Community Centre, Station Road – Town Hall Square*

⑤ **Town Hall.** [IMAGE 7] Designed by Henry Ward and opened on the 27<sup>th</sup> April 1895 by the Mayor of London Sir Joseph Renals. Extended in 1908 to create a new council chamber, and again in 1937 along Amherst Road and merged with a house on the west wing in 1962. The tax office now job centre, behind, was built in 1989. The town hall site was bought from the De La Warr Estate but the Square was a gift.

**Lane Memorial.** [IMAGE 8] Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Lane (1827 – 1895) known as the “Father of Local Government in Bexhill”. All his achievements, both military and political, can be read on the various panels around his memorial. The £225 needed to pay for the memorial was raised mainly by small sums of money subscribed by local people and was unveiled in 1898. It was designed by George Ball and built by J Whitehead and Sons, the memorial has Grade II Listed status. Does anyone here remember it being used as a drinking fountain?

*Town Hall Square – Sackville Road Methodist Church, Sackville Road*

**Sackville Arch.** [IMAGE 9] Do you remember my reference to Henry Young upgrading the Sackville Cattle Arch? Well here he is in 1892... superimposed to where we are today. If you are on Facebook you can find lots my superimpositions on a group called ‘Bexhill Old Photos and History’.

⑥ **Sackville Road Methodist Church.** [IMAGE 10] This neo-gothic church built in 1895 by William Pocock, the 12 foundation stones were laid Easter Monday 1896 and it was opened that July. Vestries were added in 1924 and a new entrance in 1961. The church hall on Parkhurst Road was the original chapel opening 1892, designed by a Philip Tree.

*[Simon: Talk about the interior restoration of turret]*

*Sackville Road Methodist Church, Sackville Road – St. Andrews Church, Wickham Avenue*

⑦ **St Andrews Church.** [IMAGE 11] This was founded as a mission of St Barnabas church, the foundations being laid in 1899. The building, completed in 1900, was designed by architect Joseph Wall who constructed many Bexhill buildings during the town centre's early development phase. Prime examples being the Colonnade, the

Peace Memorial at St. Mary Magdalene's, and the first Drill Hall on Down Road, sadly demolished in 2006 [\[IMAGE 12\]](#). The church closed on Christmas Day 2011 and has recently given planning permission to be converted into 11 apartments.

*[Simon: Talk about BH's original objection to demolition to finally supporting its conversion]*

*St. Andrews Church, Wickham Avenue – Bexhill West Station, Terminus Road*

⑧ **Bexhill West Station.** [\[IMAGE 13\]](#) A four and a half mile branch line was ceremonially opened between Crowhurst and Bexhill on 31<sup>st</sup> May 1902 by the Crowhurst, Sidley & Bexhill Railway Company which had been promoted by the Earl De La Warr together with other local businessmen and landowners. The branch would offer a quicker route to Bexhill than that already provided by the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway whose own Bexhill station on the Hastings to Brighton line had opened more than fifty years earlier. Despite the shorter route to London, passengers actually continued to prefer Bexhill Central station and in 1917, the Railway Executive Committee ordered the closure of the branch from January 1917 until March 1919. The line's demise was confirmed by its inclusion in the Beeching Report, and it finally closed 54 years ago, almost to the day on the 15<sup>th</sup> June 1964.

This terminating station, hence the Terminus Road name, is recognised as a Grade II listed building designed by Barry and Mercer, built of yellow and red brick and Bath Stone dressing, Welsh slate is used on the roof which is crowned by a clock tower. Just below is the weight driven mechanism made by Gillett and Johnston. During its time as a station, the clock would have been wound once a week, many of those minders have written their signatures inside the turret. Alas, after its time as a station, the mechanism was left unwound and fell into disrepair... until today.

One of BH's first projects was to see if we could get the clock ticking again. With a team of diligent volunteers (including myself) and sponsorship help from members of the public, the mechanism and its four faces have been brought back to complete working order. [\[IMAGE 14\]](#)

*[Simon: Talk about the restoration of clock]*

*Bexhill West Station, Terminus Road – West Parade Clock Tower*

⑨ **West Parade Clock Tower.** [\[IMAGE 15\]](#) The tower was the work of architect Robert Hembrow and built by Gustin & Ransom of Bexhill, it was to celebrate King Edward 7th's Coronation on 9th August 1902 but due to poor planning it was not completed until two years later in July 1904 with an understandably low-key start. It is made of imitation bath stone and originally would not have been painted; this colour scheme was chosen by the council in 1992. Unusually it is not a listed monument. The clock face is not original and attributed to Andrew Kemp and Norman Holmes. In July 2004, a plaque was unveiled by the Mayor Stuart Earl to finally put King Edward's name on the memorials south face. [\[IMAGE 16\]](#) The clock mechanism itself was made by Wright & Sons, a local watch and clockmaker. You can see the 'flatbed movement' at work by looking through one of holes in the door and shining a torch (such a mobile phone) through the other.

*[Simon: Talk about BH's recent survey]*

**Finish**

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**Note: The tour was put together to raise funds for Bexhill Museum, so if you enjoyed it please consider sending them donation at <https://bexhillmuseum.org.uk>**

#1: Bandstand shelter | c1896



*Bandstand & Enclosure.*

#2: Cast iron shelters | 1922





### #3: St Barnabas Church | 1929



#4: Clock House | 1888



#5: Baird Court | 2007



#6: Bexhill Youth Centre | 1891



#7: Town Hall | c1900



#8: Lane Memorial | 1900



#9: Sackville Arch | 1892



#10: Sackville Road Methodist Church | c1905





#11: St Andrew's Church | 1910



#12: Drill Halls | 2009

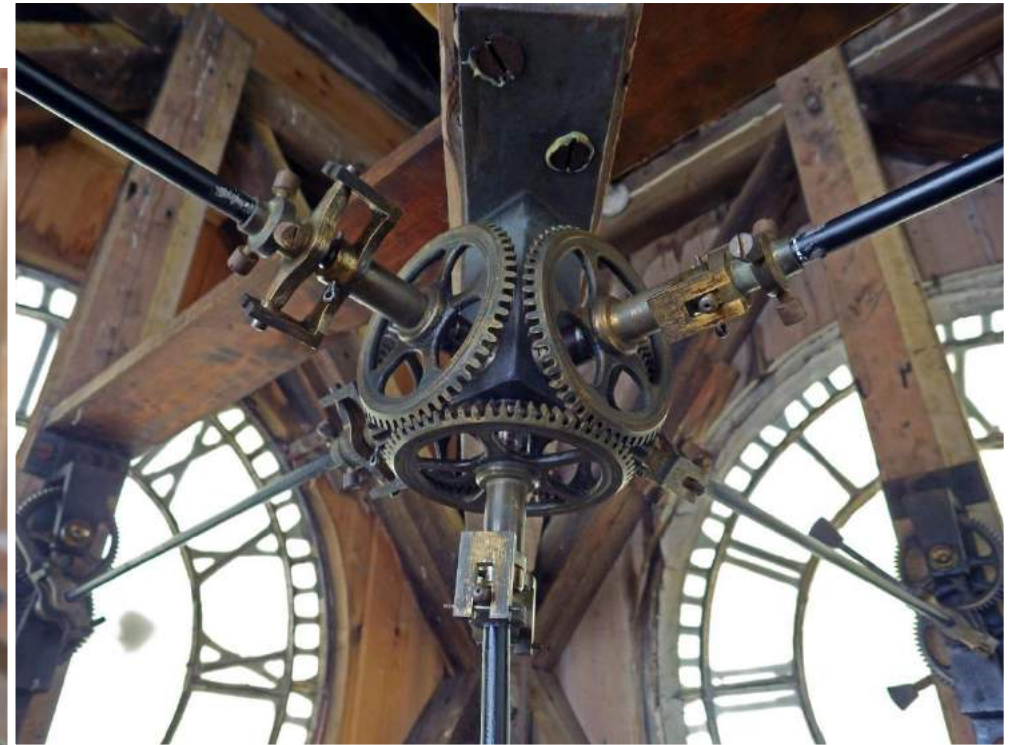
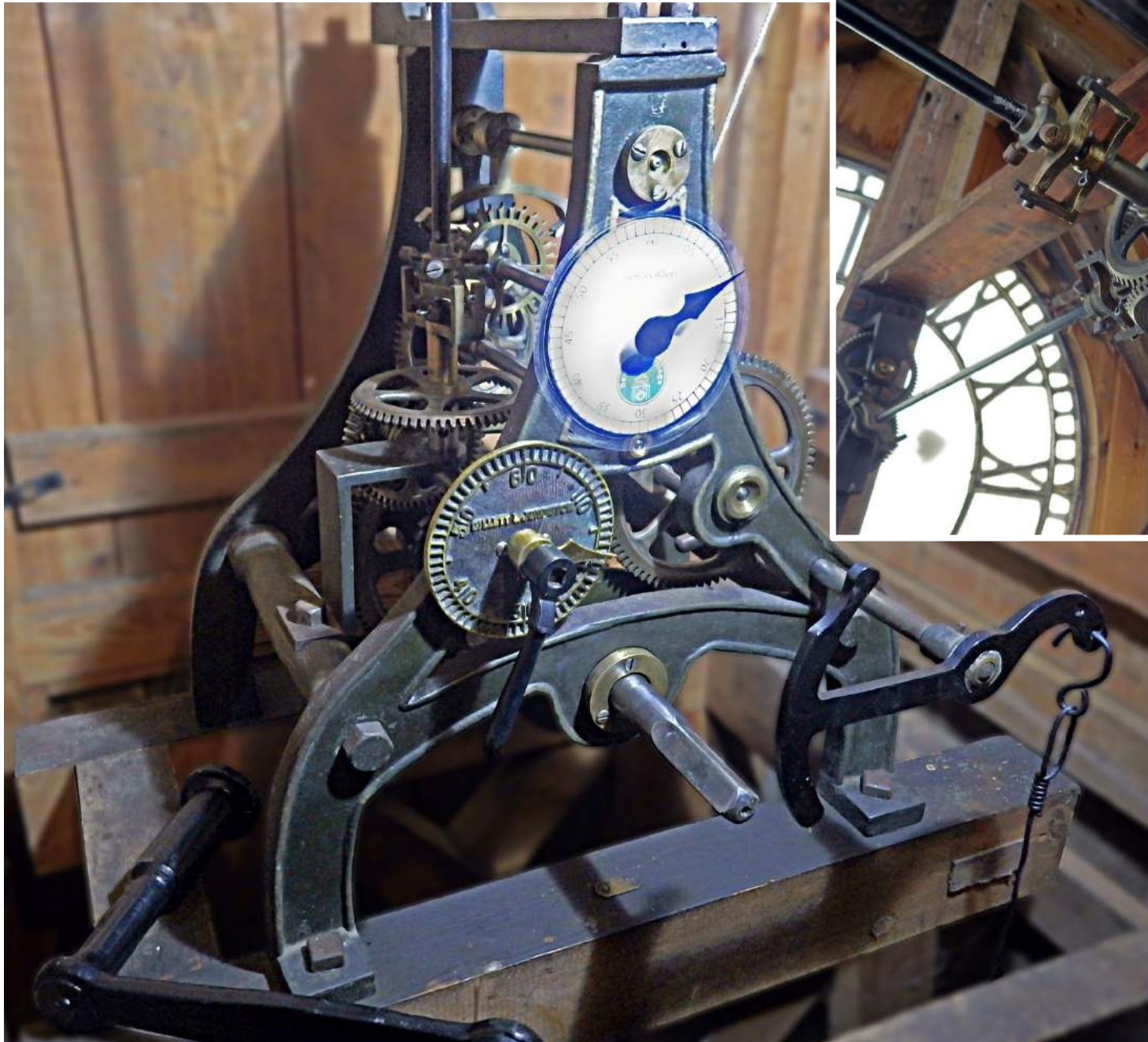
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#13: Bexhill West Station | 1905



## #14: Bexhill West Station mechanism | 2018



**Top:** Inside the turret are the brass bevel gears that drive the hands, they are connected through a 'leading off rod' to the movement below.

**Left:** The movement is powered by weights, connected through a set of pulleys and maintained by a pendulum. Note the handle used to wind the clock; this is done once a week.

#15: West Parade Clock Tower | 1980s



#16: West Parade Clock Tower movement | 2019

