



# Stepping Out to Artworks and Memorials, Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2:00pm

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Welcome to the Stepping Out walk on some of Bexhill's Artworks and Memorials. I'm Alex, one of the museum's volunteers for the Local History Study Group.

During this 2 hour walk we'll be discovering the town's lesser-known artistic creations, historic memorials and plaques, discovering the people behind them and their influence on Bexhill-on-Sea.

The walk is two miles, looking to finish back at the museum. It's all on the flat but as usual please be careful when crossing roads and be aware of other users along the busy promenade.

## Introduction

Memorials and commemorative plaques are a meaningful way to honour and remember notable people - they serve as a lasting tribute to their life and legacy. So today we'll be looking at why these people were chosen to be preserved in our memories and putting faces to their names.

Our reflection and remembrance will be interspersed with various artworks as I guide you through the town.

## Route

### *Bexhill Museum – Egerton Park*

① **Joyce Alexander.** (1891-1982). [\[IMAGE 1\]](#) Moved to Bexhill with her husband Captain D F Alexander in 1939. At the outbreak of war later that year she began her long career in the town's public life. She joined the Women's Voluntary Service and was largely responsible for billeting evacuees and, the following year, for making evacuation arrangements for local children and families. Spike Milligan particularly remembers her work for the soldiers billeted here during the war. She was also involved with the Air Raid Precautions Control Centre and was the local representative for the Women's Land Army. Mrs Alexander was first elected a town councillor in November 1945, representing St Marks Ward. She was elected Mayor three times, in 1954, 1955 and 1962. Her great interest whilst serving on the council was housing and social welfare. Her public service included serving on committees of many town organisations including the Citizens Advice Bureau and Bexhill Hospital. She was a governor of the Down County Secondary School and Manager of Little Common County Primary School. Alderman Mrs Alexander always had the wellbeing of the town at heart, giving her wholehearted support to many ideas and organisations. In recognition of her many outstanding services she had rendered, the council in 1968 conferred upon her the Honorary Freedom of the Borough, previously only given to ten people since the towns' incorporation in 1902.

② **Richard Cecil Sewell.** (1879-1956). [\[IMAGE 2\]](#) The Devonshire Hotel was one of the first major buildings to be built south of the railway line in the 1880s. It was owned by three brothers, one being Richard Sewell. Sewell joined the Bexhill Ambulance Service as Transport Officer and survived the war becoming prominent in the civic and sporting life of the town – he was given the Freeman of the Borough and became the Mayor in 1924. He was responsible for the reviving of the Bexhill Rowing Club in 1925 and became their Life President. One of the borough's fire engines was named 'Helena' after the wife of Mr Sewell, who was chairman of the Council's Fire Brigade Committee for many years. It was during his time as Mayor in 1925 that the Corporation Act was passed and the borough council acquired Bexhill Water and Gas Company. Councillor Sewell died in 1956 and was buried in Bexhill Cemetery.

③ **Chainsaw Sculptures.** (2013). Three chainsaw sculptures were unveiled in Egerton Park on 11th December 2013. Chainsaw artist Dave Lucas drew inspiration for the sculptures from workshops at St Mary's School and Glyne Gap School; both schools catering for children with special needs. The resulting sculptures are an acoustic chair in the shape of a dinosaur egg with a hatching baby Iguanodon nearby; three-metre high bracken leaves with mini beasts and, finally, a damselfly. The damselfly was replaced in September 2014 by a frog. The creation and installation of the sculptures was part of the 21st Century Parks project partnership between Rother District Council and Oostende City Council in Belgium.

**Scented Garden Shelter.** (1952). The Scented Garden for the Blind in Egerton Park (recently restored by Bexhill in Bloom) was presented by the Inner Wheel Club in May 1951 and paid for by public subscription. It was one of the first of its type in the country. The shelter opened the next year on 31st March 1952, having been donated by Mr. David MacBeth of Cooden. The plaque bears the donor's name and explains the object of the shelter, requesting the public give the blind precedence in its use. The lettering is repeated in braille.

④ **Egerton Park and John William Webb.** (1888 | 1840-1922). [\[IMAGE 3\]](#) "The Builder of Bexhill". A builder by trade, John William Webb, or Johnny Webb as he was affectionately known, owned a thriving business at Brockley in South London. His connection with the town lasted some 40 years. Starting with the construction of the vital sea wall from Galley Hill to Sea Road. This fronted the 7<sup>th</sup> Earl De La Warr estate - essential if the town was to be developed as the 'exclusive' resort the Earl envisaged. In part payment for the building work Johnny Webb was given land south of the railway line from Sea Road across to the Polegrove. As seen today, the town developed much more to the west rather than the east, contrary to the intentions of the Earls De La Warr.

*Egerton Park – Wickham Avenue*

⑤ **New Mural replacing Bexhill Butterfly.** (2023). By Ajax Blyth Piper.

*Wickham Avenue – Sackville Road*

⑥ **Natured Emporium.** (2020). Spray painted by Luke Brabants. The local artist has also done murals at Sutton Place, Glyne Gap arch and Windmill Drive.

*Sackville Road – Town Hall Square*

⑦ **Sainsbury's Mural.** (1976). [\[IMAGE 4\]](#) These three murals were commissioned for the newly-constructed J. Sainsbury store, Buckhurst Place which opened on the 8<sup>th</sup> June 1976, designed by Henry Collins and Joyce Pallot from Colchester. This husband and wife team worked on a number of large-scale public concrete murals during the 1960s and 70s across the UK. Each relief was made in reverse and then concrete was poured into the moulds. These murals and mosaics often marked significant points in the history and culture of the places in which they were set.

**Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Lane.** (1827-1895). [\[IMAGE 5\]](#) "Father of Local Government in Bexhill". Henry Lane took up residence at the family home at Broadoak Manor (now the Deerswood Lane estate) and served the community of Bexhill for the next 30 years. Henry Lane was the first chairman of the Local Board of Bexhill, first chairman of Bexhill Urban Council and first resident justice of the peace. 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 (Bexhill Museum architect) and built by J Whitehead and Sons, the memorial has a Grade II Listed status.

#### *Town Hall Square – Station Road*

⑧ **Footbridge Gallery.** (x). Tim and Diana Birch came up with the idea of a public open air art gallery in 2019. The aim of the project is to visually enhance the well-used footbridge and create a positive impact on a location that fell into disrepair. Every two years, people of all ages are welcome to submit their artwork to appear on the bridge. 2023 saw 96 accepted submissions.

⑨ **Jubilee Memorial Institute.** (1888). [\[IMAGE 6\]](#) Today known as the Bexhill Youth and Community Centre, this building was opened by the 7<sup>th</sup> Earl De La Warr during 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.

#### *Station Road – Upper Sea Road*

⑩ **John Logie Baird** (1888-1946). [\[IMAGE 7\]](#) This is the former site of the last home of John Logie Baird. Baird was born in Scotland and studied at Glasgow University until the outbreak of the First World War, where he started working 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. Notice the blue plaque on the corner of the building, there has been at least 3 memorials to the television pioneer located here since 1959.

**Belgian Refugees.** (1920). On the back of the Peace Memorial can be seen a Latin inscription which records the thanks of the Belgian refugees cared for in the town during the First World War. It also records the names and dates of those five refugees who died during their stay and were buried in Bexhill cemetery. About 500 refugees were looked after in Bexhill for varying periods and their needs were attended to by the Bexhill Belgian Refugee Committee. It reads "Belgians, driven from their homeland by the Great War, being welcomed into this town had this stone erected to show that they remembered their hosts, who kindly provided for the nourishment of their bodies and the salvation of their souls, and their fellow citizens who died in a foreign land in the year of our Lord 1920."

### *Upper Sea Road – St Leonards Road*

**❶❶ Sydney Albert Wise.** (1899-1924). [\[IMAGE 8\]](#) The Hastings Fire Brigade were called to Bexhill on 19<sup>th</sup> September, when a serious fire devastated Messrs. Miller and Franklin's furnishing department at the junction of St. Leonards Road and Wilton Road with damage estimated at many thousands of pounds. Shortly after 11pm, when the fire had reached a critical stage, the Hastings Brigade was summoned. Captain Alderman Hocking and Lieutenant Chessum, with their men, immediately responded, and in eleven minutes, having attained a speed of 58 miles an hour on the Hastings front, the motor fire engine, Mary, was on the scene. The Hastings men established themselves at a window at the back of the burning building, and rendered invaluable help until 2:30am on Saturday, when they returned, leaving the fire well under control. The Bexhill Brigade throughout showed the greatest gallantry, particularly Fireman Sydney Albert Wise, who sustained serious injuries through the telescoping of a fire escape, and died four days later at the Royal East Sussex Hospital. An inquest was held, when the Deputy Borough Coroner returned a verdict of "Death by misadventure." The funeral of Fireman Wise, who was 25 years of age, took place at St. Andrew's Church on 27<sup>th</sup> September 1924 with a statue erected in his honour at his grave in Bexhill Cemetery. This plaque was unveiled on the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death in 2014.

### *St Leonards Road – Sea Road*

**❶❷ Canon Basil H Davis.** (1879-1961). [\[IMAGE 9\]](#) Basil H. Davies was a student at Lincoln College and graduated in 1901 with a theology degree. Many of his fellow students were well-to-do and, being adventurous young men, became interested in the fledgling cars and motorcycles that first started to appear whilst Basil was studying. These machines were very primitive, dangerous, and quite a handful to control; indeed Basil himself described the first motorcycle he rode "as an unnecessarily complicated form of suicide". However he was not put off and a year or two after leaving Oxford was able to buy his own motorcycle. After Oxford he first settled in Northampton, later moving to Cornwall and West Sussex (Lodsworth) and finally to East Sussex (Bexhill). He married in 1908, raised 6 children and also found time to lead a 'second life' as the UK's most respected motorcycling journalist. From 1903 until 1961, he wrote under the name 'Ixon' (the fiery wheel), as well as under his own name, but never revealed his daily function. His double life was not known to most people. His fame and popularity as a journalist was enormous, and would have compared with the status of Murray Walker today. Bexhill motorcycle rider and historian Dave Masters found that Canon Davies' last parish was St. Barnabas in Bexhill, and researched Basil's story, eventually leading to a blue plaque being attached to the church. The unveiling was done in the presence of many family members, including Basil's son Godfrey in 2011.

### *Sea Road – Brassey Road*

**❶❸ Church Gardens.** (1942). [\[IMAGE 10\]](#) On the 17<sup>th</sup> May 1942 at 6:15am a bomb completely demolished the large and fortunately unoccupied vicarage of St. Barnabas'. Those few who saw the occurrence report that the house collapsed like a house of cards, having apparently been hit in the absolute centre. The only part left standing, and that only precariously, was the back addition of the kitchen, scullery and store premises. Of more immediate concern to those in the town, was the state of the two other buildings. The back of the Lodge was severely damaged, for most of its roof had gone and the steel framed windows were wrenched from their hinges and lay twisted among dislodged bricks and splintered timber. The church also suffered considerable damage from the bomb which hit the vicarage. Most of the windows on the south side of the church were blown in, including four memorial windows of stained glass.

### *Brassey Road – De La Warr Parade*



**①④ Marine Mansions.** (1896). [\[IMAGE 11\]](#) Individually known as Stonehaven Court, Knole Court, Berkeley Mansions, Newdigate House, Carlton Court and Hartley Court, this terrace of 20 gables was built between 1893 and 1896 by Charles Henry Gold. Planned by the 7<sup>th</sup> Earl De La Warr and designed by Hicks & Alton; the design took its influences from Knole House in Kent (seat to the Sackville dynasty) and Dutch Colonial architecture. In September 1940, Knole Court's gable and entrances were destroyed by a Luftwaffe bombing raid; the gable was restored in the 1960s and both entrances were faithfully restored in 2016.

#### *De La Warr Parade – East Parade*

**①⑤ The Serpolet Sculpture.** (2002). [\[IMAGE 12\]](#) This tubular steel structure resembles the winning car of the 1902 motor races held in the town. The main race was won by the French driver Leon Serpollet with his steam-driven car reaching an average speed of nearly 55mph. The one kilometre race was held over the 8<sup>th</sup> De La Warr's private land so the national speed limit of 12mph did not apply. Peter Fairhurst designed this sculpture and its wheels are said to represent the distorted characteristics of early photographs of speeding cars. A replica of the original "Easter Egg" car may be viewed in the Motoring Gallery at Bexhill Museum. Peter Fairhurst also broke a land speed record of his own with Project Volta – a lightweight electric vehicle developed by Fairhurst and four pupils at St. Richards Roman Catholic School in 1993. It reached 106mph in Berkshire beating the previous record set in Germany in 1981. This car can also be seen at the museum.

**①⑥ 1902 Finishing Line.** (1994). This marked the finishing line of the 1902 races and a similar boulder half way up Galley Hill to the east marks the starting line. Across the road we have the Motoring Racing Heritage Centre which has photographic records of the races that took place here. A series of five Motoring Heritage Trail interpretation boards were erected during 2012, three along East Parade, one outside Bexhill Museum and one outside Cooden Beach Hotel.

#### *East Parade – Marina*

**①⑦ RNLI Coin Collector.** (1935). [\[IMAGE 13\]](#) This metre-high Royal National Lifeboat Institute Coin Collector is one of only 30 left in the country. It was installed at the Colonnade in 1935 and then moved to East Parade in the 1960s. In 2017 it came to the attention of local history duo Dr. Paul Wright and Dave Hatherell who decided to research its history with Bexhill Museum and restore it to its former glory by painting it a special 'RNLI blue'. Bexhill Heritage has since taken custodianship of the box and we thought it was time once again to give it some much needed care and attention. Our first step was to seek help from a local specialist called Blasted Bare who prepared the surface by removing all the old paint, rust and grime through sandblasting. Once the bare metal had been exposed we were quick to put on the first undercoat to protect the iron from the effects of sea air. A couple of days later we were back to examine the inside for any signs of corrosion. Simon carefully drilled out the locks on the north door and Alexis applied considerable leverage before the door popped open in a cloud of brown dust. At first all that could be seen at the bottom of the box was a pile of sand, but upon further inspection we could feel coins, many coins. In fact we've managed to pull out almost 7.5KG of coinage, some of which is pre-decimal! From a brief inspection looking at dates on the coins, we believe the pedestal must have been sealed up in the early 1980s.

#### *Marina – Marina Court Avenue*

**1 8 Civilian War Dead.** (1995 | 2015). [\[IMAGE 14\]](#) On Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2015 the installation took place of a new commemorative plaque to the civilian war dead of Bexhill, at Marina Court Gardens. This replaced and updated the plaque that was at the south western corner of the De La Warr Pavilion car park. The origin of this plaque lay in a scroll presented to Bexhill Borough by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission [CWGC] which listed 21 civilians who had lost their lives within the boundaries of Bexhill borough through enemy action. Not all the persons listed were Bexhillians. The Scroll was framed and for many years was mounted on the wall at the town hall by the entrance to the council chamber but often hidden when the door was open. There the matter rested for many years until visiting members of the public, who had commented on the inadequacy of the existing memorial. This matter was duly taken up by Rother District Council and the Bexhill Observer in 1995. With representations from the public three names were added. Twenty years later and with specialist research, further names of Bexhillians who were killed outside the borough were discovered including traffic accidents involving military vehicles and a case of death from shock through strafing. The present civilian war dead memorial now commemorates all those who lost their lives through the circumstances of war. The scroll and the original public memorial are now in the custody of the museum.

#### *Marina Court Avenue – Central Parade*

**1 9 Bexhill Trust Challenger.** (2009). [\[IMAGE 15\]](#) The four rowers, Ian Allen, brothers Nick and Phil McCorry, and Matt Hellier, made history by becoming the first team of four to row from Australia to Mauritius. They began the 3,132 nautical mile challenge in April 2009, finishing in 68 days, 19 hours and 40 minutes. They had rowed in pairs on two-hour shifts throughout the challenge, which saw them take the risk of going north earlier in the race, when their competitors were going south. By the end of their journey the rudder was tied on with string and straps nearly costing them the journey. In the end they won the race with a huge margin, with their nearest competitors 300 miles behind. Upon returning, all four rowers were given freedom of the town honours, the first in more than 40 years. This plaque was unveiled on their 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their historic win in 2019.

**2 0 Colonnade and Diamond Jubilee Walk.** (1911 & 2015). Not memorials, but commemorations to royalty, The Colonnade being dedicated to King George V and the Diamond Jubilee Walk to Queen Elizabeth II's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her accession to the throne.

#### *Central Parade – West Parade*

**2 1 Frapping Anchor Point.** (2007). [\[IMAGE 16\]](#) A frapping point is the anchorage from which the boats were winched up the beach and onto the promenade particularly in bad weather. This commemorative plaque was unveiled on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2007 with over 40 members of the Moore family in attendance. The plaque reads: "FROM THIS BEACH SITE DURING THE YEARS :- C1906-1960 A. G. Moore & Sons operated a fleet of commercial fishing and pleasure boats. Fish caught daily provided the residents of Bexhill with food including the allied forces billeted around Bexhill during the two world wars. Pleasure boating was a popular pastime for the many holiday makers who visited the town in the years of peace during the summer months. Below this plaque is the original Frapping-Anchor Point by which the Fleet was hauled up onto the parade in bad weather." If you look at the edge of the promenade on the beach side, you can still see marks where the cables, used to haul the boats up onto the beach, have cut into the stonework.

**2 2 Orientation Marker.** (1911). [\[IMAGE 17\]](#) Also known as a distance marker or toposcope. Made of bronze and sandstone, the last original item of West Parade furniture dating from 1911. The inscribed coordinates are incorrect; they show a location of 1km to the south-east.

**King Edward VII Clock Tower.** (1904). [\[IMAGE 18\]](#) The tower was the work of architect Robert Hembrow and built by Gastin & Ransom of Bexhill, it was to celebrate King Edward 7th's Coronation on 9<sup>th</sup> 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. In July 2004, a plaque was unveiled by the Mayor Stuart Earl to finally put King Edward's name on the memorials south face.

**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: Joyce Alexander (1891-1982)





#2: Richard Cecil Sewell (1879-1956) | Diana Countess De La Warr & Lady Kitty (1931)





### #3: Egerton Park and John William Webb (1888)





#### #4: Sainsbury's Mural (1976)





**#5: Henry Lane (1827-1895) | Memorial unveiled by his widow (1898)**





#6: Jubilee Memorial Institute (1888)





#7: John Logie Baird (1888-1946) | Baird Court (1959) | Blue Plaque (2009)



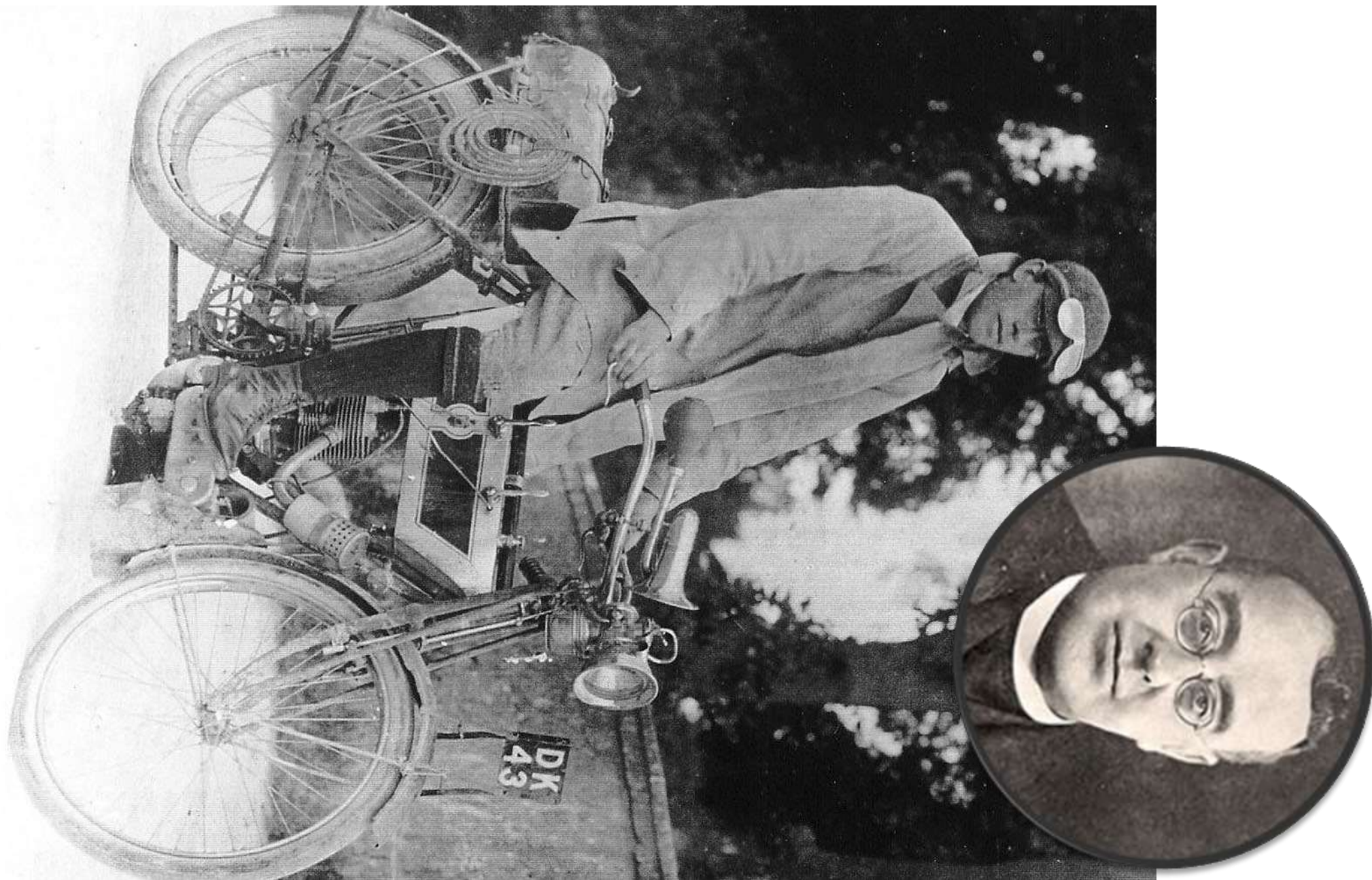


#8: Sydney Albert Wise (1899-1924) | Memorial unveiled by East Sussex Fire (2014)





**#9: Canon Basil H Davies (1926-1940) | Plaque unveiled by Dave Masters (2011)**





## #10: Church Gardens (1942)





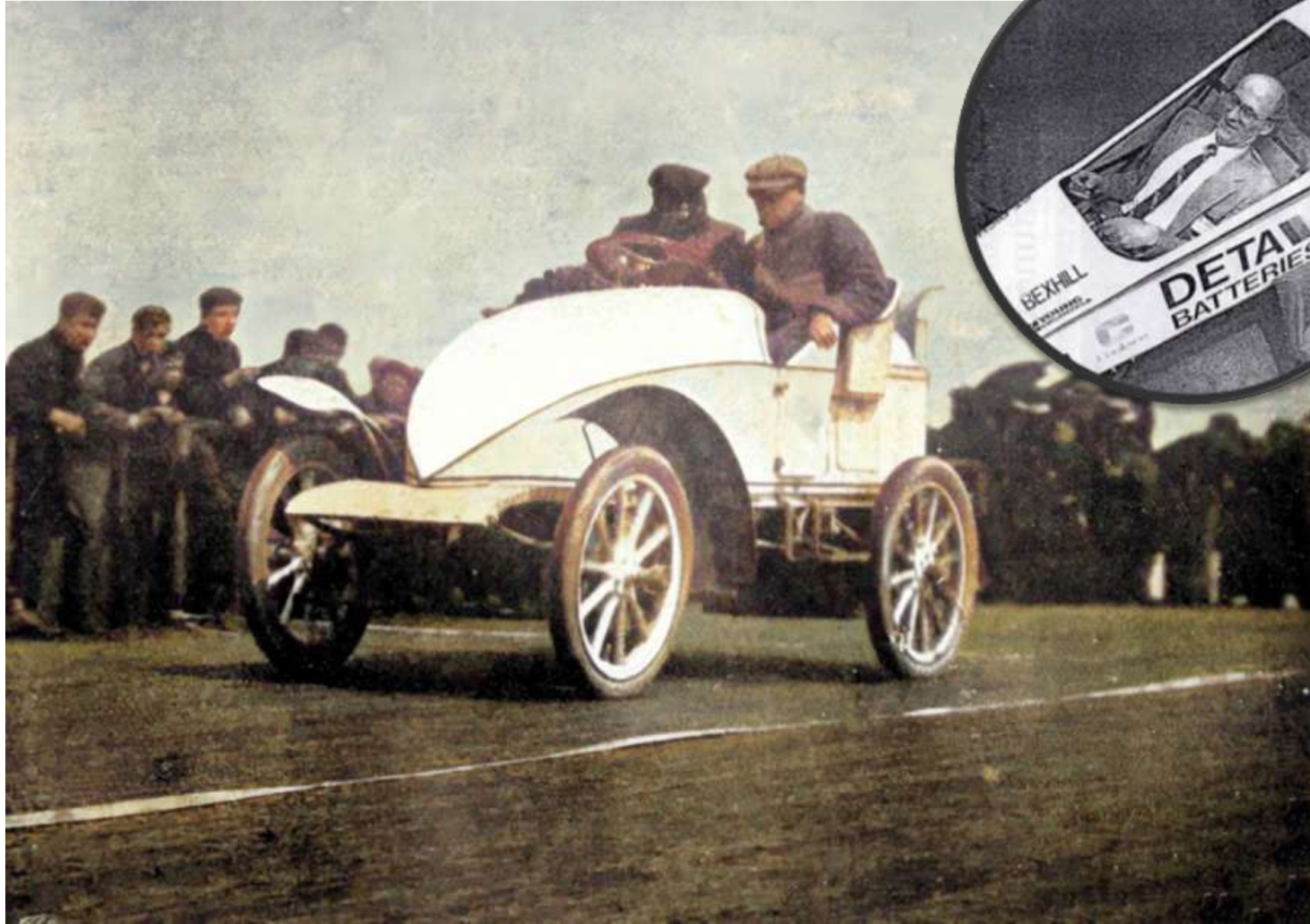
## #11: Marine Mansions (1896)



Unveiled by the Mayor of Bexhill  
Cllr Mrs F Winterborn  
in 2013 to Celebrate the Laying  
of the First Foundations of  
Marine Mansions 120 years ago

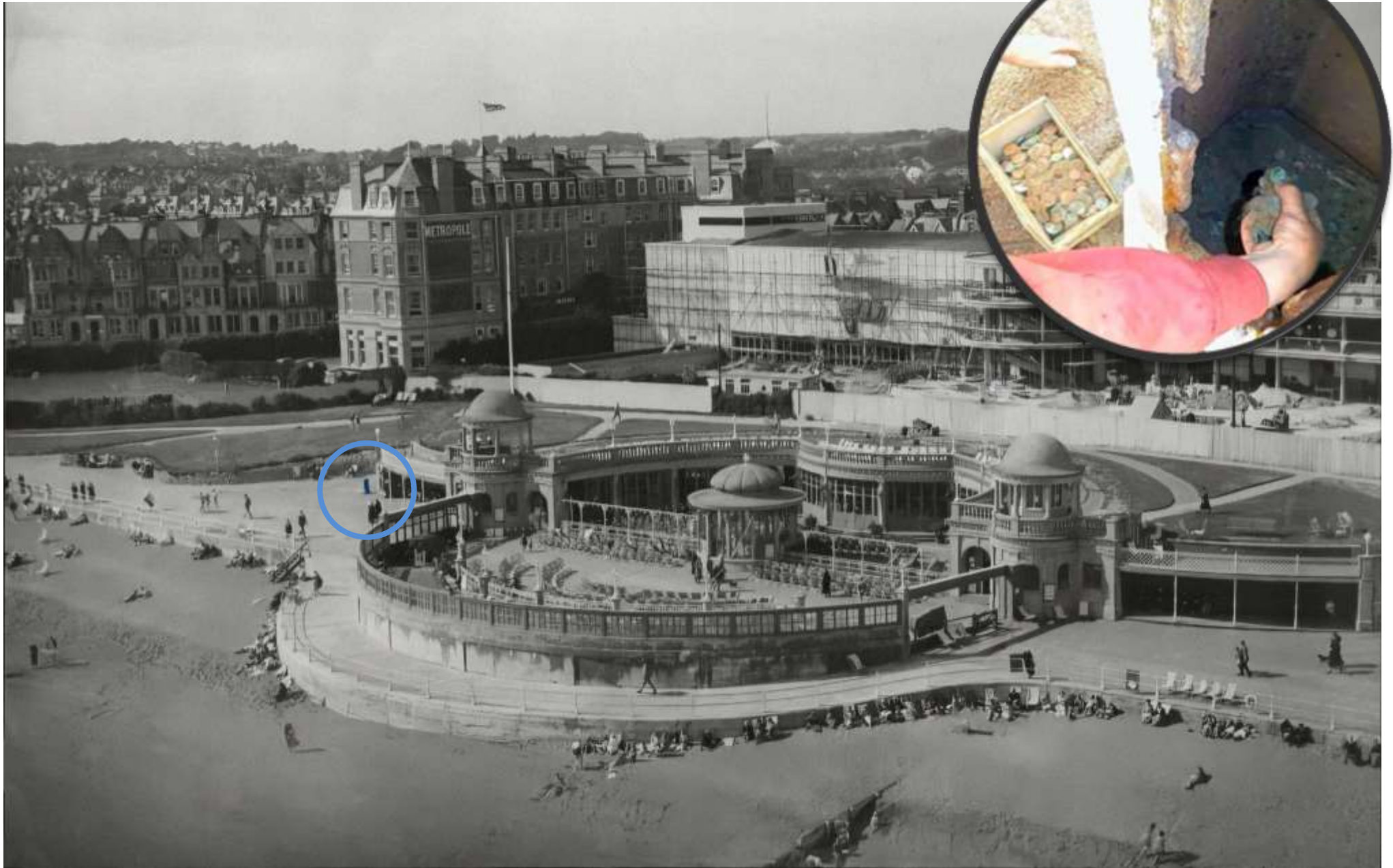


#12: The Serpollet Sculpture (2002)





#13: RNLI Coin Collector (1935)

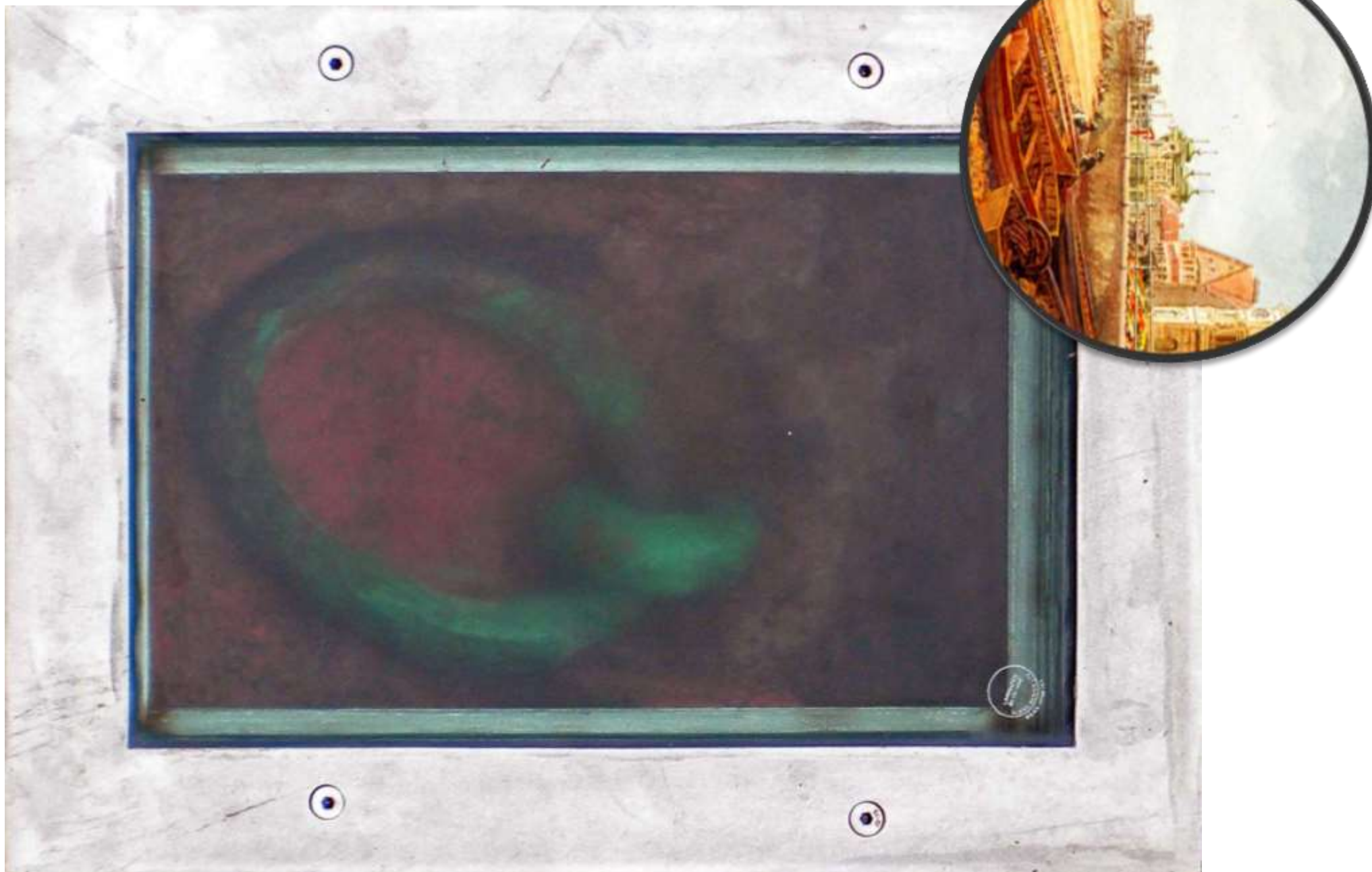




## #14: Roll of Honour of Civilian War Dead (1995 | 2015)



#16: Frapping-Anchor Point (2007)





#17: Orientation Marker (1911)



WEST PARADE, BEXHILL-ON-SEA. 1927.



#18: King Edward VII Clock Tower (1904)

