

A GUIDE TO CHOOSING & USING PLAQUES

We've been making plaques for over 140 years and we're more than happy to help you with their design, the best choice of materials and their installation. Every week, we help civic societies, history groups and local authorities - plus many individuals who need advice on how best to commemorate people and places.



Quick things to think about:

Is the plaque you need to be sited indoors or outdoors?

If it's outdoors, is it in a marine environment (by the seaside!)?

How will it be mounted - on a wall, on a post, in the floor?

What size and shape do you think will suit the plaque and its location?

Have you any preference for a particular material or style of plaque - cast, engraved, etched, vitreous enamelled? Would you welcome some advice?

Will the plaque be permanent or might it need to be moved?

At this point, we'll make a suggestion. Email us with a description of what you think you want, including the text you'd like incorporated, and we'll come back with a drawing (or two), a specification and a price. Before you email us, have a look at some of the options on the following pages. You may well find what you're looking for.

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Up to the Second World War, plaques were rare things and tended to be very simple, commemorating someone's birthplace or the date of a famous building, but with little other information.

After the War, as the economy recovered and changed, so did people's attitude to the history of their surroundings. The English Heritage blue plaque scheme was soon followed by others in London Boroughs and several provincial cities.

"Many thanks to you and your colleagues for producing such a beautiful plaque for us. Everyone is very impressed with it, including HRH The Princess Royal"

As much of Britain's heavy industry began to disappear, along with the 'old way of life' which accompanied it, increased leisure time led to the formation of civic trusts, history societies, heritage groups and preservation societies eager to preserve, or at least record, what was being lost. Add to this an upsurge in interest in all matters historical, including the two World Wars, and it's no surprise that commemorative and informative plaques are now found all over the country.



A highly-detailed engraved brass plaque for The Railway Heritage Trust

Many people who've volunteered to start and run plaque schemes are amazed at the amount of work it can entail - seeking planning permission, authority from the building owners, 'committee' agreement on the plaque wording, and making absolutely sure all the dates are correct. One of our regular customers found it harder work than his day job!

Remember - plaques don't have to be blue!

Cast aluminium plaques

are the most popular throughout the country. Long-lasting, economical and with all the details raised from the surface, they are ideal for many plaque types and locations. Moulded in sand and cast in a high-silicon aluminium alloy, they can incorporate logos, QR codes and coats-of-arms in full relief as well as text. Several of our customers have used this kind of plaque for 50 years.



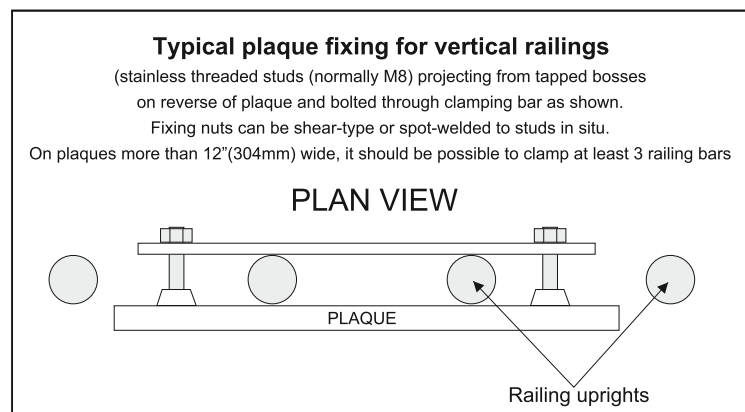
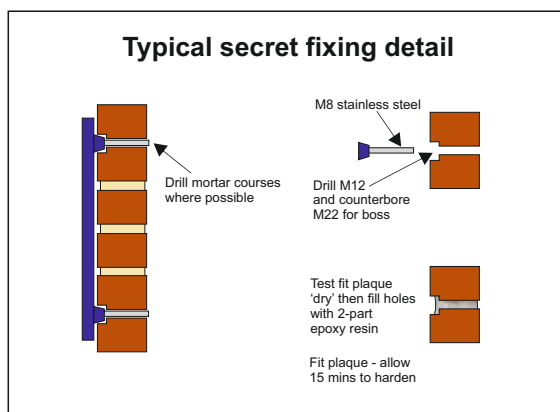
Cast aluminium plaques

We can make this kind of plaque in virtually any size or shape, using almost any typeface. For large plaques (above approx 400mm diam), if cost is a critical factor, it's best to make use of our existing patterns and fonts, rather than cover the cost of creating new ones. We have around 1000 patterns so the choice isn't exactly limited!

If you have a rough idea of the size of plaque you'd like and the wording required, send us what details you have. We'll send you a draft drawing of the plaque for comment, together with a quotation - and this can usually be done within 24 hours. If you have doubts about anything, such as how the plaque can be fixed, what colours work best or whether to incorporate a logo, just tell us and we'll give you as much help as we can.

"The new plaque arrived on Tuesday. It looks very fine. It is a beautiful piece of casting and the paint work is immaculate. Thanks to everyone concerned."

Fixings - most of our cast aluminium plaques are 'secretly fixed' - nothing is visible on the face of the plaque - partly for neatness and partly to deter any thieves or souvenir hunters. The drawing below shows how this is done. We can also supply plaques with conventional screw fixings or adapted to suit railings, gates and posts.



Colours - plaques can be finished in any RAL, BS or Pantone colours. We can often also match colours from other colour ranges such as Dulux. Our normal paint finish comprises an acid etch primer, undercoat and two thin acrylic top coats. The lettering etc is then rubbed down and highlighted by hand in enamels. We can provide a powder-coated finish but, from long experience, it is less durable than a wet-applied paint finish.

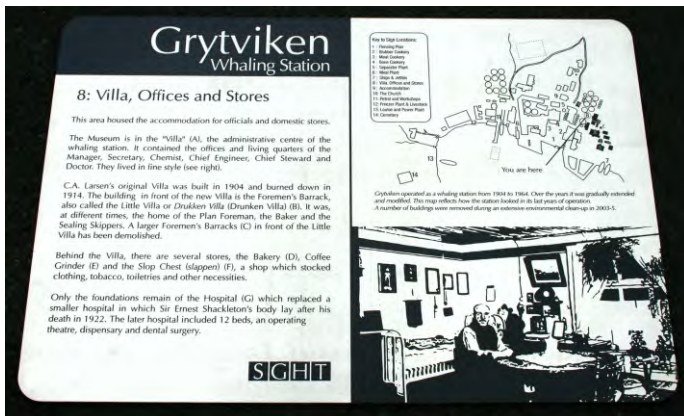
Delivery and installation - plaques are usually delivered overnight by parcel carrier. Our staff ring each customer before delivery to liaise on dates and times.

We can and do install many of the plaques we make but there are many parts of the UK where the travel costs from our base in Buxton could make this expensive. Our own staff cover an area roughly from north Lancs and the West Riding of Yorks down to the southern end of Staffs, Derbyshire, Notts and Leicestershire. We also have arrangements with people in some other areas of the country - e.g. Kent - who provide an installation service for us.

Refurbishment - old plaques are often sent to us to be refurbished. Some are ones we made 40 to 50 years ago; others are an eclectic mix of shapes, sizes and styles made by long-forgotten companies. We strip them to bare metal, make any necessary repairs and repaint from scratch, giving the plaque several more decades of looking smart. The oldest and largest we've tackled were two 1860s cast iron plaques from a London trunk sewer!!

Etched and Engraved plaques

If you need a plaque with a great deal of fine detail, or for the interior of an office, church or school, an engraved or etched plaque might be most suitable - and cost effective.



Etched high-grade stainless steel for an unlikely destination - the South Georgia Heritage Trust in the icy South Atlantic



Engraved & vitreous-enamelled bronze plaque - Manchester City Council



Engraved brass on hardwood - Railway Heritage Trust



Stainless steel "brass rubbing" plate - National Trust

Some of the above examples were created directly from digital artwork, either supplied to us or originated by us. If you prefer to design everything yourself, do please talk to us first about what will and won't work in terms of finished artwork - line widths, line density, how best to reproduce photographic images.

An advantage of both etched and engraved plaques is that they can be created quickly and we have many times managed to rescue people who suddenly realised that a plaque was needed for an unveiling in just a week's time!

Any of our etched/engraved plaques can be supplied "as is" or mounted on shaped hardwood backboards. Brass rubbing plates and the like can be supplied on timber or metal posts and the timber posts can incorporate routed lettering as well, if required.

It should be noted that while bronze and high-grade stainless steel work very well outdoors, brass is less successful and will oxidise unless regularly polished or lacquered. We can advise on suitability for particular sites, various fixing methods, finishes, costs and design ideas.

Bronze plaques and memorials

This page gives a brief summary of the bronze plaque work we undertake. For a much more detailed look at the subject, see our separate downloadable pdf file on our cast bronze work.

We are probably better known for our bronzes than for anything else, and with good reason. Over the years, we've been honoured with some superb commissions, challenging and demanding, but very much worth all the effort. As well as these larger commissions, we make many smaller bronze plaques for all sorts of locations - war graves, war memorials, light-houses, castles, coffee bars, steam locomotives and ships - to name a few. Many bronzes incorporate hand-carved reliefs and some faithfully reproduce unique typefaces, created for specific projects.



This large bronze was to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of Her Majesty the Queen in 2012



One of 32 individually carved designs in bronze for the Dudley Timeline 2015



600mm diam floor plaque for the Greenock Town Trail 2014

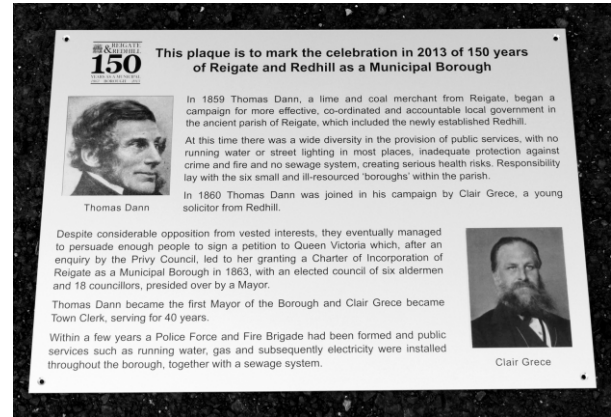
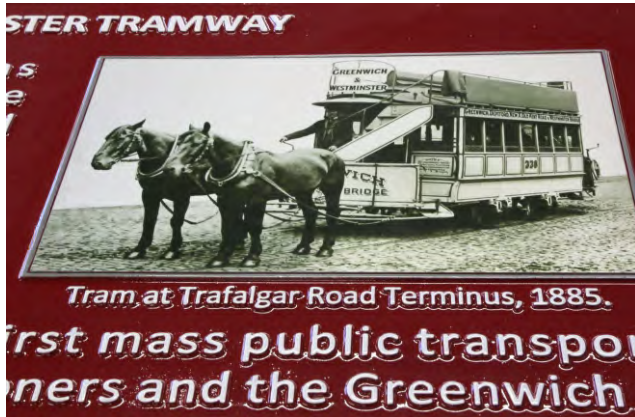
In late 2015, we created what we think is Britain's largest bronze plaque 3 metres (or 10ft) in diameter for Bromley town centre in Kent



A series of "silver" bronze plaques and reliefs created for the Operation Frankton Memorial near Bordeaux, commemorating the gallant efforts of the Royal Marine "Cockleshell Heroes"

Other materials

If you want to use true but durable photographic images on a plaque, it's worth considering **ano-printed plates**. By this process, the metal is effectively dyed rather than printed. Ano plates can be made directly from your own photographic image (jpeg or pdf for instance). If your photo is old and needs some TLC, we can provide that! Ano plates can be used on their own or as inserts in cast metal plaques - as per the example below.



“Just a quick note to say I am really delighted with how the plaques have turned out. You’ll certainly be the first people we call if we need anything else”

If you'd prefer your plaque to have flat 'printed' rather than raised lettering, but still to be very durable, a good option is a **vitreous-enamelled steel plate**. This material was in widespread use in Victorian and Edwardian times and thousands of French streets still carry distinctive blue and white vitreous street nameplates. The example below (right) is one of a series we made to commemorate BBC buildings and studios.



Vitreous enamel street nameplate



We have made plaques in other materials for special purposes - cast and etched copper, lead, wood and slate - but most of these materials are not ideal for general plaque use.

Whatever shape, size and style of plaque you want, we are here to help. A telephone call or email will connect you directly to someone who has long experience of the practicalities, problems, pleasures and pitfalls of plaque making!

Tel: 01298-814941 (ask for Ted McAvoy or Alex Worth)
email: sales@leanderarchitectural.co.uk