

Report to FOLK Executive Committee by the Memorial Wall Sub-Group

1. Introduction

A proposal has been put forward by Wayne Sedgwick, CBC, to introduce a Memorial Wall on Charlton Kings Common (see his email dated 02/06/2021). This was discussed at the Executive Committee site visit on 09/06/2021 where alternative design ideas were put forward. It was also discussed at the Executive Committee meeting on 11/08/2021, along with other memorial alternatives, but no specific conclusions were drawn. There were mixed views and degrees of support for, or against, the proposal.

Following the Executive Committee meeting a number of emails were exchanged between members. This included a statement by Wayne that CBC were against most of the memorial alternatives that had been suggested and that, if new memorials were to be allowed in the future, only some form of memorial associated with an existing wall would be allowed by CBC. As a result, Executive Committee members were asked to vote on whether there was support for the principle of a memorial wall. This resulted in a majority, but not unanimous, vote for the principle, but most expressed a wish to be able to influence any design proposals.

In order to take this forward a sub-group was set up to review and develop the design proposals with Wayne, and to report back to the Executive Committee. The members of this sub-group are Mike Donnelly, John Harvey, Geoff Holt, Wayne Sedgwick and Peter Whalley.

The following is a report on the sub-group's deliberations.

2. Present Situation

- There are approximately 30 memorial plaques already on the Hill/Common. These are mainly attached to benches. A few are set onto small ground level concrete blocks.



- There is a small ongoing demand for new memorial plaques of up to 2 or 3 per year.
- For any new plaques, CBC will not support the following:
 - Additional memorial benches
 - Adding new memorial plaques to existing benches
 - Additional memorial trees
 - New structures to support memorial plaques
- CBC proposal is for memorial plaques associated with existing walls, termed 'memorial wall' in this report.

- The general view is that any new memorial plaques should be displayed in a way that does not detract from the nature of the site, e.g. not a country park, and that is not visually dominant or distracting.

3. Design Ideas

Three design ideas for a new memorial wall have been put forward for consideration. These are described below alongside Photoshop mock-ups and comments on each.

3.1 Design 1

This involves setting matching Cotswold stone blocks into an existing wall to which plaques can be fixed.





The stone blocks will be 650mm x 250mm, have rough-cut edges and be set at the mid height of the main part of the wall (excluding the capping stones). The spacing between blocks would be 650mm. Each block would hold up to 6 off 150mm x 100mm plaques. Blocks can be sourced from the same quarry as the stone in the wall so that it matches (after weathering).

Comments on this idea are:

- The initial proposal is to install 2 blocks. When these become full further blocks could be installed.
- The Cotswold Wardens have confirmed that they would be able to install the blocks and that they consider the work to be a relatively simple matter. This would take some effort but, once installed, additional blocks shouldn't be needed for a few years.
- The blocks and plaques would be fixed part way up the wall and should not be particularly affected or obscured by vegetation growth. If necessary, occasional trimming of vegetation by FOLK volunteers could be done.
- The plaques could be readily fitted to the blocks by adhesive and/or screws. This could probably be done by FOLK volunteers and should be a quick and easy job.
- This option would clearly be an 'official' fixture and would not encourage unofficial installation of plaques. If any unofficial plaques were to be found these could clearly be identified and removed.
- This is potentially the most visible of the options when viewed directly which may be the most pleasing for sponsors of plaques, but not necessarily by all passers-by.

3.2 Design 2

This involves attaching plaques directly to the wall. This approach is used, for example, at Beckford Church (see photo below).



Mock-ups of such an installation on the Common are shown below.





Comments on this idea are:

- They may well be less visually obvious than the blocks associated with Design 1.
- The face of the wall is not a flat surface and hence attaching the plaques may be more difficult, e.g. set into cement as some of the plaques at Beckford have been which would make them stand out more – see photo below. This would not be as easy for FOLK volunteers to do.



- The more random nature of this installation may make it look less 'official' and potentially encourage others to install plaques themselves in an unofficial manner, either in the same area or elsewhere on the Hill/Common. This may make it more difficult to identify and remove such unofficial plaques.
- The plaques would be fixed part way up the wall and should not be particularly affected or obscured by vegetation growth. If necessary, occasional trimming of vegetation by FOLK volunteers could be done.

3.3 Design 3

This involves setting plaques at ground level in front of the wall. There are two options for fixing the plaques.

The first option is to use spikes similar to those used for memorial trees – see <https://www.brunelengraving.co.uk/cat/nameplates-plaques/memorial/tree-1> for examples. Mock-ups of this option on the Common are shown below.



The second fixing option is to use concrete blocks set into the ground in a similar manner to some of the existing memorial plaques on the Hill/Common – see photo on page 1. Mock-ups of this option on the Common are shown below.





Comments on this idea are:

- They should be less visually obvious than the blocks associated with Design 1.
- Being at such a low level they are likely to be obscured by vegetation growth (see mock-up below) which may not be pleasing to sponsors of the plaques. As such the area will need to be cut regularly. FOLK volunteers could do this but it would be a chore.



- CBC experience of using such as spikes for memorial trees in the town's parks is that they are not infrequently damaged, e.g. by contractors mowing the grass, confirming that they are susceptible being at a low level.
- The supporting spikes or small blocks would need to be set into and fixed into the ground, probably using cement. As the ground is stony, and cement and water would need to be transported to and mixed at the site, this would not be an easy task. It could possibly be done by FOLK volunteers but could well be onerous.

4. Visual Impact

Concerns have been expressed, e.g. at the August Executive Committee meeting, about the visual impact of any new memorial wall. The three ideas considered will have varying degrees of visibility when looking directly at them from close quarters. However, in the position on the Common shown on the above photo mock-ups (to the East of the gate into the Common from the end of Judy's Ride) most people will be walking past parallel to the wall, which will be to the South of them, and hence any memorial will be in their peripheral vision (see the third photo in each of the blocks above which

shows this angle). Also, it would be expected that people's view will be more drawn away from the wall and towards the North and the open views. Furthermore, CBC are installing additional fencing local to the gate to direct people away from the wall and towards the escarpment edge which should reduce the footfall near to a memorial wall in this area and hence its visual impact. (This is primarily to allow the area of grassland from the gate and alongside the wall to recover from its winter muddy condition.)

5. Location

The location of any memorial wall will be a key factor in its visual impact.

The location originally proposed by Wayne is in the main wall on the Common towards its Western end as shown in the above photo mock-ups. Comments on this option are:

- The adjacent area is open and subject to high footfall potentially making any memorial wall more noticeable, but this is likely to be reduced by the planned additional fencing mentioned in the Section 4 above.
- A memorial wall here is potentially visible from the large open area around it, when viewed directly.
- There are open views when looking away from the wall (see photo below). This may be attractive if 'contemplative' benches were to be installed as well (see Section 6 on this below).



- The location is within the enclosed cattle area and is quite well grazed with limited tall growth that might obscure any memorials.

An alternative location identified by the sub-group is in the corner of the Hill where the memorial plaque to the stalwarts is to be found. Comments on this option are:

- It is set back from the Cotswold Way (by the large tree on the right in the photo below), is located in a corner meaning it is not particularly visible to those walking from the South, and hence passers-by are less likely to notice it and unlikely to see it at close quarters.
- Anyone visiting a memorial wall in this area would potentially find it more peaceful as it is more out of the way of potential passers-by.



- As can be seen in the photo above, this area gets regularly overgrown with tall grasses and gorse which presently covers the stalwarts memorial and could obscure any new memorial wall. It would need to be cut regularly to avoid this problem. Some grass cutting is done by contractors in this general area but, as can be seen in the photo above, does not get into the corner where the memorial wall would be. It would therefore be necessary for the likes of FOLK volunteers to regularly mow or brushcut tight into the corner. This wouldn't be an onerous task and could be done at the same time as other work in the area, e.g. when mowing the barrow.
- At present, this important historic monument to the stalwarts is somewhat hidden and overgrown (see photo below). Extending the use of this area for a memorial wall would overcome this.



- There is a Cotswold stone wall running alongside this area but it is presently in a ruined and overgrown state (see photo above) and hence not presently in a fit state to use as a memorial wall. The Cotswold Wardens are rebuilding the length of wall that this is a part of and, although they are at the moment working some distance away from here, they could jump to rebuilding this section on a reasonably early timescale.

- There are nice open and long-distance views from this point, e.g. as viewed from a contemplative bench installed here.



6. Contemplative Benches

Wayne has suggested that it would be nice to install simple sleeper benches (as shown in the photo on page 1) local to any new memorial wall. These could be used by people visiting plaques to commemorate their loved ones. Comments on this proposal are:

- With this design of bench visitors could either face the wall containing their plaque or face the other way to look at the view. Other people, not necessarily visiting a plaque, could also use and enjoy these benches.
- The sub-group could see that such benches would be appreciated by visitors, particularly sponsors of plaques, but thought that their numbers should be limited. This would limit the overall visual impact and minimise the impression of a memorial garden.
- In the location by the stalwarts memorial, being in a corner of the wall, it is likely that only one bench would be required.
- The overall view of the sub-group was that such benches should be part of the proposed memorial wall

7. Plaque Design

As can be seen from <https://www.brunelengraving.co.uk/cat/nameplates-plaques/memorial/wall-1/show/show-all> there are wide ranges of plaque sizes, materials and contents available. The sub-group considered that, in order to achieve consistency, some constraints should be placed on the allowable plaque designs. The following are therefore proposed:

- The allowable size of the individual memorial plaques should be limited to 150mm x 100mm only.
- To minimise the visual impact of the plaques the materials should not be shiny/reflective and be of a subdued colour. As such, brass plaques would be a preference.
- Plaques should be engraved rather than cast. (This would achieve consistency across individual stone blocks. Engraved plaques are significantly cheaper than cast ones.)
- Plaques should only contain words and not photos or graphics.
- No constraints need to be put on the number of lines or words, or font used, on each plaque.

8. Conditions for use

People wanting to install plaques would need to sign up to appropriate terms and conditions set by CBC. CBC have existing terms which, for example, confirm that memorials (including the plaques) are the property and responsibility of the Council and they have the right to remove and not necessarily replace any plaques, e.g. if they are damaged or deteriorate.

The sub-group considered that the following conditions were important to include:

- Plaques should only be dedicated to people and not animals or pets.
- Allowable plaque designs would be limited as stated in Section 7 above.
- Ashes cannot be incorporated into, or placed local to, the memorial wall.
- No additional feature such as flowers, bulbs, plants, toys or other embellishments would be allowed on or local to the memorial plaque.
- The timescales for displaying each plaque should be limited, e.g. to 25 years, and not in perpetuity. (This is not intended as an absolute maximum but could avoid any liability for replacing them and allow removal if they degraded too much.)

9. Financial Aspects

There will be a charge levied by CBC for the installation of plaques on the memorial wall. They previously charged £350 for plaques on a memorial bench which was more than the actual costs incurred but customers were advised that they were also donating towards the maintenance of the Hill/Common, and potential future maintenance of their bench.

In terms of what to charge for plaques on a memorial wall then a precedent has been set by Cleeve Common who have a special memorial wall and have been charging £500 per plaque. Their present wall is about full and they will be building another one and then intend to charge £600. There is reported to be a significant 'profit' element to this charge which is re-invested in their Common. Cleeve see this as a useful source of income and as such advertise this service. Cleeve have asked that we do not undercut their price and potentially tempt customers away.

Comments on this issue are:

- There is sympathy with Cleeve and not undercutting them.
- However, people being commemorated in plaques are likely to have been regular users of the Hill/Common or Cleeve Common and not both. Therefore there is only a small likelihood of 'poaching' customers between sites and hence any price differences may have little impact.
- There is some concern that high charges might exclude some users and supporters of the Hill/Common who cannot afford it.
- Cleeve Common advertise and encourage this service but it was strongly felt by the sub-group that this should not be done for any new memorial wall on the Hill/Common as we do not want a proliferation of new plaques and would want it to be a low-key service.
- Any income generated from new plaques should be segregated by CBC and re-invested in the Hill/Common, not absorbed into general CBC funds.
- Any charge should be at least the previous charge of £350 and no more than the Cleeve charge of £600. CBC should decide on the actual charge to be applied when the costings for a new memorial wall have been determined.

10. Sub-Group Conclusions

There is already a long-standing precedent for having memorial plaques on the Hill/Common, and a continuing, but small, demand for new ones. Initial discussions within the Executive Committee, and

with Wayne/CBC, indicated that a form of memorial wall was the only overall option available. An email survey of the Executive Committee members indicated a majority accepting the principle of having a memorial wall, but that further consideration of the proposals was needed. This is what the sub-group has been addressing.

The sub-group considers that the key factors related to any future proposals are design, location and visual impact, and that these need to be considered as a combination rather than individually.

In the originally proposed location on the Common all design options would potentially be noticeable from the large open area in front of the wall, with Design 1 probably being the most prominent and Design 3 the least, but this design potentially being impacted by obscuring plant growth. However, in the alternative location by the stalwarts memorial, it being more enclosed/obscured, all designs are expected to be much less noticeable to passers-by, and quieter for those remembering their loved ones. As such the potentially more aesthetically pleasing design (particularly to plaque sponsors), Design 1, would be much more acceptable here. Design 3 would be more susceptible to being obscured by the more rampant plant growth here. (In either location, Design 2 is least favoured because of the fixing problems and its potential to attract unofficial plaque erection.)

There is probably no perfect solution, and individuals will and do have varying views, but it is felt that the 'best' compromise will be Design 1 located in the wall by the stalwarts memorial.

In addition to the above key factors there are a number of other less contentious factors that the sub-group have addressed and agreed on, e.g. plaque design and conditions for use, as addressed in Sections 6 to 9 above.

As a final conclusion, the sub-group has some concerns about the unpredictability of the future, e.g. what the demand for plaques will be and how much of the wall could be taken over by them, its long term visual impact and future reaction from users of the Hill/Common. As such it was considered that there should be a review of the situation by CBC and FOLK two years after implementation, or when the first two stone blocks become full (whichever is the earliest), and a decision made as to whether to continue, modify or halt the scheme.

11. Recommendations to the FOLK Executive Committee

It is recognised that there is not wholehearted support, either within the sub-group or the Executive Committee, for an overt memorial wall but it is recognised that there is a small continuing demand for memorial plaques, and that there is some sympathy for this. It is difficult to deny new memorial plaques when a significant number have already been allowed. As such, the sub-group consider that the following recommendations are an acceptable compromise, i.e. allowing a 'memorial wall' but in a quiet and not prominent location.

The FOLK Executive Committee are therefore asked to consider and endorse the following recommendations.

1. That a new memorial wall feature be installed on the Hill/Common based on the concept of matching stone blocks set into an existing Cotswold stone wall with plaques attached (see Sections 3.1 above).
2. To reduce the visual impact of this design an acceptable location is on the Hill adjacent to the stalwarts memorial plaque (See Section 5 and 10 above.)

3. A contemplative bench of the sleeper design should be installed by the memorial wall (see Section 6 above).
4. The allowable plaque designs should be constrained in terms of size, material and content as outlined in Section 7 above.
5. CBC should draw up a terms and conditions document, to be signed by plaque sponsors, which includes the conditions stated in Section 8 above.
6. A charge of between £350 and £600 should be levied per plaque with any excess income over costs being reinvested in the Hill/Common (see Section 9 above).
7. The facility to install plaques on the memorial wall should not be advertised or actively promoted and kept low key to avoid any undue proliferation of plaque numbers.
8. The continued acceptability, or otherwise, of the new memorial wall should be reviewed by CBC and FOLK two years after its implementation, or when the first two blocks are full of plaques if sooner.
9. Following endorsement, or otherwise, of these recommendations by the Executive Committee its decisions should be transmitted to CBC for their consideration.