

**LEISURE & AMENITIES COMMITTEE, 06 AUGUST 2018**

**REPORT FOR DECISION**  
**PLAQUE FOR MARIA BRONTË / ELIZABETH BRANWELL**

**Recommendation: -**

That the Leisure and Amenities Committee do not progress the procurement and installation of a commemorative plaque for Maria Brontë and Elizabeth Branwell at Penlee House gallery in support of the resolution at the Penlee House committee (23.07.2018).

**Background: -**

Minute 13a) from the Penlee House committee meeting:

- (a) To approve the siting of a slate memorial plaque to Maria Brontë and Elizabeth Branwell

This request had come in a letter from a private individual, via the Town Clerk. Penlee House was built in the 1860s for JR Branwell, the second cousin twice removed of Maria and Elizabeth. JR Branwell was born in 1823, two years after Maria's death. Although the Branwells of Penlee House were proud of their Brontë heritage, it is not a direct line of descent. Penlee House was built after the sisters had passed away and they had no physical connection to the site. It was therefore thought that the link was a little tenuous and siting a plaque at Penlee House would be misleading to the public. It was suggested by Councillor Cordel that the request be passed to the Plaques Committee.

It was unanimously

**RESOLVED** that the request is passed to the Plaques Committee with a recommendation that it is not approved.

(Proposed: Councillor Axford; Seconded: Councillor Broadhurst)



Ben Brosgall  
Leisure and Amenities Manager

**LEISURE & AMENITIES COMMITTEE, 06 AUGUST 2018**

**REPORT FOR DECISION**  
**HERITAGE PLAQUE SCHEME - WILLIAM COLLENZO**

**Recommendation: -**

The Leisure and Amenities Committee rescinds the previous resolution of the Finance & General Purposes Committee to progress a heritage plaque for William Colenso.

**Background: -**

On the 19<sup>th</sup> September 2016 the Finance and General Purposes Committee resolved to progress a heritage plaque for William Colenso. The basis for this initial resolution was related to the removal of a plaque erected in St John's Hall to allow for significant refurbishment works to be undertaken.

Subsequently this plaque has been reinstated in St John's Hall negating the need for a duplicate plaque to be procured, located and installed by the Town Council.

Historically Penzance Town Council has not had a policy of duplicating Heritage Plaques where an existing acknowledgement of an individual is in place. Rescinding the previous resolution will enable Town Council staff to focus on the progression of a growing list of new submissions.



Ben Brosgall  
Leisure and Amenities Manager

**LEISURE & AMENITIES COMMITTEE, 06 AUGUST 2018**

**REPORT FOR DECISION**

**HERITAGE PLAQUES - NEW SUBMISSIONS**

**Recommendation: -**

1) The Leisure and Amenities Committee review the submissions for Heritage Plaques in the order detailed below and agrees whether to approve the progression of:

- A) Agatha Ursula Chirgwin
- B) Charles Simpson
- C) Charles Campbell Ross
- D) George Marsden Waterhouse
- E) John Matthews

The Leisure and Amenities Committee is currently progressing two other plaques for Lemon Hart (111 Market Jew Street Penzance) and John Blight (8 Alverton Terrace).

2) Should more than two of the above submissions be approved, a further recommendation is required to Full Council to release unspent Heritage Plaque expenditure from 2017 from General Reserve Fund back to budget line 1095.

**Background: -**

A number of requests have been submitted to the Leisure and Amenities Committee for the installation of Heritage Plaques. These submissions should be considered by the committee on an individual basis on whether to approve their progression.

Pricing of the plaques range from approximately £200 - £300 depending on the amount of text and design of the plaque. In addition to this, it is sometimes a requirement that listed building consent be obtained prior to the plaque being installed as well as ordnance survey fees. Penzance Town Council historically has had limited success in the property owner paying the costs of listed building consent and as such, it can cost an additional £150 (approximately) to obtain the necessary consents before progression.

A significant amount of research has been completed by the individual who has submitted the proposals and the details of why they have been submitted alongside their connections to buildings in Penzance is detailed below.

In consideration of the submission, the committee should take into account the information on the historic significance of the individual and the strength of their

connection to the parish and the proposed buildings on which the plaques should be installed.

Following approval of these items, a significant amount of work is required to achieve the relevant approvals and permissions for the installation of the plaques which in some instances can be a time intensive task that often depends on the third parties and premises owners and updates will be provided back to the committee on progress made.

1) George Marsden Waterhouse (6 April 1824 - 6 August 1906).

He was born in Penzance on 6 April 1824, the son of the Methodist minister, John Waterhouse. He was born in the minister's lodgings in the house next to the Methodist Chapel in Chapel Street. The house was later demolished and the existing building houses the Dance Studio.

The family like many other families emigrated to Australia in 1839. He became a politician and the Premier of South Australia between 8 October 1861 - 3 July 1863. In 1869 he emigrated to New Zealand becoming the 7th Prime Minister of the country between 11 October 1872 - 3 March 1873. He continued in parliament until 1890, eventually retiring back to England to Torquay.

I think that he is an excellent candidate as he achieved success in two countries and is certainly a Penzance person who made a significant contribution in his chosen field of politics.

PZTC comment - No building has been formally proposed for the plaque to be located however a connection to the building which houses a Dance Studio is identified above.

2) John Matthews (1807 - 1871), first Borough Surveyor of Penzance.

He was Borough Surveyor from 1854 until his death. He has been called, ' the man who planned Penzance.' He drew up plans for new drainage and sewerage following the Penzance Sanitary Report. He was responsible for the design of Princes Street Market, the Albert Pier works, the Queen's Hotel and much of the town's road system. He was buried on Saturday 25th November 1871 in the cemetery that he had designed.

He lived from 1861 until 1871 at 29 New Street, Penzance.

His two sons, John and William were both engineers specialising in docks, harbours and other maritime structures. Both were knighted for their work.

William left a fund which is still given out to pensioners living within the boundary of Old Penzance. The Mayor attends meetings of this fund.

PZTC comment - No building for the plaque has been formally proposed although a connection to the Queen's Hotel has been identified in the above information.

### 3) Agatha Ursula Chirgwin (1898 - 1981)

First Female Mayor of Penzance 1955 - 1956

Agatha came from an old Penzance family. They owned The Chirgwin's Grocery Store in Market Place, currently the Tremeneere Public House and owned several other grocery stores throughout Penwith. This was one of the largest family stores in the town and Agatha was a long-term director. She was elected to the Borough Council in 1946 and played a very full and active role in the town until her death in 1981. She was held in considerable regard by her fellow councilors, so much so that the council broke almost 350 years of tradition by electing her the first female Mayor of the Borough in 1955.

One of the most notable events of her Mayoralty was the opening on 5th August 1955 of the Rotary Boating Pool.

She was the first Mayor to keep a full record of her time in office and these records can still be viewed at the Morrab Library.

She was made a Justice of the Peace and therefore she played a very active part in the administration of local justice.

She was one of a handful of senior councillors to be made an Alderman of the Borough in 1972.

She died on 29 July 1981 at Chycelin, Alverton.

She also lived for many years in various houses in Alexandra Road, including Keigwin. However a plaque on one of the granite entrance posts to Chycelin would be very visible from the road and is next door to Stanley House

PZTC comment - The proposed location of this plaque appears to be Chycelin, Alverton.

### (3) Charles Simpson (1885 - 1971)

Later Newlyn School Artist.

Achieved national acclaim for his equestrian and wild life paintings. Many of which were used for book illustrations. He came to West Penwith in 1908, later married fellow artist, Ruth Alison and lived in Newlyn, Lamorna and St Ives until 1924. He then moved to London, returning in 1931, initially to Lamorna but then settled in the 1940s in Stanley House, Alverton Terrace until he died in 1971. He and Ruth set up their own School of Painting in the Piazza Studios, whilst living in in St Ives

In addition to the paintings of animals and birds for which he was most famous he also painted scenes of Penzance including: The Western Union Fleet, Mount's Bay in 1949. This is painted from the roof of The Pavilion Theatre, showing a very good view of the Promenade in addition to the assembled fleets.

Below is the letter of support from Steve Simmons at Stanley House.

I do feel that Charles Walter Simpson would be a suitable candidate for commemoration in this way.

He lived at Stanley House from 1946 until his death in 1971: the broad details of his career are covered by Branfield's book, as you mention, but were perhaps more memorably covered by the Penlee House exhibition of recent years. He had been associated with Penwith for most of his long career (48 works displayed at the Royal Academy is a remarkable record, even for its time), but the single item that I think makes him of special significance to Penzance is the portrait (exhibited in the Penlee exhibition) entitled 'To youth the heritage'. This shows a young girl sitting at the bay window of the studio at the top of Stanley House with the bombed wreck of Belair House opposite visible through the window, and as intended to illustrate the 'we shall overcome' spirit of the time. The picture was sent on tour around the country by, I think, the Daily Express, and was the subject of much interest. The front wall of Stanley House still carries the shrapnel scars of the bombing, which also blew out the 112 panes of curved glass that had previously distinguished its windows.

Simpson, incidentally, was fond of very large canvases, and had the ceiling of the studio here raised so that his easel could accommodate them. large pictures were then hoisted through the windows.

I am sure that Penlee House will prove a more informative and more reliable source of information about the man and his times, but I think that there can be little doubt that he was both important and a significant element in the history of Penzance.

PZTC Comment - The owners of Stanely House have indicated that they would be agreeable to a plaque to be installed should Penzance Town Council wish to commemorate him.

(4) Charles Campbell Ross (1849 - 1920)

Charles was a leading member of Penzance Borough Council. He was Mayor 5 times - 1877 - 1879, 1881 and 1883.

He was also MP for the St Ives Constituency 1881 - 1885

In addition, he was both Borough and County magistrate and Hon Secretary of the West Cornwall Infirmary.

In 1881 the swing bridge in the harbour was built and named the Ross Bridge in his honour.

He was also a major partner of the Batten, Carne and Carne Bank. His grandfather Joseph Carne was one of the founders of the bank. It was taken over by the Consolidated Bank of Cornwall in 1896 (itself later taken over by Barclays Bank).

Charles Ross bought Morrab House from the original owner Samuel Pidwell, living there for many years. He eventually sold the house and grounds to the Borough Council on 16 July 1888 for £3120. The Council leased the house to the Penzance Library in 1889. The library now known as the Morrab Library is still there and in 2018 is celebrating its 200th anniversary since its founding.

It would be very nice to commemorate Charles Ross as he made an important contribution in many ways to the life of Penzance and at the same time to say that the plaque was unveiled in the 200th year of the Morrab library on the library building.

PZTC Comment - Morrab Library proposed as a suitable location



Ben Brosgall  
Leisure and Amenities Manager