

HISTORIC STREET FURNITURE IN THE PUBLIC REALM



Trustee Richard Crook has been campaigning for over 40 years for the retention of historic street furniture in his home town of Eastbourne. The town was developed in the Victorian period by the 7th Duke of Devonshire and his architect Henry Currey who laid out a grid pattern of streets and a three tier seafront promenade to create a high class seaside resort.

No expense was spared, ensuring that the detail was of the highest quality and a rich palate of materials was specified. Red paving bricks were used for the pavements and promenades (very much a Sussex tradition) with Purbeck stone kerbs and cast iron gutter grids made in Lewes by Ebenezer Morris. Morris also cast the ornamental square based iron gas lamp posts which were a unique feature of the town (the square bases housed a gas meter).

The streets were planted with Wheatley Elms to create impressive wide tree-lined boulevards with grass borders. The ash roads were sprayed with water from horse-drawn water carts which were filled from ornamental cast iron hydrants placed at convenient locations. All these features have been gradually disappearing over the years and Richard and the local Conservation Officer have been negotiating with East Sussex County Council (who are responsible for the streets) to retain these interesting features which add so much to the character of the town. There are now only about 30 square based lamp posts left (with modern electric light fittings added) and the general policy is for these to be retained in Conservation Areas. The photographs below show a recent heritage scheme in Old Wish Road where traditional Sugg lanterns were added to the Morris posts. It is hoped that similar schemes will follow.







In Upper Duke's Drive which is outside the adjoining Conservation Area, ESCC has just agreed to retain three Morris posts, and three lanterns for these are being donated by local amenity societies. Sadly though, the later adjoining round based lamp posts cast by Every of Lewes (which are not so rare) have been removed and replaced by modern steel lamp posts.

Only four water hydrants are left in the town (there were eleven in the mid-70s) and recently, one was inadvertently removed by ESCC as part of their town centre improvement works. The local History Society spotted this and Richard negotiated its safe reinstatement as shown in the top photograph. Unfortunately Local Authorities are not required to retain this type of heritage under Conservation Area legislation and it is important therefore that people are vigilant in other parts of Sussex and strike up relationships with the officers involved to ensure that historic street furniture is retained for future generations to enjoy.



The refurbishment and redecoration of the post was carried out at no cost by **Sussex Blast Cleaning** of Hailsham as part of the community effort to reinstate it.