

# CUCKFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Queen's Hall, High Street, Cuckfield, RH17 5EL



## **Item 10: Commemorative Bench**

### **Background**

Last century over five hundred still born babies were buried in unmarked graves in Cuckfield Churchyard. In the early nineteenth century and up to 1970, history reveals that stillborn and babies dying shortly after birth were buried in communal graves alongside other babies. District Hospitals in the past were responsible for the burial and in this case Cuckfield Churchyard was the nearest.

Cuckfield Parish Council in 2017 decided that, in recognition of the unmarked babies graves, a commemorative feature or memorial should be commissioned. After discussion on the subject a commemorative installation in the shape of a feathered bench was commissioned early 2018.

A working Party consisted of Andrea King, Frances Laing and Marie Dormer and Sam Heynes took over the running of the Project.

### **Sculptor**

Christian Funnell was chosen as the sculptor to design and make the piece, a Sussex Man who is familiar with Cuckfield. Christian had completed 'the shoal', Seaford's community bench, commissioned by Seaford Town Council in Spring 2017 on Seaford's waterfront. This exciting Sculpture has become an iconic attraction for Seaford and in the same vein the feathered Bench could become a focal place within the Churchyard for contemplation.

### **Feathered Bench**

Feathered Bench will be 3m long made out of galvanised steel (design circulated separately).

### **Cost**

The overall cost for design, finished product and installation will be £3000 and the money was obtained in January 2018 from an Art's Grant from MSDC. In September 2018, £1000 was released to Christian Funnell.

## **Communication Strategy**

Thanks to Cuckfield Museum's article in the local paper about the unmarked baby's graves this spread the word and the office was receiving calls from interested parties. It is important that the public are aware of this project and keeping the idea alive, there was also a poster exhibition at Cuckfield Parish Council Annual Parish Meeting last May. Sixteen people have contacted the Parish Council and asked to be kept up to date with any developments.

## **To Date**

Christian Funnell is underway with the bench and has recently contacted Parish Office stating that he had started the feather bench and decided it would be a better design for the feather to be tilted back at more of an angle, to look more naturalistic and reminiscent of a cradle. It will still function as a bench rather than a seat.



## **What Happens Next?**

### **Finance**

Parish Clerk to follow up that the Grant money has gone to Christian and if not to ensure its release before the expiry date.

### **Installation**

Planning permission is not required from MSDC. The installation site will need to be discussed with Council and Matthew Gallagher as to where it would be suitable and that the ground will take the structure. It is hoped that the bench will be installed facing towards the Downs. The Working Committee will meet and complete the final planning phase of the project.

**Action points:**

- Installation date to be agreed with Christian, possibly late Spring early Summer
- Media coverage
- Cllr. Dormer to contact the people who have shown a personal interest in the project
- A service or just an 'opening' with a poem
- Reception back at Queen's Hall or Old School
- Who to invite?
- Who to oversee proceedings

**Upkeep**

The design and materials used for the feathered bench will require little maintenance and weathering will enhance the patina of the bench. An annual clean and oiling by the grounds man.