

# Cromer's Blue Plaque Trail



Cromer has been home to a diverse range of people through the years, from lifeboatmen to abolitionists, writers, and more. Around the town can be found nine blue plaques commemorating some of the most significant figures associated with the locality. This helpful guide will show you how to find them all, and tell you a bit about each of them!

## 1. Archibald and Bertie Hastings

In a terraced house on West Street once lived the brothers Archie and Bertie Hastings, who, together with their brother Austin, served in the Norfolk Regiment during the First World War. Archie held the rank of Sergeant, and Bertie was a Private, of the 1/5th battalion, a volunteer battalion of the Norfolk Regiment.



In 1917 they participated in the invasion of Palestine, and on the 17th of April, following a failed first attempt the previous month to take the city of Gaza, a second attack by the British was launched. On the morning of April the 19th, Archie and Bertie's battalion followed a tank into an Ottoman redoubt, driving out the Ottoman soldiers who were stationed there. In response, the Ottomans fired artillery shells at the redoubt. The battalion suffered extremely heavy losses, and this is likely when Archie and Bertie were killed in action, aged 29 and 27. They have no known grave, and are commemorated on the Jerusalem Memorial within the Jerusalem War Cemetery. Their blue plaque is visible from the street on the front wall of Meadow Cottages.

## 2. Henry Blogg

Tucked away on Corner Street is a house which is immortalised as the former home of Cromer's most famous son, Henry Blogg.

Born here in 1876, Blogg lived here his entire life and played an active part in local life. During his early life he witnessed Cromer change from a sleepy fishing town into a Victorian tourist destination. Leaving school at 11 to work on a crab boat, Henry would spend much of his time throughout his life working on the beach, renting deckchairs and beach huts to visitors. Aged 18 he joined the lifeboat service, at a time when the job involved rowing as a team through heavy seas, launching and landing at the beach.

Blogg took the role of Coxswain in 1909, and during his subsequent 38-year career he would go on to save hundreds of lives. The waters off the North Norfolk coast contain many treacherous sandbanks, and Blogg's remarkable bravery and leadership in rescuing stricken sailors saw him and his crew decorated both by the RNLI and the Crown.

One such rescue happened on the stormy night of the 9th of January 1917. Blogg's crew, many of whom were over the age of 50, launched to rescue 22 crewmen off the Greek vessel *Pyrin*. On their return, they immediately launched again to help the Swedish cargo ship *Fernebo*, which had been blown in half by a sea mine. In a period of 14 hours, Blogg and his crew launched a total of four times, fighting doggedly to reach one half of the vessel and rescue its crew. The wreck of the *Fernebo* can still occasionally be seen off the East Beach during a particularly low tide.

On 20 November 1927, the Dutch oil tanker *SS Georgia* ran aground on a sandbank, and eventually broke in two. Over the next two days, lifeboats would carefully and strenuously attempt to rescue the crew sheltering in the bow section. Under Blogg's command, the Cromer lifeboat spent all the night of the 21st guarding the stern section and warning other ships away from it, and eventually succeeded in rescuing the sixteen people in the bow.

During the rescue of the Italian ship *Monte Nevoso* in 1932, Blogg boarded the ship to find it abandoned, except for a dog and some caged birds, which he rescued. The dog, with whom Blogg is often



depicted, was gifted to him, and he named him Monte.

In November 1938 the Spanish cargo ship *Cantabria* was sailing off the North Norfolk coast when she came under fire from the *Nadir*, a ship of General Franco's navy sailing under the guise of a civilian vessel. Shells struck the bridge and the engine of the *Cantabria*, which was carrying civilian passengers, rendering her immobile. When the Cromer lifeboat arrived shortly after dusk the ship was on fire and its lifeboats had been launched, one of which was captured by the *Nadir*. Blogg succeeded in rescuing the Captain and his family, and the steward.

In 1941, the cargo ship *English Trader* broke off from a convoy and, after being attacked by German planes, ran aground off Norfolk. Cromer lifeboat, while first attempting to rescue her crew, had five men, including Blogg himself, thrown overboard and hauled back in. After struggling in gale force winds for hours, they made for Great Yarmouth. Gorleston lifeboat subsequently tried unsuccessfully to approach the stricken ship. The next day, in calmer seas, Blogg's crew returned and rescued 44 crew members.

These are a few of the many courageous rescues carried out under Blogg's leadership. He retired in 1947 and died seven years later, aged 78. He is commemorated in a bust standing in North Lodge Park, on the seaward side of Cromer Town Hall, and in the Henry Blogg Museum on the East Beach next to the Gangway, which is dedicated to his life and the service of him and his crew. His blue plaque is visible on the front of his cottage on Corner Street.



### 3. Lewis "Tuna" Harrison

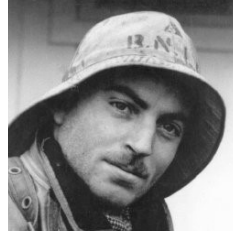
Just around the corner you'll find the cottage where Lewis Harrison, coxswain of No.2 lifeboat, once lived. His nickname was earned by his habit of whistling as a youth ('Tuner' which became 'Tuna' when he was a seafarer). Harrison was also in command of No. 2 lifeboat *Harriet Dixon* during the extraordinary rescue on 6 August 1941, when, following a terrible storm, seven ships separated from a coal convoy and ran aground on the notorious Haisborough Sands. Coxswain Blogg arrived first aboard No. 1 lifeboat



*H F Bailey* and managed to rescue, among others, sixteen men from the *Oxshott*—which was so badly wrecked he had believed nobody on board was alive—who were clinging to its funnel. Harrison and his crew joined the rescue in the *Harriet Dixon* and helped crewmen off the *Taara*. A total of 119 lives were saved during the same operation, which also involved Gorleston, Lowestoft and Sheringham lifeboats, as well as Merchant and Navy ships. Harrison’s plaque can easily be seen on Garden Street.

## 4. Henry “Shrimp” Davies

Turn another corner and you’ll come across the house of another prominent Cromer lifeboatman, Henry Davies. Henry’s nickname was given him by his uncle, Henry Blogg, after seeing him as a tiny baby. Like his uncle, Henry joined the lifeboat service aged 18—in fact, to this day, the Davies family have a long history of service on the Cromer lifeboats. He participated in some of Blogg’s most famous rescues, including that of the *English Trader* when he was one of the crewmen thrown overboard by a large wave. Davies became Blogg’s immediate successor as Coxswain, and led the service to the *Francois Tixier* in 1948. Unable to get close to the vessel due to rough seas, Davies’ crew hauled in nearly a dozen crew members with a breeches buoy, and plucked another four from the water. Davies helped save 500 lives during his 45-year career as a lifeboatman, 29 years of which he served as Coxswain. He appeared on the television show *This Is Your Life* on the eve of his retirement in 1976, just before his 62nd birthday, and remained a visible part of the local community for the rest of his life.



## 5. Clement Scott

A popular poet, playwright, and pioneering theatre critic, Clement Scott was well-known during his lifetime, most notably as theatre columnist for the *Daily Telegraph*, in which role his habit for harshness could often get him into trouble. Scott lived most of his life in London, but travelled extensively, writing as he went. The explosion of Victorian tourism in Cromer is widely attributed to an 1883 *Telegraph* article by Scott describing the area’s charm, which drew interest and property investment from the London theatre crowd. In the same article, Scott coined North Norfolk’s now-iconic nickname, ‘Poppyland’.



In 1898 Scott published an article in an evangelical magazine attacking the morals of theatre people and was consequently ostracised

from many circles, suffering a loss of fortunes as a result. He recovered some of his reputation by the time of his death, and is fondly remembered for raising the reputation of North Norfolk. His blue plaque is visible on Jetty Cliff, on the front wall of the Hotel de Paris.

## 6. Edward Bach

Above the bustle of the Gangway is the former home of influential physician, writer and homeopath Edward Bach. Born in Worcestershire, Bach trained in medicine and public health in London and Cambridge, worked as a doctor in some prominent London hospitals, and eventually his own practice on Harley Street. He took a special interest in the relationship between the emotional state of his patients and their physical wellbeing. In 1930 Bach gave up conventional medicine and abandoned scientific methods, opting instead to develop his own treatments through intuition. The most famous of these, the Bach Flower Remedy system, was invented by inducing a specific emotional state in himself, then holding his hand over various flowers to see which would apparently alleviate it. Several of these were formulated in Cromer. Bach would collect dewdrops from flowers sitting in sunlight to create his remedies, but since dew is not abundant, Flower Remedies are manufactured by sitting flowers in water in sunlight, or simply by boiling them, then mixing the water with brandy and diluting it heavily. Remedies derived from different flowers are then mixed together according to need. One such combination, according to legend, was made for survivors of the *Sepoy* wreck rescued by Henry Blogg, from which it derives its name: Rescue Remedy. Bach had been treated for spleen cancer in 1917, and died in 1936, aged 50. His work is still widely applied the world over. His blue plaque can be seen on the front of his house on Brunswick Terrace, which rises parallel to the Gangway, near the corner of Surrey Street.



## 7. Priscilla Buxton

At a time when women were prohibited from voting or holding public office and women's participation in political life was shunned, Priscilla Buxton played an important role in the campaign to abolish slavery in the British Empire. Born at Earlham Hall near Norwich, Buxton was a close relative of the prominent Gurney banking family; her aunt was the prison reformist Elizabeth Fry. Priscilla



was a passionate political activist in spite of her disenfranchisement: she served as co-secretary of the London Female Anti-Slavery Society, and together with Norwich author Amelia Opie raised a petition to parliament of 187,000 women's names, with theirs at the top. When her father, Thomas Fowell Buxton, presented it, it was met with ridicule.

Priscilla, together with Anna Gurney, also worked for Fowell Buxton, a member of the House of Commons, in his abolitionist efforts. He became leader of the abolition movement in 1825, and Priscilla conducted detailed research, and wrote letters, speeches, and books using his name. In the absence of real political franchise, this method enabled Priscilla's political participation, although having to defer final say on specific issues to her father could be frustrating. She wasn't even allowed into the gallery of the House of Commons to hear her own speeches being delivered, having instead to listen through a ventilation shaft.

Buxton lived in Overstrand, and married the Scottish politician Andrew Johnston on 1 August 1834, the same day most slaves in the British Empire were freed. They had six children, and Priscilla died in 1852, aged 44. An edition of her journal and letters was published in 1862, which can be found on the Internet Archive. Her blue plaque can be found on the northern (seaward) side of Cromer Town Hall in North Lodge Park, behind the bust of Henry Blogg.

## 8. Cyril & Alfred Fenner

Two sons of a local doctor who were born and grew up together in Cromer both lost their lives serving in the First World War.

Cyril was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant on probation in the Scots Guards in August 1915. At the end of February 1916 his rank was confirmed. After a brief leave in June-July of the same year due to a knee issue, Cyril was killed in action at the Somme on 24th September. He is commemorated on the Thiepval memorial in France.

His older brother Alfred had enlisted in the Navy in 1901, aged only 14. He served in the First World War in the rank of Lieutenant-Commander. He took command of the submarine *K4*, which came from a notoriously accident-prone class of boat. On a misty night in early

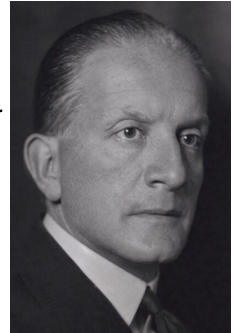


1918, during an incident known as the 'Battle of May Island', the K4 collided with two other Royal Navy submarines in the Firth of Forth while trying to avoid a collision with another. She sank with all hands. Alfred is commemorated on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial. Their blue plaque is visible from the street on the front of their house on Norwich Road, on the southern corner of St. Margaret's Road.

## 9. Oliver Locker-Lampson

Trek a little way up Norwich Road and you'll come to the final stop on our trail, the former home of Cdr. Oliver Stillingfleet Locker-Lampson. Educated at Eton and Cambridge, Locker-Lampson worked as a journalist before going into politics in 1910 as a Conservative MP. After striking a deal in 1914 with Navy chief Winston Churchill, Locker-Lampson was given a commission in the Naval Reserve in exchange for personally funding an armoured car squadron under the Royal Naval Air Service. His role as a founding director of Norwich car dealership Duff Morgan helped supply the vehicles, and many of the division's men were from Cromer. After serving in France and Belgium, the armoured cars became impractical as trench warfare set in, so Locker-Lampson's squadron was sent to Russia to assist with the Russian army. There they witnessed the revolutions of 1917 while stationed in Petrograd.

This experience left Locker-Lampson with a lasting distaste for communism, which led him after the war to become aligned with burgeoning British fascist movements, expressing admiration for Hitler and Mussolini, and founding his own group known as the blue shirts. In 1933 his politics suddenly changed and he became an outspoken opponent of Nazism and anti-Semitic persecution, arranging accommodation in the same year for Albert Einstein on Roughton Heath to facilitate his flight from Europe, and attempting to have the wearing of political uniforms banned by statute, a policy targeted at British Union of Fascists leader Oswald Mosley. During World War Two he served in the Home Guard and supported Churchill in parliament. Retiring from politics in 1945, his final years were passed as a recluse. He is buried in Worth churchyard in Sussex. His blue plaque is visible from Norwich Road on the wall of the lodge at the corner of Court Drive, near the site of his former home, Newhaven Court, which burned down in 1963.



National Portrait Gallery  
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# Map of Blue Plaques in Cromer



1. Archibald and Bertie Hastings
2. Henry Blogg
3. Lewis "Tuna" Harrison
4. Henry "Shrimp" Davies
5. Clement Scott
6. Edward Bach
7. Priscilla Buxton
8. Cyril and Alfred Fenner
9. Oliver Locker-Lampson

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Information correct at time of printing. This guide is not exhaustive and inclusion should not be taken as a recommendation. Please contact us to contribute updates and additions.

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