



MARLBOROUGH TOWN COUNCIL

PRESS RELEASE

28 February 2019

Blue Plaque for Bob Pelham

On 28 February 2019, a special commemorative event took place to honour Bob Pelham, founder of Pelham Puppets. Our Town Mayor, Councillor Lisa Farrell and Astrid and Sue Pelham, nieces of Bob Pelham, unveiled the plaque which sits on the side of the curved building in Kingsbury Street close to the heart of the town centre. The unveiling coincides with what would have been Bob's 100th birthday, a very special day.



What started as a small business at 3 Kingsbury Street occupying the ground and first floors and known first as Wonky Toys became Pelham Puppets in 1947. From these small beginnings, it moved to a factory in London Road and grew to one where puppets were made in Marlborough and exported all over the world. So, internationally important as well as locally – in the 1970s it was the biggest employer in town. The factory closed in 1986.

In July 2017, the Town Council in partnership with David Leech and the British Puppet & Model Theatre Guild admirably supported by a dedicated committee of volunteers hosted a festival to celebrate the 70th anniversary of Pelham Puppets. The two day event began with a Puppet Parade along the town's famously wide High Street headed up by the Phoenix Brass Band playing the theme tune from Thunderbirds. They were closely followed by a giant Punch & Judy, an impressive dragon created by local students from St John's Academy, a giant Merlin and lots of other puppets including the original Muffin the Mule.

Councillor Farrell said "This blue plaque is a fitting tribute to Bob Pelham who played a hugely important part in Marlborough's history. Many of Marlborough's residents will remember the importance of Pelham Puppets to the town and may well have worked in Kingsbury Street or at the factory based in London Road. Others will have grown up playing with the internationally famous puppets and will have their own personal favourites. Today is our chance to say thank you."

David Leech, current owner of the brand, said: "It is wonderful that the Town Council has made this possible. They have been enthusiastically supportive both with the Puppet Festival in 2017 and with today's event. I'm so pleased that Bob Pelham has been recognised for all he did with the placement of this plaque."

For more information, please contact the Town Clerk, Mrs Shelley Parker, at
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