



THE WORTHING SOCIETY

President : D.Robert Elleray, ALA, FRSA, FLS

NEWSLETTER

SPRING/SUMMER 2015

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SUB-COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Tony Malone
Natalie Cropper
Sue Belton

NEWSLETTER COMPILER:

Sandra Malone

FORTHCOMING ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 28 APRIL 2015

Notice is hereby given that the 33rd Annual General Meeting of The Worthing Society will take place on Tuesday, 28 April 2015 at 7pm in the Library Lecture Theatre.

Nominations are invited for the following posts:-

- Chairman
- Vice-Chairman
- Honorary Secretary
- Honorary Treasurer
- Honorary Membership Secretary
- Honorary Publicity Officer
- Honorary Legal Consultant
- Six Members of the Executive Committee

All nominations supported by a seconder and with the approval of the nominee should be sent, not later than Tuesday, 14 April 2015, to the Chairman.

At the conclusion of the AGM there will be a coffee break followed by an entertaining and informative talk at 7.30pm by Ian Gledhill on Art Deco.

MESSAGE FROM YOUR MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Another year has passed us by and believe it or not it is time to renew your membership. We are pleased to state that we have welcomed quite a few new members this last year and hope that they will give us the support that our existing members have given us over the years.

We have to again thank Mrs Phillips, Mr & Mrs Marks and Mr & Mrs Harrison for their very generous donations. It is lovely that they have yet again thought of us in these times of austerity.

Please find enclosed the renewal forms for our annual members. Could you please complete and either send to me or, even better, bring along to the April quarterly meeting, where we hope to see many of you and meet in person some of our new members. The meetings are free for members and only £3 for guests.

Susan Miller

CHAIRMAN'S GENERAL REPORT 2014 – 2015

A year dominated by planning matters which gave a prodigious amount of work for key Committee members. Despite widespread condemnation and criticism, the application to develop the **Aquarena** site blunders on as Roffey seek to build overbearing, high-density, blocks culminating with a 21 storey residential tower on the seafront. This mainly residential complex will cause irreparable harm to designated heritage assets.

Meanwhile, on the other side of town, another Roffey application proposes to redevelop **4 Grand Avenue** and the land to the south on **West Parade**. This envisages blocks of different heights climaxing with an 11 storey tower at the west corner of the site. As well as ruffling local feathers, other objectors see Roffey being intent on despoiling Worthing's seafront, already damaged by assorted blocks from the past.

There was uproar in **Ambrose Place** before Christmas when contractors SSE, working on behalf of West Sussex County Council, ripped out the heritage style lighting to replace them with modern lamp-posts. This work was done without warning in a Conservation Area with listed buildings which are subject to strict planning controls. The replacements are quite hideous, sway in the breeze and are 6ft too tall. The Society is working with residents to resolve the issue which would be a pantomime except that the contractor's actions are illegal. One despairs at the lack of respect and care shown to this most important historic area. Where is control?

Listing and Conservation Sub-Committee

Tony Malone's report is included in this Newsletter. It is frustrating work to persuade the Council to give conservation the priority it deserves. Tony Malone, Sue Belton and Natalie Cropper have built up solid casework and enjoy an excellent relationship with English Heritage.

Blue Plaque Trail

Fresh printing of the most popular leaflets has been ordered. The Jane Austen plaque and leaflet have had a world-wide impact. Janet Clarke, a Society member, and a member of the Jane Austen Society, together with the technical back-up of Barry Richards, have delivered excellent illustrated talks to various societies – earning funds for the Worthing Society.

Events

Talks at the Quarterly Meeting in the Library have had excellent support, even on bad weather days and new members have been enrolled. Paul Holden's talk on "Worthing and the Great War" was a huge popular success and a credit to this fine journalist and founder of the Worthing Journal.

Outings have been enjoyed by the loyal band of supporters who always sign up first. However, you will notice that there are none planned for 2015. Drumming up enough support to break even has become difficult. We have not ruled out a fresh start in 2016 if we can find a Social Secretary. The sell-out coach trip to the Christmas Celebration Concert with John Rutter at the Royal Albert Hall remains in the programme.

Appreciation

Sue Belton is taking a 'leave of absence' which I hope will not be too long. Her valuable contribution to conservation work and in building a working relationship with the South Eastern Office of English Heritage, have made her a major player on the Committee. She has promised to answer the telephone to help us, should we get stuck.

I remain indebted to Officers and Members of the Executive Committee who give so much of their time to the hard business of the Society and keeping the wheels turning. Major planning applications need much detailed study. It would be impossible to fulfil the role of Chairman without the team around me. We, in turn, can only function with the support, encouragement and prompting of our members who are the Worthing Society.

Lastly, fulsome thanks to Sandra Malone for her efforts to decipher copy and prepare the Newsletter for the printer and for managing to smile through it all.

Thank you.

David Sumner

CHAIRMAN

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTARY

It's Iconic

Roffey's Ben Cheal continues to call his application for the Aquarena site "Iconic". Let me be an iconoclast. It is awful. Speaking on BBC Radio Sussex with Tim Loughton MP, we agreed it was awful. The concept ought to be scrapped and the site given a fresh start.

Did the Roffey juggernaut receive any covert encouragement before embarking on this seemingly foolhardy approach? The concept is unchanged following two public consultations with Roffey dismissing the critics with mulish fervour. All you objectors and demonstrators do not know what is good for you, or Worthing!

The proposed scheme's density is over twice that considered appropriate leading to the overhearing scale and mass. The design conflicts with Worthing Borough Council's planning policy agreed in the Core Strategy and the Supplementary Planning Documents on Residential Development and Tall Buildings.

English Heritage has submitted disparaging comments about the scheme harming heritage assets and the sensitive seafront site as inappropriate for a tower block of the scale proposed. The 21 storey tower would be 50% higher than Manor Lea! Worthing's skyline and shoreline altered forever. Residents of the tower – if fit enough – will be a hop, skip and jump from the seashore. ***Read our full objection and English Heritage's comments on our website or that of the Council.***

Roffey have another tower in mind for their proposed redevelopment to provide 36 apartments on the corner of Grand Avenue and West Parade. The tower with 11 storeys on the southwest corner would be higher than any other block on West Worthing seafront. The Society has objected. Existing building lines have been exceeded despite assurances at the public consultations and there are detrimental side effects for neighbours.

What is it with these towers? They use brownfield sites. Building costs are higher but the higher the apartment block the more money it makes. Rule of thumb is that each floor adds 1.5 per cent to the value of each apartment. Higher it goes, the greater the profit. But you all knew that.

All lighting is not the same

As contractors SSC and WSCC Highways wrestle to find acceptable replacement lighting in Ambrose Place, resident MP Sir Peter Bottomley noted that in Westminster they have installed gas lighting to add authenticity to a Conservation Area. The Kit is available. The squabble may be about who pays. Warwick Place is next in line for treatment by SSC. A disgraceful muddle – 'pass the parcel' politics.

The Manor Sports Ground was gifted to the town by FW Mitchell, the local baker, whose main branch and restaurant occupied the corner site of the Arcade where Nationwide sits. Upstairs, waitresses in black dresses, white aprons and caps, served delicious morning coffee, luncheon and teas. What would he think of a town that contemplates giving priority use to a school built in the wrong place on a site too small. The Education Authorities are adept at being wrong footed.

I recall watching the Annual Police Sports and County Cricket Week at the ground. Harold Pinter recalled enjoying cricket when he worked at the Connaught Theatre. In those days, the roped off cricket square was respected.

Meanwhile, the much vaunted re-paving and regeneration of Montague Street, Montague Place, Portland Road and Bath Place has been delayed. Engineers keep finding problems.

The decision to close the Tourist Information Centre is regrettable and I have yet to meet anyone who agrees with it. But I am old. The geeks who sit in offices justifying the move are out of touch with reality on the ground.

David Sumner

CHAIRMAN

LISTING AND CONSERVATION SUB-COMMITTEE REPORT

(Our 'watchdog' for anything affecting Worthing's Listed/Local Interest Buildings and Conservation Areas)

Chairman - Tony Malone
Committee - Natalie Cropper
Susan Belton

First, a brief update on the Buildings At Risk that I mentioned in the last Newsletter. It doesn't make optimistic reading as precious little has happened to improve the state of some of these Heritage Buildings, all of which we have regularly brought to the attention of Worthing Borough Council.

The 160 year old Gospel Hall in Bedford Row has, for the last few years, been empty and has been allowed to slowly but surely slip into a state of neglect and disrepair. Boarded up and dilapidated it is a sad sight. However, things are looking more hopeful for the unique Castle Goring. The new owner has installed a Chamberlain (what a great job description!) and is making a start by concentrating on restoring one part of the building at a time, as a spectacular venue for functions such as weddings and receptions.

The Grade II Listed Building at 83 Marine Parade has, at last, been lifted from the brink of total dereliction. Part of the building has now been repaired and renovated and it looks like work is underway for the rest of it. Meanwhile, the old Ship Inn in South Street has, thankfully, now had some renovation and repair work done to the façade after part of it fell into South Street exposing rotten timbers.

Battling Conservationist Pat Baring's Listed street lamp in Farncombe Road – this one-time beacon (no pun intended!) that was in the vanguard of the early days of conservation in our town still, after many months, remains unrepaired. The glass panels remain broken and the lights are out. This is a tricky road junction at the best of times and local residents have voiced their concerns that the lighting no longer functions during the hours of darkness. Meanwhile, I am advised that the lamp is not part of the contract to replace all street lights in the County with modern replacements and that the delay in repair is partly down to the County Council attempting to hand over responsibility for the lamp to WBC. Pass the parcel yet again.

Finally, the old Lifeboat House continues to fall further into disrepair. There seemed to be light at the end of the tunnel when a buyer was rumoured but all has gone quiet.

I have spent a lot of time recently trying to find an answer as to why our constant dialogue with WBC regarding 'Heritage' matters (e.g. concerns over Listed buildings; Local List buildings and Conservation Areas) is so arduous and all too frequently does not end in resolution. I have finally reached a conclusion. After digging deep into English Heritage Guidelines plus WBC policy and strategic documents two fundamental facts emerge. English Heritage Guidelines for local authorities are very detailed and give very good advice **but they are only guidelines.** WBC policy/strategic documents recognise and acknowledge this guidance but at this point in time have not enshrined some of the key points in their own policy documents. Every time I pored over WBC policy documents on Conservation and Heritage two key documents appeared to be missing – the 'Conservation and Heritage Technical Note' and another policy document covering 'Environmental areas of special character'. Both documents were mentioned but failed to materialise.

At last I managed to track down the answer to the first part of this puzzle via an Officer in WBC Planning Policy Section who acknowledged that it had indeed been intended some time ago to produce a Conservation and Heritage Technical Note and I quote – "Unfortunately, due to other priorities and resource pressures this document was not progressed within the timeframe suggested in the Council's Local Development Scheme 2012. We are currently in the process of revising the Local Development Scheme and the 2015 version will be considered by Members in March..... this will include the 'Conservation and Heritage Guide'".

The second part of the puzzle remains. The policy document covering 'Environmental areas of special character' is what is known as a 'Saved Document' that existed in previous WBC policy and should have been included in current policy. Instead it has simply disappeared.

Tony Malone

**Vice Chairman of The Worthing Society
Chairman of Listing and Conservation Sub Committee**

Joan Laurie still remembers her lines

Joan Laurie was 91 in January. When she unveiled the blue plaque to commemorate the career of her mother, the variety and radio star Gladys Morgan, I was amazed by her liveliness and her ability to recall the past. In the spacious family flat in Salisbury Road she tells stories of tours all over the world with the family act and as a solo artiste. Variety was a tough world and forged Joan's eternal optimism. Roy Hudd and Ken Dodd are pals.

She is off to Eastbourne on March 13th for the unveiling of a blue plaque to Sandy Powell, organised by the British Music Hall Society. Later she will attend the BMHS 'Day By The Sea' on Saturday 16th May at the Royal Hippodrome Theatre. The day-long celebration of the world of music hall and variety with music, comedy, discussion and archive film footage promises to be a sell-out. Joan's star is still sparkling – what did I do yesterday?!

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Change at the top

We have a new Leader of the Council. Dan Humphreys steps into the shoes of Paul Yallop who decided to resign and take up a role elsewhere. I liked Yallop.

The new man, Dan Humphreys, is unknown to me. He talks the talk. It's early days to judge what he will 'bring to the table'. He needs to be more than a committee man.

Will he make a difference? There is a fault line running through the Executive of WSCC and WBC. Continued delays in the town centre re-paving and regeneration; the fiasco over the Manor Sports Ground; the illegal action of the SSC contractors regarding the street-lamp replacements in Ambrose Place, Farncombe Road and, potentially, Warwick Place; the extraordinary planning application for the Aquarena site that could have been reigned in two years ago; the closing of the Visit Worthing Centre (Tourist Information Centre to the sensible) and so on, leads me to question the competence and agenda of the Council Executive. In addition, the adoption of the Cabinet system has made the role of Councillor a frustrating one.

The Worthing Society's future

The future of the Worthing Society will only be secure if we can recruit suitable candidates to the Committee when vacancies occur. In today's world all new candidates will require reasonable I.T. skills.

We urgently need to recruit a Hon. Secretary – a key role within the team. Essential qualities are commitment; the ability to learn on the job and get on with us.

A Social Secretary is also needed to organise outings and assist finding guest speakers for the Quarterly Meetings.

Rumour has it that the Chairman will need replacing soon. We are searching for a younger ideal. The, perhaps, obvious candidate, Vice Chairman Tony Malone has indicated that he does not wish to be considered for the role as he has been trying, for some time, to reduce his workload because of other pressures and commitments.

Please contact the Chairman if you are interested in discussing these roles in more depth.

David Sumner
CHAIRMAN

Decide Before the Tide

By Jessica Gill

An interactive Art installation that will stand as a monument to Democracy and the Art of Conversation, to be used by anyone to enjoy the right to debate in spectacular surroundings.



“Democracy means government by discussion, but it is only effective if you can stop people talking”. *Clement Atlee 1883-1967 British Prime Minister*

We aim to construct and secure a sculpture SW of the Lido called: ‘Decide Before the Tide’; it will appear and disappear with the tide.

The sculpture will be the first of its kind and would contribute towards Worthing promoting itself as a Centre for Culture & the Arts. It is a tribute to free speech and democracy and will be a National Landmark for the town. This ambitious plan has the backing of Worthing Council providing it does not cost the taxpayer anything, and it will not. Several local businesses have expressed interest in sponsoring the installation.

The installation, a re-enactment of the local democratic process, comprises a round table surrounded by a circular bench, leaving room for one single chair. The structures are fixed to the seabed and therefore are only visible when the tide is out. It will provide a forum for meetings with the idea that fresh air, beautiful views and nature as timekeeper will inspire clear thinking and make for unencumbered decision making.

A Committee sits on the bench and the campaigners use the lone chair. The scene is set, a decision is needed, all sides of the debate are represented, the campaigners petition, the Committee votes. A decision must be taken before the tide comes in.....

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CHAIRMAN’S COMMENT – This really would be “Iconic”.

THE WORTHING SOCIETY EVENTS FOR 2015

- FEB - Tuesday 24th at 7.30pm QUARTERLY MEETING in the Worthing Library Lecture Theatre.
Speaker: Dr. Geoffrey Mead on 'Scattered Squalor & Downland Housing....Inter-War Sussex Housing'
- APR - Tuesday 28th at 7.00 p.m. A.G.M. in the Worthing Library Theatre followed by lecture at 7.30p.m. Speaker: Ian Gledhill on Art Deco
- JUN - Sunday 21st from 3:00-4:30pm a midsummer afternoon 'STRAWBERRIES & CREAM TEA' in the Ayrton Suite at Beach House. **Tickets: £5.00**
- NB:** *Tickets for the CreamTea will be on sale at the A.G.M. on Tuesday 28th April or, alternatively, please send a cheque made payable to 'The Worthing Society' enclosing a S.A.E. to: Mrs M Richards, 2 Beach House, Brighton Road, Worthing, West Sussex BN11 2EJ*
- SEP - Tuesday 22nd at 7:30pm. QUARTERLY MEETING in the Worthing Library Lecture Theatre.
Film: 'Looking Back at Worthing' the last 200 years, followed by a Q & A session
- OCT - Tuesday 6th at 11:00am. VISIT to Highdown Vineyard – Tour, Tasting & Ploughman's Lunch. **Ticket: £20.00**
- NOV - Tuesday 24th at 7:30pm. QUARTERLY MEETING in the Worthing Library Lecture Theatre.
Speaker : T.B.A.
- DEC - Monday 7th a COACH OUTING to the Royal Albert Hall for John Rutter's CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION CONCERT with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. **Cost: £45.00**

Please remember that prior to Quarterly meetings Committee Members will be available from 7p.m. to talk to members wishing to discuss matters of interest or concern.

Visitors / Guests are welcome to attend the lectures – fee £3

Tickets for the above events can be booked either at the Quarterly meetings or from Mrs M Richards, 2 Beach House, Brighton Road, Worthing, West Sussex BN11 2EJ

For Membership enquiries please contact our Membership Secretary
Mrs. Susan Miller on 01903 219884

Don't forget to look at our website for the latest news
www.worthingsociety.org.uk

and if you wish to email the Executive Committee, our email address is
worthingsociety@yahoo.co.uk