



## THE WORTHING SOCIETY

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P. A. SNOW O.B.E., J.P., M.A., F.R.S.A.

## NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2009

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### FORTHCOMING EVENTS

#### **Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> September**

**A Guided Walk of Lewes with Chris Hare.** Cost £10.  
Meet at Lewes Station at 10:30. For bookings Tel.700325

#### **Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> September – National Pier Day**

**Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> September** at 7:30 p.m. in the Worthing Library Lecture Theatre when Laura Kidner, Curator of Art & Exhibitions at Worthing Museum & Art Gallery will be speaking about **‘Worthing Museum & Art Gallery and Its Collection’**.

#### **Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> September – 12 noon -plaque unveiling**

#### **Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> September until Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> October**

**Annual Exhibition at Worthing Library**  
Theme: ‘A Stroll Through Worthing’s Conservation Areas’

**Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> November** at 7:30 p.m. in the Worthing Library Lecture Theatre when a speaker from **The South Downs Society** will give an illustrated talk.

At this meeting mince pies and mulled fruit punch or coffee will be served. Cost £1. p.p. Also a pre-Christmas raffle will take place. Donations of raffle prizes will be very much appreciated on the night!

**Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> February** at 7:30 p.m. in the Worthing Library Lecture Theatre when Dave Allport, MBE will give a digital presentation entitled **‘Cruise in the Solent’**.

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

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#### A Reminder from your Membership Secretary

Subscriptions for the year 2009-10 (Single £7, Joint £10) were due on April 1<sup>st</sup>. Members who may not yet have renewed their **annual** membership please send a cheque made payable to The Worthing Society and send to Mrs. S. Miller, Membership Secretary, 92 Lyndhurst Road, Worthing, BN11 2DW, enclosing a stamped addressed envelope, please.

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The future of the Beach Hotel, the Tesco Extra superstore at Durrington and the siting of a children's playground were matters of controversy for members.

"Save the Beach Hotel" has been a call echoed by many, who have expressed dismay at the proposed demolition of a landmark building from Worthing's better days. There has been a call for 'listing'. Unfortunately, the hotel is a conversion of a Victorian terrace with a deco front put on in the early thirties, and does not fulfil any of the criteria used by English Heritage. If it was the original terrace or a whole purpose built deco building, listing would be a formality and I suggest, if it was the latter, would not be for sale.

The Farnes family, owners of the Beach Hotel for three generations, are reluctant sellers. The hotel, as it stands, no longer has a viable long term future. Only half of the 79 rooms are doubles, the size in demand by most guests. The best front balcony rooms can no longer command premium rates because 'health and safety' rule that the balconies must not be used. Despite continuous expenditure on the building and refurbishment of the public area and rooms, the structure of the old parts of the building need major work - £3million might be enough. Roffey, the local developers, have taken up the option and propose apartments and a new build 40 room spa hotel on the frontage with houses to the rear. The major hurdle is securing a hotelier for the site because consultants in the industry do not regard Worthing worth considering. The only sizeable surviving town hotels are privately owned. Travelodge is a different category. Roffey is optimistic they have an interested partner. We wait design proposals and hope they will respect this major site in a conservation area.

Despite our, and others, opposition to the detailed planning application for the new Tesco Extra superstore in Durrington, the DCC gave its glum assent. Our committee member, David Sawers, drafted an excellent final letter to the Head of Planning and to members of the DCC, and addressed the meeting. Impassioned pleas were made by nearby residents. Tesco offer a few extra jobs but no-one gets rich manning a till or stacking shelves. Would anyone by choice want to live next to a Tesco superstore or on a local road nearby? A very disappointing day.

WBC, aided by another gang of consultants, has successfully applied for a £100,000 Lottery grant for a children's playground. When it was revealed it was planned for the Goring Greensward, there was hostile opposition – not as some claim because residents dislike children. The Greensward is a wonderful open public area by the sea and in the summer is thronged with families at leisure. Parts flood in winter but it still plays host to ball games, walkers and kite flyers. A fenced, structured, playground could set a precedent for the building of activity areas. Thrashing about in a pantomime of municipal mismanagement to find somewhere to spend the windfall, the Council is now considering two sites on Worthing seafront at Anscombe Road and Marine Gardens. I suggest neither of these sites fulfil the catchment criteria set by the funders. Using Marine Gardens in this way would be an act of corporate vandalism. An attack on the integrity of the Bowling Pavilion and the space is already threatened by a proposal to re-develop #'s 42,43 and 44 on West Parade. A Society member noted that no financial audit on immediate and ongoing costs of the project has been made. Nothing is for nothing.

A revised Core Strategy document was published in June for consultation and inviting comments by 1<sup>st</sup> August 2009. This document sets out what the Council wants to achieve in different parts of the Borough to 2026 and how it will go about it. This is the second attempt by WBC to set out its overall vision and development strategy. The Committee discussed the document and David Sawers wrote a brilliant critique. In our opinion, the document draft is a complete failure and divorced from reality. It is too aspirational and some of the strategic objectives are completely beyond the powers and influence of a local authority.

If you believe tinkering with the public realm will bring private investment, better jobs, quality shops to the town, and even new hotels and upmarket restaurants, a statement in the draft Core Strategy should dampen the spirits. It concerns the demography of the town and may go some way to explain the economic decline of a town, which is becoming a centre of charity, discount and pounds shops. There are three areas of deprivation, which is why Worthing Hospital became the main area centre. About 23 – 30% of adults possess poor literacy and numeracy skills. That is over 20,000 souls. Walk slowly through the moving mass in Montague Street on market day and look for people who would attract quality shopping and business! The future will not be easy – business follows the customer.

Another windfall to come to WBC is a grant of £500,000 to "do something" at Splash Point. The Society made a presentation and submissions to the chosen design teams, thanks to work done by Tony Malone and Sue Belton. Even those of the committee, who dared to question another regeneration scheme, felt our input was vital. I went to look at the four competing concepts on show at the Town Hall until 4<sup>th</sup> September. The Society is not on the judging panel, but I hope members and the committee submitted views on their choice. Free votes for all.

Meanwhile, I hope to see members and hear views on everything at the Quarterly Meeting at the Library on Thursday, 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2009. We will learn what treasures are in the town's art collection. I am on the Lewes Walk on 9<sup>th</sup> September too.

Thank you all for your support.

*David Sumner,*  
Chairman

### **Nearing the final decision on the South Downs National Park**

The final session of the inquiry into the South Downs National Park was held in Worthing on August 18<sup>th</sup>. The purpose of this session was to discuss the few changes to the Park's boundary that had been proposed by Defra in March. The only contended change was the addition of Castle Goring and its park, as the Society and other amenity societies have urged over the last six years. The addition was opposed by the landowners, the Somerset family, and by the West Durrington Consortium. Mr Clement Somerset argued that the park is not a park, just farmland; and the consultant for the Consortium argued that only the gardens around the house are connected to the building. I spoke for the Society, and pointed out that the park is marked as a park on the 1879 OS map, and is the landscape into which Bysse Shelley had chosen to place his house.

The Inspector will have delivered his report to Defra by now, so we can hope to hear the final decision on the establishment of the Park, its boundary and its governance before the end of the year.

David Sawers, Committee Member

## An update from Tony Malone (Vice Chairman/Publicity Officer)

It has been another busy time for the Society. Apart from keeping an eye on the weekly Planning Lists we are always 'scanning the radar' for issues that we feel demand our attention - which is why we represent our members at forums such as Worthing Arts Council; Planning User Group and Conservation Area Advisory Committee.

Some of the major issues around Worthing that have been occupying our time and resources are the Core Strategy for Worthing; West Durrington development ; Tesco at West Durrington and the South Downs National Park. Our strong objections were also submitted regarding the proposed demolition of the three properties immediately to the east of Marine Gardens to make way for a block of flats. We have also been working on the forthcoming Worthing Society exhibition at Worthing Library starting 26<sup>th</sup> September for 2 weeks. The theme will be Worthing's Conservation Areas.

We were also asked to submit our ideas for the Splash Point Regeneration Project, which we duly did, followed by our presentation at the Town Hall to the WBC team and the short-listed architects. By the time that you receive this newsletter the architects will have displayed their submissions in the Town Hall (until 4<sup>th</sup> Sep.) for public scrutiny. I hope that you were aware of the display and were able to make your comments. I find that, so often, these things are poorly advertised and the public are unaware of the opportunity to comment.

When we became aware of Worthing Pier Day (20<sup>th</sup> September) we expressed interest in having a 'stand' on the pier so that we could publicise The Society. The organiser asked if we could also display some material on the history of the pier, which we will be pleased to do. Please do try and come along and do invite your friends.

This is a repeat from previous newsletters...but there is no easy way to say this - our Committee is still very stretched and we would welcome any approach from you, our members, if you would like to help in any way. Although access to a computer and some familiarity with word-processing and the use of email would be a great asset it is not imperative. Willingness and reliability is probably just as important. Apart from needing a Minutes Secretary for our monthly meetings at Beach House, additional help would, for example, make it possible for us to allocate 'portfolios' to individuals. These could relate to a specific development or initiative within Worthing (e.g. the Aquarena redevelopment; The Dome; The Connaught etc). Given enough 'hands to the pump' we might even run to the luxury of having someone maintain a file on Worthing Society press cuttings. Lots of jobs to do...there is something for everyone who is willing to lend a hand.

As always...may I remind all of you with internet access to keep an eye on the Worthing Borough Council website [www.worthing.gov.uk](http://www.worthing.gov.uk) . It contains not only updates on planning matters and major developments in particular but also has regular public consultations to which you may wish to contribute.

Please do keep us aware of your feelings on any Worthing Society matters of concern. The newsletter and our website ([www.worthingsociety.org.uk](http://www.worthingsociety.org.uk)) contain contact details.

Tony Malone  
Vice Chairman/Publicity Officer



**Worthing Pier**

## **NATIONAL PIER DAY SUNDAY 20<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER**

### **WORTHING PIER**

In 1860 a pier campaign was launched and a company formed. A simple iron jetty 960 feet long with toll hut and sea end platform was opened on April 9<sup>th</sup> 1862. The design by Sir Robert Rawlinson cost £6,500.

In 1887 a complete reconstruction took place to mark Queen Victoria's Jubilee. The improvements by James Mansergh included a south pavilion and landing stage. A grand opening by Viscount Hampden (Lord Lieutenant of Sussex) took place on July 1<sup>st</sup> 1889. On Easter Saturday, March 22<sup>nd</sup> 1913, a violent storm destroyed the deck isolating the pavilion, which was nicknamed 'Easter Island'. Following restoration the pier was re-opened by the Lord Mayor of London, Sir. T. Vanistart Bowater on May 29<sup>th</sup> 1914.

In 1921 the pier was purchased by the Borough and in 1925 a large domed pavilion by Adshead and Ramsey replaced the kiosks of 1884 at the shore end.

On September 10<sup>th</sup> 1933, fire gutted the south pavilion and an Art Deco style replacement by C.H. Wall opened in 1935, with slight modification on 1986.

**So, come and visit your lovely GradeII listed pier on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> September – we'll be there!**

### **A PLAQUE UNVEILING AT 12 NOON ON WEDNESDAY 23<sup>RD</sup> SEPTEMBER**

**at 6 Lansdown Close, West Worthing**

**in memory of**

**HENFREY SMAIL 1909 – 1979**

This year the Worthing Society has continued its important programme of erecting plaques to identify buildings of historic interest in the Borough. The next to be unveiled (September 23<sup>rd</sup>) at Tudor Cottage, 6 Lansdown Close, West Worthing is of special interest in commemorating Henfrey Smail who during the years 1938-1950 researched and wrote Worthing's history beginning with a series of articles in the former Sussex County Magazine. Several volumes followed notably The Worthing Map Story (1949) where the successive maps of the town are examined to provide the basis of a detailed account of the development of Worthing from the time of the Armada.

Smail's interest in transport began with articles on local railways and his first book The Worthing Road & It's Coaches (1943) studies road improvement, coaching and the growth of Worthing as a holiday resort. Despite poor health Henfrey became a co-director of the local Copthorne Builders (Worthing) Ltd., surveyed local architecture and supported local interests including the Archaeological Society, and with Oliver Buckle, founded the Worthing Natural History Society in 1961. He also participated in setting up the Sussex Wildlife Trust.

The Smail family name derives from Smailholm, a village near Kelso, Henfrey's father Charles G. Smail later moved south to Forest Hill (Lewisham) where Henfrey was born and then to Worthing in 1923, living first at 1 Valencia Road and then Tudor Cottage, built by the family in 1930. Henfrey attended Brighton College and a career in banking was planned but frustrated by the onset of tuberculosis. Henfrey Smail was a shy quiet man but possessed a keen intellect and infinite curiosity for all knowledge, this enriched by a wonderful sense of humour made him delightful company.

In 1968 when I took charge of the Local History Collection at Worthing Library I had the great fortune of getting to know Henfrey very well and owe him much for stimulating and encouraging my own career in local history.

Robert Elleray, Vice-President

Outings during 2009:-

We enjoyed two very successful outings earlier this year to The Red House in Bexleyheath, viewing the iconic home of William Morris, followed by a later visit in June to Standen and Saint Hill Manor. **A third interesting day trip is scheduled for September 9 to Lewes. Chris Hare, our popular, knowledgeable historian will lead the morning and afternoon tours of Lewes.**

We now hire a 16-seater bus on occasion, depending on the cost and demand by members. And, on the two occasions which we used the bus, it was fully booked.

Now, for 2010!

The outing on the cards for next June is Mottisfront Abbey and Gardens (NT) near Romsey. It is famous for its fabulous old-fashioned walled rose gardens (at their best in June) renowned for their wonderful scent and show of colour. En route, we will visit National Trust's Uppark's House and Gardens, in South Harting, Petersfield.

Another fascinating outing is being arranged to Ditchling, a charming old village in East Sussex, off the A23, where Dame Vera Lynn resides. I hope to organise a meeting with the Friends of Ditchling, a charity organisation who are fund-raising to refurbish their historic Old Barn located close to Ditchling's excellent Museum. Perhaps we will be able to meet up with them for a welcome tea to find out more about their historic village!

Later, that afternoon, we will continue on to Glynde Place for a tour of the historic Elizabethan home of the VI<sup>th</sup> Viscount and Viscountess Hampden after which we will have tea in the garden.

Other trips will be scheduled.

When booking for an outing please could members send me a stamped self-addressed envelope in order to receive the final details of each trip after sending their payment in advance. Cheques to be made out to The Worthing Society

My tel. number is 01903 700 325 e-mail address:- [travel\\_editor@btinternet.com](mailto:travel_editor@btinternet.com) and physical address 24 Marine Crescent, Goring by Sea, Worthing, West Sussex BN12 4JF.

Look forward to seeing you all again next year!

Christine Roberts – Social Secretary.

Many thanks to those members who attended the 'Wine & Cheese Party' at Beach House in July and who helped to make it such a success. Once again we were very lucky with the weather and £65 was raised for the Society's funds.

Mascha/ Editor

## **Stop Press**

**SATURDAY 12th DECEMBER 2009**

**JOHN RUTTER'S CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION MATINEE CONCERT**

**WITH THE RPO**

**AT THE ROYAL ALBERT HALL**

**TICKET PRICE £33 pp**

For tickets send a **SAE** to Mrs. M. Richards, 2 Beach House, Brighton Road, Worthing BN11 2EJ  
Cheques made payable to ARUN DFAS. (Price includes coach travel and concert ticket)