

THE WORTHING SOCIETY

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NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2013

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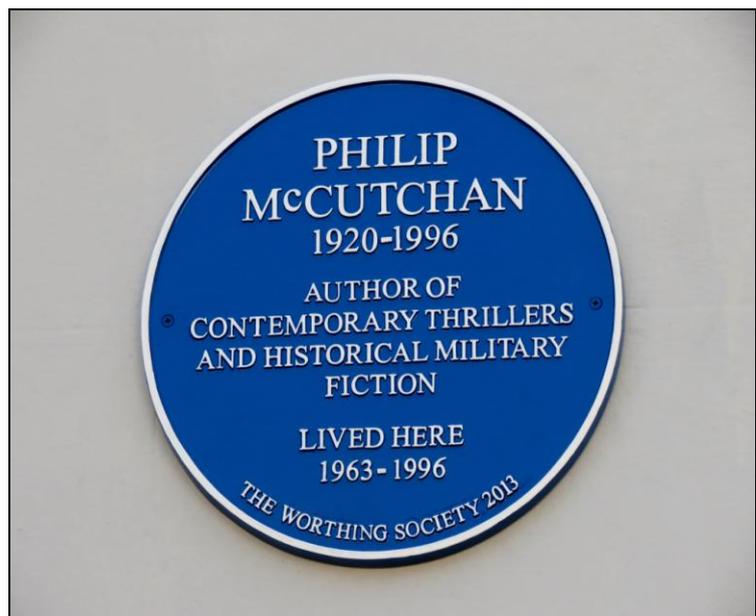
CELEBRATE WORTHING'S CULTURAL LIFE WITH US

Do not miss.....

Amanda O'Reilly, the General Manager of Worthing Theatres, will be our Speaker at the Quarterly Meeting in the renovated Library Lecture Theatre on 24 September 2013 at 7.30pm. Members will be aware of the changes and innovations to the programmes for our entertainment venues that she has made in a short time. Her mission is to revive the fortunes of our four venues, cutting the subsidy by increasing audiences. Amanda has made an impressive start. If anyone can, she can. She deserves our support. Come and listen and take part in the discussion.

Gerry Connolly, of Worthing Museum will speak to us on 26 November 2013 about our Museum's Costume Collection which is second only in importance to that of the V&A.

Jane Austen outing - The Society is maintaining links with the Jane Austen Society. Join our coach outing on 1 October 2013 to Jane Austen country.



Our latest blue plaque – Philip M^cCutchan

A blue plaque in memory of the distinguished author **Philip M^cCutchan** was unveiled on 6 July 2013 at Myrtle Cottage, 107 Portland Road, Worthing, where the writer lived from 1963 until his death in 1996. The Worthing Society plaque, sponsored by the author's son Donald and daughter Rosie, was unveiled by best-selling crime writer Lesley Thomas, a member of the Crimewriter's Association which Mr M^cCutchan Chaired in 1965. A prolific writer, he had nearly 130 books published and his books were borrowed half-a-million times a year from the country's libraries. For decades he was 'the most borrowed author' and his work can still be found on the shelves of Worthing Library. As well as crime fiction, he wrote historic military fiction using pen names such as Duncan MacNeil.

When Philip M^cCutchan moved to Worthing in 1963, he settled in the artistic quarter of the town, around the corner from Harold Pinter and the theatric digs of Ambrose Place. Now only the houses remain.

After the unveiling, some Committee members went to Donald's home in Ferring for tea and to view the wonderful archive of his father's novels; some translated into foreign languages; a 'cuttings' book and other memorabilia.



The son and daughter of Philip M^cCutchan at the unveiling of his commemoration plaque

BLUE PLAQUE TRAIL

Still on this subject, you may be interested to know that the Society is planning a series of leaflets about our blue plaques – **A blue plaque trail!** They will build into a fascinating look at buildings, their occupants and help our aim to promote Worthing's sense of place.

ROUND UP

The Society's **Montague Place** campaign against the proposed development of small shops with flats along the east boundary wall has been boosted by a submission from English Heritage opposing the scheme, and the refusal of the Highways Authority to agree a stopping-up of the road. After nearly 30 years of this saga, will we finally kill this scheme off? Enhancement of this historic space is not being considered by our Council.

Beach Huts – the flat ugly ones – are to spring up on the seafront so that the Council can increase revenue. Our strongest objections were for those proposed south of the valued Heene Terrace Conservation Area, and the 17 planned for the irreplaceable shore path west of Sea Lane Café. These are on the back burner because of the powerful arguments against. However, be aware!

The suggested change of use of more chalets near Splashpoint to artist's studios seems perverse.

The **Frink Heads** have an Information Board. The contribution of the Society and the Twentieth Century Society to persuade English Heritage to 'list' the sculptures and the supporting structure is not acknowledged on the Information Board!

Four **Worthing Heritage Trails** to promote interest in the town's history and environment have been launched and the Visitor Centre reports a strong demand for the leaflets which contain a map, directions and descriptions plus a *QR code* to enable Smart phone users to access the website for the trails with video recorded commentary and additional information. This application will widen the appeal. Chris Hare, who is managing this HLF funded scheme for the Worthing Heritage Alliance initiative, is planning a training programme for volunteer guides to lead organised walks. A further four trails will be launched next Spring. The Worthing Society is a founder member of the WHA.

Thank you to Members who joined us for the Wine & Cheese Open House at Beach House, to socialise and raise funds. The sun shone for this popular gathering that happens because of Barry and Mascha Richards who let us invade their home.

RESTORATION

1. The restoration and repair of 11 and 12 Heene Terrace is nearly complete. The derelict Mayfair Hotel has been transformed and the integrity of the elevation restored to the original G A Dean design of the mid 1860's. The Terrace has lost some of its historic features and we hope that Adrian Marmont's attention to detail will raise the standard of works to other buildings in the Terrace.
2. Restoration to the front of 14 Ambrose Place (the "Pinter" house) is to be carried out. Again, great care has been taken to identify original features of the canopy and balcony. The work will be supervised by specialists using a builder with the skills.

The Society is delighted when owners of Listed properties show this level of care, love and concern.

DESTRUCTION

Flip the coin and we have the site of the three houses nos. 42 – 44 West Parade, on the corner of Marine Gardens, where Roffey's 'Vista Mare' nears completion. Approval was given on Appeal, despite the public, the Society's and the Council's objections. The Deco touches cannot disguise/hide that this 13 apartment block is out of keeping/step with its overwhelming mass and height. Near neighbours in Hastings Court and Sunny Close have cause to feel let down by the system. The purchaser of the £1m penthouse will be able to enjoy superior views over all below and beyond. **It is a lump.**

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SAD FAREWELLS.....

To **Ron Kerridge**, that generous, enthusiastic researcher of all things historic in the Worthing area.

To **Roy Bishop**, supporter and active member of the Chamber of Trade and late manager of Hector Powe, the tailors in Chapel Road, who kitted out the business men in the town. I bought five great suits (that really fitted) and an overcoat from Roy, in his prime.

To **Mary Rosenberg** of Ambrose Place, who supported the Society and attended meetings until too frail to do so, but who always gave me her forthright opinions.

SPLASHPOINT – OUR CHAIRMAN TAKES A LOOK

Visitors first view

Why do I feel ambivalent about this project? It is up and running and so popular that in the school holidays demand has exceeded capacity. Splashing families have occupied all its pools and in the diving pool youngsters queue up to jump and hurl themselves off the boards. Serious swimmers are confined to one lane, as better go early or late, or plunge into the sea during our glorious summer. When the Swimming Club takes over, order is restored. Water polo has an evening venue.

From its inception, and over the years, the project took on a life of its own. The budget has emptied the town's coffers and beggared the Council. Our golf course and any other open land belonging to the Council has been 'flogged off' to raise funds. The old Aquarena site and public open space to the south is to go to a developer and still there will be a shortfall of cash in the kitty to hobble future projects.



When the previous Council Leader, Keith Mercer, made a commitment to keep the Aquarena open until a new pool was completed, use of the existing site was ruled out. Thoughts of a prestige 50 metre competition pool were dashed when Sports England refused to consider a grant. Consideration was given to sites at Durrington and as part of Teville Gate before deciding on what the architects described as "a unique seafront site next to the existing Aquarena", over the top of the free children's paddling pool!

After an RIBA competition, Wilkinson Eyre were chosen as Project Architects in September 2009. The new building was to offer a 25 metre pool; a learner/diving pool; indoor leisure pools with rapids and flumes and outdoor waters. It would also offer a health and fitness centre, café, crèche and a flexible centre for other activities. A modest offer in a build to reflect Civic Pride and Regeneration.

Wilkinson Eyre is an international practice employing 130 people with offices in London, Hong Kong and Shanghai. 35% - 40% of their work is abroad. They designed the just-opened Mary Rose Museum in Portsmouth; have two Sterling prizes and have just scooped Project Of The Year International Award 2013 for their Garden In The Bay in Singapore. The firm is used to competing for work and say "conceptual creative innovation and detailed technical design are given equal emphasis".

Chris Wilkinson is an RA and started his practice 30 years ago after working with Denys Lasdun, Norman Foster, Michael Hopkins and Richard Rogers. All show-boating headline architects. In a recent interview, he said he is always "searching for a beautiful idea, a design that is aesthetically pleasing, fits the brief and solves the problem in a beautiful way". A design statement in other words.

The Worthing project design aimed to maximise the potential of the site with ribbons of accommodation flowing north to south to emphasise the connection between land and sea. Each pool has its own terrace, opening up the façade to animate the beach front elevation and enliven this prominent location in line with the Council's aspiration for an Active Beach Zone. Planning permission was granted in October 2010 and the Architects list it as a £17 million project. The Council say that it has cost a little under £20 million.

Demand will settle into a rhythm which hopefully will produce revenue enough to maintain the building properly for its 40/50 year life. But the nagging feeling persists that this leisure centre cost too much. A popular local facility in a building with prestige aspirations.

To name some of the things that do not sit comfortably with me - I am not happy with the way the south terraces link with the seafront; the entrance foyer is a jumble of pushchairs, leaflets and bookstands, indifferent furniture and a café you would only want to use if you were waiting to get in (it should be slicker, offering a more polished image - that is down to management) and the exterior wall cladding has an odd

finish – not what I expected.

What the alternative finalists in the design competition offered I do not know. The choice was made in Council. And what meddling was there from the clients as the job was started?

However, the Splashpoint Centre is with us and the town must make a success of it. We can promote the Splashpoint building; the Frink Heads; the Jane Austen links with Worthing; the Pier, Sea and Downs as reasons to visit and explore this area, perhaps using the excellent Town Trails. But the true cost is too high, I say!



Splashpoint from the south (also, incidentally, showing the chalets currently under threat of conversion into artist's studios)

A BIG "THANK YOU" - I am indebted to Sandra Malone for typing the contents of the Newsletter and then formatting the whole thing.

DAVID SUMNER
CHAIRMAN

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LISTING AND CONSERVATION SUB-COMMITTEE REPORT

Listing applications to English Heritage

English Heritage has indicated that the criteria for Listing has tightened so it is likely that we will find it more difficult to achieve Listed status for any future submissions. They have, however, indicated that this will give more weight to the Local Interest Buildings Lists which are held by local Councils, including Worthing Borough Council (WBC). This means that, when submitting comments in respect of Planning applications, we need to be aware of whether the building is Listed, or on the Local Interest Buildings List and also whether it lies within a Conservation Area. Both the Listed Buildings List and the Local Interest Buildings List (see next paragraph) are substantial documents.

Local Interest Buildings – an explanation

To clarify what constitutes a Local Interest Building they are described on the WBC website as follows:-

'There are many unlisted buildings within the Borough which are of local interest because of their contribution to the character of the area in which they are located. This contribution may be due to the architectural quality or the historic interest of such a building or simply because of its group/ townscape value, its character/ identity, or its siting/location.'

NB - any buildings that the Society has submitted for addition to the list have been approved by WBC but their web-page has not been updated to reflect this.

How to view the above lists

People, unsurprisingly, find it quite perplexing to track down the above lists. They may be viewed on the WBC website but they are not easy to find, so the simplest way is to go to the WBC Home page and select the A to Z index, then click on 'C' and select Conservation Areas. You will then have the choice of selecting Conservation Areas; Listed Buildings or Local Interest Buildings. Incidentally, there is also a supplementary list on the page entitled 'Worthing Local Interest Study'. Click on this to view the supplementary list - the buildings contained within its 119 pages have all been approved by WBC as Local Interest Buildings.

Buildings At Risk

Our Sub-Committee continues to maintain our own local Buildings At Risk register which is particularly useful in our meetings with WBC. With hope on the horizon that renovations will soon start following planning approval for REPS in Grafton Road and the sale of Castle Goring, our attention has now turned to the old Gospel Hall in Bedford Row. We managed to get WBC to add it the Local Interest Building List some time ago but it continues to deteriorate. A great shame, as it is an unusual and little-known building and comes with quite a history. I was recently asked to write an article outlining its history for the local email newspaper Worthing Daily. We continue to pursue this case with WBC's Conservation and Heritage Architect.

Conservation Areas

It isn't hard to spot a gradual decline in the state of buildings in some of our Conservation Areas. Many of you will have noticed, for instance, that Travelodge on the seafront, is already looking shabby and the old Listed houses on the seafront just east of South Street – Threadneedle House; Great Terrace and Little Terrace – are marred by 'tacky' shop fronts at ground level. Our Sub-Committee discussed these with WBC's Conservation & Heritage Architect. Following that discussion we came to the conclusion that raising awareness by getting them mentioned in the local media may be the best tactic to getting something done.

Grade II Heritage At Risk Pilot Project

Sub Committee member Sue Belton and I had a meeting with Mark Sanderson, a heritage consultant working with the local authority and Museum of London Archaeology on the English Heritage Buildings at Risk Pilot Project. This project is aimed at assessing the state of the country's Grade II Listed buildings

Worthing has been chosen as one of the towns to take part in this pilot Project which would entail all our 208 or so Grade II Listed buildings being externally (but only informally) 'surveyed' for a list of things such as missing roof slates; broken windows; graffiti; whether the building is unoccupied etc etc. All the buildings will, where practical, also require to be photographed externally. A small amount of training (probably less than a day I imagine) would be given and full ID provided.

The project sounds interesting and worthwhile but, at the time of going to press, I had found just 3 volunteers. The consultant's estimate of 10 minutes per property is, in my view, a gross under-estimation so I subsequently told the consultant that the requirements needed to be cut down and far more volunteers found. By the time that you read this he will have responded. If the response is favourable, it would be useful to know if any of you, your family or friends would be interested in taking part. The project timetable has already

slipped, so this Newsletter will reach you in time for anyone who is interested to contact me. Please do give it consideration. My contact details are on the front page.

Blocks of flats in place of family homes of character?

The fight goes on to stop the inappropriate demolition of quality houses to make way for featureless multi-storey blocks of flats. The latest attempt is a planning application for the demolition of a spacious house of character, "Three Chimneys", on the corner of Grand Avenue and Lansdowne Road. I viewed this handsome property and the architect's plans for a four storey block of flats. Needless to say we have submitted a strong objection.

Manpower

Last but definitely not least, one of the Society's biggest problems is lack of manpower. The Executive Committee and Listing and Conservation Sub Committee are constantly battling against a burgeoning in-box. I urge all of you to do two things – please actively encourage as many people as you can to join the Society. Secondly, if you feel you would like to help the Committee, please contact our Vice Chairman, Tony Malone. There are a whole range of functions that the Committee have to undertake behind the scenes in addition to core business. Just some of the functions include preparing publicity (posters and local media releases) for forthcoming events; preparing membership campaigns; compiling/preparing quarterly Newsletters; photographing, e.g. Listed properties or Conservation Areas at risk; inspecting the weekly planning application list for proposals that may require our attention; creating/maintaining an archive of Worthing Society material and a cuttings file from local media; monitoring the Society's emails (mainly received via our website) and forwarding any emails to the appropriate person for action, etc. It would also help enormously if you have access to a computer and are computer-literate in terms of emails and word-processing.

It would be particularly gratifying to see younger people joining, or taking an interest in the activities of the Society.

Tony Malone

Chairman of Sub Committee and Vice Chairman of The Worthing Society

MEMBERSHIP

Thank you very much to all of our members who have renewed their subscriptions. We have enclosed another renewal form for those of you who have not renewed. We look forward to hearing from you as we do need your support.

Thank you once again for donations from Mr & Mrs Marks, Mr & Mrs Harrison, Ms Sullivan & Mr Gorman, Mr Ripley and also Mrs Phillips. We really do appreciate your generosity.

In order that we may keep our membership records up to date, this year we have sent out forms to our Life Members. Although we have had quite a number returned (and thank you very much for that) we enclose Reminders for those who have not yet replied and would stress that we need to hear from you if you still wish to remain a member and receive your Newsletter twice a year.

We thank you all for your continued support.

Susan Miller

Membership Secretary

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Tuesday 24th September at 7:30pm - **QUARTERLY MEETING** in the Worthing Library Lecture Theatre when Amanda O'Reilly, General Manager of Worthing Theatres will be speaking about - **'Which Way – What Way?'**.

Tuesday 1st October - **COACH OUTING TO JANE AUSTEN COUNTRY.** Morning visit to Jane Austen's House Museum, Chawton. In the afternoon a "Jane Austen Tour" of Winchester Cathedral. **Cost £30.00**

To book: Telephone Mascha Richards 01903-214519

Tuesday 26th November at 7:30pm - **QUARTERLY MEETING** in the Worthing Library Lecture Theatre when Gerry Connolly, Curator of Historic Collections at Worthing Museum, will be speaking about **'The Costume Collection at Worthing Museum'**.

At this meeting, mince pies and mulled fruit punch or coffee will be served. Cost £1.00 per person. Also, a pre-Christmas raffle will take place. Donations of raffle prizes will be very much appreciated on the night.

Tuesday 25th February 2014 at 7:30pm - **QUARTERLY MEETING** in the Worthing Library Lecture Theatre when Bill Gage, West Sussex Record Office County Archivist, will give his talk **"Going Off The Rails"** about how steam trains helped shape West Sussex at the beginning of the last century.

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

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

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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