



# The Worthing Society

Conserving, Preserving  
and  
Safeguarding our Heritage

**Heritage Leaflet No: 3**  
**St. Paul's**



This is the third of a series of leaflets being produced by the Worthing Society to accompany the plaques erected throughout the Town to commemorate notable people, buildings, and events in the town's history. For more information about the Society and its activities go to our Web Site at: [www.worthingsociety.org.uk](http://www.worthingsociety.org.uk)

At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Worthing was just a small agricultural and fishing village by the sea with no church for Christian worship . The closest parish church was St. Mary's in Broadwater.

By an Act of Parliament it was decided to build a Chapel-of-Ease and land occupied by the present building was purchased. Subscriptions amounting to £7,000 were raised for a building fund and everyone involved in the work was required to purchase one or more pews.

The Church was opened and consecrated in 1812 as the Worthing [Chapel of Ease](#). It was built so that the residents and visitors to the newly created town of Worthing would not need to travel to the parish church in [Broadwater](#). As a growing resort, it was felt that for the town to prosper, residents and visitors would demand a local church or chapel. The Chapel of Ease gave its name to Worthing town centre's principal north-south route, Chapel Road.

The Reverend William Davison was appointed the chapel's first chaplain. The Reverend Davison went on to set up schools for boys, girls and infants in the town with money raised from the congregation. The girls' school he established was the original [Davison High School](#).

Being funded by the sale and leasing of pews, the chapel was a [proprietary chapel](#). This policy effectively excluded the poor from the church which was criticised .

By the 1880's the town was larger and Church attendance greater so work was undertaken on an extension . Money for the £3,680 work was



raised by an appeal to the public to contribute, which they did over a five-year period. An extension eastwards was not possible due to the proximity of Chapel Road , so the building was enlarged to the west and the chancel moved from the east to the west end – an unusual position for an Anglican Church. The Chapel was upgraded to Parish Church status and dedicated to St. Paul in October 1893. It continued to be a popular centre for Christian worship until it closed in 1996, due to an unsafe roof. By this time it had been classified with a Grade II \* listing.

Designed by [John Biagio Rebecca](#) , who also designed Beach House, and built by Ambrose Cartwright, who also built nearby Ambrose Place, the building has a [Doric portico](#) with four [columns](#) facing Chapel Road, with a bell [cupola](#) behind it. The building's yellow bricks are made from the blue clay taken from Worthing Common (also known as the Saltgrass), the green space which in the 19th century existed south of the

current beach and is now underwater. The building is partly [stuccoed](#).

The interior of the church was finished by a Worthing man, Edward Hide. [Queen Charlotte](#), wife of [George III](#), presented the church with the royal [coat of arms](#) in thanks to the people of Worthing for showing such generosity and kindness to her two daughters, Princesses [Amelia](#) and [Charlotte](#) when they stayed in the town. The organ was given to the church by Edward Ogle, nicknamed "King Ogle" by Worthing residents on account of his autocratic behaviour.

After closure in 1996 and following a detailed review the building was converted into a cafe and community centre for weddings, concerts etc. and adjacent assisted accommodation.



The commemorative plaque was unveiled on the 27<sup>th</sup> of September 2012 by the then Mayor of Worthing, Councillor Charles James, shown in the picture above alongside David Sumner , the Chairman of the Worthing Society.