

The Worthing Society

Conserving, Preserving
and
Safeguarding our Heritage

Heritage Leaflet No: 1

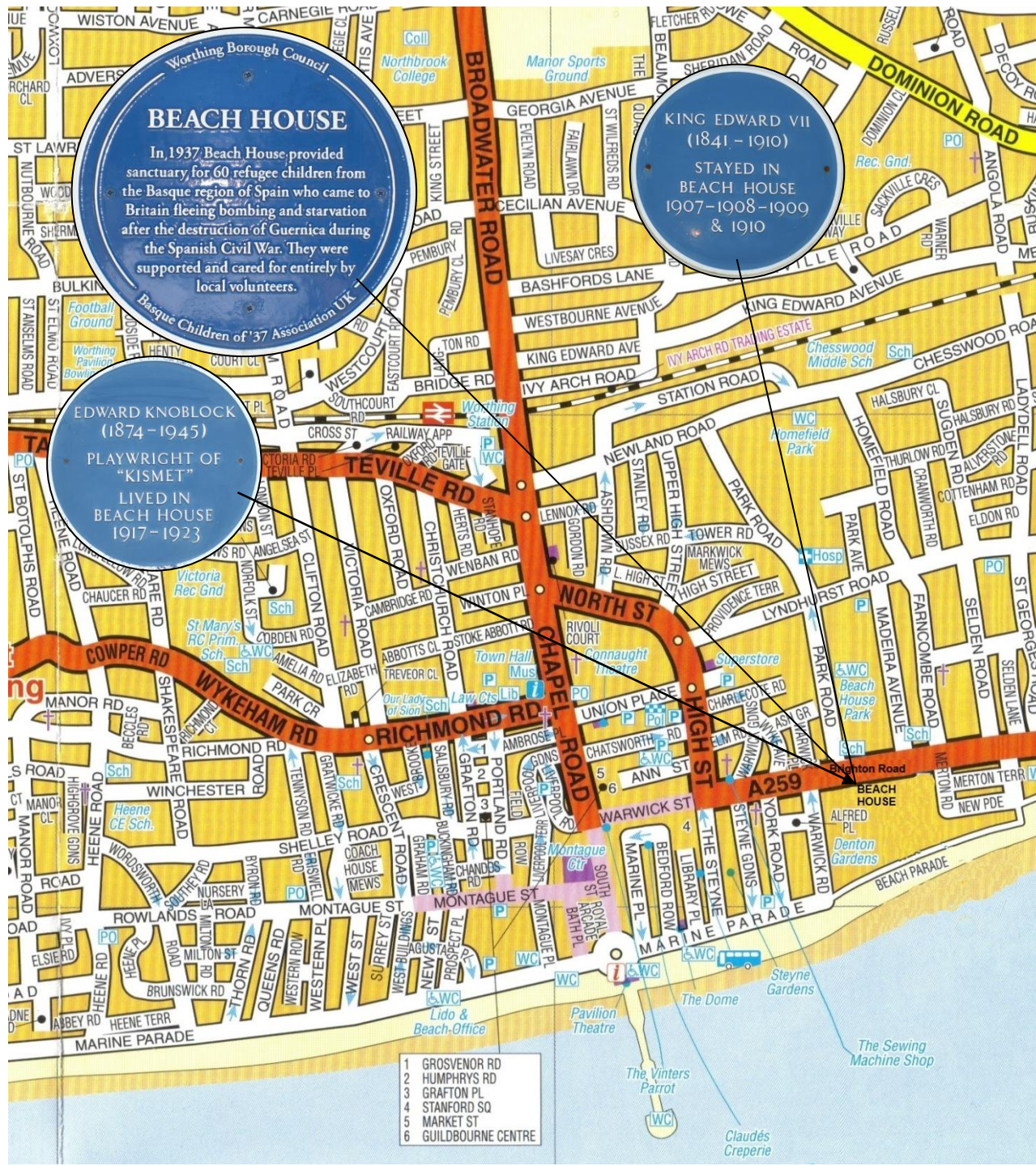
BEACH HOUSE



(c 1820)

This is the first 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

Reg. Charity No. 286899



Beach House is one of the last surviving Beach-Side villas of the Regency Period. Built in 1820 it has been home to a wide diversity of people and organizations and still remains an outstanding example of Regency architecture.

It was designed by John Biagio Rebecca, the architect responsible for the design of a number of buildings in Worthing including the town's first large church (St.Paul's) and Castle Goring (for the poet, Percy Bysshe Shelley). The original owner of the building was a Mr. Robert Carey Elwes who sold the house in 1846 to Sir Frederick Adair Roe, Chief Magistrate of the Bow Street Office and head of the Bow Street Runners, London's Police Force. After his death his wife continued to live in the house until she died in 1876 when it was sold to Sir Robert Loder, Conservative Member of Parliament for New Shoreham. He died in 1888 and the House passed to his son, Sir Edmund Giles Loder who lived there until 1911. Between 1907 and 1910 King Edward VII stayed at the House several times while visiting Sir Edmund Loder and his family. **A blue plaque commemorating these visits can be found on the left hand side of the entrance to the building.** (see map overleaf).

When he moved from the House, Sir Edmund offered it to Worthing Council for the sum of £16,000 but the deal fell through and for some years Beach House was left vacant. During the First World War it was used as a doll-making factory for the employment of refugees.

In 1917 the House was bought by the playwright, Edward Knoblock (1874 – 1945) who used the proceeds from his play "Kismet" to purchase and refurbish the House with the help of the architect, Maxwell Ayrton, who had been a pupil of Lutyens. Ayrton added a new forecourt and wall

with iron gates to separate the house from the Brighton Road.

His visitors included Arnold Bennett, J.B. Priestley, and Sir Compton Mackenzie (when the House was converted into flats in 1982 the names of these authors, together with Rebecca and Ayrton, were given to the flats) **A blue plaque commemorating Knoblock's stay in the House can be found on the right hand side of the entrance to the building.**(see map overleaf)



In 1927 the House was sold to Worthing Corporation and served as a temporary Town Hall from 1929 – 1933 and as the headquarters of the Air Training Corps during the Second World War.

During the [Spanish Civil War](#) in 1936, Beach House was used to house children evacuated from their homes in the [Basque](#) province of [Biscay](#). The children were fleeing bombing and starvation after the destruction of the town of [Guernica](#) by the [Nazi Luftwaffe](#). They were supported and cared for entirely by local volunteers.

On the 23rd May 2007 a blue plaque commemorating their stay in the House was erected on the right hand side of the steps leading to the building's entrance by Worthing Council and "the Basque Children of '37 Association UK" (see map overleaf)



The picture shows the unveiling ceremony by the Deputy Mayor of Worthing, Christine Brown (right) and Maria Teresa Grijalba, one of the original evacuees who travelled over from Venezuela especially for the event.

After the war Worthing Council wanted to demolish the House but due to the determined opposition of local groups led by Pat Baring of the local Civic Society a Public Enquiry was held in 1948 and as a result a Preservation Order was served under the Town and Country Planning act of 1947. However the Building continued to deteriorate due to neglect until, in 1982, it was sold to a private developer who converted the building into 7 flats. Since then it has been well maintained and remains one of the few buildings left in the Town to remind us of our past heritage. It now has Grade II* Listed status. As important as the House is itself, its setting is equally important.



The grounds used to provide an uninterrupted view from the sea with the House framed by plantations of elm, ilex and Sycamore. (see

picture above) but over the years there has been encroachment into this open space and a significant loss of trees. It remains at risk from Council Planners but any attempt at further encroachment is met by vigorous resistance from local residents, conservation groups and English Heritage who take an active interest in the Building and its setting.