THE WORTHING SOCIETY

President: Anthony Malone

NEWSLETTER

SPRING/SUMMER 2022

OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY

CHAIRMAN:
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WEBSITE MANAGER:
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EXECUTIVE MEMBERS:
Natalie Cropper David Sawers
Barry Richards Leonia Crozier
John Head

SUB-COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Listing & Conservation Areas (LCAS):
Sue Belton (Chair) Natalie Cropper
David Clark John Head
Tony Malone - by invitation

Publicity:
David Clark (Chair) Jessica Gill
Barry Richards
Tony Malone - by invitation

NEWSLETTER COMPILER:
Sandra Malone

FORTHCOMING ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 26 APRIL 2022

Notice is hereby given that the 39th Annual General Meeting of The Worthing Society will take place on Tuesday, 26 April 2022 at 7.00pm in the Ardington Hotel, Steyne Gardens, Worthing.

Nominations are invited for the following posts:-

- Chairman
- Vice-Chairman
- Honorary Secretary
- Honorary Treasurer
- Honorary Membership Secretary
- Honorary Social 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 12th April 2022**, to the Chairman. Nominations close two weeks before the AGM.

Doors will open at 6.45pm and the AGM will commence at 7.00pm after which there will be a short break followed by a talk by Pat Kingshott MVO on "THE HISTORY OF THE CROWN JEWELS".

A FEW OF THE HISTORIC BUILDINGS SAVED BY THE WORTHING SOCIETY

IN 40 YEARS OF CONSERVING AND SAFEGUARDING WORTHING'S HERITAGE

MESSAGE FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

I would like to express my thanks for the loyal support of our members during the recent Covid 19 emergency. This has meant a great deal to the Committee. In fact we have been very pleased to welcome some valued new members to the Society. Now that restrictions have eased, we are looking forward to seeing you at the AGM on 26 April 2022. Details of our meetings are on the Events page of your newsletter.

One of our most important priorities this year will be a Membership Drive including an initiative to contact local Colleges to give our talks about the Worthing Society's work. Students may be interested in joining the Society and researching projects about the town. Just to remind you that we have a Youth Membership for young people under the age of 21, at only £5 per year. Please also consider inviting your friends or neighbours to consider joining the Society if they are interested in protecting Worthing's heritage and concerned about new development. By increasing our membership we increase our presence in the town.

Thank you again for your support and to those members who have generously made donations.

Brenda Whitmell

Membership Secretary

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Originally the Worthing Civic Society founded in 1973 by the pioneer conservationist Mrs Pat Baring, the present Society was formed following her death in 1982. We have continued to build on Mrs Baring's legacy of saving Beach House and Bedford Row, by protecting many of the historic buildings we enjoy today. These include The Dome, Pizza Express (Stanford Cottage) and the Burlington Hotel, as well as our successful campaign to save the unique Desert Quartet.

This year marks our 40th Anniversary in safeguarding our heritage which is, I feel, a tremendous achievement and a credit to our members. We have been selected to be one of the Mayoral Charities for 2021/22, which is a great honour, and will allow us to fund-raise as well as raise the profile of the Society.

There are, however, serious challenges ahead and the work of the conservationist has never been more needed. Protecting the character of the town and retaining our open green spaces will become harder to defend in the face of the recent Government housing targets. Worthing Borough Council has missed its housing target despite good use of brownfield sites. Attempting to meet these unrealistic targets could result in Worthing looking like Brighton or Hove and losing its unique identity. Planning Committees will now have less flexibility in decisions unless there is Government intervention. Good design will be imperative and your Society will be proactive in attempting to mitigate the effects of larger developments on the much valued character of the town. Our Sub-Committee recently made comments on the Gas Works Site to achieve some improvements in design, and will be contributing to the Planning Consultations for Union Place and for the former Debenhams store, (contact: info@craigdevelopments.co.uk) to register for the consultation.

Our open green spaces, and there are relatively few, could also come under threat. Even if every blade of grass were to be built on, Worthing would still fail to meet these unrealistic housing targets. Like other coastal towns, the available space is permanently restricted because we are hemmed in by the South Downs National Park to the north and the sea to the south. The open green spaces to the west of Worthing are particularly important giving character to Goring, Ferring and the setting of Highdown.

We hope our local MP's and Council representatives, who are very concerned, can lobby Ministers and consider inviting them to view Worthing's unique setting in person, perhaps even holding a forum with local people. I recently spoke at the Public Inquiry in support of the Council's Local Plan policy to retain Chatsmore Farm as a Local Green Gap. The developer, Persimmon, was appealing against the refusal to

build 475 dwellings on this historic open space opposite the National Park. At the time of writing, we are awaiting the Planning Inspector's decision, one of the most important in recent years, but feel we have put up a good case, supported by Sir Peter Bottomley, MP.

On a lighter note I am pleased that, in September, we were able to dedicate a Blue Plaque in honour of Carl Adolf Seebold, founder of The Dome Cinema. This was attended by the Mayor and Mayoress. Our Historic Blue Plaque Trail links the built environment to the social history of the town, stimulating research and into Worthing's heritage as well as contributing to the local economy.

The Covid 19 emergency and its effects on the community have been unprecedented but I am pleased to report that our Society has come through in good order, ready to meet our future challenges in acting as a 'watchdog' for protecting Worthing's unique heritage and green infrastructure. We will carry on in the tradition of our founder, Pat Baring, known as the battle axe!

I extend a personal thank you to our loyal members and the hard-working, dedicated Committee.

Susan Belton

Worthing Society Chairman

LISTING AND CONSERVATION AREAS SUB-COMMITTEE REPORT

MEMBERS: Sue Belton (Chair), Natalie Cropper, David Clark, John Head and, by invitation,Tony Malone

Our Sub-Committee deals with the core work of the Society, protecting Worthing's heritage buildings and conservation areas and, more recently, our green infrastructure.

The Sub-Committee team have continued their excellent work throughout the long months of the Covid emergency. We regularly review the Weekly Planning Lists and comment on an average of two applications per week. In fact it has been an exceptionally busy period with a high number of planning applications. I have attended several Planning Meetings via Zoom.

We are maintaining our local **Heritage at Risk Register** to direct our efforts where they are most needed. The Register now includes The Lido (Grade II listed) which is in very poor structural condition and the Grade II listed Heslington House in Richmond Road. This elegant mansion house has become seriously dilapidated as you can see by the picture.

Heslington House
Richmond Road
Worthing

Gospel Hall
Bedford Row
Worthing

After some redecoration, the Gospel Hall in Bedford Row has deteriorated badly. I am hoping to resume our regular meetings with the Conservation Officer to address these issues.

We are optimistic that after our representations, the Planning Department will insist on some screening to the large unsightly air conditioning units which have appeared on the roof of the locally listed Connaught Theatre.

On a positive note we understand the Council will be holding a review of Worthing's Conservation Areas and heritage matters in the Spring. This will be carried out by a Heritage Consultant. I have submitted an application for the Marine Gardens and environs to be designated as a new conservation area for the town. We are also applying for the Steyne Gardens Conservation Area to be extended to include Denton Gardens, Beach House Grounds and Beach House Park. Fingers crossed the Heritage Consultant agrees!

Finally, I would like to thank the Heritage Sub-Committee team for their dedication and expertise.

Sue Belton

LCAS Chair

A NOTE ON PUBLICITY

Since the last newsletter our main focus has been to formalise the process for choosing new Blue Plaques to make it more transparent and potentially easier for members of the public to participate. We now have a Blue Plaque selection committee to consider applications for Blue Plaques. It consists of local people with an in-depth knowledge of Worthing and its history with representatives from The Worthing Society, Worthing Borough Council and a local historian. We have established a set of criteria against which any suggestions will be judged. These have been based on those set down by English Heritage but adapted for Worthing. Details of the process and how to nominate someone for a Blue Plaque can be found on the home page of The Worthing Society website. We will shortly be discussing nominations for 2022 so if you have any ideas let me know!

Looking forward, there are a number of major planning applications in the offing and I am considering how we use publicity to influence the design of these schemes.

David Clark

PUBLICITY OFFICER

PRESIDENT'S THOUGHTS

First of all some well-deserved words of praise. Despite the difficult times of 2021/22, our Chairman, Sue Belton, with the support of the Executive Committee, has yet again achieved some remarkable successes, particularly in making our submissions count in WBC Planning Committee meetings, also in making meaningful and well thought out responses to Consultations. However, we still struggle with two major issues:-

The primary issue has long been the very real difficulty in attracting new members. I believe that this is partly down to the fact that Worthing is too large a town and not sufficiently distinctive for residents to feel a sense of place or 'ownership', although common factors likely to affect most of us in some way would be a town centre project or development.

I have compared our situation to a village that also has a Conservation Society. Despite having a far smaller number of residents from which to attract new members, their conservation society seems to thrive and has an impressively active membership. I have come to the conclusion that their success lies partly in the fact that the village has a far smaller population than Worthing's current 110,000 and, as such, is small enough for the villagers to feel that they have an identity and a 'sense of place', giving a feeling of having some control over the place in which they live by having their voices heard. By comparison, Worthing's population does not appear to have a sense of identity in the same way. Our Society seems to be a lone voice in trying to protect and conserve Worthing's heritage.

The secondary issue that we have is income which, of course, is linked to the low membership problem. One idea to increase membership and therefore a higher income could be to invite each of the 'villages' that make up Worthing, to join our Society (e.g. one membership for each association). Only in that way could people feel a sense of identity with the 'area/village' that they live in and have the advantage of also being members of The Worthing Society, thus feeling they also belong to Worthing. My idea is that each local resident's association/society could pay an annual membership subscription to join The Worthing Society as an Associate/Affiliated Member on behalf of their own members.

Although we currently use Facebook and the Worthing Journal for Worthing Society news, I suggest another way forward would be to use an existing online Group such as 'Bygone Worthing' for a focussed drive to stimulate interest in The Worthing Society and, of equal importance, to achieve increased membership.

I know that none of the above would necessarily be straightforward to achieve and I simply offer these thoughts as a talking point for discussion – food for thought. Maybe our members have some ideas of their own that they would like to put forward?

Tony Malone
President

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Following our AGM on 26th April this year, there will be some changes to our Executive Committee and I would like to acknowledge the contribution of our members.

Our Vice-Chair, Jessica Gill, will be standing down from this role in preparation for a move to Scotland. Jess has been a great support to me personally and for taking down the Minutes at Committee meetings, which is no easy task! She is a talented professional artist and has lent her expertise to the Society in designing our logos and banners and also designing the Lifeboat Information Board which is a memorable and lasting tribute to Worthing's early lifeboat crews. We wish Jess and her partner Paul good luck with their move although we will still be in contact with Jess as, due to the wonders of modern technology, she will continue to run our Facebook page and design our artwork.

My sincere thanks also go to Mascha and Barry Richards. Mascha is standing down as the Society's Hon.Treasurer, a post she has held for many years. As we are responsible to the Charity Commission, these records have had to be kept in a most professional manner. More recently, Mascha has also acted as our Social Secretary and she is happy to stand again for this role on the Committee.

After many years of hard work, Barry will also be stepping down as our Webmaster. He is to be congratulated for creating our Website which is clearly an accessible visual way of promoting the work of the Society. Barry also instigated the design for our Blue Plaque Heritage Trail. The trails are enjoyed by residents and visitors to Worthing and have become important for the town's heritage. Barry can be very proud of his lasting achievements.

My sincere thanks to you all, together with those of your colleagues and Society members, for all your hard work over the years.

Lastly, I would be very interested to hear from any members who may be interested in either helping or indeed joining our Committee.

Sue Belton **(Chairman)**

If it's not broken, don't fix it - Save Denton Gardens

Below are just a few of the many positive reviews of Denton Gardens on trip advisor:

- *Lovely way to spend an hour in Worthing!* *Reviewed 19 August 2021*
- *Good old fashioned value* *Reviewed 28 July 2021 via mobile*
- *Top Spot for Mini Golf* *Date of experience: August 2018*

Denton Garden's ambiance, its architecture and its mini-golf course not only bring joy to our visitors but also to our residents. Its sleepy secret world offers something for everyone. In short, it provides a quiet oasis of calm, a place to walk the dog or meet friends, have a quiet lunch break, enjoy low-key entertainment and, most importantly, it offers a place to be in touch with nature without too much razzmatazz.

The pandemic showed us the importance of green spaces; it has also brought to light how access to nature is diminishing with every new stroke of "economic development" in our towns. People who spend as little as two hours in nature each week report higher levels of wellbeing compared to those that don't. It's not surprising green spaces can lower depression, improve sleep, reduce stress, improve cognitive performance and bring about greater levels of happiness - The greener the space, the better the effect.

If the local council progress with their plans to develop the mini-golf course and its shelter, this little patch of magic will be lost forever. Denton Gardens could do with more attention to its planting, weeding and general upkeep but overall it is a gem of Worthing which does not need to be changed.

The friends of Denton Garden need your support to protect this park and its iconic shelter by signing their petition or better still, by getting involved. **https://chng.it/VdwWn2HGPK**

Help them make the Council recognise and respect both its historic and community value and to restore and protect it for present and future generations.

Jessica Gill

VICE CHAIRMAN

THE WORTHING SOCIETY EVENTS FOR 2022

FEB - Tuesday, 22nd at 7.30pm QUARTERLY MEETING at the Ardington Hotel, Steyne Gardens, Worthing.

SPEAKER: James Sainsbury, Curator – Archaeology, Worthing Museum
On "THE STORY OF CISSBURY RING – STONE AGE TO WW11".

Doors open at 7pm for Coffee / Tea and Biscuits……..……..Cost £1.50

APR - Tuesday 26th at 7.00pm AGM at the Ardington Hotel, Steyne Gardens, Worthing.

Doors open at 6.45pm for AGM at 7.00pm.

There will be a short break for Coffee / Tea and Biscuits……..…….Cost £1.50
Followed by:-

SPEAKER: Pat Kingshott, MVO on "THE HISTORY OF THE CROWN JEWELS".

SEP - Tuesday, 27th at 7.30pm QUARTERLY MEETING at the Ardington Hotel, Steyne Gardens, Worthing.

SPEAKER: Craig Daters, Lead Ranger, Central Downs on "SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK".

Doors open at 7pm for Coffee / Tea and Biscuits……..Cost £1.50

NOV - Tuesday, 22nd at 7.30pm QUARTERLY MEETING at the Ardington Hotel, Steyne Gardens, Worthing.

SPEAKER: Andy Thomas on "LEWES and BONFIRE NIGHT".

Doors open at 7pm for Coffee / Tea and Biscuits……..Cost £1.50

DEC - CHRISTMAS LUNCH at The Arundel Restaurant, Northbrook College, Littlehampton Road, Worthing……..……Date and Cost TBA

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 £3.00

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

For membership enquiries please contact our Membership Secretary
(tel: 01903 920713)