THE WORTHING SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

SPRING/SUMMER 2023

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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Natalie Cropper	Trustee; LCAS
John Head	Planning Consultant;LCAS
David Sawers	Advisor on Policy
David Clark	Publicity; LCAS; Website
Barry Richards	Publicity
Jessica Gill	Publicity

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NEWSLETTER COMPILER:
Sandra Malone

FORTHCOMING ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 25 APRIL 2023

Notice is hereby given that the 40th Annual General Meeting of The Worthing Society will take place on Tuesday, 25 April 2023 at 7.00pm in the Worthing Library Lecture Theatre.

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

Barry and Mascha Richards (Publicity and Hon Social Secretary respectively) have asked me to inform Members that they are stepping down after 25 years as dedicated Officers of the Society and therefore these posts will become vacant and need to be filled.

All nominations supported by a seconder and with the approval of the nominee should be sent/notified, to Susan Belton, Chairman, **not later than 12th April 2023**. 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 Chris Hare, on "Smuggling Days in Worthing".

THE WORTHING SOCIETY'S TREE

PLANTED IN HONOUR OF QUEEN ELIZABETH II

THE WORTHING SOCIETY'S MEMORIAL TREE, BEACH HOUSE PARK

I am pleased to inform you that following a generous donation, the Committee were honoured to dedicate a Memorial Tree in honour of HM Queen Elizabeth II. The tree is an English Crab Apple tree, (Malus Sylvestris) which will flower in the Spring.

We planted the tree on 20th December 2022 in Beach House Park on the advice of the Parks Team. Our tree has been registered for Worthing and will form part of the Queen's Green Canopy initiative and we have been awarded a Green Plaque!

I am most grateful to Worthing Borough Council and the Parks Team who allocated us a plot in the south-west corner of the park which is opposite Beach House and easily accessible from Brighton Road. Later in the year we shall be dedicating a memorial stone or plinth and will invite our loyal member, Sir Peter Bottomley to attend and give an address at the dedication. I will keep in touch regarding the arrangements.

The Committee is most grateful to our member Dianne Griffith who suggested that the Society consider honouring the late Queen by dedicating a memorial tree.

Susan Belton
Chairman

MESSAGE FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Dear Members

The Committee extend sincere thanks to our members for your loyal support with a special thank you to those members who have made such generous donations which are very much appreciated.

We hope that you have enjoyed our programme over the past year and that you will continue to support the work of The Worthing Society by renewing your Membership for the next season. Your membership to the Society is due from 1 April 2023. Membership fees will remain the same this year (please see the details in your enclosed renewal letter) but, due to rising overheads, our membership fees will have to be increased next year.

We have been pleased to welcome many new members to our Society and look forward to meeting you at one of our talks. The details of these are on the back page of this Newsletter. Please invite your friends or neighbours to consider joining the Society if they are interested in Worthing's heritage and concerned about the new developments scheduled to take place in Worthing during 2023.

Brenda Whitmell
Membership Secretary

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Dear Members,

As the New Year commences and The Worthing Society enters its 41st year there will undoubtedly be challenges ahead and the Society will continue to campaign for Worthing's past and future heritage. Conservation of Worthing's places of special architectural or historic interest and protecting our open green spaces remains at the heart of the Society's work. In our regular discussions and representations to the Planning Department, we aim to encourage excellence in conservation, planning, design and construction. The aim is to ensure that new and regenerated buildings sit well with their 'heritage neighbours' to give our town a sense of place and individual character. We are on the 'front line' in protecting the integrity of our conservation areas and commenting on development plans. The question for all parties is, and I quote from Historic England: "How we Manage Change in the Heritage Environment".

We therefore need to look at how our resources can work towards achieving an acceptable balance. I am most appreciative of the work and expertise of our Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Sub-Committee, (LCAS). Our Case Officers regularly monitor and comment on plans affecting Worthing's heritage. There will be development plans coming forward for the Union Place site. In addition, there is an ongoing Consultation for the future of Montague Place, a landmark site in the South Street Conservation Area. We are actively involved and will lobby for a creative, coherent, conservation-based approach, looking at reinstating the original central garden. Another popular suggestion is a living green wall to make a feature of the former Woolworth wall. We have also liaised with the developers of the former Debenhams store at an early stage and are pleased to note that some of our comments are reflected in the Planning Application which aims to keep the character of the building, so a positive meeting.

Networking and liaising with like-minded groups is an important 'tool' in protecting our open green spaces, particularly bearing in mind the pressure of Housing Targets. This will be an increasing challenge and I am pleased to say that we are members of the Pro-Gaps Group which includes the Ferring Group Conservation and the Ilex Conservation Societies. The aim is to protect Goring Gap and the green areas along the Littlehampton Road. We have also supported the 'Friends of Denton Gardens' in their successful attempts to protect and upgrade this area. LCAS has also applied to the Council to extend the Steyne Gardens Conservation Area (CA), to include Denton Gardens, the Beach House Grounds and Beach House Park to hopefully provide an extra 'layer' of protection. An application has also been to consider designation of Marine Gardens as a new CA.

Another way we can highlight the value of Worthing's heritage and how it can contribute to the town's economy is by our Blue Plaque Heritage Trail. This opens up the social history of Worthing and shows the relevance of safeguarding our heritage buildings. We are updating our Town Centre Trail leaflet to include recent plaques and I am most appreciative that we have received generous donations from our members and Worthing Borough Council's visual, inclusive way of making our heritage accessible to the wider community towards the new design and printing costs. Our Blue Plaques and Heritage leaflets are an accessible, visual and inclusive way of presenting our history to the wider community.

Below is a picture of our most recent Blue Plaque to honour Ethel 'Effie' Methold, a founder member of the Worthing Council for Social Services in 1934. The dedication was attended by Her Worship The Mayor of Worthing, Councillor Henna Chowdhury.

Our talks to local groups and societies also reach out to the community to stimulate interest and involvement in protecting Worthing's unique heritage. The main talk is 'Worthing Buildings Lost and Saved' which illustrates the ongoing need for a conservation movement in the town.

Now the Covid recovery period is drawing to a close, we will begin our new Membership Campaign and will be attending local farmers markets. By increasing our membership we increase our representation in town. I am also hoping to contact Northbrook College to introduce their students to the work of the Worthing Society. I must also thank our existing members and those who have recently joined us for your support. This is much valued by our hard working Executive Committee. If you have time and would like to assist the Committee, please do not hesitate to contact me.

In conclusion, a reminder that we are all Guardians of our heritage which is an irreplaceable resource. Last year I was advised by a member about a building called Forest Barn, in Forest Barn Lane and located on the boundary of the Castle Goring Conservation Area (CA) and South Downs National Park. A Planning Application (AWDM/1471/22) has been submitted to demolish Forest Barn to erect four two-storey buildings on the site and surrounding garden area.

Once part of the Castle Goring Estate, enquiries revealed this flint Sussex barn, now a cottage, dates from circa 1790. It is shown on the earliest Tithe Map of West Sussex. The Society is fighting to save this heritage building which, sadly, and despite our best efforts, was not on our 'radar'. Following a significant number of objections, I understand the application has been recommended for refusal. Until a final decision is made we shall monitor the situation. I feel the message here is that we all need to be vigilant so if you have concerns about a building near you please do not delay and do contact us.

With best wishes to all our members for 2023

Susan Belton

Worthing Society Chair

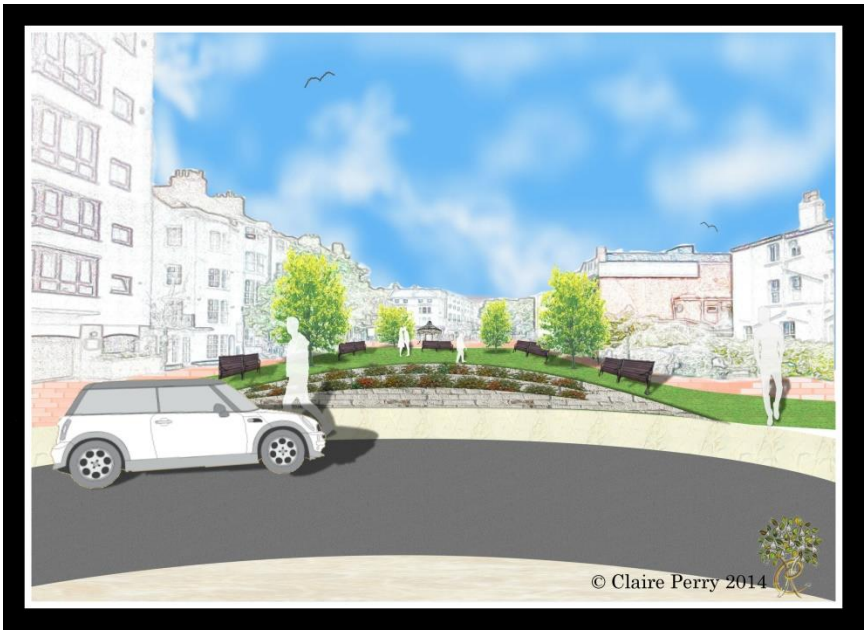
LISTING AND CONSERVATION AREAS SUB-COMMITTEE (LCAS) REPORT

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

Our Heritage Sub-Committee is our 'watchdog' for anything affecting Worthing's Listed or Local Interest Buildings and Conservation Areas fulfilling our main aims to protect and conserve the architectural assets of Worthing. The Case Officers examine the Weekly Planning Lists on a rota basis and typically review over 30 planning applications each week. On average we take action on a least one planning application per week. The Worthing Society is now included as a consultee by the Planning Department and our views are sought at the consultation stage. We feel it is important to engage early on in the planning process. There is obviously a sensitive balance to be achieved regarding growth and housing but we feel it is vital that our heritage assets are at the heart of the development process and not just an afterthought. Good colour, design and scale are important tools in ensuring new buildings complement and enhance our town's character. We shall continue to lobby for this and the LCAS Team will resume our regular meetings with the

Conservation Officer.

Already, this year, we have sent in a comment on the regeneration of the former Debenhams building where I am pleased to say we are broadly supportive and pleased to note the Developer is retaining the Art Deco character of the building. The plans for the Montague Centre which involve increasing the height by four storeys will, in our view, harm the conservation area and an objection to the plans has been made. I have recently attended a Public Consultation for the future and permanent changes to Montague Place. The Society would like to see the return of the historic central garden with perhaps a 'living green wall' to soften the extensive Woolworth brick wall. We have sent some proposed images to the Council.



The work of the Sub-Committee is in fact a 'Rolling Campaign' to protect the 'legacy' of our heritage buildings and more recently our open green spaces.

John Head

John Head BSc(Econ), DipTP, MRTPI (Retd).
Planning Consultant to the Worthing Society

A NOTE ON PUBLICITY

I am pleased to advice that the new Town Centre Blue Plaque trail leaflet is in production and should be printed and ready for distribution in April. As some of you may know, last year 'Time for Worthing' launched five Worthing Heritage Trails and I am pleased to say that the revised blue plaque trail is being designed and printed in the same format. My thanks to Judy Fox at WBC for her financial support and guidance and for the generous donations we received from Worthing Society members to help fund this project. The intention is to distribute the leaflet amongst Hotels, Bed and Breakfast outlets, Cafes as well as the Library and Museum. Hopefully, it will encourage visitors and residents to get out and about in the town and promote Worthing's rich heritage.

The Blue Plaque committee has provisionally nominated John Henry Pull (Archaeologist) and Emily Davison (Suffragette) for plaques in 2023 but both have challenges over the location of the plaque so neither is guaranteed to happen! More on that later in the year.

We continue to make improvements to the website including a Latest Planning News area giving a summary of the work Sue Belton, John Head and the team have done on recent planning applications.

David Clark

PUBLICITY OFFICER

THE REVISED NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) contains the government's directions to local authorities on how they should prepare their Local Plans and how they should decide planning applications. The government has now published a revised version of the Framework for consultation. This new draft incorporates the government's reaction to the changes to its planning policies imposed by the amendment of the Levelling Up bill that was sponsored by many Conservative backbenchers, including Sir Peter Bottomley and Tim Loughton. Most of the document is left unchanged. More complete redrafts expected in the summer, after the Levelling Up bill has become law.

The initial impression is that the government has watered down the provisions of the back-benchers amendment. The main objective of the amendment was to remove central government's control over the number of houses that local authorities should propose to build in their Local Plans. This control is exercised by requiring local authorities to use the government's Standard Method to forecast the need for housing in its area. This Method is not an objective method of forecasting the need for housing in an area, but a means of forecasting that the need for houses is about 300,000 a year – the government's housing target. The Method will be reviewed in 2024, when relevant data from the 2021 Census will become available.

The output of this Standard Method will now become the advisory starting point for calculations of the requirement for housing in a district. Alternative methods of calculating the requirement would only be permitted if there were exceptional features, such as Green Belt land, in a district. Excessive increases in housing density are cited as a reason for limiting development in a district, though high densities are environmentally desirable, and the draft also states that the 20 largest urban areas should be centres of development.

The need for Councils to have a five year supply of development sites is retained, but Local Authorities would no longer see their Plans side-lined in such situations e.g. the provision that has produced the recent flood of planning applications in the Strategic Gaps in Worthing and Arun. However, developers might be able to use a shortfall in the supply of sites as an argument to get planning permission for a site outside the local plan. Much will depend on the instructions Planning Inspectors receive from the government.

The draft shows that the government is determined to retain control over the planning system. However, ingenious local authorities may be able to gain some control over the numbers of houses they have to provide for in their local plans. The Society will be commenting on the draft - if members want to see the draft and perhaps comment, they should Google NPPF Consultation.

David Sawers
ADVISOR ON POLICY

PRESIDENT'S THOUGHTS

Working with WBC Planning Office

In this Newsletter I want to let you know about some of the good work that we do behind the scenes and which may go unnoticed.

Until recently the Weekly List of Planning Applications that we receive online from WBC were scrutinised by our Sub-committee (on a rota basis) for any applications that required comment. This could be a refusal, an observation or, if we deemed it appropriate, praise. At the request of the Planning Office this process has now changed, slightly but significantly. They now invite us to comment on **specific** planning applications, although we are still free to also comment on other applications in the weekly lists. Our Planning Consultant, John Head, provides significant input and guidance in the preparation of our detailed consultation responses that we provide to Planning Office, who often record them in full when subsequently providing their reports to the Planning Committee. The preparation of our comments can involve quite a lengthy process, sometimes involving a site visit and, at the early pre-application stage, discussions with the Developer. A significant case in point is the recent planning application for the former Debenhams building.

I believe that this is a significant development in the way that our Society has risen in the esteem of WBC and the Planning Office in particular. Well done to our Planning Sub-committee and to Susan in particular as she oversees this process and consequently bears the brunt of this substantial increase in the workload. I intend to discuss this with Susan to see how we can best tackle this issue.

Working with Developers

We welcome any Developers inviting us to discuss their plans with them at early stage of a development. This provides the opportunity to spot potential problem areas that could arise later in the development. As an aside, it also begs the question of when a substantial planning application is submitted should **we** be proactive and make the first approach ourselves? Food for thought!

Stepping Down

As you will have read earlier, Barry and Mascha Richards have decided to step down as Officers of the Society. We thank them for their 25 years loyal service to the Society and wish them well for the future.

Tony Malone
President

OBITUARY- DOROTHY JOAN SMITH

The Worthing Society Committee was deeply saddened to learn that our former colleague, Joan (as she was known to her friends) had passed away on 29 December 2022 at the remarkable age of 100. Joan was a founder member of the Worthing Society and a pioneer conservationist who helped to build the foundations of our work today. Many colleagues remember her hosting our meetings at her lovely home "The Hollies". Our President, Tony Malone, recalls Joan as a charming lady, always welcoming our Committee members to her home with a smile and refreshments. Our thoughts are with her family and friends.

Susan and the Committee.

THE WORTHING SOCIETY MEETINGS FOR 2023

FEB - Tuesday 28th at 7.30pm QUARTERLY MEETING at the DOME CINEMA FUNCTION ROOM followed by a

FILM SHOW: A Topical Film Show by Southdowns Film Makers

Doors open at 7pm for Coffee / Tea and Biscuits ……..Cost £2.00

APR - Tuesday 25th at 7.00p.m A.G.M. at THE WORTHING LIBRARY LECTURE THEATRE
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 a talk from: -

Speaker: Chris Hare on "Smuggling Days in Worthing – an illustrated history"

SEP - Tuesday 26th at 7:30pm QUARTERLY MEETING at the WORTHING LIBRARY LECTURE THEATRE followed by a talk from:

Speaker: James Sainsbury, Curator – Archaeology, Worthing Museum
on "John Pull & Worthing's Stoneage Revolution"

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

NOV - Tuesday 28th at 7:30pm QUARTERLY MEETING at the WORTHING LIBRARY LECTURE THEATRE followed by a talk from:

Speaker: Martin Hayes on "An Alternative History of Worthing".

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

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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