THE WORTHING SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN/WINTER 2025

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Nevil Hopkins	Member (LCAS)
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NEWSLETTER COMPILER:
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JANE AUSTEN AND THE WORTHING CONNECTION

The Society's Talk
Celebrating the 250th Anniversary of her birth 16.12.1775 –18.7.1817

For details or to book a Talk
Email:contact@worthingsociety.org.uk

A MESSAGE FROM YOUR MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Dear Members

I hope you have had a very pleasant Summer. The Committee would like to thank you for your ongoing support and to express sincere thanks to members who have made generous donations. As a registered charity this means a great deal and helps us to continue our conservation work to protect Worthing's heritage.

I am very pleased to report that largely due to our community talks and heritage walks we have been delighted to welcome many new members.

Please accept my apologies for some delays in issuing your membership cards when I was unwell during the Summer. Very pleased to say I am catching up now.

Looking forward to seeing you at the next Quarterly Members Meeting on Tuesday 30th September. Do invite a friend or guest to come along!

Brenda Whitmell
Membership Secretary

OBITUARY

DAVID RICHARD HALL SAWERS

(1931 – 2025)

On behalf of the Worthing Society Committee I am deeply saddened to report that our esteemed colleague David Sawers has passed away. David was a true conservationist who served on our Committee for over twenty years. He took an active part in the Consultations to designate the South Downs National Park and successfully lobbied to include the Castle Goring estate within the boundary. He was also influential in protecting the ancient woodland at Titnore Lane and preserving Goring Greensward for the town. David held an important role on the Committee as our Policy Adviser on planning matters. He was a great help to me, personally, and gave valuable information and support in respect of the recent Chatsmore Farm Public Inquiry. He was much respected by our associate groups and in our dealings with the Worthing Planning Department.

Born in 1931 to Edward and Madeline Sawers, David attended Monkton Coombe School in Bath, followed by Westminster School and Christ Church College, Oxford, where he obtained BA (Hons), an MA in Politics and Philosophy and Economics (PPE) and became a Research Assistant to Professor to John Jewkes. David was a Journalist for The Economist (1959-64) and a Visiting Fellow, Princeton University 1964-65. He then went on to a distinguished career, becoming an Economic Adviser to the Government on Aviation and Technology. This was followed by a period in the Under Secretary Departments of Industry and Trade and Consumer Protection, then the Under Secretary of State Departments of Environment and Transport (1976 – 1983). David then undertook the role of Principal Research Fellow at the Technical Change Centre until 1986. A man of great intellectual ability, David was also a published author whose works included:- The Sources of Invention and The Technical Development of Modern Aviation plus numerous articles in the press on politics, aviation and heritage conservation. On retiring, he moved to East Preston to care for his elderly mother.

During his later years he gave freely of his time and extensive expertise to various community groups, becoming Chairman of the East Preston and Kingston Preservation Society (2000 – 2021) and chaired the Forum of Arun District Amenity Groups plus the Angmering-on-Sea Residents Association. David had a lifetime interest in ballet and opera as well as appreciating music and the visual arts. He also engaged with the natural world and animal welfare, supporting local animal charities.

David was a man of great integrity and intellect. In his ‘Who’s Who Entry’ he used the term ’environmental campaigner and writer’ to describe the later years of his life. David will be very much missed by his family, friends, fellow conservationists, and of course by his Worthing Society colleagues.

Susan Belton

Worthing Society Chair

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

I am delighted to report that our Spring and Summer Calendar of Events has been most successful and, as a result, we have seen a welcome increase in our membership. This is a great credit to the Committee who have worked extremely hard in preparing these events which included 'Heritage Walks' in Tarring and Heene as well as a series of community talks highlighting the social history of our town. A tour of Grade I Listed Castle Goring by Lady Campbell to show the restoration of this building was a very special visit.

We also took part in the Worthing Heritage Festival where our Blue Plaque Trail walk was very popular with both members and the public. Our Festival Talk was 'Pioneers of Worthing', an historic timeline of the people who, from 1798, had a major impact on the development of the town. We are developing this talk into a mobile and interactive exhibition for the Library, Museum and local colleges. My thanks here to our Publicity Officer, David Clark, for this initiative and generous donation, Louise Hodson our Web Manager for the technical expertise and to our Life Member, Wendy Greene for the donations to the project from her series of books 'What's in a Name'. We hope this exhibition and its audio visual presentation will be user friendly and attractive to younger members of the community.

In May and June we welcomed groups of American tourists to hear our talk 'Jane Austen and the Worthing Connection' to celebrate the 250th Anniversary of her birth. The talks were held at Grade II Listed Pizza Express, formerly Stanford's Cottage, where the Austen family stayed in 1805. There is perhaps potential here to promote a Literary Festival for Worthing and include Shelley, Oscar Wilde, and Harold Pinter. I have suggested this idea to Worthing Borough Council to use this historic legacy to put Worthing on the tourist map!

We believe by shining a light on the social history of the town and the varied, often controversial, characters who once lived here, we can link the buildings associated with them to the importance of conserving Worthing's historic built environment. Our heritage buildings are irreplaceable, forming the backdrop to Worthing's unique history and our sense of place. Buildings such as Pizza Express, the Pier and the Dome Cinema contribute positively to the local economy.

The Committee were also delighted to work in partnership with West Sussex Library Service to dedicate this year's Blue Plaque in honour of the Pioneer Librarian, Marian Frost, who lobbied Andrew Carnegie for funds for the new Worthing Library which opened in 1908. This dedication coincided with the Centenary of the West Sussex Library Service and in June the plaque was jointly unveiled by the Mayor of Worthing, Councillor Kathy Glynn-Davies and Councillor Crow representing West Sussex County Council.

PLANNING MATTERS

The Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Sub-Committee, led by John Head, is the 'engine room' of the Society, working consistently to protect our heritage. I am reassured that we are 'Planning Consultees' and this year have commented on over 45 consultations for our heritage buildings and conservation areas. I also speak at Planning Meetings and we act as a 'watchdog' in respect of the larger developments. The Team also monitor the condition of our listed buildings and conservation areas liaising with the Planning Enforcement Officers. I am indebted to our Sub-Committee Team, John, Nevil Hopkins and Susan Head for their dedication

Our remit also extends to our green infrastructure. Earlier this year I spoke at the Chatsmore Farm (Goring Gap North) Public Inquiry on behalf of the Society and the Ferring Conservation Group. I am thrilled and relieved to report that after two years hard campaigning the Inspector **REFUSED** the Appeal by Persimmon to build 475 dwellings on this natural green gap between Worthing and Ferring - a positive result for all the campaigning groups!

I am delighted that we have been included in the 'Lido Stakeholder Group' with Dr Beccy Cooper MP, Tom Rutland MP, Council Leader Sophie Cox, Deputy Leader Rita Garner, Historic England, plus representatives

from the local leisure and business communities. We are looking forward to being involved with the Campaign to regenerate this classic Art Deco seafront building built in 1925.

Nevil Hopkins is working on a planning policy project with Worthing Borough Council to review and upgrade the Council's Local Interest List which records heritage buildings. Although not on the Statutory List they are unique to Worthing and contribute to the historic and architectural 'heritage portfolio' of the town. As you can see the heritage 'in tray' is overflowing!

CHALLENGES AHEAD

There are significant challenges ahead as many of our heritage buildings reach their centenary and beyond. We are awaiting the result of the Government Consultation: 'The Future Protection of our Built Heritage'. The Society contributed a report suggesting the reinstatement of grants or loans and the removal of VAT for labour and material costs for listed buildings. The results are expected shortly.

The effect of proposals for the local government re-organisation will present challenges and the Society will be lobbying for the retention of a Town Council to protect our interests. I am determined that 'Worthing's Heritage' will continue to have a voice within the forthcoming changes at the 'top table' so that our identity is retained. The current proposal appears to be Adur, Arun, and Worthing joining with Chichester forming a unitary authority. We shall monitor the situation closely.

For more information, the Councils website is: www.adur-worthing.gov.uk

In conclusion I extend sincere thanks to our President, Tony Malone, for his wise Council and the unstinting hard work and expertise of the Committee. As always the ongoing support and interest of our members has been invaluable.

A special thank-you to my secretary Sandra Malone for her ongoing support and excellent work compiling our Newsletter.

Susan Belton

Worthing Society Chair

LISTING AND CONSERVATION AREAS SUB-COMMITTEE (LCAS) REPORT

MEMBERS: Sue Belton (Chair), John Head, Susan Head, Nevil Hopkins, Tony Malone

The Sub-Committee last met on 7 August 2025 and continues to deal with a full agenda of planning and heritage matters. There is still no Conservation Areas Advisory Committee for Worthing and, with the uncertainty around devolution and the Council's financial constraints, there is unlikely to be one any time soon. The Worthing Society is, therefore, filling this role as best we can. We have valuable assistance from the Council's Conservation Architect Richard Small, although he has to deal with conservation matters in Adur as well as in Worthing, a difficult job for one person without sufficient resources and support.

Some of the items dealt with at the last meeting were:

Gospel Hall, Bedford Row – I am pleased to report that the appeal for demolition and redevelopment was dismissed. We are waiting to see what the owner's next move will be and in the meantime are monitoring the site and will make sure that the Council takes appropriate enforcement action if it becomes untidy. The building needs to be occupied, and we think it would be suitable for a number of uses, including residential.

The Thatched Cottage, Pond Lane – Council officers have made a visit to the cottage and are considering serving a Repairs Notice, although the Council's finances are, as always, a problem. Historic England is involved and may send a surveyor to inspect the building.

Shopfront and Advertisement Policy – We were dismayed to discover that there is no current policy guidance for Worthing relating to shopfronts and advertisements. The guidance that was produced some years ago is, for some reason, no longer available. Having brought this to the Planning Officer's attention, we have been assured that this is being looked into and that new guidance will be available as a Supplementary Planning Document, based on existing guidance for Adur District, which is already in electronic form.

Nelson Passage – The saga of the unlawful closure of this footpath continues. We are consistently told by WSCC that it will "soon" be re-opened, but nothing happens. Councillor Turley, who is a West Sussex County Councillor, has taken this up and was told a few weeks ago that the developers Geneva, who closed the path, are "near to concluding" providing the street lighting and re-opening it. As yet, nothing has happened, and we do not know why WSCC have not taken more robust legal action.

Local List Review – Work on the review of buildings on the Local List continues and the two separate lists held by the Council have now been combined and formatted. The next stage is to update the list, removing buildings that may have been unacceptably altered or, indeed, demolished. This will be a lengthy task. We will also work with the Council on a method for adding any appropriate new buildings to the list. To that end, we are shortly meeting with Planning Officers to discuss the way forward.

Hemiko – Sue Belton and John Head had a very successful meeting with Hemiko, at which they agreed to provide two information boards at their site in High Street. One of these will show the history of the locality and the buildings that have been lost, and the other will reference the history of power generation in Worthing, with details of the gasworks and the electricity power station. Chris Hare is to provide the text and details, and we have managed to source some photographs. Hemiko have also agreed to provide funding towards a blue plaque.

Lifeboat Memorial Stone – We have now obtained the Council's agreement that they will clean and renovate the Lifeboat Memorial in time for the Lallah Rookh commemoration on 23 November. Unfortunately, there is no progress on the repair of the nearby Festival of Britain clock – no doubt again due to financial constraints.

John Head BSc(Econ), DipTP, MRTPI (Retd). Planning Consultant and Heritage Team

A NOTE ON PUBLICITY

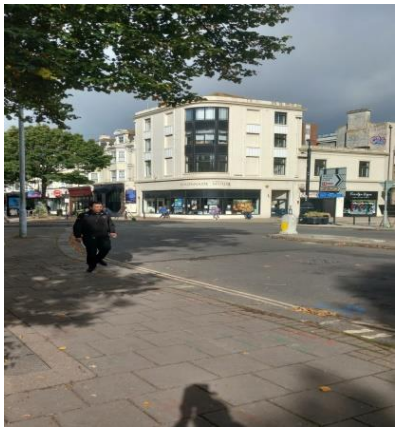
As Sue mentioned in her column our talks and walks continue help drive engagement with The Worthing Society. Our latest talk 'Hidden Gems' was shown to members in July. It focuses on lesser-known listed buildings including those on the Local Interest List.

An exciting project we have been working on for the past 6 months is our Pioneers Exhibition which is based on our talk 'Pioneers of Worthing'. In March we commissioned Millstream Productions to make a series of 1-to-2-minute videos with text, pictures and an AI voiceover charting the impact of these Pioneers on the development of Worthing from the late 18th century to the modern era. There are 17 videos in total and a quiz. They are shown on an iPad sitting on a floor stand which we hope will be located in the museum when it re-opens next year and/or in the library. We will also take it with us when we are out in the community promoting the society. We are most grateful to Wendy and Chrissie Greene and other members for their generous donations to help fund this project.

After the successful unveiling of a Blue Plaque for Marian Frost at the library in June, we will soon be considering a plaque for 2026. Possible candidates include Edward Ogle who was the first Chair of Worthing Town Commissioners and who built the Colonnade and Steyne Hotel (now part of the Chatsworth). John Selden has also been suggested.

BUILDINGS OF NOTE

THE COLONNADE



Local resident Edward Ogle began developing Worthing in 1802 by building the Colonnade. The Library on the corner with Warwick Street closed in 1838 and became Colonnade House.

The new library situated in the Colonnade was run by Mrs Mary Spooner. She also ran the Post Office, and was agent for a national lottery. The 21st March 1814 issue of the Sussex Weekly Advertiser shows her as agent for the Globe Fire Insurance Company. This company merged with Liverpool and London Fire Insurance Company and eventually became a subsidiary of Royal Insurance.

Fire broke out on 10th January 1888 and all but consumed the building. The fire started in No.3 which had recently become a girl's school. The occupants were rescued by Police Sergeant Byrne, using the balcony which ran around the building. No.3 was destroyed, Nos.1 and 5 survived major damage and No.7 escaped unscathed.

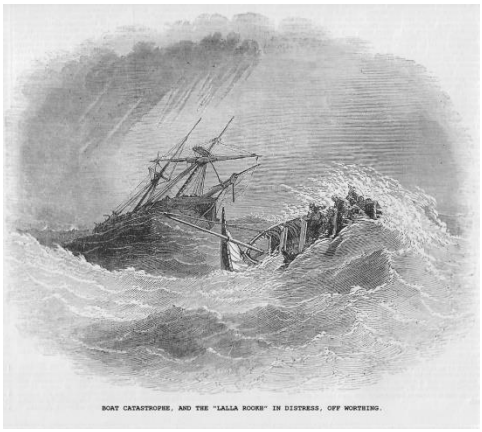
The property was rebuilt by the end of the century and the Cast Iron Colonnade (which gives the building its name) was retained.

Further restructuring in 1936 saw the removal of the Colonnade.

David Pateman

175 YEARS REMEMBRANCE SERVICE

LALLA ROOKH



One of the most tragic events in the history of Worthing occurred 175 years ago in November 1850, when a killer storm sent shockwaves through the town.

Eleven of our brave fishermen went out in a small open boat to render assistance to the distressed barque Lalla Rookh – disabled in a severe gale three miles off Worthing. In sight of the three-masted trading ship, a huge wave overturned their small craft. All eleven were washed away and perished.

But their sacrifice was not in vain. In giving all, they revealed a vital need, inspiring a campaign to fund an independent Lifeboat Service here at Worthing.

A special Remembrance Service will honour these brave 11 heroes at Broadwater Church where they are buried: Henry Bacon (48), John Belville (49), James Edwards (46), his brother Stephen Edwards (40), William Hoskins (37), Henry Newman (47), his brother James Newman senior (51), his son James Newman junior (21), his brother John Newman (26), Henry Slaughter (28), and William Wicks (24).

Forty-eight distraught dependants, widows, fatherless children and ageing parents, were left with no means of financial support. An appeal collected more than £5,000 – a huge amount of money 175 years ago.

Within hours, a second rescue was launched, and 20 Worthing fishermen successfully saved the vessel and its crew. We celebrate their actions as well. In total 31 men put to sea that day in rescuing the Lalla Rookh, but only 20 returned.

We've traced a number of their present-day relatives, who will be attending the Service. But, there's many more; if you come across anyone who may be a very distant relative of one of those 31 names please do get in touch.

The 20 fishermen who went out on a lugger and rescued the Lalla Rookh were: Jim Benn, John Teasdale, George Steere, John Tester, Harry Head, Tom Coppard, William (Bill) Marshall, Jim Searle, J Burtenshaw, Alex Churcher, John Collier, Edward and Peter Edwards, Stephen Parsons, William Field, Bob Hills, George Wingfield and his brother Henry, Tom Blann and his brother Edwin (Ed).

A lifeboat was first stationed here in 1853, and in 1865 the RNLI took command. The station served the town faithfully until 1930, when Shoreham's new motor lifeboat rendered Worthing's traditional rowing and sailing craft obsolete.

The Lalla Rookh 175 Remembrance Service, Broadwater Church at 1.30pm on Sunday 23rd November 2025 will include Lancing Brass of the Royal British Legion, the Royal Naval Association with Standard bearers, RNLI Lifeboat crew, Town Crier and Mayor in period costume, and Secret Shore sea shanty singers.

A unique ceremony features young children, each honouring the 11 souls individually. Inspired by the extent of this tragedy lasting many generations, Worthing-based award-winning singer/ songwriter Greg Harper will perform his debut of *'48 Dependants'*.

Part of the very first film of a Lifeboat in action will be screened, made in Worthing in 1898 by royal command of the Prince of Wales, who later became Edward V11.

Rob Blann
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07977098690

PRESIDENT'S THOUGHTS

I want to draw your attention to the sterling work that our Chairman, Sue Belton, does on behalf of us all, Members and Officers of the Worthing Society, alike.

Sue regularly works seven days a week and often participates in the various Sub-Committees. Never complaining about her workload, she just gets on with the job.

When I became President, I gradually became aware that the Planning Office of Worthing Borough Council, in general, regarded The Worthing Society as a 'thorn in their side'. Over the years, Sue has nibbled away at this attitude until we have reached the current situation where I believe they now regard us as valuable allies. Sue points out to the Planning Officer dealing with the case, any action that may be required. This simple procedure saves Planning Officers a great deal of time and effort. It's a 'win win' situation.

Sue also continues to foster good relationships with potential developers which, I believe, past Chairman David Sumner and I first started with a high-tech company called Lemo in Worthing. The Managing Director at the time, Richard Thomas, invited us to meet him to show and discuss the plans for their new building in North Street, Worthing. This paid dividends for them as what we saw was quite a revolutionary building and persuaded us to back their planning application which otherwise promised to have a 'rough ride' from Worthing Borough Council Planning Office.

I would also like to thank John Head who chairs the Listing & Conservation Areas Sub-Committee. He and his team keep a watchful eye on planning and heritage matters and act as Planning Consultants to the Society. He and the team endeavour to stop various sites and listed buildings deteriorating any further.

Lastly, our Publicity Officer David Clarke is a great help to Susan helping to organise the numerous Walks and Talks that the Society gives to local organisations on our local heritage and he works hard helping Susan with organising the next Blue Plaque event. He also maintains our membership database and keeps it up to date.

A lot of work goes on behind the scenes so if any members would like to know more on how they might be able to help the Committees, please do get in touch with Susan.

Tony Malone

PRESIDENT

Highdown Round Barrow

Alex Vincent

During the Highdown Big Dig from July 19th to August 1st 2025 several trenches were excavated with the Worthing Archaeological Society, Worthing Museum and the National Trust. One of the trenches "Trench H" is the site of a possible Bronze Age Barrow, which the author of this article had suggested a few years ago due to a slight mound on the site. The excavations proved that the mound is that of a barrow. The barrow was probably much larger at one time, but mainly destroyed by ploughing and looting by antiquarians.

The author thought that this could be a barrow on the evening of September 16th 2021 as the mound stood out when the Sun was low and took a photograph of it. The author went to Highdown on several other occasions to look for other possible barrow sites and had found several other slight mounds. This means there could be a possible barrow cemetery on Highdown. It seems that they are aligned with the Spring and Equinox Sunsets. A visit to the site on these Equinoxes showed that this was the case.

A SPECIAL APPRECIATION - THE PIONEERS OF WORTHING TALK AND EXHIBITION

There are always challenges in attracting younger members who will become the conservationists of the future and guardians of our heritage. The need has never been greater and the challenge is how we can represent our conservation work in a contemporary, attractive way with easy access to the information for young people in this 'online world'.

I must therefore commend our Publicity Officer, David Clark, for addressing this problem by linking our built heritage to our social history. It was David's inspiration to create our talk 'Pioneers of Worthing' which is a fascinating timeline of the varied, sometimes controversial, characters who contributed to the town's development. The talk has been very popular and, following this success, David has worked hard to evolve the talk into a touch screen exhibition and audio trail. The portable display unit is user friendly and should appeal to younger members of the community. It can be taken to libraries, colleges, schools and community groups.

David made a generous donation to initiate the project and our Web Manager, Louise Hodson, contributed her valuable technical expertise. The Committee also extend their sincere thanks to our Life Member, Wendy Greene, who has made a significant donation to support the project from her book sales, "What's in a Name?". There are a few more technical details to resolve and then we will be able to launch the Exhibition which will be a major step forward for the Society in reaching out to all members of the community.

Sue Belton - Worthing Society Chair

FORTHCOMING EVENTS FOR 2025/2026

2025

SEPT **TUESDAY 30th at 7.00pm - QUARTERLY MEETING AT WORTHING LIBRARY LECTURE THEATRE.**

Followed by talk from:

GUEST SPEAKER: Gary Baines, Chairman of the Friends of Shoreham Fort Group on the "History of Shoreham Fort".

Doors open at 7.00pm for Coffee / Tea & Biscuits ……....Cost £1.50

NOV **TUESDAY 25th at 7.00pm** - QUARTERLY MEETING AT WORTING LIBRARY LECTURE THEATRE.

Tonight there will be a Commemoration of the 175th Anniversary of the Lallah Rookh Tragedy with a two minute silence in memory of the 'Brave Eleven', the Worthing fishermen who lost their lives in an attempted rescue.

Followed by a talk from:

GUEST SPEAKER: Martin Hayes: "An Alternative History of 19th century Worthing - Part One 1800-1852: Worthing emerges as a major seaside resort on the South Coast as seen through the eyes of the Duffield family.

Doors open at 7.00pm for Coffee / Tea & Mince Pies ……..……....Cost £1.50

Our Christmas Raffle will be held during the evening

2026

FEB **TUESDAY 24th at 7.00pm - QUARTERLY MEETING AT WORTING LIBRARY LECTURE THEATRE.**

Followed by: Part Two of "An Alternative History of 19th century Worthing 1852 -1899: The town's recovery from the chaotic days of the Town Commissioners and the emergence of a major new industry, apart from tourism, as witnessed by the local Duffield family.

Doors open at 7.00pm for Coffee / Tea & Biscuits ……....Cost £1.50

APRIL **TUESDAY 28th at 7.00pm - QUARTERLY MEETING AT WORTING LIBRARY LECTURE THEATRE**

Doors open at 6.45pm for AGM at 7.00pm. After which there will be a short break for Coffee/Tea & Biscuits……..Cost £1.50

Followed by a talk from:

GUEST SPEAKER: James Sainsbury, Curator of Archaeology at Worthing Museum on The Updated Story of Highdown Hill.

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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 new email address is
contact@worthingsociety.org.uk

Membership enquiries please contact our Membership Secretary, Brenda Whitmell at: contact@worthingsociety.org.uk