



# Edward Ogle

## The inspiration for “Mr Parker”

Edward Ogle and his brother James were the partners in the firm of Messrs Ogle and Company, which had a warehouse four hundred yards east of London Bridge. Although the Ogle brothers' wealth was partly built on the import of sugar from the West Indies, they were strongly opposed to slavery.



*South Street as it looked during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. At the end of the street on the left is the New Inn and on the right the Sea House Inn*

As Chairman of the Committee of Proprietors of the Legal Quays, Edward was one of the most important figures in London's docklands. In 1796 he submitted a detailed proposal for re-organising the shipping on the river – “Mr Ogle's Plan for Mooring Vessels in the River Thames”.

In 1801 Ogle was about 42, and seeking a new challenge. The Warwick House estate in Worthing was on the market, and he saw the potential. He bought it, and over the next decade almost single-handedly transformed the straggling village of Worthing into a modern resort intended to rival nearby Brighton.

Jane and her sister Cassandra became acquainted with Ogle in 1805, and kept up with him afterwards. Six years later Jane wrote to Cassandra, then staying in London: “Sweet Mr Ogle. I dare say he sees all the panoramas for nothing, has

free-admittance everywhere. He is so delightful! Now, you need not see anybody else.”

The “panoramas” in question were the views of London from the river that Ogle was able to see “for nothing” because he could travel up and down the Thames on his barges whenever he liked. He therefore had “free admittance” to London's finest scenery.

Jane Austen probably first met Ogle at the library he owned in the Colonnade building, less than a minute's walk from both Warwick House and Stanford's Cottage.

Jane tells us in *Sanditon* that Mr Parker – the Ogle-inspired character in the novel – regularly went to the library to monitor new visitors to the resort: “Mr Parker could not be satisfied without an early visit to the library, and the library subscription book.” This was almost certainly Ogle's own routine. On one particular evening, the list was disappointing, being “not only without distinction, but less numerous than [Mr Parker] had hoped”.

We can also be confident that Jane Austen's account of Mr Parker talking about Sanditon was prompted by monologues that Ogle delivered about the town that was his obsession:

“[Mr Parker] was perceived to be an enthusiast – on the subject of Sanditon, a complete enthusiast. The success of Sanditon as a small, fashionable bathing place was the object for which he seemed to live. A very few years ago, and it had been a quiet village of no pretensions, [but] he saw the probability of its becoming a profitable speculation. [He] had engaged in it, and planned and built, and praised and puffed, and raised it to something of young renown, and Mr Parker could now think of very little besides. He could talk of it for ever. It was his mine, his lottery, his speculation and his hobby horse; his occupation, his hope and his futurity.”

This is an exact match for Worthing in 1805, and for Edward Ogle's attitude to his town.



*This engraving of the Steyne Hotel (now the southern end of the Chatsworth) and part of Steyne Terrace dates from 1849, but shows the buildings just as they were when first erected for Edward Ogle between 1806 and 1808*