

Jane Austen's Worthing

A sequence of twelve displays telling the story of Jane Austen's visit to Worthing in 1805 and setting out the parallels between Worthing and her fictional town of Sanditon



Montague Terrace (centre-left), the Sea House Inn (centre-right) and the New Inn (far right), painted by John Nixon around 1805–1810

Jane Austen, her mother, her sister Cassandra, and their friend Martha Lloyd stayed at Stanford's Cottage in Worthing for at least seven weeks at the end of 1805, and probably for fifteen.

During their visit, Jane and Cassandra became friends with Edward Ogle, who was Worthing's leading citizen at the time. Ogle was a brilliant and energetic entrepreneur who, over the course of the first decade of the nineteenth century, almost single-handedly transformed Worthing from a straggling village into a modern seaside resort.

Early in 1817, almost exactly eleven years after her stay in Worthing ended, Jane Austen began writing a novel partly inspired by her experiences in the town.

This novel – which she gave no title, but is today known as *Sanditon* – had to be abandoned after a few months as the painful and debilitating illness that killed her later that year took hold.

Most Jane Austen critics are of the opinion that *Sanditon* is in no way inferior to her best work – and that, if it had been completed, it would have taken its place among her other great novels, such as *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*.

The text of these display-boards consists of material adapted by Antony Edmonds from his 2013 book *Jane's Austen's Worthing: The Real Sanditon*, where all but three of the pictures also appear. The design of the display-boards is by Carly Vaughan.

The pictures of the Sea House Inn & the New Inn, the Teville Gate Tollhouse, Montague Terrace, Wicks's Baths, the Colonnade & Warwick House, and South Street appear by courtesy of Worthing Museum & Art Gallery; the pictures of Stanford's Cottage, Bedford House and Offington House by courtesy of West Sussex County Council Library Service, www.westsussexpast.org.uk; and the picture of Fanny Austen by courtesy of Jane Austen's House Museum, Chawton.