



ST. MARY'S HOUSE & GARDENS, BRAMBER

A Young Person's Guide

A House of History and Mystery

How it all began.....

1069 Bramber Castle, the wooden bridge over the river, and the land around were owned by

William De Braose

His son Phillip went to fight in the 1st Crusade in Jerusalem when the Order of the Knights Templar was formed.

Phillip died in 1125 and his widow gave the land to:

The Knights Templar

who built a Chapter House

1190 A new bridge was built: **The Great Bridge at Bramber** with a Chapel dedicated to **St Mary the Virgin** on the central pier.

John de Braose gave the bridge to the **Benedictine Priory of Sele.**

The monks looked after the bridge and used the Chapter (or Chapel House) as an INN for travellers on their way to Canterbury.

1459 The monks failed to look after the Inn and the next owner was

The Bishop of Winchester

William Waynflete

He restored the chapel and the bridge.

1555 About this time the name of the house changes and takes on the name of the chapel on the bridge. It also became a private house owned by **Francis Shirley MP.**

1651 **King Charles II** may have stayed at the house and escaped to Shoreham by boat to avoid the ROUNDHEAD SOLDIERS on Bramber Bridge.

Many changes were gradually introduced to St Mary's House such as:

- the wooden panelling around the walls of the rooms
- chimneys
- the cat slide roof
- the stairs with the lion candlesticks
- the painted wall leather

1690 Occupant of the House

Dr Nicholas Barbon MP

the first of several Members of Parliament to own the house.

1713 The owners of the house were the **Gough** family

Sir Henry Calthorpe

was also a member of the Gough family who let the house in two parts or 'tenements'.

Gradually the Calthorpes lost interest and 1831 St Mary's House was again in disrepair.

1860 **Farmer Hudson** to the rescue !! Farmer Hudson and his 11 children lived here and looked after 5 acres of land. The farming work was continued by **Captain Ashmore** of the Royal Irish Fusiliers.

Enter **Algernon and Gwendoline Bourke** at the end of the 1900s.

Algernon was the son of an Earl (from County Mayo in Ireland). He added the **Victorian Music Room** so that Gwendoline could sing and hold concerts.

Famous Friends Gwendoline and Algernon were friends with the famous playwright **Oscar Wilde**, and they appear as characters in his world-famous play *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

Wealth and Riches at St Mary's House: **Alfred Musgrave** was a wealthy man and bought many of Algernon Bourke's possessions. At this time St Mary's House had at least **30 rooms!**
He was a friend of **Sherlock Holmes'** creator, **Sir Arthur Conan Doyle**

Fun and frolics came with the next owners: The **McConnel family** and the house was filled with laughter. They played tennis and had parties.

1939 World War 2 - **Here come the troops!!**

Royal Canadian Artillery moved in.

The soldiers were not used to old houses and damaged the painted wall leather and other parts of the house. Their boots wore away the treads on the staircases.

1944 **Ladies to the Rescue**

Dorothy Ellis bought St Mary's House at an auction in Brighton after reading about the house in a magazine at the **hairdresser's!**
Dorothy Ellis opened 12 of the rooms for visitors but had to sell part of the house and grounds to pay for the work on the house.

1980 **Butterflies.** The next owner was **Paul Smart** who had a butterfly collection

A House of History and Mystery again

1984 The new owners **Peter Thorogood and Roger Linton**

The **present owners** have carried out many restorations in the house including the creation of the Octagonal room and the library.

Musical concerts are held in the Victorian Music Room (the Tea Room) and plays are sometimes performed outside on the lawn

There are many unusual plants in the garden surrounding the house, including an ancient tree dating from before **the dinosaurs**.

The gardens have been designed to include **topiary** in the shape of animals and birds.

There is also a '**secret garden**', which you might like to visit.



The Victorian 'Secret' Garden



A topiary rabbit

**You might now
like to try the
Quiz about
St. Mary's House**