

How you can help

- Become a Friend
- Introduce your friends to the house and gardens
- Bring a group to which you may belong
- Support our concerts and other events
- Hold a fund-raising event, e.g., a coffee morning
- Donations, however small

The benefits of being a Friend

- Free entry on open days for yourself and one guest
- Prior information on special events
- Regular newsletter
- Special activities arranged for Friends

How you can become a Friend

If you would like to become a Friend of St. Mary's, please fill in your name and address in the box below. Send the completed form and payment (Cheques to be payable to 'The Friends of St. Mary's') to:

The Membership Secretary, The Friends of St. Mary's, St. Mary's House, Bramber, West Sussex BN44 3WE

Name

Address

..... Postcode.....

Tel..... Email

Please tick the appropriate category (annual subscription rates are for 2010):

- Individual £18
- Joint £26
for two members at the same address
(£8 for each additional member)
- Family£30
for one or two adults and their children under 18 living at the same address; one card covers the family.
- Life membership
ten times the current annual subscription rate.

If you would like to help in any of the following areas, please tick the appropriate box(es) below:

- Guiding*
- Stewarding*
- Shop/reception*
- Tea-room/kitchen*
- Gardening*

Be a Friend
&

BECOME A FRIEND

of

**St. Mary's House
& Gardens**



Bramber, West Sussex

A Chequered History

Originally a monastic inn, founded by the Bishop of Winchester, St. Mary's was run and financed by an order of Benedictine monks. From the dissolution of the monasteries to the present day, the house has remained in private hands and every owner has sought to protect it from some form of threat, official or otherwise, and even total demolition.

In the sixteenth century, the first owner, Francis Shirley, came into possession of what must have been a fairly dilapidated building which he wonderfully restored as a private dwelling with its splendid central courtyard. During the mid-seventeenth century Civil War action led to the virtual destruction of three sides of the building, fortunately leaving intact the important east wing with its splendid panelling, parquetry and marquetry fireplaces.

In the late nineteenth century, major restoration of the house and landscaping of the garden was carried out by the new owner, the Hon. Algernon Bourke, son of the Earl of Mayo, who built the splendid Music Room for his wife, a talented musician.

The house fell on hard times during the Second World War when requisitioned by the War Office as a billet for Canadian troops. In 1944, Dorothy Ellis rescued the house

from threatened demolition, and opened the house to the public during her time there. Although she did everything in her power to keep the old house going, a financial crisis forced her to sell off parts of the estate, including the Victorian Garden, five cottages and the domestic Victorian wing.

In 1984 Peter Thorogood, author, composer and literary historian, and Roger Linton, gifted designer, restorer and conservator, were able, together with other members of their family, to purchase this historically distinguished and architecturally important manor house.

At that time the property was again in a serious state of dereliction. Work began on the restoration of the Victorian Music Room and funds were greatly helped by donations from family and friends, as well as visitors. In the past twenty or more years, Peter and Roger have worked unstintingly and with great success to restore and conserve the house and its gardens, together with its collections of books, manuscripts, ceramics and family furniture.

Today it is one of the foremost heritage attractions in the South East. The house has been visited by many thousands of visitors, both by the general public on open afternoons and countless specialist groups and schools.

The Friends of St. Mary's

Formed in 1991, the aim of the Friends is to help secure the future of this historic house, its contents and gardens, as a heritage attraction of public benefit. Working closely with the St. Mary's Historic House & Gardens Charitable Trust, the Friends provide support both financially as well as in practical ways. Specifically, the Friends exist to:

- raise funds for purposes connected with the house, gardens and its collections
- fund specific restoration projects
- sponsor publications and events

While day-to-day running costs are mostly covered by visitor entrance charges, revenue from concerts, weddings, receptions, dinners and corporate events, a fifteenth century house like St. Mary's needs ongoing repair and maintenance. Added to this, there are specific restoration projects which require substantial funding.

Over the years, the Friends have raised, through subscriptions, donations and fund-raising events, around £50,000 for the following projects:

- Dehumidifier for Library
- Restoration of The Monks' Walk
- Showcases for exhibits
- Installation of a shutting window
- Victorian 'Lost' gardens appeal
- Restoration of Gothic cornice in Music Room
- Installation of stained glass window in Music Room
- Industrial dish-washer for kitchen
- New window for main (east) façade
- Levelling and re-laying of flagstones in topiary garden
- Roof repairs
- Replacement of Music Room windows (Millennium Project—see picture)
- Music Room roof replacement
- Repairs to dormer windows
- Kitchen refurbishment
- Raised floor in Music Room store room
- New shelving in Music Room



The Music Room window, installed in 2003