



MULBERRY HOUSE

HISTORY

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Mulberry House was built in 1767 as a home for the local squire, Edward Earle. It replaced a Tudor house of wattle and daub which was situated on the upper and lower lawns to the north east of the current house. It was probably the presence of the moat which dictated the position of this early building providing the mud that was needed for construction.

The new house took ten years to build. The service wing, which is believed to contain part of the Tudor house, was built first, to house the people building Mulberry House.

The completed building looked much as it does today externally, with the impressive Doric porch – its columns, pilasters and frieze welcoming visitors.

The house became the rectory in 1788 when Edward Earle became minister of the church of St Mary the Virgin in High Ongar, a position he held for 32 years. It was during this time that many of the windows were blocked up to avoid paying window tax. These windows were not unblocked until 1958, despite the tax being abolished over 100 years previously.

The Rectory remained in the Earle family when Edward Robert Earle became minister in 1821. He stayed only 2 years before being succeeded by Henry John Earle, the eldest son of the original owner. He was to become High Ongar's longest serving rector, staying until his death in 1881. He was followed by William Henry Bond,

who donated the stained glass East window in High Ongar church.

Water was first supplied to the house in 1914. Previously water was gathered from the well which can still be found under the kitchen floor. The original pump can still be seen in the kitchen.

The House remained a rectory for a further 61 years. During this time it was more than just a home to the ministers who lived there, it was home to their families and it was part of the local community too. The Rectory Cottage was used as the village youth club and games were played in the grounds. Tennis courts were situated on the site of the former Tudor House. One former rector reputedly kept a horse in the kitchen!

Such a large house with its extensive grounds became expensive to maintain, so in 1975 the church sold the house to a Canadian, Maynard Rafus, a director of Ford Motor Company and his English wife, Sylvia.

During the 4 years they lived there, they completely restored the property which they renamed Mulberry House, whilst new features such as the luxurious sunken bath with gold plated taps were added, surrounded by a mural of London viewed from Somerset House in 1750.

Mulberry House was purchased by the Trustee Savings Bank in 1979 who converted the house into a Training Centre through careful restoration.

RESIDENTS OF MULBERRY HOUSE

1767 - EDWARD EARLE, MA

1821 - EDWARD ROBERT EARLE

1823 - HENRY JOHN EARLE

1882 - WILLIAM HENRY BOND, MA

1916 - GEORGE RICHARD NESBITT, MA

1946 - BERNARD HARTLEY, MA

1959 - ARTHUR FREDERICK ABBOTT, AL, CD

1961 - ARTHUR WILFRED NEWTON TRIBE, MA

1975 - MAYNARD AND SYLVIA RAFUS

1979 - TRUSTEE SAVINGS BANK

1994 - PFE INTERNATIONAL
(RAY AND ANN GEORGE
CONTROLLING SHAREHOLDERS)

2008 - RAY AND ANN GEORGE

PASTORAL CENTRE

This was previously known as Rectory Cottage and used to consist of one cottage and an attached barn.

When Mr & Mrs Tribe lived here it was used as a base for the village youth club. Upstairs was a hayloft.

Mr & Mrs Rafus converted the property into two cottages. The exposed beams inside are original. Water used to be obtained from the pump on the outside of the property.

The cottages were converted by TSB into lecture rooms. The Nationwide Christian Trust now use the facility for Seminars and Retreat Days with offices upstairs.

MULBERRY SUITE AND CEDAR ROOM

This was converted from a granary to an indoor swimming pool by Mr & Mrs Rafus, then to a conference room by TSB and more recently to the Mulberry Room by Ray & Ann George in memory of Ray's father who died in October 1997.

THE COURTYARD BEDROOMS

These were built on the site of the Rectory's vegetable garden by TSB. The TSB used these facilities to train their counter staff for many years. The wall with an archway close to the bedrooms, marks the boundary of the former kitchen garden.

THE GROUNDS

The beautiful grounds stretch to 22 acres and include the Mulberry tree from which the house gets its present name.

There is a Wellintonia Fir planted to commemorate the Battle of Waterloo as well as many other mature trees including Lime, Ash, Elm, Yew and Chestnut.

The lake was previously part of a larger moat used to protect the Tudor house. More recently it has been used for ornamentation. It is well stocked with fish and many different birds can be seen around it, including ducks and Kingfishers.

For many years there was a Chinese Chippendale style bridge crossing to the island but unfortunately this fell into disrepair. This has since been replaced by Ray & Ann George.





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