



BLUE PLAQUE AT BROOK BANK, SHOTTERMILL ROAD, HASLEMERE

GEORGE ELIOT

ALIAS MARION EVANS

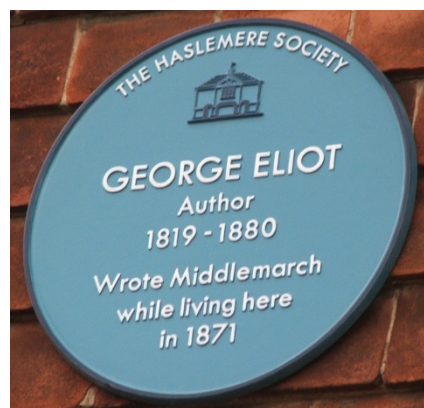
who created much of her great novel Middlemarch

at Brookbank during the summer of 1871.

Other Victorian literary stars such as

Tennyson, Dante Gabriel, William and Christina Rossetti

also visited and wrote at 'this queer little cottage'



Brookbank

Brookbank was originally a farm cottage of simple construction. Built in 1730 the front of the house has traditional ironstone walls to ward off evil spirits.

It was only upgraded for middleclass residence with the coming of the railways in 1860s. The formers from a nearby railway bridge were used to extend the back of the house making for a high arched ceiling which is an unusual construction and feature. To help keep the heat in the house, the back wall has large tapestry hooks placed up high.

The two colourful stained glass bay windows in the main room and the coloured arch window on the stairs were added at this time too. The two downstairs fireplaces are documented as coming from the Carlton Hotel and were added late in the 19th century.

The house was divided into two residencies in the 1960's and most of the original features were retained. Brookbank is grade II listed for its historic and artistic interest.

Will and Melanie recently extended the kitchen at the back of the house and added a refurbished steel window and put in a reinforced glass floor beneath the arch window to bring in some more light.

George Eliot

Mary Ann (Marian) Evans better known by her pen name George Eliot, was one of the leading writers of the Victorian era. Her novels, largely set in provincial England, are well known for their realism and psychological perspicacity.

She used a male pen name, she said, to ensure that her works were taken seriously. Female authors published freely under their own names, but Eliot wanted to ensure that she was not seen as merely a writer of romances. An additional factor may have been a desire to shield her private life from public scrutiny and to prevent scandals attending her relationship with the married George Henry Lewes.

Her first complete novel, published in 1859, was Adam Bede and was an instant success, but it prompted an intense interest in who this new author might be, and there was even a pretender to the authorship, one Joseph Liggins.

In the end, the real George Eliot stepped forward: Marian Evans Lewes admitted she was the author. The revelations about Eliot's private life surprised and shocked many of her admiring readers, but this apparently did not affect her popularity as a novelist.

George Eliot at Brookbank Cottage

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