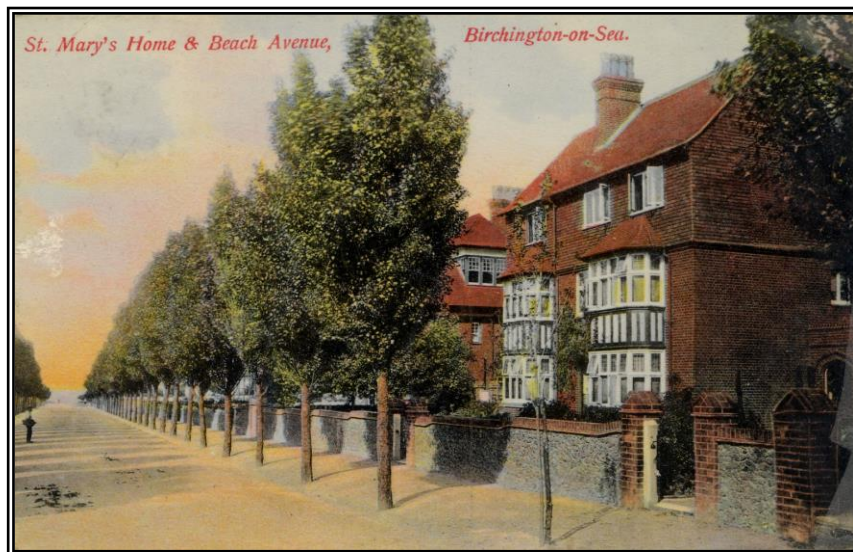


ST. MARY'S HOME, Beach Avenue, Birchington



St Mary's Home was purpose built in 1888 as a Convalescent Home for females between the ages of 16 and 65. It was funded by the Mansford Street Mission (a Baptist foundation) in Bethnal Green and in c. 1920, according to a local post card, held one free bed for a member of the Girls' Friendly Society, who only had to pay 10/- a week for her food. The home was non-sectarian and had a chapel for non-denominational worship. It housed about forty visitors in the 1920s.

Just before the First World War the London Mission built a children's unit on the corner of Gainsborough and Spencer Road called "Mansford House". Both houses were used as convalescent homes for wounded soldiers during that war. When hostilities ended, St Mary's was returned to its original use and the children's home came into operation and flourished right up until WW 2. They were closed down and used for military personnel for the next six years, like so many other large properties in the village.

By 1947, St Mary's was again in use, but had now become a stabilising unit for Diabetics, one of a very small number of such places in the U.K., so was in great demand. Mansford House reopened as "St Mary's Convalescent Home for Children" under Miss D.M. Spencer, who was listed as being in charge of both establishments. By 1957 the children's home had been closed down, but St Mary's Diabetic Home continued to thrive until the late 1970s or early 1980s. By then, control of Diabetes was improving and the Home was no longer in such demand. Thanet Council took over the premises as a Care Home, renaming it "Beresford House". It was later run privately under the same name, providing a permanent home for people all over Thanet who were unable to care for themselves, mainly through impaired intellect. They also took people in need of a short break for medical reasons.

In c. 2000 it was sold and renamed "St Mary's", providing similar facilities as before. Finally, it was closed down and eventually bought by Churchill Developments in November 2004 to be redeveloped as flats, which were begun in 2006. By the time the first residents move in to the 31 apartments in St Mary's Lodge, the 120th anniversary of its birth in 1888 will have arrived.