

Esgairs, High Street, Horsell



At the time this was written the owners and/or occupants of the property were Peter White and Tanina Russo who gave their permission for photographs to be taken, the property has since been sold.

Esgairs is Grade II listed as follows:

House. Early C16 with early C18 remodelling to street front. Timber framed brick infill, to rear, red and blue brick to street front; plain tiled roofs, hipped with gablet to rear right and large ridge stack to left of centre. T shaped plan with main front to rear. Street front: 2 storeys, plat band over ground floor, one leaded casement under cambered heads on each floor, blocked window in gable. Main front: one casement window on each floor to right, C20 addition projecting from left half containing ribbed door. Right hand return front has exposed framing and C17 door.

There is a fairly accurate chain of past owners and occupiers back to 1640 on the Surrey History Centre website *SHC Reference 6522 The Horsell Nurseries Estate (including Esgairs, Sow Moor, Gastons, Inner and Outer Gastons Field and Marl Close)*. Although we are only concerned here with Esgairs the chain generally refers to all the properties mentioned above up to the time these were sold in 1898.

The majority of the 17th century references cover a period when the property was owned by absentee landlords more interested in the rental income from the land than the house itself. There is also an error in the chain. Ann Lynn, the then owner did not marry John Freeland, wheelwright of Woking in 1697 but she did convey the property to him that year. (SHC G96/10/5&6).

John Freeland married Mary Hone at Horsell on the 11th December 1696 and this marriage and John Freeland's acquisition of the property marked the start of local ownership of the house and possibly, its extension by means of the *new wing* (the new house). The progress of the chain over the next 200 plus years is shown below

1726 (20 April) Mary Freeland eldest daughter of John and Mary Freeland above married Henry Edmead.

1730 (18 January) John Freeland by his will left to his daughter Ann, the lease of messuage and ground of East Guise (the name of Esgairs then) Horsell having been in his occupation. The will refers to the *new chamber* which would seem to indicate that there had been building at the house prior to 1730. He was buried at Horsell on 1 March 1735

1736 (prior to) Sarah Freeland youngest daughter of John and Mary Hone above married Richard Bonsey
1746 (December) marriage settlement for the marriage of Ann Freeland to Richard Roake, yeoman of Church Lane includes Esgairs .

1747 (21st April) Ann Freeland married Richard Roake at Horsell

The Freeland, Edmead, Bonsey and Roake families were important residents at Horsell at this time.

1749 Rear of Esgairs (the new house) rebuilt with carved bricks (ME = Mary Edmead, SB = Sarah Bonsey both sisters EB not known but possibly another member of the Bonsey family)

1755 (January 7th) Richard Roake buried Horsell.

1755 (18 February) Will of Richard Roake, yeoman of East Guise (Esgairs), proved.

1769 (28th June) under the terms of Ann Roake's will the properties and tithes passed to her niece, Jane Edmead. (Jane was the daughter of Mary the eldest daughter of John Freeland and Mary Hone above)

1775 (14 February) Jane Edmead married Charles March of Dorking who died in her lifetime.

1812 (19th June) Jane March by her will left the property and tithes to her nephew, Henry Still (not Harry Hill as stated in SHC G6/10/12) probate being granted in November 1821.

1821 (11th October) Jane March buried Horsell aged 86 years).

1821 Henry Still acquired Esgairs

1840 (29th October) James Knowles, butcher of Horsell purchased the property and tithes and lived at the house.

1841 Henry and Carmi Cobbett, brothers and nurserymen of Horsell purchased the property

From this time Esgairs and associated land continued in the ownership of the Cobbett family until its sale by auction in 1898 with various tenants living there or in close proximity.

1851 Census Jacob Spooner letter carrier and James Clarke grocer

1861 Census East Guise Farm William Cox farmer 4 acres of land boarder of James and Elizabeth Clarke grocer & baker

1871 Census Richard Howard horticultural labourer

1881 Census Richard Howard propagator of plants

1883 (27th January) Katharine Phyllis Grisdale baptised Barnes – see later

1891 Census East Gayes (Guise) Howard nurseryman propagator plus Joseph Payne master baker and family

1899 (23rd September).Property sold by auction

The following persons shown in the Woking News & Mail directory and the 1901 and 1911 censuses would most likely to have been owners

1901 Census Esgairs Richard Howard nurseryman own account at home.

1911 Census Richard Howard small nurseryman.

1919 Woking News directory MH & Mail Pocock.

1921 Woking News & Mail directory Major WH Barnard.

1922-5 Woking News & Mail directory Miss Todd.

1925-62 Woking News & Mail directory Miss KP Grisdale (see above)

1962 (30th October) Miss Grisdale died at Mayhurst, Woking

Miss Grisdale's executors were applying for permission to build two semi-detached houses in the superfluous part of the garden in December 1962.

After 1962 TD Lock who built 71-3 High Street and today lives in 71

1969 Woking News & Mail directory PE Watson

Tradition says that the magnificent carved hearth bressumer came from Chertsey Abbey. Since Horsell is in Godley the same hundred as Chertsey (ie not Woking) and only 7 miles by road from the Abbey, this is possible but unlikely in the absence of proof.

The south side of the house comprises a brick gable in a modified Dutch style.



There is another house – The Old Manor House in Old Woking – which has a Dutch style brick gable. The occupier of this other house according to the Woking Land Tax returns from 1780 – and probably before this – was Richard Fenn described as a bachelor of Woking on his burial at St Mary's, Horsell in 1797. He was succeeded as occupier by James Fenn possibly a relative.



Fenn is a Horsell family name and it may be that the presence of Dutch style gables in Horsell and Old Woking is more than coincidental since Thornash Farm up the road was occupied by George Fenn in 1851. Also the windows in the Old Woking house originally were landscape in style but now have been changed to portrait. A similar change has been made has been made at the Horsell house.



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The dated bricks at the south end on the east side are set in the lower of two bricked up windows.

What was originally read as MH is more likely to be ME = Mary Edmead. SB must be Sarah Bonsey, these two being sisters. The identity of EB is not known but possibly another member of the Bonsey family.



On the west side of the house there hardly readable carvings over the door on that side



On the same side there is an almost complete 179



This image from the east side of the house shows the smoke bay and possible original entrance to the new house.





The north east corner



The old west side door



The west side showing the smoke bay



The west side end



Large bread oven (part obscured) in added brick bay in *old* house



South side of *old* house – note flat joists, also elsewhere in the old house.



Inglennook in *new* house – note carved bressumer



Mjddle of bressumer



Right side of bressumer



Stop in *new* house

The old house was possibly late 15th century; Flat joists, hipped roofs and jowled posts are indicative of such an interpretation. Queen struts, clasped purlins and wind braces are later. The imported bressumer is older or earlier than the rest of the new house.

There is seemingly a break in the chain of owners at the end of the 17th century indicating a change in the style of ownership from absentee landlord to locally based owner. It is at this stage that the building of the *new* wing was begun although the Dutch style gable was not added until the middle of the next century possibly in 1749 if the date on the carved bricks is to be trusted.

Originally the two bay *old* house would probably have been a humble roughly built farmhouse. Between the house and the cottages facing the common at Horsell Birch there was only Thornash Farm which stood where Thornash Road meets Horsell High Street today. What is now Esgairs would have resembled a larger version of the common facing cottages up the road. There is a significant difference between the quality of the materials and construction of the *new* house compared with that of the *old*.

It would have been extremely unlikely that the earlier remote owners would have resided in or visited the property which would have represented nothing more than an investment by way of rents for the owners. With the change to local ownership at the end of the 17th century the new owners set about using the *old* house as a means of creating an expanded house appropriate to their local position as comparatively better off inhabitants in an otherwise relatively sparse and poor community.

Sources

Woking Land Tax returns 1789-1811
 West Surrey Family History Society publications
 Surrey History Centre records 6522 and G96/10/1-14

Phillip Arnold
 October 2014