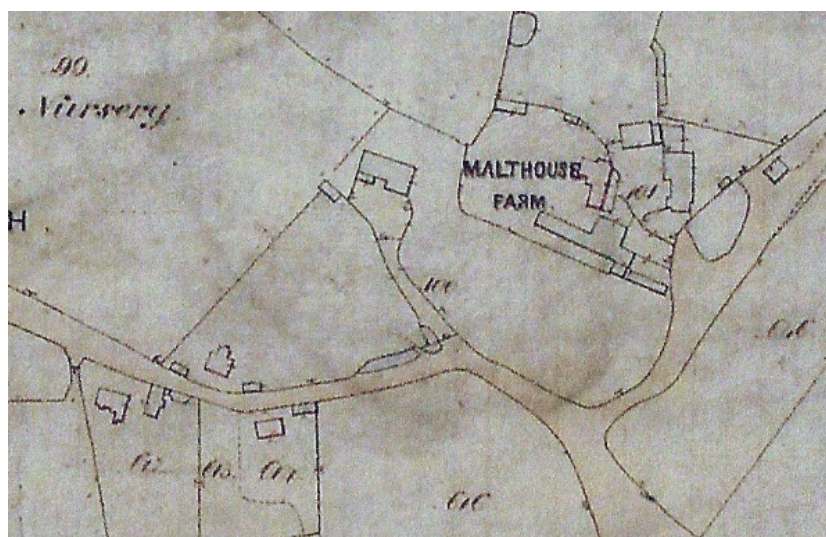


Moorhatch, Church Hill, Horsell
An arts and crafts house

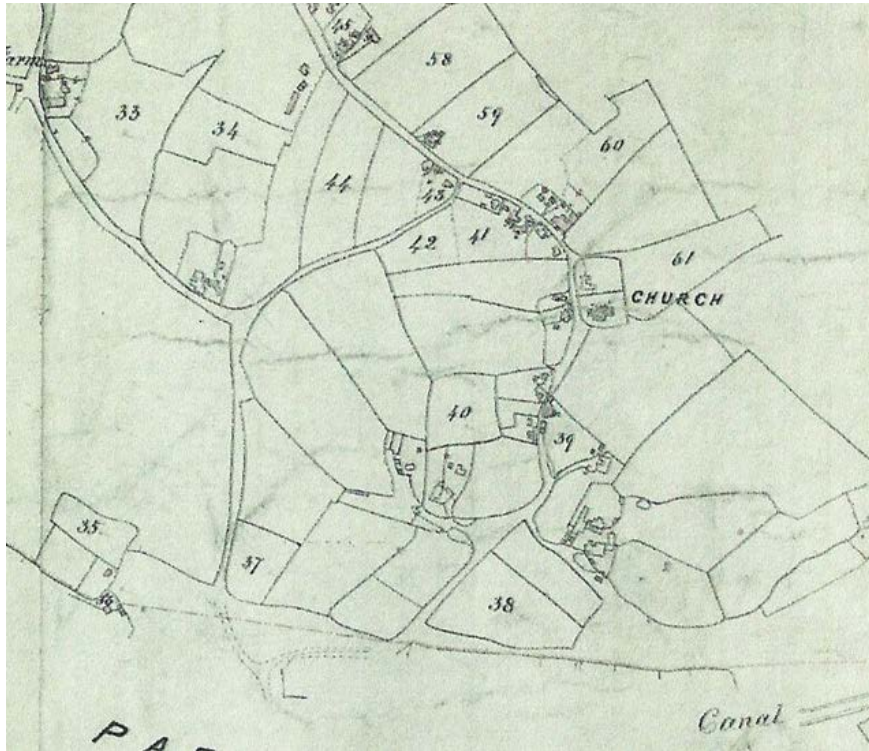


History of the site

The land on which this house was erected was probably part of the Horsell Nurseries Estate (including Esgairs, Sow Moor, Gastons, Inner and Outer Gastons Field and Marl Close) acquired by Henry Cobbett and his brother Carmi at an auction on 23 Mar 1841 at the Crown Inn, Horsell (SHC reference 6522) and sold at another auction at the White Hart, Guildford on 23rd September 1899. (SHC reference G113/39 - Sale particulars of the Horsell Nurseries with plan)



Edward Ryde's 1851 survey of Horsell above shows the site as Plan No.100 House Farm Yard Owner Richard Fenn Occupiers Henry Cobbett and Carmi nursery of 2.3 acres.



The title map of the same date has 39, probably Kalmia, Owner Richard Fenn Occupiers Henry Cobbett and Carmi Cobbett nursery 3 Roods 26 Perches.

The 1851 and 1861 censuses (see below) show Carmi living with his wife Eliza, son and daughter on what is now known as Church Hill immediately after the church towards the site.

1851

8	Chobham Road	Carmi Cobbett	head	40	nurseryman	Horsell
		Eliza	wife	41		Chobham
		Mary Ann	daughter	11	scholar	Chobham
		Henry	son	9	scholar	Chobham
		Alice	daughter	7	scholar	Horsell
		James	son	4		Horsell
		Eliza	daughter	1		Horsell

1861

4	Street	Carmi Cobbett	head	49	nurseryman.	Horsell
		Eliza	wife	51		Chobham
		James	son	14		Horsell
		Elizabeth Charlotte	daughter	11		Horsell



This Cobbett family were possibly living at present day Kalmia shown above and thought to be built in the 18th century.

The site on which Moorhatch was erected appears as Lot 2 at the 1899 auction at Guildford giving the acreage as 7 acres 3 roods and 9 perches including *The Dwelling House thereon occupied by Mr James Cobbett*. Might this dwelling house be Kalmia? The 1891 census shows James living there with his wife Mary and family.

1891

2	The Street	James Cobbett	head	45	nurseryman	Horsell
		Mary	wife	49		Jersey
		Edith	daughter	19	school teacher	Horsell
		John	son	18	foreman in nursery	Horsell
		George	son	16	propagator in nursery	Horsell
		Albert	son	15	scholar	Horsell
		Alice	daughter	13	scholar	Horsell
		Alfred	son	12	scholar	Horsell
		Florence	daughter	10	scholar	Horsell
		Horace	son	7	scholar	Horsell

The first mention of Moorhatch in the censuses appears in the 1911 census as follows:

305	Moorhatch	RYDE Charles Bertram	head	S	52	surveyor invalided	London	Middx
		RYDE Ada Kate	sister	S	50	independent means	London	Middx
		NICHOLSON Walter Harry Griffin	cousin	M	52	independent means	Natal	Richmond
		MANNING	serv	M	41	attendant (army pensioner)	Oxon	Chacomb Banbury
		REED Esther	serv	-	23	parlourmaid	Essex	Clavering

Interesting the fuller information required in this census shows that the cottage had 9 rooms then. The instructions to the enumerator were to count the kitchen as a room but not any scullery, landing, lobby, closet, bathroom; nor warehouse, office, or shop.

Charles (Bertie) and Ada¹ were the son and daughter of Edward Ryde (1844-92) surveyor, resident of Old Woking and prominent citizen of Woking whose diary is in the care of Surrey History Centre. Ada was not permitted at the age of 19 years to accept the hand of the vicar of St Peter's, Old Woking and died unmarried.

Edward Ryde owned a property in Old Woking called Moorhatch adjacent to the brewery but it is unlikely that he had anything to do with the building of the house in Church Hill as he died in 1892. What is more likely is that his son and daughter were the first owners of Moorhatch and the house's name reflects their childhood in Old Woking.

Although the house today is locally listed as a building of townscape merit it does not appear in either the 1965 Surrey County Council publication *Antiquities of Surrey* or Pevsner. The latter apart from describing St Mary's refers slightly to the village as *A few battered cottages remain from the old village.*



Charles and Ada also appear in the earlier 1901 census together with a servant living in Church Hill at a house called Hillside², a semi-detached property on the other side of the road the other half being Harleston.

1901

27	Charles B Ryde	head	S	42	surveyor valuer	employer	London Middlesex
	Ada R Ryde	sister	S	40	living on own means		London Middlesex
	Edith A Vellacott	servant	S	18	cook general domestic	worker	North Devon Lynton



The House

Moorhatch is said to have been constructed of grizzled stocks with occasional red headers sand faced weather tiling and old tiles to roof. The windows were lead glazed and all the woodwork including half timbering treated with brown staining.

The architects of the house were Cyril Bazett Tubbs³ and Arthur Albert Messer⁴ whose practice was at 5 Broadway, Woking and the builders Drowley and Company⁵. The house would probably have been built in 1905⁶.



Although Moorhatch is described as an *art and crafts* house it would probably be more accurate to say it was designed with the arts and crafts movement in mind. The Arts and Crafts Movement was a reaction to the excesses of Victorian industrialisation. It grew from a desire to revive traditional craftsmanship and restore simplicity and honesty to how buildings and furnishings were made.

Moorhatch has a number of features which might be regarded as being included *with the arts and crafts movement in mind* for example the porch, the front door, the tile ends on either side of that door, the hall, the staircase and the lead glazed windows, the latter feature being promoted by the arts and crafts movement. Other features might contribute to the feeling of traditional craftsmanship, simplicity and honesty.

However, I am not absolutely convinced that only traditional craftsmanship was used in its construction. Nevertheless, this is a fine well-built house worthy of our protection in its present form. It would be a tragedy if the house should lose more of its garden to facilitate the building of modern properties around it.



The two bench seats reminiscent of the porch before a church door. The two small windows either side of the door provide a glimpse of the lead glazing. Although charming the letter box in the tile ends on the right side of the door is not as utilitarian as it may look. The door and its fittings are best seen from the hall inside.



The woodwork has been changed from the original brown staining to a conventional white in tune with the modern craze for reflected white light. There is just one side of a door upstairs retaining the original brown staining. The retention of the brown staining would probably have darkened the hall so one would not necessarily do away with the white light even though the arts and crafts aspect has been diminished. The changes would appear to have been made since 1969/70 when the Pliszka family (see later) left the house.



The newel and the part of the stair supporting the hand rail are attractive and exhibit craftsmanship with an air of arts and crafts



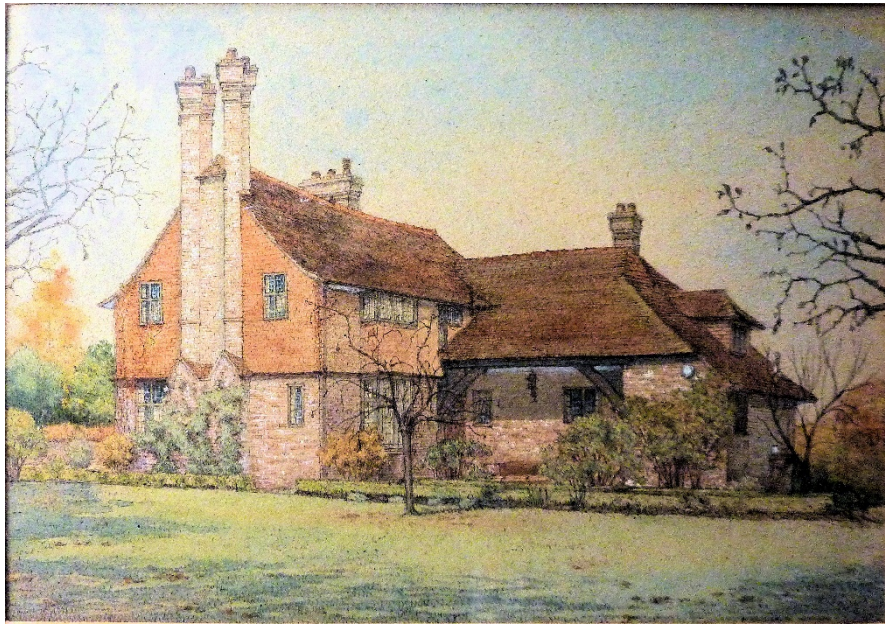


The three images above show the leaded windows from the inside.

The Woking News and Mail published directories between the two world wars and during a short period afterwards which show the houses in Church Hill and their occupants. The 1964 edition is the last year we have and there is no trace of present day The Ridings which suggests that this house was built after that date. The land for the house must have come from the Moorhatch plot. Also the brick wall along Brewery Road shows signs of having extended past the present boundary between the house and the three modern properties which would seem to indicate that these houses were built in what was originally part of Moorhatch's garden.

The directories, census returns and electoral rolls enable us to discover who lived at the house between 1905 and 1964 which is the last year we have directories.

1905-15 Charles Bertram Ryde and Ada Kate Ryde
 1916 Miss AK Ryde
 1919 Dr W Risdon⁶
 1923-5 RG Finlayson
 1925-50 Mrs EM Hicks
 1957 CL Franks
 1964 No occupier shown
 1969 DS Dunbar
 1969/70 George and Mary Pliszka (rented the house)
 2011- Kevin and Jane O'Connor



Diana Pliszka who lives in California recently wrote to me advising that her parents, George and Mary Pliszka, who rented the house from roughly January 1969 to July 1970, have a Marguerite Howarth water colour of the house which they commissioned in 1969 (see above). The painting is now hanging in their house near Austin, Texas. It has supplied them with many happy memories of their time in England. Surprisingly Mrs Howarth omitted the attic window between the chimneys. This is unusual for her as I have always thought her paintings were correct in detail although I do recall her telling she often left out unsightly television aerials and electricity pylons

The present owners, Keith and Jane O'Connor, acquired the house from owners who had occupied the house for almost 45 years.



The two above photographs have been sent by Diana Pliszka and show the house when she and her parents lived at Moorhatch. (Note the radiators now replaced with modern ones.) She also advises that the kitchen was modernised by the owners when her family left the premises.

¹Charles Bertram Ryde died on 28th Februsry 1915. The funeral was held at St Mary's Horsell and he was buried in Plot No.1754 in the graveyard. Probate was granted to his sister and Edward Humphrey Noel Ryde the value

of his estate being £11,535 0s 10d. Ada Kate Ryde died 16th June 1943 and was buried in the same plot as her brother. Probate was granted at Llandudno Edward Humphrey Noel Ryde, her estate being valued at £7045 1s 4d.



The remains of the Ryde grave in St Mary's in the left foreground. The thumb and finger monument belongs to the grave behind

²Hillside Church Hill Estate Horsell

Architect J Drowley

Red brick and white rough cast red tiled roof and lead glazing

Source *Woking as a Residential District* by William J Drowley and Ernest BA Allen December 1907

³Cyril Bazett Tubbs (1860 – 29 Mar 1927) designed two buildings in Brookwood Cemetery and also had a hand in its planning and in developing some of its surplus land, He designed the former Catholic chapel (Plot 124), completed 1899, burned down about 1990, and with Messer designed the larger former Anglican Chapel of 1909-10, now the church of the St Edward the Martyr Orthodox Brotherhood.

He lived in Datchet in 1901 with wife, 2 children and 6 servants and had moved to Hastings in 1911 with 3 children and 9 servants. Died at Thedden Grange, Alton, leaving £7451.4.11

⁴Arthur Albert Messer (1863- 14 Apr 1934) practised in the USA for a time, He was at Harleston, Church Hill, Horsell in the 1901 census and moved to Little Widbury, Hook Heath by 1904, dying there and leaving £10666.5.2 He worked with the Imperial War Graves Commission and was awarded a CBE and DSO

⁵WJ Drowley An advertisement in the Woking News & Mail 1919 directory (next page) reads

WJ Drowley

(late Drowley & Co)

Builders and Contractors, Shop fitters & Sanitary Engineers, Undertakers & Monumental Masons, Funerals Completely Furnished.

Walmley Bath Road, Woking.

Telephone 317

The directory shows Bath Road as leading from Commercial Road to Church Street

⁶The Electoral Roll (per Ancestry) shows Ada as living at Hillside 1902-3, and Moorhatch 1905-15. After her brother's death the list shows her at Beaulieu (probably No.28) 1918-25 and Heritage (third in voters list) 1926-43 both houses in Waldens Park Road.

⁶William Elliott Risdon MD b1864 d Bournemouth 1951

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17th October 2015

Sources

Kevin and Jane O'Connor (present owners)

Ancestry.co.uk

Dr Richard Christophers

Horsell Electoral Rolls

Surrey History Centre

1851, 1861, 1891, 1901 and 1911 census returns

WN&M Directories

George and Mary Pliszka and their daughter Diana