

The Howdah, Castle Road, Horsell, GU21 4EU



I have been asked to put together this report on the Howdah by the present owners of the property, Mr and Mrs Peter Edmunds.

The house is basically an interesting Victorian house albeit with a flat roof and unusual name, probably built on one of two building plots acquired by Trelawny Barlow Giles (see below) and being part of the Horsell Grange Estate developed by the National Land Corporation Limited at the end of the 19th century

The owners have a copy of the prospectus for the auction by the developers of 38 building plots held on the 19th October 1893 together with the map accompanying an earlier auction on 30th June. The particulars of the plots offered for sale in the October 1893 prospectus are augmented by two handwritten notes:

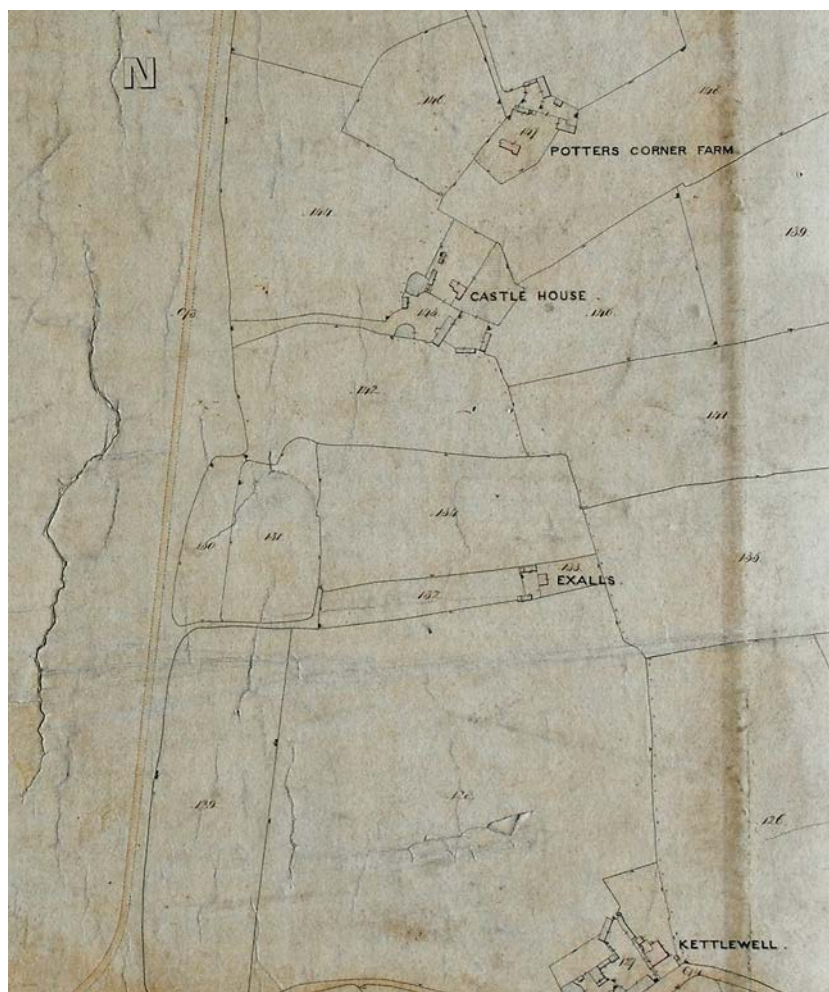
Plot 78 210 ft. frontage to Elm Road and depth of about 240 feet and

Plot 47 150 frontage to Castle Road and depth of about 230 feet

Neither of these plots is shown on the map.

The Horsell Grange Estate had largely been acquired by the Brettell family firm of solicitors of Chertsey including Horsell Grange Estate in 1878 and Potters Corner Farm in 1880. Prior to these acquisitions the land had been devoted to farming and there were a number of existing

properties in the area principally farm houses including Potters Corner, Castle House, Exalls, Horsell Grange, Kettlewell Farm and Kettlewell House (see extract from Ryde map below).



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Richard Brettell and his family of this firm lived at Horsell Grange according to the 1881 Census (see Appendix p12).

On 20th January 1896 Trelawny Barlow Giles of Summerhill, Horsell put down a deposit of £22 acknowledging himself to be the purchaser of Lot 78. This cannot be the plot on which The Howdah was built as Lot 78 is described in the particulars as having a frontage to Elm Road which road when built was on the other side of Woodham Road. What is more likely is that The Howdah was built on Lot 47 with its frontage to Castle Road particularly as Mr Giles is known to be living at Grange Cottage in Elm Road from the time of the 1901 census (see Appendix p13) until he died there in 1934.

The 1911 census (see Appendix pp13,14) shows the number of rooms in a house including the kitchen but not a scullery, landing, lobby, closet or bathroom. The number of rooms in Grange Cottage was 11. The Howdah is an 8 room detached house built at the end of the 19th century

In the 1901 census (see Appendix p13) Summerhill was shown as 154 the houses between that house and The Howdah being 155 Castle House 156 Castle House Lodge and 157 Westcroft either in Castle Road or Woodham Road.

As can be seen from the extracts from the 1901 and 1911 censuses (see Appendix pp13,14), Trelawny Giles was not living at The Howdah then but at Grange Cottage in Elm Road. The Kelly's directory for 1924 shows he was still living at this house when he died that year aged 80.

It is possible that Trelawny Giles had nothing to do with The Howdah and that his receipt for Grange Cottage had just been attached in error to the prospectus now in the hands of Mr and Mrs Edmunds. On the other hand, he may have bought both plots, having Grange Cottage built on Plot 78 for his own occupation and disposing of Plot 47 either before or after The Howdah was built. I incline to the latter suggestion.

According to Wikipedia a Howdah is *a carriage which is positioned on the back of an elephant, or occasionally some other animal such as camels, used most often in the past to carry wealthy people or for use in hunting or warfare. It was also a symbol of wealth for the owner.*

It might be thought because the house has a name with an apparently Indian derivation the Giles family had lived in India before they came to this country but since the family's elder daughter was born in South Africa it is equally possible that the name relates to their stay there.

The first census after the house was built shows the occupant as Alice Peake, widow in 1901. She lived at Horsell Grange with her husband when he was alive according to the 1891 census. (see Appendix pp 13-14). He died at Holloway Sanatorium on 25th July 1900 and left £6357. 5s.5d. At the time of his death his home was Horsell Lodge.



©Mr & Mrs Peter Edmunds

The owners have a number of photographs of the house including the above which because the property has a flat roof shows the metal safety railings outlined against the middle chimney. These are no longer there which seems to indicate that these were removed during the Second World War in connection with the war effort. It follows that the photograph was taken pre-war.



©Mr & Mrs Peter Edmunds
The rear in greater detail with the safety railings in position.



The rear of the building as it is today without the safety railings.



The corner of the building today with the railings gone. Above the small lean to greenhouse is the brick colour moulding shown in greater detail below.





The groundfloor front window shown above is to the left hand of the porch. The head is made up of rubbed bricks, the bricks around the window framed are chamfered and there is decoration just visible below the window ledge.

The heads for most of the house windows are made up of rubbed bricks. Each brick is rubbed slightly off square so that the cumulative effect is the splayed wedged-shaped appearance. The joints are very narrow lime mortar, not pointing.



The upper windows at the front have a little apron of rubbed bricks below the window ledge. This rubbed brick style constituted the very pinnacle of the bricklayers art first produced in the 17th and 18th centuries.



This side double window follows the general picture of rubbed brick heads, chamfered bricks around the window frame and decoration under the window ledge. The upper windows at the side and the two original upper windows at the back have rubbed brick heads.



This front ground floor window is a replacement, utility having understandably won over symmetrical pedantry.



The porch again continues the theme of rubbed brick head, chamfered brick surround to the window frame and under window ledge decoration.



Finally, last outside the delightful almost earthenware airbricks.

Inside the white painted staircase





The White fireplace on the Ground floor front reception room.



The brick fireplace in the rear reception room.



Beam with chamfers and stops in the front reception room (best in black & white).



The chamfers and stops in the woodwork and walls in the Garden Room



Further chamfers and stops in the woodwork and walls in the Garden Room



Chamfers and stops in the walls and woodwork on the landing



The landing. The staircase originally continued to provide access to the roof.



Down stairs!

A charming house with interesting and significant brickwork

Sources

James W. P. Campbell, Brick: A World History
 Dr Richard Christophers
 Domestic Buildings Research Group (Surrey)
 Mr & Mrs Peter Edmunds
 Findmypast
 The Lightbox
 West Surrey Family History Society
 Woking History Society

Appendix Censuses

1881

31	The Grange	1	Richard Brettell	head	M	34	solicitor	Worcester Tunstall Bromsgrove
			Laura	wife	M	35		Middx Acton
			Richard JG	son	S	6		Surrey Chertsey
			Norman S	son	S	3		Surrey Chertsey
			Henry G	son	S	2		Surrey Horsell
			Constance MM	dau	S	1		Surrey Horsell
			Mildred E Allen	serv	S	30	cook	Herts St Albans
			Emily Miller	serv	S	29	nurse	Glouc Dyham
			Florence M Walker	serv	S	25	parlour maid	Oxford
			Eleanor Anderton	serv	S	19	housemaid	Yorkshire Bradford
			Emily Brown	serv	S	20	under nurse	Sussex Highhurst
			Lavina L Allen	serv	S	18	kitchen maid	Herts Hatfield

1891

The Grange	1	Francis C	Peake	Head	M	35	coal owner & colliery agent	Penkridge, Staffs
		Alice J	Peake	wife	M	30	-	Parr, Lancashire
		William F C	Peake	son	-	3	-	Kensington, Middlesex
		Gwendoline E C	Peake	dau	-	2	-	Horsell, Surrey
		Julia	Bedwell	serv	W	36	nurse domestic servant	Hampshire
		Sarah A	Jones	serv	S	25	Parlour maid domestic servant	Brereton, Staffs

		Annie	Robinson	serv	S	19	housemaid domestic servant	Brereton, Staffs
		Mary E	Price	serv	S	29	cook domestic servant	Staffs
		William	West	serv	S	32	Groom Domestic Servant	Sussex
		Cosino F W	Peake	v	S	30	stockbroker	Holt, Leicestershire

1901

158	The Howdah	Alice Peake	Head	wid	41	Living on own means	France BS
		Gwendoline Peake	dau	S	12		Horsell Surrey
		Bertha Bright	serv	S	25	Cook Domestic	Brown Candover Hants
		Margaret Garwaker	serv	S	25	House Parlourmaid	Hensting Hants
165	Grange Cottage	Trelawny Giles	head	M	47	Stock* dealer	Middx London
	Woodham Road	Alice	wife	M	43		Hants Southampton
		Ada M	dau	S	16		Cape colony
		Granville CJ	son	S	9		Surrey Richmond
		Amy F	dau	S	7		Hants Southampton
		Alfred EB	son	S	6		Hants Southampton
		Elizabeth Turner	serv	S	26	Cook domestic	Surrey Chertsey
		Elizabeth A Sage	serv	S	21	Housemaid domestic	Devon East Budleigh

*amended incorrectly by the enumerator to Cattle!

1911

197	The Howdah	SMITH Isaac Gregory	head	W	84	clergyman	Lancs Manchester
		SMITH Constance Gertrude	daug	S	50		Hereford Tadstone
		LAMBERT Alice	v	S	41		Gloucs Malvern
		SMITH Edith	serv	S	26	cook	Wilts Highworth
		THIRKEL Florence	serv	S	18	housemaid	Middx Staines

205	Grange Cottage	GILES Trelawny Barlow	head	M	57	member London stock exchange (jobber)	Middx London Regents Park
		GILES Alice Francis	wife	M	53		Hants Southampton
		GILES Ada Maud Keele	dau	S	26		Cape Colony Eastern Province (Resident)
		MAY Rose	serv	S	25	cook	Hants Odiham
		HUNT Mary	serv	S	20	housemaid	London