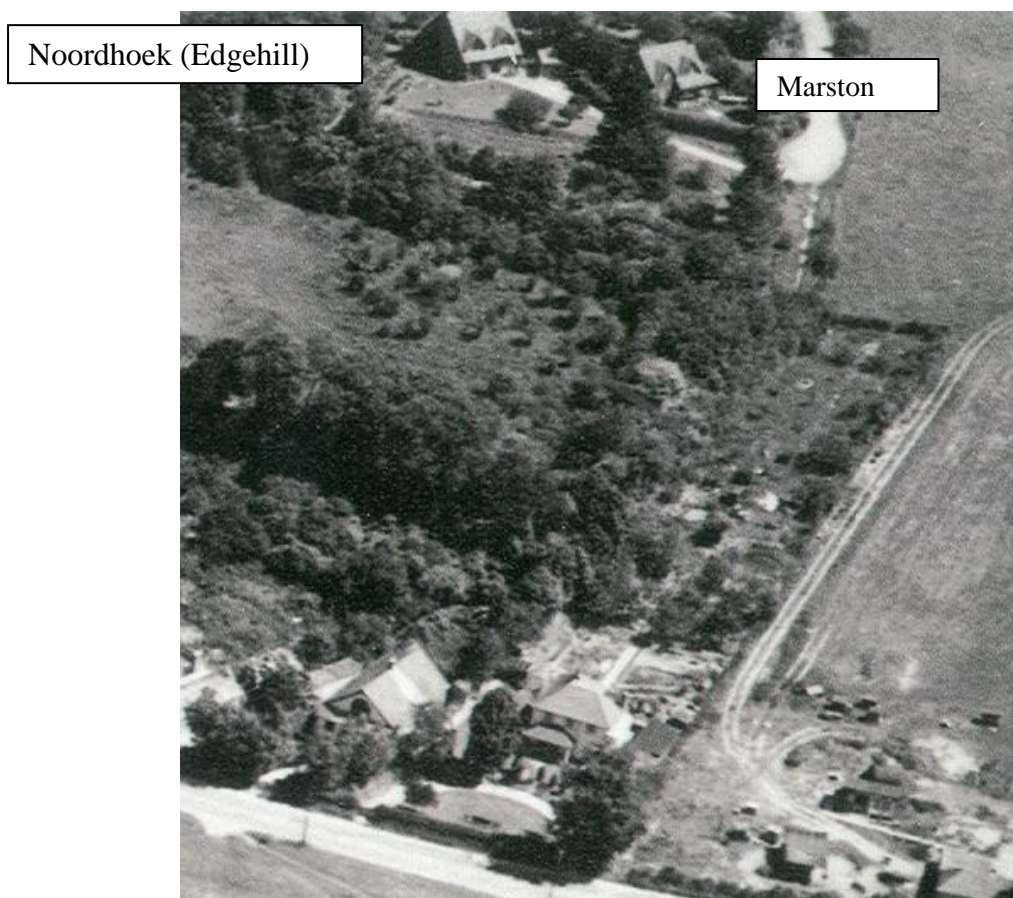


THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONNECTION

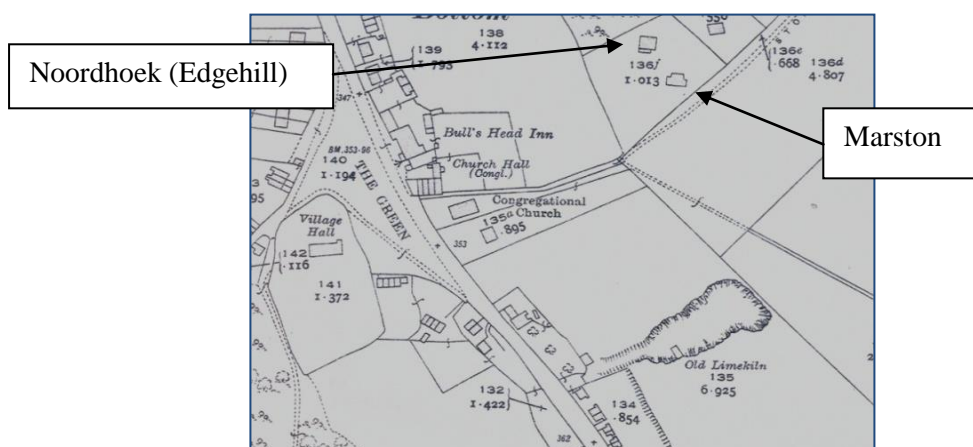
By Sue Short 03/03/12



This aerial photograph, taken by Philip Lane, shows the position of Noordhoek and Marston in Stonehouse Road.

Noordhoek (renamed Edgehill), Marston and the cottage behind Noordhoek were built by John William Smails in Stonehouse Road in the 1920s.

Note: Noordhoek means north hook or north corner in the South African language.



John William Robson Smails & Emily Jane Willett

John or William as he liked to be called was born 28th December 1869 in Stoke Damerel. Devonport, Devon and married Emily Jane Willett on 29th July 1899 in the Parish Church Stoke Damerel, Devonport. Emily was born in 1864 in Fishhoek, Simons Town, South Africa. They had one son Frederick George William born 26th November 1901 in Devonport.

A career Naval Officer a short history appears in his Obituary below. When he retired from the Navy he built two houses next to each other called 'Marston' and 'Noordhoek' and a cottage behind Marston in a small village in Kent called Pratts Bottom. He lived with Emily in Noordhoek which was so called to honour Emily's South African connection. His niece Marie Winifred and her husband Lionel Mallison lived in Marston and Kathleen Palmer (Marie Winifred's sister.) lived in the little cottage.

John William died 26th September 1935 in Marston House, Kent and Emily in 1950 in Battle, Sussex.

This information was supplied by Pauline Vane



NAVAL OFFICER'S DEATH AT HALSTEAD

The Late Lieut.-Commander
W. J. Smailes

By the death of Engineer-Lieut.-Commander W. J. Smailes, who had resided in Halstead for 12 years, the village has lost an interesting figure. Lieut.-Commander Smailes came to live in Halstead on his retirement from the Royal Navy after the War, and on the site which he bought for a house Roman tiles and pre-historic arrow heads have been unearthed.

As a young man Commander Smailes played rugger for his home town, Plymouth, and for the Devon Colts, and for the Royal Navy in various parts of the world.

He was badly wounded at the Dardanelles, and while serving in the North Sea in a destroyer his vessel sank an enemy submarine. The next day the destroyer itself ran aground.

GRIM WAR EXPERIENCES

"Possessed of keen sense of humour (writes one who knew him well) Commander Smailes had many a yarn to spin of his experiences in collisions, storms, and the perils and humours of his profession, but like so many brought face to face with the grim side of warfare, he rarely related his war experiences.

"It was obvious, however, that the scenes at the Dardanelles had made a deep impression on his mind."

He left a widow and one son. The funeral service was held on Saturday in Halstead Church, and, in accordance with his wishes, it was attended only by a few close friends and male relatives. These few included his three brothers, his son, his nephew, and Messrs. Goodall, Horne, Keen and Palmer.

The Rev. R. E. E. Frampton, the former Vicar, and the Rev. J. C. Barker, the present Vicar, conducted the service, the former having come from Crowborough, Sussex, for the purpose.



Information supplied by Pauline Vane



Noordhoek-circa 1930s



John William and Emily Smails



Noordhoek and the tennis court in the foreground-circa 1930s

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'Signs of Roman occupation have been uncovered at Halstead's north western boundaries. Building operation at Stonehouse in 1928 disinterred Roman floor and roof tiles and pottery fragments, with some interminate structural remains. Despite the site published as in Halstead, it appears to have been in the grounds of "Squirrels", Stonehouse Road, which is in Pratts Bottom. This location is however, surprisingly isolated from the principle local lines of Roman occupation, along the Cray and Darrent valleys, and there is no evidence of any continuity of occupation of use beyond the original Roman structure'

Page 5 of *Millennial Halstead-A Kentish Village History* by Geoffrey Kitchener



A while ago I asked the owners of Squirrels if any Roman artefacts had been found in their garden. They felt that the remains had, more likely, been uncovered around the area of the tennis court in the garden at Edgehill (Noordhoek) This would fit in with the William Smail's building operations in the 1920s.



The following photo is taken outside the Noordhoek sometime in the 1920's. The three ladies to the left are not family but friends as far as we know but then it is Emily Jane (wife of John William), John William and Marie Winifred (Palmer) wife of Lionel Mallinson. The little boy in a white jumper is John Herbert Elliott (son of Isabel Palmer and Herbert Ben Elliott)

Front row from left:- Herbert Elliott, James Mallinson (son of Isabel & Lionel) & Lionel Mallinson.

This information was supplied by Pauline Vane

John William Robson Smails, who built the houses, was one of six children, two girls and four boys. Pauline's great, great aunt married one of the Smails brothers.