

Edward Loomes (Part 1) *by Geoff Oldfield*

The ancestors of Edward Loomes came to England from Holland, being of Huguenot extraction. Of the two brothers who landed on our shores, a descendent of the elder one was Knighted in 1732 as Sir Thomas Loomes for his services to this country in the silk weaving industry, having a factory in Derby employing 300 people.

Edward was born on the 2nd May 1823 and being, it was said 'of an incurable turn of mind', introduced many improvements into brick making machinery, adapting the first Hoffman kiln in England with Mr. Peed, the Whittlesey solicitor, at Kings Dyke. It was here that he put on the market the 'cable' garden edging tile representing a section of rope. Examples of this product bearing his name can still be found locally. He subsequently sold his rights to this title to a London company, Hooper & Co, who made a fortune from this simple invention.

Educated at Oundle School, he afterwards learned farming at Stevenage before settling on the ancestral estate at Flegcroft in Whittlesey 'the scene for many of everything novel in the way of agricultural development'. He not only introduced, but invented a potato lifter, whilst the first threshing machine in the country was used on his farm and he startled the locals by introducing the first steam ploughing engines. He was one of the pioneers of the Peterborough Agricultural Society and was a life member of the Royal Agricultural Society of England.

However, in the latter half of the 19th century, flooding of his ripening crops considerably depleted his finances and coincided with the death of his wife leaving him to raise nine young children. These set backs saw him relocated to Kent where he was commissioned to develop brickyards to provide bricks to be used in the construction of the new railway. Frank who was the youngest of his nine children, later became editor of the Peterborough Advertiser weekly newspaper. Designs for the first machine for folding newspapers were conceived by him and sold to



'The Times'.

When quite a young man, he was a prominent officer in the Whittlesey Yeomanry and had the distinction of being in the guard of honour when Queen Victoria and Albert her Prince Consort visited Cambridge. With his soldierly presence and natural aptitude for discipline, he formed and was duly commissioned as Commanding Officer of the Whittlesey Rifles. In 1860 he, as Commanding Officer and promoter of the rifle movement, was presented to Queen Victoria at the Volunteer Rally held in that year.

General Sir Henry Gorge Wakelyn Smith K.C.B., the Hero of Aliwal, died on 12th October 1860. As he was someone Edward knew quite well, the whole of the arrangements for the funeral and burial were left in his capable hands.

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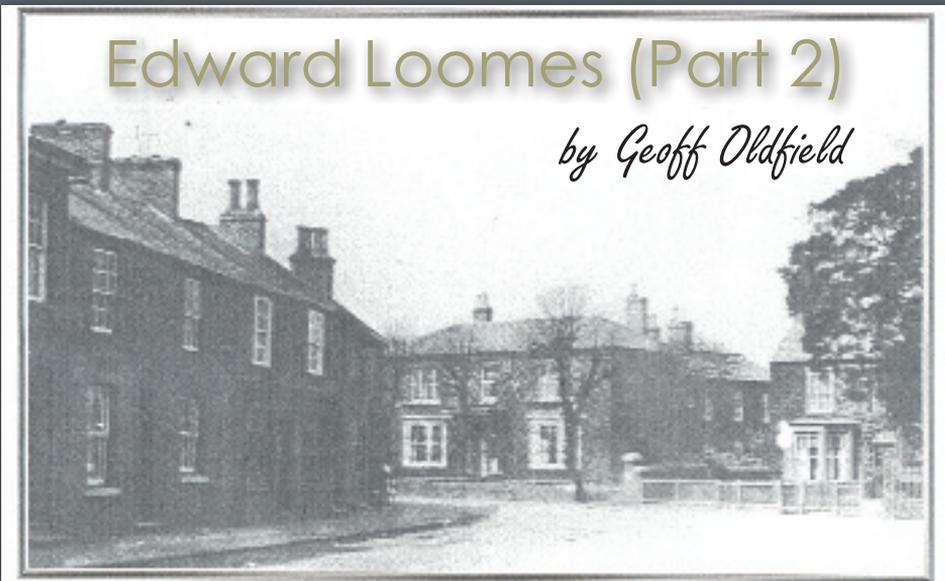
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Edward Loomes (Part 2)

by Geoff Oldfield



Edward Loomes was a keen sportsman and it was said that he was, probably, in his day, the best shot in the Isla of Ely. His wife, Frances Elizabeth Ground, he met in their school days and was practically engaged to her when she was only 9 years old! She shared Edward's love of sport, being a fine horsewoman and also a good shot. She was also a gifted musician.

He served as a Governor of the Town Revenues and was an Improvement Commissioner under the Act of 1849. For eighteen years he was church warden of St Mary's church in Whittlesey and played a prominent role in the restoration of the church, especially after the great gale of 1865 blew down the weather vane and part of the lofty steeple.

He always had a warm hearted and charitable disposition and was a Guardian of the Poor in Whittlesey and a lifetime Governor of the Peterborough Infirmary.

As an eminent citizen of the Town, he was an innocent party caught up in the Whittlesey election riots of 1857 when his own home 'The Limes' in Whitmore Street (now the Conservative Club) suffered quite a lot of damage, despite being heavily barricaded. He was with Mr Thomas Bowker J.P. when he read the Riot Act from the steps of the Town Hall to those who chose to rampage through the town.

He made a prolonged visit to the United States of America where his eldest son, also Edward, was practising as a veterinary surgeon. Back in England and some years later, he engineered a woodworking industry at Tower Works, Fletton for the Reverend J Cautley, the vicar of Thorney, which went into business trading under the name of Harmer & Co.

In the early 1880s, approaching his seventieth year, he left with his second wife to visit his sons, William and Charles in New Zealand where they stayed for ten years. After Mrs Loomes had

received a substantial legacy, they returned to England and went to live in Forest Hill in south east London.

Edward, in his earlier days a leading and influential resident of Whittlesey died in London on 5th April 1905 at the age of 82, leaving a widow, four sons and a daughter. He is buried in Whittlesey cemetery, having been conveyed from London by express train which was especially halted at Whittlesey station to allow the coffin to be removed. The train was met by twenty four present members of the Whittlesey Rifles in their scarlet uniforms (including a smart little bugle boy) of F Company 3rd Cambs V.B. Suffolk Regiment under the command of Major Weldon. Five old comrades of the original Corps were also present as was Ex-Sergeant E.J. Jesson. The funeral service was conducted by Reverend C.E.B. Bell was held at St. Mary's church before he was laid to rest in the family vault close by the tomb of his friend General Sir Harry Smith K.C.B.

A remarkable man who put his exceptional talents to good use and had the Townsfolk of Whittlesey at heart.

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