

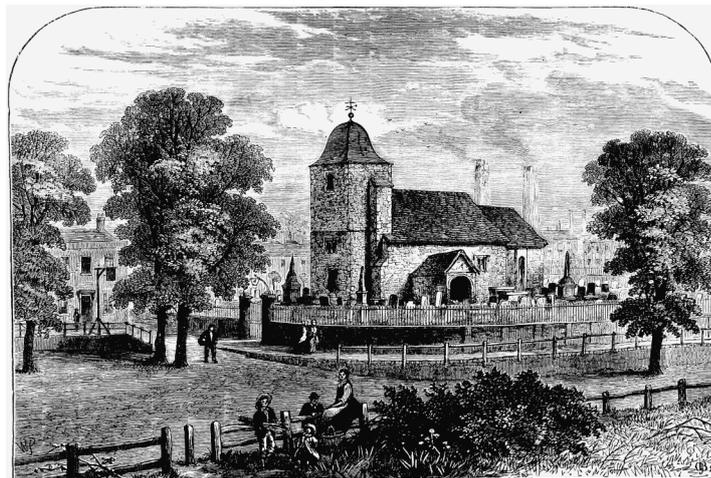
## FRANCIS and FANNY EDE

### *Two 'forgotten' owners of Pishiobury House, Sawbridgeworth*

Very few people nowadays would have heard of either Francis or Fanny Ede. They did not reside in Sawbridgeworth for long, nor did they leave any true lasting legacy to the town. They were, though, for a short time, owners and residents of Pishiobury House, and as such deserve to be recorded in the history of the town.

Records show that Francis Ede was born on 27 October 1783 at Liskeard in Cornwall. (Note, the 1841 census incorrectly suggests that he was born in 1786.) Francis was the eldest son of Joseph Ede and his wife Ann (Little). Both Joseph and Ann (and others from their family) are mentioned frequently in newspapers such as the *Royal Cornwall Gazette*. Joseph was both a draper and an alderman for the town. Bearing in mind that Liskeard was a Stannary Town, he probably also had interests in the tin trade (Stannary Towns were towns in tin mining areas, for the collection of tin coinage, which would be passed on to the Duchy of Cornwall; the town would also appoint a 'stannator' to the Stannary Parliament in Cornwall). An obscure piece from 1815 in the *Royal Cornwall Gazette* further indicates that Joseph was a 'Gentleman Farmer', leasing 'Ede's Belyotha' Farm (this is most likely a misspelling of the name 'Bolitho' who were (and still are) a major landowning family in Cornwall). Bolitho Farm at Liskeard still exists. It is still owned by the Bolitho family, being leased on their behalf. The farm covers an area of 172 acres and the substantial main farmhouse has six bedrooms. Clearly, Francis' parents were quite wealthy.

On 21 February 1818, Francis married Fanny Beckely at St. Pancras Old Church in North London. Presumably, the couple were living nearby at that time. It is known that Francis had a brother Joseph, who was living at Islington in 1841.



*St. Pancras Old Church in about 1815*

Fanny Beckely was seven years younger than Francis and was born at Cuckfield, in what is now West Sussex, in the year 1790. The villages of Cuckfield and Petworth are not that far from each other and the Ede family had a notable presence in both of them. In the village of Cuckfield, for instance, Ede family members were living at places such as Board Hill cottage and the 'Rose and Crown' inn. It was possibly at the inn where Francis and Fanny first met.



*'Rose and Crown' Cuckfield, now a 'gastropub'*

Francis and Fanny had a total of 10 children during their marriage. The children of Francis and Fanny were as follows:

Francis Beckely, (sometimes found written as Bechely), born on 5 December 1818, baptised on 13 January 1819.

Harry/Henry, born on 20 August 1820, baptised on 10 July 1822.

Fanny, born on 7 June 1822, baptised with Henry on 10 July 1822.

Mary Rawe/Rowe, born on 23 January 1824, baptised on 30 April 1824.

Robert, born on 29 July 1825, baptised on 26 August 1825.

Louisa, born on 8 February 1827, baptised on 27 April 1827.

Emma, born on 18 December 1828, baptised on 14 January 1829.

Jane, born on 12 December 1830, baptised on 16 March 1831.

Denzil Little, born on 15 January 1833, baptised on 8 February 1833; died and buried on 9 August 1834.

Ellen, born on 15 April 1836, baptised 3 August 1836.

All the children were born in what is now South London (but was then Surrey), with the family recorded on some of the baptismal registers as living in Upper Tooting. Of interest, in 1849, Francis Beckely was noted as a shareholder of the Great Western Railway company. Furthermore, in 1849 there are **two** Francis Edes noted as shareholders. It is, therefore, likely that the elder Francis was also a shareholder before he died. Also of possible interest is that, in 1845, a Francis Ede was noted as a shareholder and Director of the Direct Northern Railway. However, this may be a different person.

The 1841 census recorded the family as living in Streatham. Here, and in other documents, Francis was noted as being a 'Turkey Merchant'. This is not quite what it seems at first glance. Francis was not a turkey farmer, nor was he dealing in or selling turkeys. The term 'Turkey Merchant' meant that Francis was a former member of the Levant Company (which was dissolved in 1825). Francis was actually an importer/exporter and dealer in goods coming to and from Britain and Turkey, which was then also known as the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire at that time controlled much of Eastern Europe, as well as the Arabian peninsular and large swathes of North Africa. Goods from these areas were in great demand in Britain and could command high prices. Likewise, the Turks wanted British manufactured goods. The Levant trade was a huge business enterprise. In 1824, there 122 ships were dispatched from Britain and 138 ships returned. The Levant Company had

representatives based in Constantinople (Istanbul), Smyrna and Aleppo. This trade resulted in Francis becoming very wealthy.



*Map showing the Levant trade area*

The company owned by Francis for the Levant trade was known Francis Ede & Co and was based in London. This later became Francis Ede, Son & Co. In a newspaper report of 1861, this company was noted as 'one of the oldest and most respectable firms in the Levant trade'.

During the 1850s, following the death of Francis Ede (snr), the Ottoman Empire underwent a financial crisis. This was exacerbated by the Crimean War, which ended in 1856, and the Turks were obliged to take numerous international loans to cover their debts. By January 1861, the 'Turkish Commercial Crisis', as it was called at the time, reached a peak. It was reported in newspapers as far away as Liverpool, York and Belfast, that Francis Ede, Son & Co were in danger of becoming bankrupt. The Bank of England was refusing their cheques and the company's liabilities were estimated as between £250,000 and £1,000,000, enormous sums for the day. The crisis for the company was relatively short-lived, though, as in February the British Government supplied yet another loan to the Turks of £200,000 specifically so that the Ottomans could then pay this sum on to Francis Ede, Son & Co., thus, paying some of what was owed to them and giving back some liquidity. By December 1862, the company was once more on a sound financial footing and was once again paying a dividend.

Our local interest in Francis and Fanny Ede comes from the year 1847. In about 1844, the owner of Pishiobury House, Rowland Alston, decided to sell the property. Rowland was the Lord of the Manor of Sayesbury/Sawbridgeworth, and still retained his property of Alston Oak, but wanted to live in London, where he had another property at 52 Belgrave Road, Pimlico. Accordingly, in 1847, Pishiobury House was purchased by Francis Ede and he relocated there from South London with Fanny and five of their children, plus other relations.



*Pishiobury House in circa 1800*

Rather sadly, having secured his fortune, Francis did not live long enough at Pishiobury to enjoy it. On the 10 October 1849 he had an accident whilst being driven to Harlow Station in a dog cart, which overturned. This accident was to prove fatal and Francis died just over a month later on 19 November 1849 at Pishiobury House. The inquest into his death was held at Pishiobury by the coroner Thomas Sworder, the next day, on Tuesday 20 November, with the body of Francis in full view. The main evidence was given by Francis' coachman. Francis was buried in what was to become a family vault in the churchyard at Great St. Mary's, Sawbridgeworth. Also, Francis and some of his family are commemorated inside the church on the South aisle by a number of wall tablets.

Following Francis' death, Fanny now became the owner of Pishiobury House. In the 1851 census, she was living there with five of her children and other relatives, plus the servants. An incident was recorded on 4 January 1851 at Bishop's Stortford Petty Sessions, in which Fanny was named, related to poaching on the Pishiobury Estate. The final outcome is not known, but it shows the difficulty of managing such a large property.

Four of Francis' and Fanny's children were to marry locally. Henry got married on 19 August 1849 at St. Dunstan's in Hunsdon. Fanny (jnr.) got married on 2 April 1852. Emma got married on 12 August 1852, and Jane got married on 11 July 1857. All the last three marriages took place at Great St. Mary's.

In the 1861 census, Fanny was living in the fashionable Regency area of Sion Hill, Clifton, Bristol, with her daughter Mary and of course, their servants. It is likely, though, that she still owned Pishiobury House. This was not recorded as being sold until 1862, when it was purchased by a Mr. Beale Colvin.

In the 1871 census, Fanny was living by the coast at Weston (Super-Mare), Somerset, still with her daughter Mary and at least four servants. Fanny died on 6 September 1871, aged 81, at Fairfield House, Newbridge, Bath in Somerset. She was, however, interred in the same vault as her husband in Great St. Mary's churchyard. Likewise, she is also named on a wall tablet inside the church next to that of her husband.



*Fairfield House, Bath*

Two of Francis' and Fanny's children were also subsequently buried in the family vault. These were Robert and Mary. Again, there are wall tablets inside the church naming them. There are, though, no extant portraits or photographs that can be found of any of the family.



*Ede family vault, Great St Mary's, Sawbridgeworth*

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Flt Lt Douglas Coe BSc RAFVR(T) Ret'd.

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