

A BRIEF HISTORY OF EDGE HILL FARM, FOUR OAKS COMMON

Author: Paul Harrison, October 2026 ©

When the extensive commons of Sutton Coldfield were enclosed in the 1820's, much of Four Oaks Common was converted into farmland by its new owners. According to Roger Lea, one such farmer was Thomas Edge who "achieved his aim of setting up as a gentleman farmer by purchasing a large tract of Four Oaks Common and building his mansion at "Edge Hill"¹. He described himself on the 1851 census as a "Farmer of 98 acres employing 3 labourers & 2 boys".

Edge Hill Road was named after the farm² which, over time, was used for both arable purposes and the keeping of livestock.



Edge Hill House stood in Edge Hill Road opposite Four Oaks Primary School (Norman Evans collection)³

Thomas Edge let the farm out in 1862, and the next occupant was Joseph Smout, previously a Tobacconist at Bull Street, Birmingham.

Smout died in 1867 after which the farm was run by James Loescher who had been a town councillor for Hill Ward. The 1871 census recorded him as a "Farmer of 100 acres employing 2 labourers and 2 women". He ran the farm for ten years.⁴

¹ <https://sclhrq.org.uk/history-spot/107-articles-241-280/2107-four-oaks-common-241.html?highlight=WyJlZGdliiwiaGlsbCJd>

² The Street Names of Sutton Coldfield by Kerry Osbourne (2007). Page 77.

³ <https://sclhrq.org.uk/history-spot/107-articles-241-280/2107-four-oaks-common-241.html?highlight=WyJlZGdliiwiaGlsbCJd>

⁴ *The Sutton Coldfield News*, 13th November 1909

SALES BY AUCTION.
BY MR. KEMPSON.
EDGE HILL HOUSE, FOUR OAKS,
SUTTON COLDFIELD.
SALE OF LIVE AND DEAD FARMING STOCK,
&c. &c.
MR. KEMPSON has received instructions from Mr. Thomas Edge, who has let the Farm, to **SELL** by **AUCTION**, on **WEDNESDAY**, the 17th day of December inst.—the whole of his **FARMING STOCK** and other effects. Full particulars will appear in next week's papers, and catalogues, to be had eight days prior to the Sale, at the Auctioneer's Offices, Caville Chambers, High Street, Birmingham, and Sutton Coldfield.

Aris's Birmingham Gazette, 6th December 1862 (FMP)

SMOUT.—On Wednesday last, at Sutton Coldfield, Joseph Smout, aged 73 years.

From the Death Notices section of the Leamington Spa Courier, 14th September 1867 (FMP)

Sales by Auction.
UNRESERVED SALE AT EDGE HILL FARM,
FOUR OAKS, near SUTTON COLDFIELD.
Nine miles from Birmingham.
TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION,
BY FALLOWS and SMITH (by order of the Executors of the late Mr. Joseph Smout), as above, on **TUESDAY NEXT**, the 21st January, at Eleven o'clock in the morning, subject to the usual conditions—all the valuable Live and Dead **FARMING STOCK**, comprising two Wagon Horses and their Tackle; Harness Mare, promising yearling Colt; two new **MILCH COWS**, two coloury **STIRKS**, Brittany Cow, two yearling Calves; 40 well-bred **EWES**, 35 Fat **TRGS** and **LAMBS**; 10 tons of Mangolds, 30 tons of Swedes; useful **AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENTS**, consisting of broad and narrow-wheel Wagons and Carls, Howard's Patent Ploughs and Scuffles, Bentall's Scarifier, 9-tine Scuffle, iron and wood Harrows, Land Roll, Oil Cake Crusher, Winnowing Machine, 70 Sacks, Ladders, 40 Iron Hurdles, Turnip Cutters, Dairy Vessels, 4-wheel Basket Scoffable, a patent Washing, Wringing, and Mangling Machine, and numerous other Effects. Catalogues may be had, at the Place of Sale; the Three Tuns Inn, and Railway Inn, Sutton; and at the Auctioneers' Offices, 14, Temple Row, Birmingham. 5340

Birmingham Journal, 18th January 1868 (FMP)

The 1881 census recorded John Oliver Charles Phillips at the farm as a “Dentist and farmer of 100 acres employing 3 men and 1 boy”. He published a pamphlet about growing comfrey which espoused the growing thereof. However, by 1884 he was bankrupt. Although practising both dentistry and farming seemed an odd combination it was unclear what caused him to accrue such debts.



A FIELD OF PRICKLY COMFREY.
6 feet high and 48 tons to the acre.

The above “brick” as it was described in the *Farmer's Gazette and Journal of Practical Horticulture* dated 21st October 1882, was supposedly taken from a photograph of a “field of prickly comfrey grown this year by Mr. Phillips”, presumably at Edge Hill Farm. The article quotes from his pamphlet on how to grow comfrey as a feed for livestock and claimed very high yields. (FMP)

COMFREY—TRUE CAUCASIAN PRICKLY.
 —100 ACRES of SETS for SALE. Crown Eyes, 20s; Mixed, 15s; Roots, 10s per 1000. Plant now for Heavy Crops; mixed sets are best, the crowns showing the rows for early hoeing, and the roots sending up strongest and most numerous shoots. **PAMPHLET FREE**—‘How to Grow 60 to 120 Tons of Green Food for Cattle per Acre.’ **J. O. C. PHILLIPS**, Edge Hill Farm, Four Oaks, Sutton Coldfield, near Birmingham.

North British Agriculturist, 26th February 1879 (FMP)

John Oliver Chapman Phillips, described as of 73, Colmore Row, Birmingham, and of Edge Hill Farm, Four Oaks, Sutton Coldfield, surgeon dentist and farmer, has filed his petition for liquidation, with liabilities estimated at £2,000, and assets not yet ascertained. Mr. R. Taylor, of 82, Colmore Row is the solicitor for the debtor.

Lichfield Mercury, 4th January 1884 (FMP)

The next incumbent was Thomas Kent who ran the farm for around twenty years before retiring in 1906.

SHEEP WORRYING AT SUTTON COLDFIELD.—The Sutton Coldfield magistrates on Tuesday heard a claim made by Mr. Thomas Oldham Kent, Confrey Farm, Edge Hill, Four Oaks, against Walter Howse, The Nest, Four Oaks, for £5, for damages to some sheep and lambs by defendant's dog worrying them on the 25th April, and again on the 2nd May. The worrying by the defendant's dog of plaintiff's sheep and lambs on the 2nd of May was admitted, but that alleged on the 25th April was denied. The magistrates gave judgment for £2 damages and costs, being of opinion that there was not sufficient evidence in the case on the 25th April.—A charge against the defendant for keeping a dangerous dog was dismissed.

Warwick and Warwickshire Advertiser, 24th May 1902 (FMP)

**EDGE HILL FARM,
SUTTON COLDFIELD, WARWICKSHIRE.**
MESSRS. FRANK C. COOPER & CO.
will SELL BY AUCTION, on
WEDNESDAY NEXT:—
HAY, CLOVER, STRAW, 140 BAGS OF
SEED CORN, 20 BAGS GROUND OATS,
POTATOES, MANGOLDS, SWEDES, Etc.
Sale to commence at 2 o'clock.
Auctioneers' Offices, Stourbridge and Bir-
mingham. 4212

County Express, 7th December 1912 (FMP)

Sales by Auction.
MESSRS. WINTERTON & SONS.
EDGE HILL FARM, FOUR OAKS.
1 mile from Blake Street Station, L. and N.W.
Railway; 1 from Streetley, M.R.; and 2½
from Sutton Coldfield.
WINTERTON & SONS are instructed by
Mr. T. O. KENT (who is retiring from
farming), to SELL by AUCTION, on FRIDAY,
MARCH 9th, without reserve:—
112 SHEEP.
19 DAIRY COWS and Y.
7 WORK HORSES,
PONY.
Pigs, Poultry, Seed Potatoes,
Oats, 200 Lots Implements &
Lots of HOUSEHOLD FUR-
niture, and Effects.
Sale at 11 o'clock.
Catalogues from the Auct.

Lichfield Mercury, 23rd February 1906 (FMP)

Herbert Coulson Holloway then took over the farm where in late 1914, four men training with a Birmingham City Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment in Sutton Park were billeted.⁵ One of the soldiers described Holloway as "A worthy occupant". However, the farm had been the scene of a tragic incident a few years prior.

SAD BURNING FATALITY.
On Monday Lucy Holloway (80), living with her son Herbert Holloway, at Edge Hill Farm, Streetly, Sutton Coldfield, was burned to death. The deceased, who occupied a room on the ground floor, rose as usual in the morning, and, her maid and daughter-in-law having seen to her wants, left her to attend to their other duties. A short time after the son of the deceased had his attention drawn to her room by the smell of fire. He entered and found the furniture of the room on fire and the deceased lying on the floor in flames. With assistance the fire was got under and the deceased rescued; but her face, arms, and legs were so badly burned that she died almost immediately. How the fire was caused is at present a mystery as the fire in the room was surrounded by a high guard.

Tamworth Herald, 18th April 1908

It appears that the farm and its land were owned by Thomas Edge and leased to tenant farmers until sometime after his death when the estate put up for sale.

⁵ Birmingham Pals by Terry Carter. (2011). Page 58.

SALES BY AUCTION—Continued.

By MESSRS. HORATIO LANE & SMITH.

Estate of the Late Thomas Edge, Esq.

FOUR OAKS, SUTTON COLDFIELD.
About 1 mile from Blake Street and Streetly
Railway Stations.

**SALE OF THE
VALUABLE FREEHOLD ESTATE,**
known as
“EDGE HILL FARM.”

Comprising FARM HOUSE or RESIDENCE,
EXTENSIVE FARM BUILDINGS,
Two COTTAGES with Gardens; also another
COTTAGE or SMALL HOMESTEAD, with
Farmyard and Buildings; and Nineteen En-
closures of ARABLE and GRASS LAND, the
whole extending to an area of
ABOUT 105 ACRES.

At present let under two Leases, expiring at
Lady Day Next, at rents amounting to £233
per annum.

The Estate occupies a high position, command-
ing wide views of the surrounding district. It
is within easy reach of Sutton Park, and is
particularly attractive for DEVELOPMENT
AS A BUILDING ESTATE, having long road
frontages, affording many
IDEAL BUILDING SITES.

HORATIO LANE & SMITH have received
instructions to SELL BY AUCTION, at the
Grand Hotel, Colmore Row, Birmingham, on
WEDNESDAY NEXT, JULY 16, at Four o'clock
in the Afternoon, as above.

Particulars with Plan may be obtained of
Messrs. Harward and Evers, Solicitors, Stour-
bridge; of Messrs. Riley and Smith, Architects
and Surveyors, King's Court, 115-117 Colmore
Row; or at the Offices of the Auctioneers, 57,
Colmore Row, Birmingham.

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Tamworth Herald, 12th July 1919 (FMP)

William Herbert Peace recorded his occupation as “Farming General” at Edge Hill Farm on the 1921 census.

Edge Hill farm itself was not found on the 1939 Register, but Arthur Loyns had run the farm until early 1939. The 1939 Register recorded him as an “Arable Farmer (without farm)” living at Britwell Road, Sutton Coldfield.

WAGGONER Wanted; good, all-round
Man; no milking; cottage and garden
close to; wages £2; reference. — Loyns,
Edge Hill Farm, Four Oaks, Sutton Cold-
field.

Staffordshire Advertiser, 20th March 1926 (FMP)

FOR Sale, King Edward Seed Potatoes,
certified, direct from North of Scot-
land last year; good sample; cheap.—
Loyns, Edgchill Farm, Four Oaks, Sutton
Coldfield.

Staffordshire Advertiser, 12th April 1930 (FMP)

FOR Sale, Good Sound SWEDES, 15s.
per ton—Loyns, Edge Hill Farm,
Four Oaks, Sutton Coldfield.

Lichfield Mercury, 20th March 1931 (FMP)

EDGE HILL FARM, FOUR OAKS COMMON.

WALTERS & SON, F.A.I., will Sell by Auction,
on FRIDAY, March 31, at One o'clock, by direction
of Mr. A. W. Loyns, who is leaving.

THE ENTIRE COLLECTION OF VALUABLE
AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENTS, TACKLE AND TOOLS,
including two Lorries, three Carts, Self-binder, Mower, three
Drills, seven Ploughs, seven sets Harrows, five sets Tackle;
BARN MACHINERY, STRAW, SEED POTATOES and
TWO EXCELLENT WORK HORSES.

Catalogues from the Auctioneers, Hingley Hall,
Birmingham 1.

Birmingham Daily Post, 18th March 1939



OS Map surveyed 1882-83 showing Edge Hill and surrounding farmland. Extensive housing development around Edge Hill post 1939 suggested it ceased operating as a farm around that time. (Image from NLS website⁶)



OS Map surveyed 1961 showing the remaining farm buildings and land to the north now bounded by recent housing and primary school opposite. (Image from NLS website⁷)

The last occupant found during research was Albites Ralph Turner, as recorded in local contemporary newspapers in 1950 and 1964.⁸ Post WW2, the farm became surrounded by housing development and in 1964 Turner's address was given as "Old Farm, Edge Hill Road". The farm was demolished in 1966 and replaced with housing, now Berkswell Close.

CHESSHIRE, GIBSON & CO.
 CHARTERED SURVEYORS & LAND AGENTS,
 VALUERS & AUCTIONEERS,
 COLMORE HOUSE,
 21, WATERLOO STREET, BIRMINGHAM 2.
 Telephone: MIDland 9381.

By Direction of A. R. Turner, Esq.

**FOUR OAKS
 SUTTON COLDFIELD**

Sale by Auction of the
 FREEHOLD
RESIDENTIAL BUILDING LAND
 extending to an area of over
1 1/2 ACRES
 OUTLINE PLANNING PERMISSION FOR ERECTION OF
 10 DETACHED HOUSES OR BUNGALOWS
 being the Site of the charming Detached Residence known as
OLD FARM, No. 29, EDGE HILL ROAD

CHESSHIRE, GIBSON & Co.
 will offer by Auction for Sale by Auction at the AUCTION ROOM, REGENT HOUSE,
 51, PHILIP'S PLACE, COLMORE F.O.W. BIRMINGHAM, on TUESDAY, 19th
 MARCH, 1966, at 2.30 o'clock in the afternoon (subject to prior Sale and Conditions
 of sale).

Solicitors: Messrs. Duggan, Elton & James, 43, Cannon Street, Birmingham 2.
 Telephone: MIDland 9457.

Auctioneers' Office:—
 Colmore House, 21, Waterloo Street, Birmingham 2, Telephone: MIDland 9381.

Birmingham Daily Post, 19th February 1966 (FMP)

⁶ <https://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/side-by-side/#zoom=15.7&lat=52.59807&lon=-1.85335&layers=257&right=GoogleSatHyb>

⁷ <https://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/side-by-side/#zoom=17.5&lat=52.59652&lon=-1.85267&layers=170&right=GoogleSatHyb>

⁸ Gloucestershire Echo, 18th April 1950 & Birmingham Daily Post, 22nd February 1964.

General Internet References

<https://www.findmypast.co.uk/> - Census records and historic newspaper articles, abbreviated to FMP for brevity

<https://maps.nls.uk/> - Historic Ordnance Survey mapping

<https://sclhrg.org.uk/> - History Spot Article 241 & local trade directories

Published Information

Birmingham Pals by Terry Carter. (2011). Published by Pen & Sword Military. Page 58

The Street Names of Sutton Coldfield by Kerry Osbourne. (2007). Published by Sadler House. Page 77.

Acknowledgments

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All information is provided in good faith but, on occasions errors may occur. Should this be the case, if new information can be verified, please supply it to the author and corrections will then be made.

This document was written for the 500 for SC500 event which imposed a 500 word limit necessitating its brevity.