

Uncle Tom's Cabin

(based on an article – A Westcott Street Pub by Audrey Seeley in Dorking History 2000)

The three pubs sited along the A25 in Westcott were all licensed in the 19th century. The Crown and The Prince of Wales had full licences, while the Cricketers was licensed as a beerhouse only, as were three other handy village establishments; the Cabin in St John's Road, The Bricklayers' Arms opposite the top of the village green (a mere 80 yards from the Cricketers), and Uncle Tom's Cabin in Westcott Street. All had been granted an 'on and off' licence before 1860 (1).

There may have been other beer outlets at this time in or around Westcott since the Beerhouses Act of 1830 had permitted any householder and ratepayer to open his house as a beershop on payment of two guineas to the local excise office. Unlike the regular alehouse keeper, the beershop owner was free from the supervision of the local Justices. Apparently the Act was partly aimed at encouraging beer drinking at the expense of spirit consumption (mainly gin), which had increased markedly in the early part of the century, but the arguments were of course more complex than that. Certainly beer was relatively cheap, of very variable quality and drunk in large quantities, and this continued throughout the century. However, in 1869 licensing of all retail outlets was re-imposed and transferred first to the Magistrates' Courts and later to the County Quarter Sessions. This led to the closure of the many small beershops and clarified the position of the established beer- or ale-houses, inns and tied houses.

Uncle Tom's Cabin, first licensed in the 1850s, was built on meadow land lying just to the north of Little Chadhurst Farm (2). The meadow, a quarter of an acre or so, had been owned by John Philips, who at the time of the Tithe Apportionment (1839) was renting it to Jane Harcourt, the tenant of the farm. When Edward Skilton, a blacksmith, bought the meadow, he sited his beerhouse well back from the road and in the space between it and Westcott Street built several cottages. There was also a larger building apparently used as the smithy. There is no obvious reason for Skilton's choice of name for his new venture. Perhaps it indicated an appreciation of Harriet Beecher-Stowe's novel, published in 1852, or just some commercial competition with the nearby Cabin, licensed around the same time.



Uncle Tom's Cabin (the building at the rear), Westcott Street

Skilton was born in Shere but in 1851, aged 45, he was living in Westcott with his wife Sarah, a nephew, Thomas Sax, and a couple of lodgers. Sarah does not feature in any of the beerhouse census returns, although Edward is not described as a widower until 1891 and so far Sarah has not been traced in the Westcott burials between 1852 and 1875. However, whatever her fate, Edward was not without support, as on 22 February 1859 young Thomas Sax married 'the girl next door', Eliza, the 19-year-old daughter of Zephaniah Greenfield of Little Chadhurst Farm. The couple settled down at Uncle Tom's Cabin and produced three daughters - Eliza (born about 1860), Mary (1862) and Ellen (1865), all listed as scholars in the 1871 census. But Thomas died at the age of 37. He was buried at Holy Trinity, Westcott, on 17 December 1874 and Eliza and her children left Westcott Street. By 1891 she was living in Dorking in a house inherited from her father. With her at 53 Hampstead Road lived her youngest daughter, her son-in-law, John Jeal, and two granddaughters, another Ellen, aged 4, and 2-year-old Ethel. After Eliza's departure, Edward Skilton acquired a housekeeper, Barbara Weller, who in 1881 was a 29-year-old, originally from Capel, with a 2-year-old daughter, Polly, born in Westcott. All three were still in residence ten years later.

Around this time (1892) the report of the Dorking Petty Sessional Division, listing Uncle Tom's Cabin as a free house licensed as a beerhouse, noted that it had no accommodation for travellers or their horses and provided no refreshments other than drink. It identified the clientele as 'working men'. The Bricklayers' Arms held a similar licence, but there the living-in licensee, Rebecca Greathurst, provided stabling for two horses. This, too, was described as being frequented by 'working men', but the nearby Cricketers and the Cabin in St John's Road, also with beerhouse licences, were said to be 'frequented by mostly a low class of labouring men'.

Although Skilton had retired from smithing by 1881 (he was, after all, 75 by then), another blacksmith (James Wiles) was living in one of his cottages and the Poor Rate entry for 1891 indicates that his smithy was still operating at that time. Skilton died before 1894, when papers relating to the auction of adjoining parts of the Rookery Estate referred to the owners of the beerhouse site as 'Skilton's representatives'.

The next identified licensee was Henry Muggeridge, who was succeeded early in 1901 by James Taylor from Ranmore. Interesting documents in the Dorking Museum (3) relate to this change of tenancy, providing for each room in the house a detailed inventory of the contents, from bedsteads and tables to drinking utensils, clay pipes and iron spittoons, and a list of outside assets including the dog kennel, signboard and flagpole, twelve hens and a rooster, valued in all at £105 9 (details below) The Statement of Settlement also includes the stock (down to part of a presumably large jar of pickles, 1s 2d), various legal costs, including the licence (£2 0s 6d), giving a total valuation of £113 4s 4d.

John and Celia Taylor and their two children appear on the 1901 census but two years later, when there was a drive to reduce the number of licensed premises in and around Dorking, it was reported that Uncle Tom's Cabin was owned by Mr Boxall and that the full tenancy had been transferred to W Lawrence. Although the precise dates are not known, it is believed that Uncle Tom's Cabin, together with the associated properties and nearby Spring Cottages, was subsequently owned by a Mr Collins who lived in London. On his death, ownership passed to his daughter, Mrs Mercer, who lived for a time in North Street, Westcott. His granddaughter, Mrs Flo Harris, spent her married life in Dorking but returned to Westcott to live in Bramley House for a short time. She

remembered the sizeable building close to Westcott Street as no longer a smithy but a boot makers, and said that at one time the pub building contained one, and possibly two, other dwellings.

Uncle Tom's Cabin does not appear in the Licences Registers after 1911 but local resident Phyll Todd claims that before it closed it was managed by Charlie Woods as an adjunct to his French Polishing business and that its name was changed to the Drum and Monkey.

After the closure the site remained a residential area, becoming known as Holmesdale. The area was eventually cleared in the 1960s and is now occupied by two modern houses: Sunnydown and Pinewood.

Uncle Toms Cabin – an Inventory

On 31st March 1901 the tenancy of Uncle Tom's Cabin in Westcott Street passed from Mr Henry Muggeridge to Mr James Taylor and the following inventory and valuation of fixtures, fittings, utensils and effects was prepared:

Front Bedroom No 1	Oak chest of drawers, 2ft cast iron fender, 2ft 6" painted dressing table, 2ft 6" painted washstand & chair.
Front Bedroom No 2	3ft iron French bedstead with woven wire mattress.
Right Hand Bedroom	4ft 6" brass rail iron French bedstead, straw paliasse in 2 parts.
Landing & Stairs	Dutch stairs carpet, 9 brass stair rods & 18 eyes.
Parlor	Carpet as laid to floor, Oak circular pillars & claw table, Gentleman's easy chair in American cloth, large steel fender, small deal table, paraffin duplex lamp with green glass bowl, 4 iron spittoons.
Passage	Strip of linoleum & one mat, iron umbrella stand, 3 brass hooks
Bar Parlor	Linoleum as fitted to floor, oak double table and American cover to fit, mantle mirror, two oak arm chairs, book shelf, grandfathers clock in oak case by John Taylor Petworth, two coloured prints, 39" steel top fender, bamboo curtain pole with brass ends & brackets, enamelled gas consumer, glass biscuit cover and stand, hearthrug, the cornered oak cupboard.
Drinking Utensils - Pewter	3 lipped quarts, 3 straight quarts, 2 lipped pints, 3 straight pints, 3 half pints.
Drinking Utensils - Earthenware	3 straight quarts, 3 lipped quarts, 10 lipped pints, 13 straight pints.
Drinking Utensils – Glass	7 aerated water glasses, 3 aerated half pint water glasses, 7 half pint ale glasses, 20 stemmed ale glasses.
Kitchen	Oak circular table, deal table, kitchen fender, 4ft painted dresser with two drawers, Duplex bracket lamp & chimney.
Tap Room	Eight day dial by Recordon London, Stout deal table 8' 6 x 1' 8, 2 deal forms, deal stool, 6 iron spittoons, the Incandescent gas burner chimney & tin consumer, 2 sets of dominoes and scoring boards, shove halfpenny slate, wrought iron fender & poker, cocoa door mat, iron window bar, brass double lock on door.
Cellar	3ft 9" deal table with 4 shelves over, 2 two gallon jars & baskets, 4 two gallon plain stone, 1 one gallon in basket, 18 gallon cask, 2 filters & funnell, quantity clay pipes, 1 brass & 4 wooden beer taps, 2 drip tubs & 1 washing up tub, 3 enamelled dishes, 18" deal standing board?, deal tilting board with 4 hooks & patent filter, wooden bottle case & quantity bottles.
Pantry	Wooden meat safe with zinc panel
Club Room	Bagatelle board with balls & cues, Roddleum board & case, 2 iron brackets for lamps with 2 paraffin lamps & duplex burners with chimneys, shove halfpenny board, 3 deal wooden forms, 3 chairs & one stool, 14 ft stained deal form & fixed, iron fender, old deal table, 3 iron spittoons, dart board, iron coal scuttle, strip cocoa matting, 4 pictures, the wood enclosures to gas metre.

Outhouse
Outside

Painted meat screen

Water but & tap, lean to open shed with galvanised iron top, the erection of fence enclosing garden with 2 string gates, the further enclosure of garden with netting and chain, 2 swing gates in garden and deal & iron garden edging, the name board with 71 letters, Flagpole over sign board, 2 iron scrapers, the iron enclosure of chicken run with door, wood dog kennel, chicken coops, 12 hens & 1 rooster, Iron pig trough, the crops in garden, the erection of open shed at back of chicken house with galvanised top & back.

The items enumerated in this foregoing Inventory are valued by me the undersigned including the Goodwill at the sum of one hundred and five pounds (£105)

F L Crow

The above valuation excluded the stock:

11doz	Savills Ale & Stouts	£1-2-0	2	Fancy	7
4 doz	Stone Ginger	2-8	20	Small Bass	3-4
2 doz	Cherry Champagne	1-4		Jar Pickles	1-6
4 doz	Small Lemon & Soda	3-0	25	Woodbines	1-7
22	Small Lemon & Soda	1-4	15	??	9
10	Stone ginger	7	1¼lb	Tobacco	5-3
34	Ginger Snapps	3-2	34	2d smokes	3-8

£2.10.9

Sources

1. Dorking Petty Sessional Division list of licensed premises, 1892 (Dorking Museum Library. Ref. R 104).
2. Seeley, Audrey, 'Changing Fortunes of a Small Westcott Farm' in Dorking History, No. 16, 1996.
3. Dorking Museum Library, Refs: R 134/CP12/4 & R 134/CP15/80