

The Search for the Missing Keys

It has been known for some time that there was an establishment called the *Cross Keys*, in East Ilsley, somewhere in the vicinity of the junction of Stanmore Road and the High Street, but its exact location was not known. It was also known that it was no longer in existence as a pub by 1872 when there was a requirement to maintain a register of beerhouse licences, but whether the fabric of the premises still remained was a matter of conjecture.

The earliest reference to the Cross Keys was in an overseer's report of 1803, concerning the settlement of Edward Taylor from Chieveley in 1780.

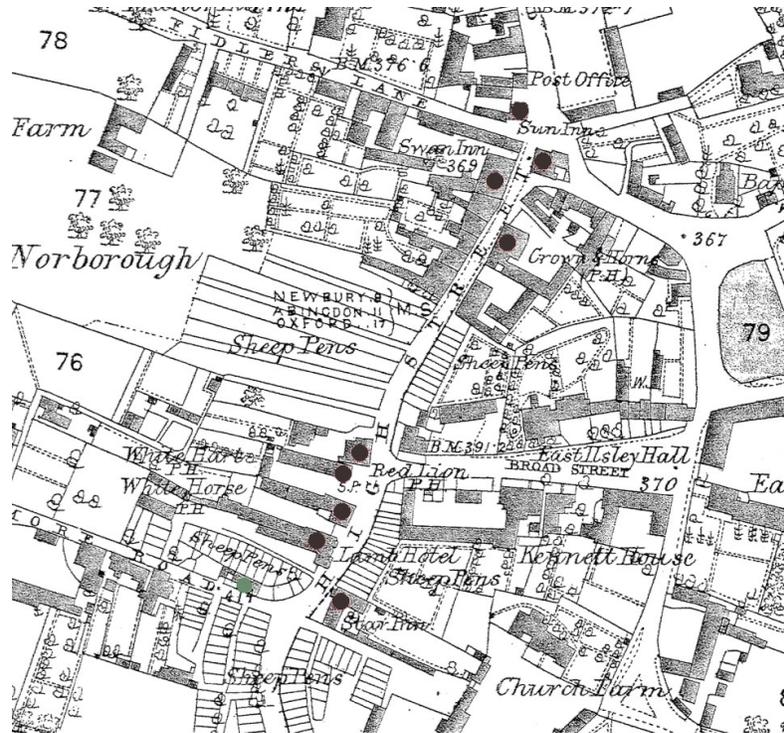
'About 39 years ago [1764 at the age of 14] he was bound apprentice to John Goddard of Chieveley aforesaid Taylor for the Term of seven years, that he served the said Term in the Parish of Chieveley aforesaid. That about 2 year after he was out of his time he was married to his present wife Jane in the Parish of Chieveley aforesaid, That he resided at Chieveley aforesaid til the year 1780 when he went and resided in the Parish of East Ilsley aforesaid in a Public House called by the Sign of the Cross Keys at the Rent of 6 gns, a garden at one Guinea and sheep pens at Two guineas per annum but whether he was charged to the Poor Rates he cannot tell having never to his knowledge paid any. That he has done no Act whatever to gain any settlement in any parish or place since his apprenticeship. That he has no child living with him in East Ilsley aforesaid his children having gained settlement in their own right'.

The rediscovery of a document in the Berkshire Record Office dated 1768, just 12 years prior to the arrival in East Ilsley of Edward Taylor refers to a plot of land for building a new messuage. Its significance had originally been overlooked. It is the description of the boundaries of this plot of land which now attracted attention. *'bounded by messuage of William Weston on west, on north by yard occupied by Black Horse PH and on the east by high street, south side by lane leading into field – estimated 3 poles'.*

This could only be where the present Leonora House now stands.

To back up these two pieces of evidence, other references to the establishment and its known occupants were examined.

In 1832 a Terrier of East Ilsley was produced at the same time as a tithe map. From these it is possible to identify owners and occupiers of all property in the village and its surroundings.



OS 25"1877 map showing the site of the Cross Keys in green
 (The 'Black Horse' changed its name to the 'Lamb' in 1875)

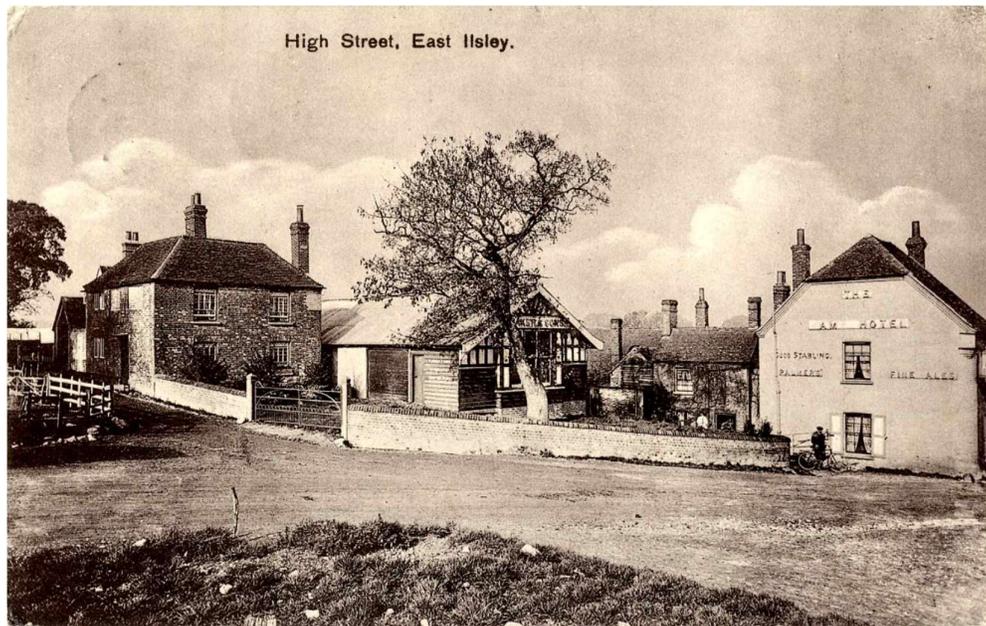
The site in question was owned by a Miss Frogley, along with a number of properties and land and the occupier in 1832 was a Thomas Kempster. In her will, made in 1839, 11 years before her death, she names Thomas Kempster as the occupier

I give and devise unto Eliza Stinson.....all those two cottages or tenements with the gardens and premises therein belonging situate in Narboro' in the parish of East Ilsley and now in the respective occupation of John Selfe and Thomas Kempster...

Robert Bartholomew is mentioned as the landlord of The Cross Keys in two separate directories in 1852 and 1864. In the 1861 census he is listed as living in Stanmore Road as a publican and butcher. One presumes he was at the Cross Keys but the location is not precise.

His son, John Bartholomew, obviously started in his father's pub. He is a waiter, aged 12 in 1861. He had moved to the Harrow in West Ilsley by 1871, and then, as his home was no longer a pub to come back to, took over the one across the road (The Star).

Re-checking what was known of the early landlord, Edward Taylor, It is known that Thomas Watkins the builder, of the premises identified in the BRO document, was a tailor by profession. Edward Taylor was also a tailor and having completed his apprenticeship some nine years earlier and married in Chieveley, could have moved to East Ilsley to work for Thomas Watkins and also run the Cross Keys, which was probably a beerhouse rather than a fully licenced premises.



Photograph circa 1900 showing Leonora House on the left and the Lamb on the right

Postscript

I had never heard of East Ilsley before I took up my appointment as a teacher at The Downs School Compton in 1964. I moved to East Ilsley in 1971 and have lived here ever since. I was therefore astonished when a chance discovery several years ago, led me to realise that my 3 x Great grandfather was born and baptised here, and his parents were married in the church 100 yards away, which dominates the view from my kitchen window. I now know that three generations of my ancestors lived here from 1780-1806.

The story begins in 1737, when my 6 x Great-grandfather Jeams (James) Taylor was married to Susanna Smith at Drayton. Susanna was born in Drayton in 1711 and lived all her life there, but there were no Taylor's there before 1737, so James must have come from another village somewhere in the area. James and Susanna had eight known children between 1738 and 1752, one of whom was my 5 x Great-grandfather Edward Taylor, baptised in 1750.

Edward Taylor was apprenticed around 1764 to John Goddard, a tailor in Chieveley, for seven years. Soon after completing his apprenticeship, he married Jane Kent in Chieveley. Jane was originally from Stanford Dingley. Their first child, James was baptised in Chieveley in 1775, followed by Walter James Taylor and Henry James Taylor in 1778. These may have been twins, if they were not, then it is not known which one was the elder of the two.

The family then moved to East Ilsley where they took possession of the Cross Keys public house. They had at least two more children, born in 1782 and 1785.

On 1st December 1801, Walter James Taylor married Elizabeth Ludlow in East Ilsley. They had a daughter, Ann, and then a son, James, who was born on 27th February 1804, and baptised at East Ilsley on 26th July. James was my 3 x Great Grandfather.

Within a year Walter and Elizabeth had moved to Oxford where they had three further children between 1806 -1812. It is not clear if Walter's parents went with him to Oxford. There is no record of their burial in East Ilsley yet both were still living here in 1803. Walter later died in Oxford in 1827 aged 49.

James Taylor married a girl from Dartford in Kent, at St Martin-in-the- Fields, London, in 1828. They had several children there, the eldest being my 2 x Great grandmother, before returning to Oxford around 1842 where his younger brother and his family were living. Their mother Elizabeth was also living there. She died about 1846.

James Taylor died in Oxford in 1852, a year after his eldest daughter, Mary Ann was married, and his first grandson, my Great grandfather was born.

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