



AMERSHAM SOCIETY



**AMERSHAM
MUSEUM**

The Saracen's Head Inn

In 1609 an inn known as the *Saracen's Head* was situated on The Broadway, then called the London highway, in what is now numbers 16 - 22. It moved to Whielden Street at some point between 1725 and 1753 but probably earlier in that period rather than later.

Originally, the 17th century building in Whielden Street building comprised 2 cottages but by 1742, the map of Agmondesham clearly shows a larger property than others in the street. It was occupied by William Bodinson and is not shown as part of the Drake estate, ie does not belong to the Lords of the Manor. William Bodinson is listed in the 1753 Quarter Sessions list of Licensed Victuallers in Amersham but the *Saracen's Head* is not named until 1756. He continued as licensee until 1765 and was then replaced by Richard Perry and in 1770 by Paul Bow. Paul is recorded as paying 11 shillings 4½ pence in the Assessment for Parish Poor Relief on 15th February 1774. William Line became the licensee for a year in 1780/1, followed by Thomas Jones. The Land Tax assessment of 1783 makes it clear that Jones is the tenant. The owner is William Weller who bought it in 1775.

In 1791 a friendly society was set up and the *Rules & orders to be observed & kept by a Friendly Society held at The House of Thomas Jones, the Sign of the Saracen's Head Inn at Amersham* are in the Archives at Aylesbury (Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies).

Census and other 19th century records show there were a succession of tenants: John Earl in 1825, Casper Cardwell in 1841, Thomas Williams in 1851, Henry Dumbarton in 1861, Frederick Dolling in 1871 and 1881, Eleanor Prentice in 1891, Hiram Bevis in 1901, Richard Chandler in 1911 and Mr H Tasker in 1929, who paid an annual rent of £25. Some of these had additional occupations, eg Frederick Dolling was a plumber.

Most of the time, there were a few other residents in addition to family members. However, in 1891 there were no fewer than 8 lodgers – all navvies. We may surmise that these men were working on constructing the Metropolitan Railway to Aylesbury; Amersham Station opened in 1892.

A local newspaper reported in 1901 that the pub was used for *The Amersham Palace of Varieties* and that Professor Wright *not only has his marvellous performing dog, Lulu, but has engaged several good singers who greatly add to the entertainment!*

Throughout this time, the *Saracen's Head* continued to be owned by members of the Weller family but the entire business by then consisting of the brewery, 142 licensed properties and various parcels of land with buildings was sold by auction in 1929.