

Saracen's Head location

To confuse researchers, pubs do not always stay in the same place! This research into the date when the Saracen's Head Inn moved from The Broadway to Whielden Street, the current location, was done by Peter and Marian Borrows. It shows the extent of the detailed information which is available in the records in Aylesbury if you know where to look.

It is easiest to tackle this from two directions – the current location in Whielden Street and work backwards in time and the earliest references to the Saracen's Head and work forwards, and see where the two meet up.

Saracen's Head Inn in Whielden Street

- 1 No 132 in the schedule of the Land Tax Assessment 1910 show the Saracen's Head in Whielden Street, owned by the Weller family (**not** the Drake family).
- 2 Census records for 19th century clearly name the Saracen's Head Inn as in Whielden St, eg 1851, Thomas Williams is the victualler.
- 3 19 May 1875, re-conveyance, George Rance to William Weller, [Aylesbury Archives D/X/1458/1/viii] (trustees of William Weller decd & Edward Weller decd)
"...and also all that other messuage, cottage or tenement in the same street called Whielden Street ... all the wash houses, backsides, yard, garden and the wall around the said garden and all and singular other hereditaments & premises with the appurtenances to the said last mentioned messuage or tenement belonging formerly in the occupation of William Bodinson in which said two lastly described cottages or tenements had been for some time part joined together and converted into ... for 1 messuage, tenement or inn commonly called the Saracen's Head Inn late in the tenure of George Jones and then Thomas Williams and which said messuage the said John Weller & William Weller the father purchased off the devisees under the will of their father & which was conveyed to them in an indenture dated 9 June 1804. ..."
This clearly shows it was originally 2 cottages, later joined together as an inn.
- 4 Pigot's *Directory of Buckinghamshire* (1831-32), Wilden St, page 70, lists a Tavern - Saracen's Head , with John Earl the inn-keeper.
- 5 Quarter Sessions list of Licensed Victuallers in Amersham (1827) shows John Earl as the inn-keeper of the Saracen's Head Inn, proprietor Edward Weller.
- 6 Land Tax assessment 1793 gives Proprietor William Weller; occupier Thomas Jones, assessment £0-18-4 [Aylesbury Archives, Q/RPL/4/14]. Same information in 1783.
- 7 4 April 1791
"Rules & orders to be observed & kept by a Friendly Society ... held at The House of Thomas Jones, the Sign of the Saracen's Head at Amersham" [Aylesbury Archives Q/RSf/1], confirmed by the Justices of the peace, midsummer session, 17 July 1794.
- 8 In *ABC: A Brewers' Compendium* by Mike Brown (page 3)
... In November 1775 his son John sold his interest in the brewery; the storehouse in Church St; the Saracen's Head Inn and the Old Griffin. Sold to William Weller possibly having leased it from 1773.

- 9 Quarter Sessions list of Licensed Victuallers in Amersham [Aylesbury Archives, Q/RLv/ ...], September each year, show inn-keepers at the Saracen's Head:
 1781 and subsequently Thomas Jones
 1780 William Line
 1770 – 1779 Paul Bow
- 10 15th Feb 1774, *Assessment for Parish Poor Relief* [Aylesbury Archives D/DR/12/88]
 “paid Bow for Saracen's Head”
 3s 3d per month, so 11s 4½d for 3½ months.
 Crucially, this entry is next in the list to several individuals who can be identified from other documents as living in that part of Whielden St: William Batchelder, Timothy Tregoe, John Nash.
- 11 Quarter Sessions list of Licensed Victuallers in Amersham [Aylesbury Archives, Q/RLv/ ...], September each year, show inn-keepers at the Saracen's Head
 1766-1769 Richard Perry
 1756 – 1765 William Bodinson
 1753 – 1755 William Bodinson listed, but no Inn named.
- 12 *Map of Agmondesham* 1742, property no. 164 in Whielden St, clearly a larger property than others in the street, is occupied by William Bodinson and is not part of the Drake estate.

Saracen's Head Inn on the London Highway (now Broadway)

- 13 Sale by John Lorord (tanner of Brayneford, Middlesex) & Henry Lorord (yeoman of Amersham) to William Grymesdale the elder (yeoman of Coleshill). [Aylesbury Archives D/DRD/2/64], 1609 (7th year in the reign of James), of
Saracen's Head Inn in which John James dwell ... houses, edifices, barns, stables, yards, backsides, orchards, gardens, lands, tenements, meadows & well, one garden & orchard & one close of meadow ground lying at the upper end of the said orchard & one cottage or tenement with appurtenances wherein William Lorord then dwelt, sometimes parcel of the Capital messuages aforesaid the garden therewith belonging & one orchard or slip of meadow then in the occupation of John James sometime belonging to a tenement late in the tenure of Nicholas Murren
- 14 The will (10 September 1660) of William Grimsdale the elder to his son & heirs William Grimsdale the younger. [Aylesbury Archives, D/DRD/2/64.]
- 15 Indenture (1688) referring to property Daniel Browne (lately?) dwells & (now?) Timothy Wingfield [Aylesbury Archives D/DRD/2/125]
Messuage between the Saracen's Head Inn on one side and messuage of Josiah ? on the other side.
 Signed Daniell Browne, Ann Allnut, James Child.
- 16 Land Tax Assessment 1694 [Aylesbury Archives PR/4/28/3]. [Occupier] “Wm Hailey ... the Sareazens Head ... [assessed at] £3-08-00”. Neighbours include Richard & James Norwood, Daniell Beck, John Wingfield (who has an orchard & House)
- 17 Conveyance from William Grimsdale (of Farnham Royal, yeoman) to Sir Roger Hill (of Denham). [Aylesbury Archives D/DRD/2/64] £400 for 99 year lease, £70 annual rent. *messuage, tenement, inn ... appurtenances, gardens, orchard, close, meadow ground lying at the upper end of the said orchard containing by estimation 4 acres*

- 18 In March 1702, John Daveney (of Penn) & Mary his wife sell land in Whielden Street between the property occupied by William Brown and the property owned by John Daveney (currently in the occupation of Edward Child)] and set as stables. Sold to Richard Sheppard (currier of Amersham) for £20. Land runs from Whielden St down to the orchard of the now dwelling house of John Wingfield.
(Aylesbury Archives D/DRD/2/115)
- 19 Conveyance in 1713 of house from Daniell Browne (of Chesham) to John Meacock (of Amersham)
Messuage between the Saracen's Head Inn and the Nags Head.
[Aylesbury Archives, D/DRD/2/125]
- 20 Indenture tripartite (1721 (?)): John Meacock (bricklayer of Amersham) and Nathan Charsley (carpenter of Amersham); Francis Allnut (carpenter of Amersham); Timothy Wingfield
Messuage between the Saracen's Head Inn & Nags Head Inn, well, backsides of same, all outhouses, gardens, yards
[Aylesbury Archives D/DRD/2/125]
- 21 Release (May 1723) by William & Mary Grimsdale (of Farnham Royal) to Sir Roger & Dame Abigail Hill (of Denham) of
Messuage or tenement & close or parcel of land or meadow ground & premises thereon
[Aylesbury Archives D/DRD/2/64]
- 22 Anthony Smith (of St Clement Danes, periwig maker) purchases on behalf of Montague Garrard Drake in 1724 for £700. Tenant of Saracen's head Henry Gillman. [Aylesbury Archives D/DRD/2/64]
- 23 Bill of sale - Mr Drake buys Saracen's Head Inn from Sir Roger Hill. [Aylesbury Archives, D/DR/2/191].
- 24 Bill for work done (1725): John Maycock's bill for work done at Saracen's Head Inn [Aylesbury Archives, D/DR/2/156].
- 25 In 1725, Montague Garrard Drake buys from John Child (butcher, son & heir of Francis Child, decd., of Amersham, weaver)
Messuage or tenement wherein Thomas Charsely & Jonas Restall now dwell in Whielden St between a messuage or tenement heretofore occupied by William Mead and now William Statham to the north and the messuage or tenement heretofore occupied by Thomas Harding and now William Hayley in the late occupation of Henry Bovingdon on the west extending to the orchard late of William Grimsdale and now Montagu Garrard Drake in the occupation of John Hall on the east & south.
[Aylesbury Archives D/DRD/2/66]
- 26 An undated note attached to the bundle containing these (and other) documents (but no document dated after 1724)
Title deeds & conveyance of a messuage in Amersham being a burgage & tenement formerly an inn called the Saracen's Head Inn and then in the tenure of H. Gillman
- 27 In 1726, lease for 1 year of
messuage occupied by William Bayley lately part of the Saracen's Head Inn between the Saracen's Head Inn and the Nags Head Inn ... where Elizabeth Browne lately dwelt & Francis Allnut, carpenter
[Aylesbury Archives D/DRD/2/125]
- 28 Return of Land Tax 1736 referred to in *Amersham Parish Chest* (by J. H. Laverty).
... part of ye late Saracen's Head ...

The book is mainly based on the account books of the church wardens & overseers, but unfortunately, unlike almost all the other documents to which Laverty refers, the original on which this comment is based cannot be traced in the Archives, so we cannot identify adjacent premises which might allow it to be definitely located.

- 29 *Map of Agmondesham 1742*, properties on the London Highway (numbers refer to identifying numbers on the map)
- 189 (next to a passage), Drake property in 1742 – now no. 14
 - 190 (next to a passage), Drake property in 1742 now Hobbs – likely location of original Saracen's Head?
 - 191: Drake property in 1742 – now Raj Indian restaurant - likely location of original Saracen's Head?
 - 192: **not** Drake property in 1742, belongs to Allnut – now health & beauty treatment
 - 193: Drake property in 1742
 - 194: Drake property in 1742
 - 195: (set back from road) **not** Drake property in 1742, belonged to Aron Blake – now Norwood Court
 - 196: **not** Drake property - in 1742, belonged to Richard Norwood – now newsagent
- 30 On the Land Tax record for 1808, the entry next to the entry for the Griffin Inn reads
Thomas Drake Tyrwhitt Drake – garden late in occupation with Saracen's Head Inn
- 31 Indenture 1809, Thomas Clarke to Thomas Drake Tyrwhitt Drake
messuage formerly occupied by Elizabeth Browne, lately Robert Hill now unoccupied. Between the messuage of William Hayley heretofore, now Francis Priest the elder, formerly part of the Saracen's Head Inn. And the messuage occupied by George Barnard, then called the Nag's Head Inn, now a private house, now occupied by William Hill.

Conclusions

- 1 There seems to be good evidence that the Saracen's Head in Whielden St was originally 2 cottages but was an inn by 1753 and possibly before 1742.
- 2 The Saracen's Head on the London Highway (now the Broadway) appears to have been an inn until at least 1725 but perhaps not by 1726 and certainly not by 1736. It was then divided into 2 houses and an orchard. It may be that the work done in 1725 by John Maycock was to convert it into dwelling houses but the bill lists labourers/days, not materials (with one exception for a few bricks). The orchard extended behind many of the houses in Whielden Street, later becoming part of the garden of the Griffin Inn and put up for sale with the inn in the Drake sale of 1928.

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