

St Albans Museums: 'Talking Buildings' project, 2016	
Building:	The Lamb Inn, 31 Chequer Street
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<p>This research was undertaken by volunteers and is not an exhaustive history of the building but captures what intrigued them during the project.</p> <p>If you have any memories you'd like to share, or any queries about the research, please do let us know: museum@stalbans.gov.uk</p>	

Location

Where the Lamb Inn once stood is now a branch of the HSBC Bank. The pub known as the Lamb closed in 1906 and the building was demolished and replaced by the one we see today.

The Lamb stood on the corner of Lamb Alley, a covered passageway between Chequer Street and the southern end of St Peters Street which is still there and still under that name.

The Lamb name

An overhead beam still in situ in Lamb Alley has a marker to show the place where the Abbey parish bordered that of St Peter's¹. These marks were used to determine parish boundaries so that the responsibility for paupers (all welfare including lodging and burial was based on parish boundaries) was correctly assigned.

It is only speculation, but given the location of The Lamb could it originally have been a place of refreshment, possibly also accommodation, for pilgrims to St Albans' shrine? If so, perhaps the religious connotations of the name The Lamb may be the reason for its name – as the lion is a symbol of the Resurrection, the lamb a symbol of the Redeemer. (From the Gospel of John (1:29): "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world."

Another possibility for the Lamb name is that it was situated in the market area, close to the Flesh Shambles, and records indicate that Lamb Alley was part-occupied by butchers between 1650 and 1700².

The Lamb in the records

In 1556 in the reign of Mary Tudor an extensive survey of the lands and properties owned by the Crown was carried out; as a result of the dissolution of the monasteries by Mary's father, Henry VIII, the amount of Crown property had increased considerably in St Albans. The Survey includes an entry stating that a Richard Clopcote left in his will a tenement called the Lamb in St. Peter's Street, for the use of the church³.

In 1573 what may be the same Lamb is mentioned in St Peters churchwarden accounts –“ received 'of Mr Henry Webbe one hole yeres rent of a tenement called the lamme with a orchard jonyng to it' – xxx shillings 'received of Humffray Hull for rent goyng owt of the Lamme & rereges of the same' – XV shillings (or lamb C)". (It is interesting that an orchard is mentioned as adjoining it - was this part of the Abbey land or did it belong to the "tenement" known as The Lamb?)

The Lamb continues to appear in the churchwarden's accounts throughout the 16C.

¹ St Albans and Hertfordshire Architectural and Archaeological Society, www.stalbanshistory.org

² "St Albans 1650-1700" by Smith and North, Hertfordshire Press, 2003

³ St Albans and Hertfordshire Architectural and Archaeological Society, www.stalbanshistory.org

Records of 1722 Licence granted to Charles Cole, gent, to keep an inn and sell wine. Term 31 years. Charles Cole was one of the mayors of St Albans in the 18C. The Museum has a stoneware tankard with an image of a lamb and the name Chas Cole.

The Lamb appears on the OS map of 1820 as an alehouse and in the late 19C was possibly the site of one of the many breweries that were located in St Albans⁴.

The famous brewer and self-publiciser, Samuel Wildbore, best known for owning and promoting the Blue Boar pub in the town, is recorded as having a leasehold interest in the Lamb at one time, but not after 1830.

Mr Parsons, brewer, was landlord in 1871, when Alfred Winter was accused of obtaining £125 from Alfred Bell under false pretences regarding the license for The Lamb (the charge could not be established and the case was thrown out).⁵

Various landlords and at least one landlady, a Mrs Hannah Reynolds, are listed in Kelly's Directory during the second half of the 19C, and brewers' records show how many barrels of beer were sold there. By the early 1900s, business must have been less brisk, as the Lamb was closed down in 1906, and the building demolished and replaced.

William Austin's poem of the 1880s, handily listing the names of all the St Albans hostelries of that time, mentions one called The Lamb, but we don't know if it was well-recognised in the town for any special distinguishing features, whether the hospitality of its landlords or the taste of its beer!

Sources

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- "A County of Small Towns", ed Slater and Goose, University of Hertfordshire Press 2007
- British History Online, "The City of St Albans"
- "A History of the County of Hertford: Volume 2", Victoria County History 1908
- Chris Saunders' (former Archaeologist at St Albans Museums) website: www.salbani.co.uk

⁴ 'Objects on Demand' research on Lamb Tankard, Penny Thei

⁵ Hertfordshire Genealogy