

# MEDIEVAL JEWISH TRAIL

Jewish Winchester

Winchester City Council would like to thank members of the local community for their help in championing the story of the Medieval Jews in the area. The text in this leaflet has been researched by Charlotte Andrasi, Adele Beston, Tracey Churcher and Cader McPhail, students at the University of Winchester, working under the guidance of Dr Christina Welch, Senior Lecturer in Religious Studies, and was inspired by the work of Sue Bartlet and Dr Toni Griffiths.

## For more information:

Visit [winchester.ac.uk/mjw](http://winchester.ac.uk/mjw) for more information or contact Christina Welch at [MJW@winchester.ac.uk](mailto:MJW@winchester.ac.uk)



In loving memory of Jack and Gretel Habel, refugees from the Holocaust who found a home in Winchester.

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June 2015 Ref No. TSM0119-00977

Winchester has an important Jewish past. The earliest record of Jews in the city date to the mid-1100s, making it one of the earliest, largest and wealthiest Jewish settlements in England.

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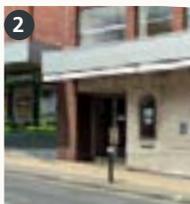
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## The trail starts from the passageway behind the Buttercross which can be found in the High Street.

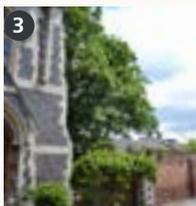
**1** In this passageway is a plaque commemorating the palace of William the Conqueror, who invited Jewish merchants to England in 1070 as financiers and traders. Unlike Jews, at this time Christians were forbidden to lend money for interest (usury) because of regulations in the New Testament. Jews loaned money to the King, the Church, and to Christian merchants in the city.



**2** In this location (at the rear of the current property) stood a property held by Duceman. Duceman (also known as 'Asher' and 'Sweteman') was a wool merchant and the son of Licoricia (Winchester's most famous female financier) and David of Oxford; Duceman held several properties in Winchester.



**3** Here once stood a property associated with Samme, one of a small number of Jews in Winchester who converted to Christianity. One such convert was renamed Henry. Henry travelled around England noting the names of coin clippers. Although both Christians and Jews were guilty of this offence, more Jews were executed, including Benedict, son of Licoricia and half-brother to Duceman.



**4** Currently Princess Court, in the Middle Ages a house in this exact spot was owned by Benedict.



**5** There was once a property that belonged to Isaac of Newbury, a Jewish wool merchant here. Jewry Street originally called Scowtrestret (Shoemakers Street) looked a little different in medieval times but, as today, it was a busy area of the city with many properties. It was close to the castle

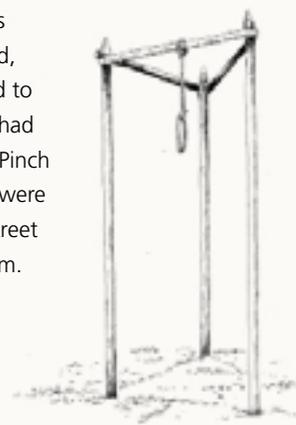


**15** where the Jews' Tower served as a Jewish refuge in troubled times.

**6** This property marks the spot where Abraham and Jaceus held land from the abbot of Hyde Abbey until 1290 when the Jews were violently expelled from the country.

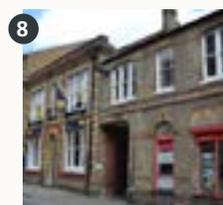


**7** Close to this spot was where the medieval synagogue (scola) was located. The scola was in the courtyard of a property owned by Abraham Pinch (son of Chera, a female financier). Pinch was also a financier, and this made him unpopular. He was accused of murdering a Christian child, although the child's mother confessed to the crime, the citizens of Winchester had him executed for petty theft instead. Pinch was buried beneath the gallows that were erected opposite the scola in Jewry Street specially for the purpose of hangin him.



**8** This location marks where a Jew named Samarian held property.

**9** A property here was sold by Isaac of Southwark to William de Seleborn in 1280; Seleborn (Selborne) Priory was part-financed by loans from Winchester's Jews.



Above: A 12th or 13th century lead token with Hebrew lettering found during excavations on Lower Brook Street in 1968, possibly a synagogue token or of some commercial use.

**10** A property here (no longer visible) was owned by Jospin who was another Jewish wool merchant.

**11** Here was another property owned by Ducemen. His father, David of Oxford, was a very wealthy man. Licoricia (Duceman's mother) married David after he divorced his first wife. On David's death in 1244, Licoricia was imprisoned in the Tower of London until she promised to pay death duties of 5,000 marks, an enormous sum of money. Part of his money financed the building of the shrine to Edward the Confessor in Westminster Abbey. A mark (which weighed 8 ounces in silver) was a little over 13 shillings; a knight earned 2 shillings a day and a kitchen servant 2 shillings a year.



**12** **13** The passageway from Jewry Street to Staple Gardens is not in the same place as it was in the medieval period. Records tell us that properties **12** and **13** were owned by Abraham. Property **13** was a stone house which was unusual at this time and indicated wealth and social status.

In the area between Jewry Street and Staple Gardens, was the medieval gaol. We know that Benedict (hanged in 1279 for coin clipping) was buried by the gaol.

This Oxford house (left, no longer existing) was owned by David of Oxford and gives an idea of what a grand stone house looked like.



**14** Occupying the same footprint as Bilberry Court was a Jewish tenement, an area with many buildings on it.

**15** In Winchester Castle (founded in 1067) was the Jews' Tower, an area where the Jews could go for their own safety. In May 1287, the city's entire Jewish population was imprisoned in Winchester Castle to ensure they paid a very large tax (tallage) of 20,000



marks that King Edward I imposed on the country's Jewish residents. Duceman recorded his stay during this time with some graffiti, although he signed it 'Asher'.

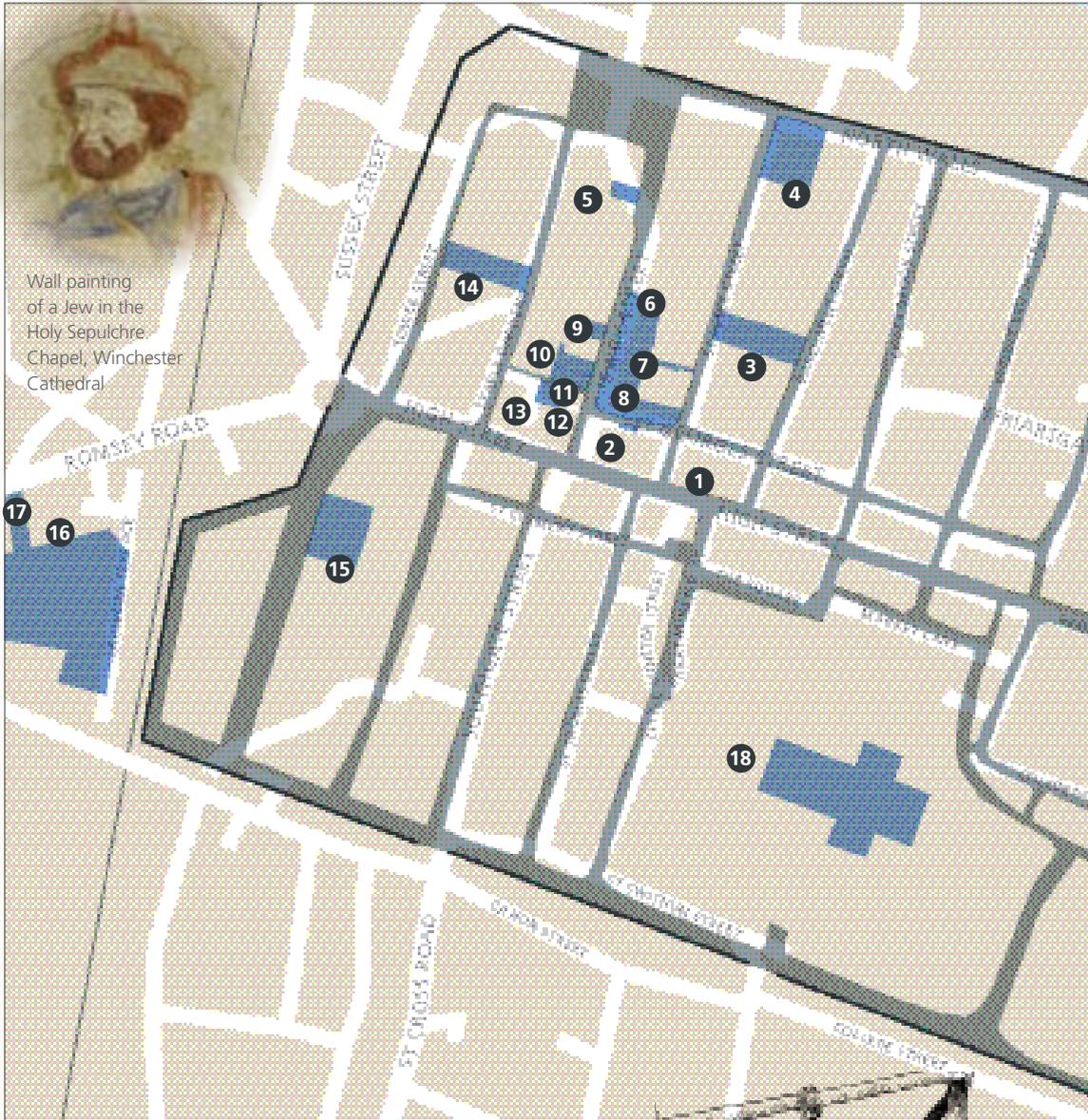
**16** The Jewish cemetery was located outside the city walls and served the Jewish communities in Southern England. Before 1177 Jews had to be taken to London for burial as the law allowed only one Jewish cemetery in the country. But in 1177 King Henry II permitted other cemeteries to be established. Excavations at Winchester's Jewish cemetery show that whilst some Jews in the city were wealthy, the majority of the Jewish population was very poor.

**17** Near the site of this property is another recorded as belonging to Benedict. A lavng stone was found here after the Jews were expelled in 1290; the stone indicates that it was here that the ritual washing of bodies before burial occurred.

**18** The cathedral in Winchester had a complex relationship with Jews. Once, outside Winchester Cathedral there were statues of Synagogia and Ecclesia; they were always shown together with Synagogia (right) shown blindfolded and holding the Ten Commandments to symbolise her blindness to the New Testament and Jesus which were represented by Ecclesia. In the cathedral's Holy Sepulchre Chapel Jews feature in some wall paintings dating to around 1160 (see illustration top left of map). They are identifiable by their conical, pointed, and funnel-shaped hats.

The interior of the cathedral does not form an integral part of this trail but there are many stories to tell that span centuries of history – visitors are required to pay an entrance fee at most times when not attending services and free events and tours are available.



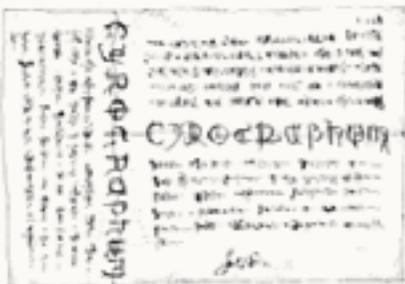


Wall painting of a Jew in the Holy Sepulchre Chapel, Winchester Cathedral

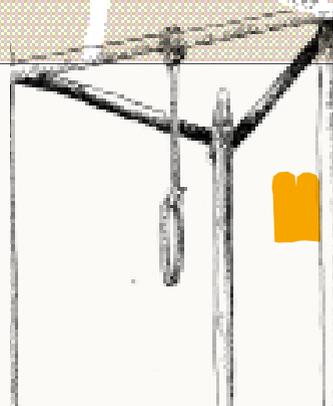
Medieval Winchester had a slightly different layout to the city today. The white lines show the city's current layout, whilst those in grey indicate how Winchester's road system looked when the Jewish community lived here.



Map adapted from Keene 'Medieval Winchester' (1985) by Alex Langlands.



An illustration of a chirograph – a medieval document written in triplicate, verifying an agreement between parties such as a financial loan.



From 1253 onwards, Jews aged 7 years and older were required to wear a strip of yellow felt, 6 inches by 3 inches in the shape of the two stone tablets given to Moses on Mount Sinai.