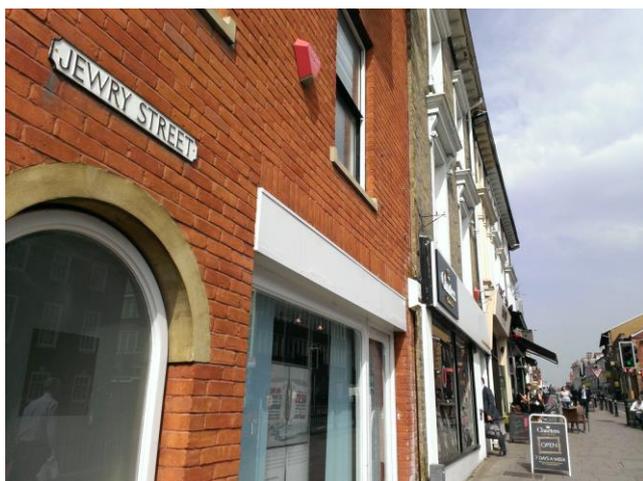


MEDIEVAL JEWISH WINCHESTER

INTRODUCTION

Winchester has an important and fascinating Jewish past. The earliest record of Jews in this city dates back to the mid-1100s, making it one of the earliest Jewish settlements in England. It was also one of the largest and wealthiest. Interestingly, despite these facts there has been a silence surrounding this chapter of Winchester's history; this walking tour has helped mark the beginning of a new approach to remembering Winchester's Medieval Jewry as part of this city's heritage.

Medieval Winchester was well located on trade routes and had a royal castle. It was a prosperous city with a wide variety of trades. It also housed one of the great fairs of England, the St Giles Fair, which brought Jewish and Christian traders to the city. From the late twelfth century all Jewish activities had to be recorded in chests known as *archae*, so Jews began to gather in those towns that had these chests. Winchester was one such city and eventually it became a centre for Jewish administrative matters in the county.



The Jewish community often clustered in particular neighbourhoods and in Winchester they largely dwelled in and around Jewry Street. They lived alongside their Christian neighbours and although it has been suggested that there were exceptionally good relations between the two communities, the Winchester Jews faced accusations of killing Christian children as part of 'Jewish' rituals.

A record from 1148 shows only two Jewish families in Winchester. This first evidence for a Jewish presence is the payment of a fine by Gentill the Jewess of fifteen pounds in order for her not to have to marry. By the mid-1200s, the total population of Winchester was around 8000 people, but the number of Jews was just 90 in total, and this included both wealthy and poor Jews. All the Jews in the land were under the custody of the King. This meant they were allowed to trade and practise their religion, but had to pay large taxes (tallages) to the King for living, working and worshipping in the country. Any Jew over the age of 12 had to pay 7 Shillings annually to remain in the country (this money went to support Jewish converts to Christianity). Many Jews were engaged in usury (lending money for interest) and they acted as a sort of bank for the King. Because of this, anyone harming a Jew was answerable directly to the King, giving rise to the term 'the King's Jews'.

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. Some communities were able to pay money not to have to wear this yellow marker, and for a while, Winchester was one of these. In 1265, the Siege of Winchester by Simon de Montfort the Younger resulted in the murder of many Jews in the city, and Jews saw their businesses raided and destroyed. Events such as these came to a head in 1290 when King Edward I ordered Jews to be expelled from England, a law which remained in effect for the rest of the Middle Ages. It was not until the time of Oliver Cromwell that Jews were officially tolerated in the country.

THE WALK

Location 1 – Buttercross area



This passageway, which connects the Cathedral and the city's High Street (photo, with the Buttercross), contains the remains of the Palace of William the Conqueror; there is a small plaque commemorating this. There is no record of Jews in England before the Norman Conquest in 1066. William I invited Jewish merchants from Rouen in France to England in 1070 as he believed their business skills would help to make England a wealthier country. At this

time Christians were forbidden to lend money for interest (usury) because of regulations in the New Testament; however, usury was not forbidden by Jewish law. Jews loaned money to the Church, and to Christian merchants in the city, with debtors to the Jewish community including the Cathedral monks and the clerics at St Swithun's Priory.

Location 2

Walk along St. Peter's Street (known as Fleshmonger Street in the medieval era), crossing St George's Street. As you cross St George's Street there is a property marked 2. On this spot in the medieval period was a property held by Duceman which was confiscated in the Jewish Expulsion of 1290. Duceman, a wool merchant, was the son of Licoricia and David of Oxford. He was also known as Asher and Sweteman, and held more than one property in Winchester. The drawing in the leaflet shows a house (no longer existing) in Oxford; this house was owned by David of Oxford.

Location 3

You have just passed an entrance to the medieval Jewish synagogue which fronted onto Jewry Street; on your map it is the narrow passage that connects location 6 to this street. By this long wall at the back of the Royal Winchester Hotel was a

property associated with Samme, a converted Jew. There were a small number of Jews in the city who had converted to Christianity. Most of them lived in poverty and needed support (alms) to help them survive.

One converted Jew living in Winchester was known as Henry of Winchester. Henry acted for the King in 1275 when usury (the main source of income for England's Jews) was made illegal. The sort of work that Jews were allowed to do was very limited because of the country's restrictive laws. Therefore Jews who found themselves with no way of making a living sometimes turned to coin clipping, a crime that carried the death sentence. Henry travelled around England noting the names of people involved in coin clipping, and in 1279, 269 Jews and 29 Christians were executed (hanged) for this offense. Henry had been knighted by King Henry III, and was given the name Henry by the King himself at the convert's baptism into the Christian faith.

Location 4

One man hanged for coin clipping was Benedict, son of Licoricia. Walk further along this road and you will find the property marked 4. Currently Princess Court, in the Middle Ages a house in this exact spot was owned by him. Benedict was a notable money-lender and is thought to have become a Winchester guildsman. You can read more about Benedict at the end of this leaflet.

Turn left at North Walls and walk up the hill a short way. Turn left into Jewry Street and walk to the Discovery Centre.

Location 5

Where the Discovery Centre is now located was once a property that belonged to Isaac of Newbury and his wife. Isaac was involved in the wool trade. His wife is recorded as being named Christina, and this raises a question. Either his wife was a Christian, and there was some level of inter-marriage in the city, or her name was Latinised in the records (this was a common practice).

As you can see from your map, Jewry Street today does not quite follow the same route as it did in medieval times. It was a busy area with many properties and close to the city castle (location 15) where the Jews' Tower would serve as their refuge in times of trouble. The street was known as Scowrtenestret Street (Shoemakers Street) or Shorten Street at this time. The road became Jewry Street in 1302 shortly after the expulsion of the Jews in 1290; it has kept this name ever since apart from a brief spell in the mid-18th century when it was known as Gaol Street.

Walk a little further along Jewry Street towards the city centre. You are now in the heart of medieval Jewish Winchester, an area sacked in 1265 by Simon de Montfort the Younger, who killed all the Jews in the city who had not taken refuge in Winchester Castle.

Location 6

This property marks the spot where Abraham, son of Cokerel (Licoricia's grandson) and Jaceus held land from the abbot of Hyde Abbey until 1290. Records show that Lumbard (son of Bely) and Cock (son of Lumbard) also occupied land in this area.

Walk a little further along Jewry Street.

Location 7

You are now standing where the medieval synagogue (known as a *scola*) would have been located. The property was owned by Abraham Pinch (son of Chera, a female money-lender) and the *scola* was in the courtyard that was accessible from both Jewry Street and St Peter's Street. In January 1252, King Henry III sent a writ (a written command) to the sheriff of Hampshire to investigate the theft from this synagogue of an 'apple of Eve' by Cressus of Stamford, a Jew. It is thought that this 'apple of Eve' was a large lemon-like fruit called a citron which was used in the festival of *Sukkot* (a festival in autumn that commemorates the 40 years the Israelites spent wandering in the desert after their escape or exodus from Egyptian slavery). That the King was personally involved in this case testifies to the importance of Winchester's Jewish community, even if the reason for the theft remains a mystery.

Abraham Pinch was amongst Hampshire's most active money-lenders, and this made him unpopular with the townspeople. In the 1230s there was a rise in anti-Jewish feeling in England as the King and country got into debt. This meant that the mostly beneficial relationship between the Bishop, Peter des Roches, and the Jewish community in the city took a turn for the worse. In 1232 a one-year old boy was found dead near St Swithun's Priory. His body had been dismembered and mutilated. The mother had fled the city but suspicion fell on Abraham Pinch, who was accused of buying the child from his nursemaid, and carrying out a dreadful ritual that mocked the crucifixion of Jesus. The whole Jewish community was imprisoned in Winchester Castle for their own safety until the person who committed the murderous act was discovered. Eventually, the boy's mother was found guilty, but the Jewish community was only allowed to leave the castle after it had paid a fine. However, the citizens of Winchester were not happy with the verdict and resentment brewed for several years. In February 1236, the townspeople accused Abraham Pinch of having stolen two Shillings from a local shop in 1230. He was found guilty of this offence and was hanged in Jewry Street outside the city gaol which was opposite his property and the *scola*. He was buried beneath the gallows; it is believed his body is still there.

His property was taken by the King and given to Adam, the royal saucer (the man who made sure the King's food was properly seasoned), and this included the synagogue. But the community managed to buy back their religious site because in 1290 it was in the ownership of Jacob, grandson of Licoricia. In 1968 a lead token with Hebrew writing was found during an excavation in Lower Brook Street. Experts

suggest it may have been a synagogue token (see the last page for more information on the token).

Location 8

The property to your right (number 8) marks a large area where Samarian, son of Lombard, held property. Samarian was convicted of a felony (although we have no record of his crime) and because of this, the property transferred to the King.

Location 9

Opposite the location of the synagogue is another property that has connections with the city's Jewish community (number 9). The property was sold by Isaac of Southwark to William de Seleborn in 1280. At this time the diocese of Winchester extended into Southwark (now part of London), and Seleborn (now Selbourne) had a priory founded in 1233, in part financed through Jewish loans. Isaac of Southwark had a daughter named Slema who also owned property in Southwark.

Walk a little further down Jewry Street towards the city centre and make sure you are on the side of the road that houses the United Reformed Church, and Habel's furniture shop.

Location 10

A property on this location was owned by Jospin (son of Gloria) and records show that he was a wool merchant along with Isaac of Newbury.

Location 11

This property was owned by Sweteman, whom we have already met. Sweteman was resident in the Jews' Tower in Winchester in 1267 (see location 15). His father, David of Oxford, was a very wealthy man, and Licoricia 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 5000 Marks – an enormous sum of money: over 4000 Marks were used to build the shrine to Edward the Confessor in Westminster Abbey. A Mark was a measure of silver, 8 ounces in weight. This was equivalent to 13 Shillings and 4 pence (One Mark = 13s.4d, 20s = £1). A knight received around 2 Shillings a day, a kitchen servant around 2 Shillings a year.

Take the passageway marked Staple Gardens; you will find this a little further along Jewry Street.

Locations 12 and 13

The passageway from Jewry Street to Staple Gardens is not in the same place as it was in the medieval period. Properties 12 and 13 are on your right. There is very little to see now but records show that property 12 was owned by Abraham, son of

Elias, while property 13 was a stone house, held by Abraham. Stone houses were unusual in this period of history and indicated wealth and social status. Before 1271 Jews were allowed to rent the properties they owned to anyone, but from 1271 they were forbidden to own any house unless they lived in it or rented it to other Jews. Renting property to Christians was banned and this, along with the 1275 ban on usury, meant that Jews had very little opportunity to earn a living in the last decades before they were forced to leave the country.

In the area between Jewry Street and Staple Gardens was the medieval gaol. We know that Benedict was hanged in 1279 for coin clipping, and buried by the gaol. Benedict owned a property next to the Jewish cemetery. After the expulsion of the Jews from England, Jewish-owned properties were sold, with the money going to the King. In one of the properties (17), a laving stone was found; this was a stone on which Jews would have ritually washed their dead before burying them in the cemetery. For more information on the Jewish cemetery see location 16.

Walk into Staple Gardens and turn right, away from the city centre. You will find a passageway that leads to Tower Street.

Location 14

On your right as you enter the passageway to Tower Street you will see a property, Bilberry Court. Occupying the same footprint as Bilberry Court was a Jewish tenement, an area with buildings on it. Records show that in 1249 the property was owned by Christina (widow of Robert Signy); we do not know if she was the Christina recorded as being married to Isaac of Newbury.

Continue to walk up the passageway into Tower Street. Turn left and head towards the ruins of Winchester Castle.

Location 15

Winchester Castle was founded in 1067 as a royal residence. By the time of King Henry III it contained some permanent staff, including Adam, the King's Saucer (who was given the property belonging to Abraham Pinch). In the castle was the Jews' Tower, to which Jews could retreat for their own safety. For its day, the tower was quite comfortable; it was furnished, had a fireplace, a lead roof and a watch tower. In 1270 King Henry III took the Jews of Winchester into his own protection and in 1272 he appointed 25 guardians to ensure their safety. One of these guardians was Simon le Draper, a wool merchant and the city's mayor. Simon, Benedict, a Jew named Deudone, and some of the other guardians were accused of malpractices, and Simon was forced to resign as mayor. In 1274 a new mayor was elected, but he, together with some of the city's residents, assaulted Duedone, and looted his property.

In May 1287, the city's entire Jewish population was imprisoned in Winchester Castle; this was to ensure they paid a very large tax that the King imposed on the

country's Jewish residents. The tax (known as a tallage) was for 20,000 Marks, a vast sum of money. Asher (also known as Sweteman) recorded his stay during this time with some graffiti; it read '*On Friday Eve of the Sabbath in which the periscope Emor is read, all Jews of the land of the isle were imprisoned. I, Asher, inscribed this...*' The graffiti was in evidence in 1617. Emor relates to a particular part of the Torah (the Hebrew Bible) that was read on that Sabbath eve; it constitutes Leviticus 21:1-24:23 and means the date the graffiti was written on 2 May 1287; periscope means a piece of scripture.

If you wish you can walk to the location of the Jewish cemetery marked as location 16 on your map, or you can walk to the Cathedral (location 18).

Location 16

The cemetery was located outside the city walls; it was excavated in 1974-75 and 1995. It is in the area that is now called Crowder Terrace and would have served the Jewish communities in the south of England. Before 1177 any Jew who died in England would have to be taken to London for burial as the law allowed only one Jewish cemetery in the country. In 1177 King Henry II permitted other cemeteries to be established in cities such as York, Oxford and Winchester.

Winchester cemetery excavations have revealed that three-quarters of the burials in the cemetery were coffin burials; Christians were typically buried in just a shroud. Also a sea urchin (an echinoid) was found in one of graves in the area reserved for children; children's graves made up the majority of those excavated in 1995, where the remains of 54 infants, 15 adolescents and only 3 adults were found.

The excavations at Winchester's Jewish cemetery demonstrate that whilst some Jews in the city were very wealthy, such as Licoricia and her family, the majority of the Jewish population was very poor. Many of the bones showed signs of rickets (caused by a lack of vitamin D and calcium), and one skeleton tell us about the violence that the city's Jewish people had to live with; the skull of one man showed two cuts to his head, from either an axe or a sword. The bones from the excavation were reburied in an Orthodox Jewish cemetery in Manchester, but because it has been impossible to fully assert the bones are Jewish, the area is fenced off from the other Jewish graves.

Location 17

The location marked as 17 is recorded as belonging to Benedict, son of Licoricia. The laving stone found here was noted in the city's expulsion returns, and indicates that ritual washing of bodies before burial occurred here. It is thought that an underground chamber with a well or spring (known as a Crowde) may have been located in this area to enable this activity to take place, giving rise to the area's current name.

Now walk back through the city centre to the Cathedral.



Location 18

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 requested to pay a modest entrance charge at most times when not attending services and free events.

The Cathedral and the Roman Catholic Church had a complex relationship with the city's Jews. In the medieval period, images of 'Synagoga' and 'Ecclesia' were commonly found in Christian art. Both shown as young and attractive women, they appeared as sculpted figures outside cathedrals such as that in Winchester. Ecclesia wore a crown and held a chalice and cross, representing the New Testament. Upright and confident, she embodied the supremacy of the Christian Church. Synagoga, by contrast, was blindfolded, loosely grasping the Ten Commandments. Representing the misguided and outdated Jewish religion, she was seen as unnecessary by the coming of Jesus. The statues were deliberately shown together to symbolise the superiority of Christianity over Judaism.

A 13th-century statue believed to be that of Ecclesia is located in the retrochoir at the south-east end of Winchester Cathedral. Unfortunately, due to Iconoclasm (the deliberate destruction of religious symbols) the statue is headless and armless, thus losing its symbolism somewhat. There is however a fully formed relief of Synagoga inside Bishop Stephen Gardiner's chapel, dating to around 1558 (photo).



There are also some recently uncovered wall paintings in the Holy Sepulchre chapel that depict Jews. These are believed to date to 1160 and would have been the finest of their kind in the country. The Jews are identifiable by their head gear. In the medieval period, Jews were not only marked out by their cloth badges, but also by their hats. Although in 1215 the Church stated that Jews had to be distinguished from Christians by their clothes, the mandatory wearing of a Jewish hat dates to 1267. The shape of the hat varied considerably; some were conical, others pointed, and some were funnel-shaped.

In the Holy Sepulchre Chapel there is a fresco of Jesus' entombment after his crucifixion, and in this image there is a man washing Jesus' legs who wears a Jewish hat; it is likely this is Joseph of Arimathea. There is another portrait of a Jew on the archway into the chapel; he wears a blue conical hat and is likely to be an Old Testament Prophet. One more Jew is depicted on an archway inside the chapel. These Jews all have beards, which was normal for married Jewish men in the medieval period (and remains so today for Orthodox Jews). However, there are two images in the Winchester Bible in which the Jews depicted do not have beards. The Isaiah page shows a beardless man in a red round brimmed hat with a knob on top, whilst the now missing Morgan leaf shows another man in a blue cap which has a spike on top; both appear to be Jewish hats and appear to be youths. In New Testament images of this period only Jews who were depicted in a special Jewish context were shown wearing a Jewish hat (the apostles and Jesus would not be depicted as Jewish). It is thought the artist who created the Winchester Bible may have done the paintings in the Holy Sepulchre chapel but this is questionable. The wall paintings and images from the Winchester Bible are available on the [Cathedral website](#).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Licoricia and other Jewish women of power and influence in medieval Winchester

Wealthy Jews within medieval England occupied a unique position in society. Permitted under Judaism to practice usury, the charging of interest on loans, they effectively became the nation's bankers. Thirteenth-century Winchester was an attractive location for Jews in the finance business, as King Henry III regularly held court here and it was also home to the internationally famous St Giles' Fair. Uniquely, three of the most powerful financial dynasties were headed up by women: Chera, Belia and Licoricia (see the family trees below). Through the extensive records kept in the *archae*, it is possible to build a picture of these intelligent and shrewd women. All three made several advantageous marriages and bore numerous children, and were nevertheless clearly mistresses of their own destiny. They travelled widely, negotiated financial deals, represented themselves in civil proceedings at law courts, and often had direct access to the King, who clearly valued the financial benefits the connections brought him.

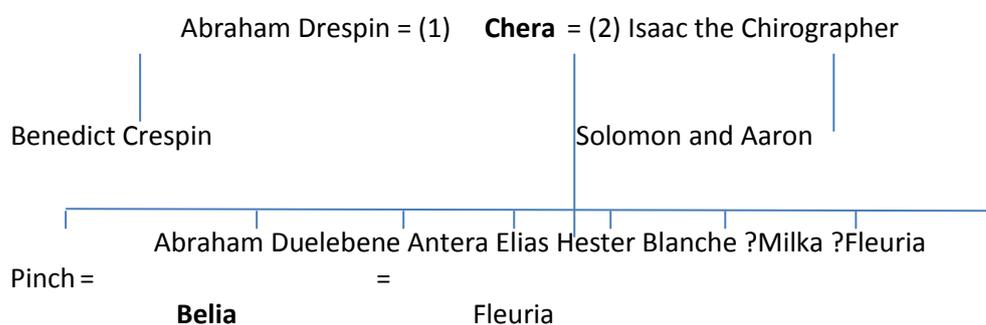
Times were difficult for Jews in England however and their high-profile families were direct targets for the waves of anti-Jewish hysteria that led up to the expulsion of the English Jewry in 1290. All three saw sons hanged for fake crimes. Licoricia herself did not escape the violence of the time and was stabbed to death along with her Christian maid, in her house in Jewry Street in 1277. Her murderer was never brought to justice.

Benedict, son of Licoricia

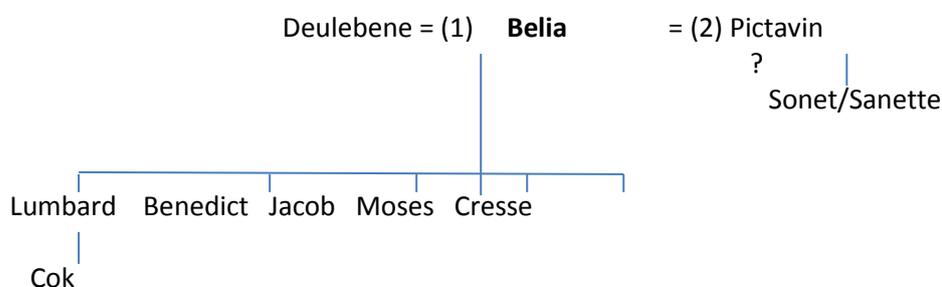
Benedict (or Baruch to give him his Hebrew name) was one of the most powerful and influential Jewish businessmen of his time. Not only is he believed to be the only Jew ever to be elected to a guild in medieval England, he also became a chirographer of the Winchester *archae*, a role which required him to witness and record the financial transactions of the city. The role involved much writing and Benedict was clearly well educated and trusted. His fortunes began to ebb, however, when his main protector, King Henry III, died in 1272. Edward I had a different attitude to Jews. His 1275 Statute of Jewry brought about devastatingly punishing measures that coincided with the rising tide of civil intolerance towards Jews; these often erupted into attacks on Jewish communities. In the short term, Benedict continued to do well, becoming the King's Assessor of Jewish Tallages (taxes) in London and he was the Keeper of the Queen's gold, ensuring she received her share of Jewish tax. However, his success did not last and contemporary accounts indicate that he made a few too many enemies along the way. Along with many others, he was accused of coin clipping, a capital offence. His royal connections chose not to negotiate on his behalf and he was executed by hanging.

The family trees of Chera, Belia, Benedict and Licoricia

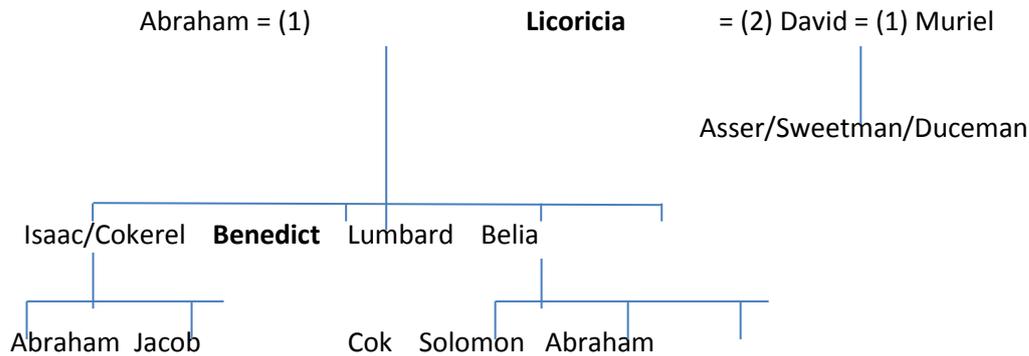
The family of Chera of Winchester



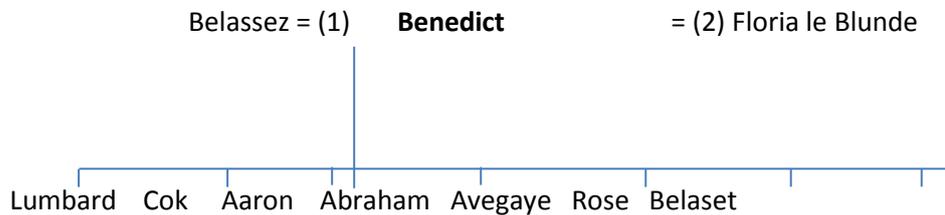
The family of Belia of Winchester



The family of Licoricia of Winchester



The family of Benedict of Winchester



The Jewish lead token



Found on Lower Brook Street during the 1968 excavations, this small lead token is shaped like a penny but bears an eleven-pointed star and Hebrew inscription on the front. The reverse is very like the contemporary short-cross penny and this dates it to between 1180 and 1247. Its purpose is more of a puzzle. Later lead discs, such as those held in the British Museum, were used to designate Kosher food items (i.e. food that conforms to Jewish dietary requirements), but experts think this token was more likely a coin substitute, with some commercial or attendance-recording function such as going to the synagogue. The key to the puzzle is probably the incomplete Hebrew inscription, but sadly that has remained indecipherable.

Photo: the late 12th- or 13th-century lead token with Hebrew writing found during excavations at Lower Brook Street in 1968. © Winchester Excavations Committee/Winchester Museums – BS 3154.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information about Medieval Jewish Winchester, email MJW@winchester.ac.uk or see www.winchester.ac.uk/MJW