

THE POSITION OF ALWARE STREET IN MEDIEVAL WINCHESTER*

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STUDENTS of the topography of medieval Winchester are fortunate in having an exceptionally full collection of leases and charters to collate, and with them as a foundation are attempting to reconstruct the city plan as it was in the fourteenth and later centuries. The record is so complete that many medieval tenements can be conclusively identified with present-day sites. Still, questions do remain, and one of the most important concerns the medieval street arrangement of the northern half of the city. This problem does not arise with the period after 1420, since the early 15th century tarrage roll (in conjunction with other material) makes it quite plain that the street order of Winchester north of the High Street was then essentially as it is today, from Staple Garden to Lower Brook Street inclusive. The same seven north-south streets were in use, though with different names: from west to east, Bruden Street, Jewry Street, Fleshmonger Street, Parchment Street, Shulworth Street, Wongar Street, Tanner Street.¹ But earlier documents speak of another street in the Jewry Street area, one not mentioned in the 15th century survey; this is Alware Street, whose location has perplexed city historians for many years. It is frequently referred to in the 13th century, and in the royal survey of 1115 (designed to correct the omission of Winchester from Domesday Book) it is cited in such a way as to suggest its position: the list of properties given there is arranged by streets in a very good approximation to their proper physical order, running in part '... Bredenestret... Scowertenestret (Jewry Street; see below, n. 9) ... Alwarenestret... Flesmangerestret... Wenegerestret...'.² References to Alware Street in certain leases also give the impression that it lies to the west of Fleshmonger Street (the present St. Peter's Street), and it has therefore usually been felt necessary to identify Alware Street with either a part of Jewry Street³ or, more usually, with a street between Jewry Street and Fleshmonger Street that then must be supposed to have fallen into disuse and disappeared in the 14th century.⁴ Yet on reconsideration it would seem to do violence to common sense to believe in a street of which there is no material trace while simultaneously supposing that both the 12th century surveys of the city omitted the street to the east of Fleshmonger Street,⁵ when there is a simpler interpretation of this evidence: that the Alware Street and Fleshmonger Street of the

*I am indebted to Ian Fisher and Derek Keene for numerous substantive and critical contributions to this article.

¹ There exist two 15th century copies of this tarrage roll, an English version in the Winchester City Archives (WCA) and a Latin version in the Winchester College Muniments. The topographical material is summarised in Tom Atkinson, *Elizabethan Winchester* (London, 1963), chapter 1.

² *Domesday-Book*... *Additamenta* (1816), 538-39. Significantly, a very similar list is to be found in the

survey of Bishop Henry of Blois (1148), reading '... Brudenestret... Scowertenestret... Alwarenestret... Flesmangerestret... Sildwortenestret... Wunegrestret...' etc. (*Additamenta*, 550-54.)

³ *Victoria History of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight* (ed. William Page), vol. 5 (London, 1912), 1.

⁴ A. W. Goodman, *The Manor of Godbegot in the City of Winchester* (Winchester, n.d. (1923?)), 59.

⁵ That is, Parchment Street; this street is mentioned in neither the survey of 1115 nor that of 1148 (cf. n. 2).

12th century are identical with the Fleshmonger Street and Parchment Street, respectively, of the 14th century. We must, of course, suppose that at some point and for some reason these two street names underwent a relatively sudden change, but examination of the city records supports these suppositions conclusively.

There are, first and most fortunately of all, two direct witnesses to the change in names. One is a passage in the mid-14th century consuetudinary of St. Swithin's, which speaks of

a certain rent in Parchment Street from the gift of Geoffrey the Barber, in the south (north?) part, almost at the end of the street, by the city walls; though Geoffrey's charter speaks not of that street but of the street which is called Fleshmonger Street, so that it is not certain whether the tenement of the aforesaid Geoffrey is in one street or the other.⁶

The document nevertheless goes on to recognise that, whatever the confusion of names, the property involved *was* located in Parchment Street. Evidently Geoffrey (who appears in the 1270's buying up land in the Alware Street precincts of the High Street⁷) had made his gift at a time when the future Parchment Street was still known as Fleshmonger Street, while by the middle of the next century the change in name had become well established. The other witness testifies to the renaming of Alware Street, and comes from a town court roll of 3-4 Edward III: it is the statement of an inquest that on the last day of December, 1329,

Alicia de Lomere, daughter of the late William Lomere, was found dead in the Fleshmonger Street which is called Alware Street, Winchester, in the house of Nicholas Feste . . .⁸

No more explicit reference to the renaming of the two streets could be hoped for.

Now it becomes possible to understand several statements partly or wholly inconsistent with the assumption that Alware Street lay to the west of the modern St. Peter's Street. Tenement descriptions assert not only that Alware Street is the next street to

⁶ ' . . . De custode Altaris beate Marie de Hyda 18 d. Altari Sancte Crucis percipiendos pro quodam redditu in Parchmerestre de dono Galfridi le Barbour in parte Australi fere ad finem vici illius versus muros civitatis; tamen carta Galfridi non loquitur de illo vico sed de vico qui dicitur Fleshmongerestre, secundum quod ignoratur de tenemento predicti Galfridi an fuerit in uno vico an in alio. Securus est (?) tenere tenementa que sunt in Parchmerestre, sicut ordinatum est per predictos custodes.' *A Consuetudinary of the Fourteenth Century for the Refectory of the House of S. Swithun in Winchester*, ed. G. W. Kitchen (Winchester and London, 1886), 20.

⁷ Goodman, 57-59.

⁸ This roll is not one of those transcribed by J. S. Furley, and because the inquest has a number of other unusual features, it seems worthwhile quoting it in full: Contigit die dominica in vigilia circuncisionis domini anno r. r. Edwardi tercii post conquestum tercio quod Alicia Lomere, filia quondam Willelmi de Lomere, inventa fuit mortua in Fleshmongerestret qui dicitur Alwardestret Wynton., in domo Nicholai Feste; quam

primo invenit Johannes le Bret, qua mortua statim levavit huthesium, cuius plegii sunt Adam Prat et Willelmus le Webbe; visa per Galfredum de Exton. et Godefridum de Fulflod coronatores civitatis Wynton., coram quibus facta est inquisitio per quatuor Aldremannos propinquiores, summi vici, Goldstrete, Alwardestret et Parchemyn et Brudenestret, per sacrum Thome atte Goldhard, Johannis de Sowyk, Elye le Ferour, Johannis le Forbour, Thome de Lamhith, Willelmi de Bromden, Galfredi le Fortreus, Johannis Saufer, Willelmi de Somersete, Walteri le Grynder, Walteri de Gloucestr, et Johannis le Nappere, juratores. Qui dicunt per sacrum suum quod die veneris in festo sancti Thome archiepiscopi in ebdomedario Natalis domini anno supradicto, Johannes Turbot clericus dictam Aliciam percussit in capite in parte anteriori in dextra parte cum quodam pollax, per quod mortua est toto capite fracto. Et nichil aliud sciunt, nec * * * culpabilis mortis dicte Alicie nisi dictum Johannem, nec aliquem ad hoc consencientem. - WCA Town Court Roll 3, skin 7v, court of Monday after Epiphany (8 January 1330).

the east of Jewry Street,⁹ but that it is the next to the west of Parchment Street.¹⁰ These relationships make excellent sense if, and only if, we suppose this Alware Street to be identical with the later 14th century Fleshmonger Street. And another reinterpretation of evidence may be offered to support the identification, one not conclusive in itself but at the very least suggestive. Two churches sometimes spoken of as distinct – St. Michael's, Fleshmonger Street, and St. Michael's, Alware Street – seem in fact to be one and the same, since John Berman is cited in Bishop Wodelok's register as rector of the former church in 1310 and in Bishop Stratford's register as rector of the latter in 1324.¹¹ It would still be possible, of course, that St. Michael's was located *between* Fleshmonger Street and Alware Street and was given either name indiscriminately,¹² but at least the evidence is perfectly consistent with the new supposition as well.

Let us state with a little more assurance, then, that at some indefinite time Fleshmonger Street was renamed Parchment Street and Alware Street renamed Fleshmonger Street; what evidence have we for the date of the transition? The material presented above shows that all three names were in circulation between 1310 and 1330, and that the new names had become entrenched by 'mid-century'. And we can be somewhat more exact about the time at which 'Alware Street', at least, fell out of currency. MS. BM Stowe 846, containing enrolments of many Winchester leases of the 14th and early 15th centuries, refers to Alware Street in 10 leases of the period 1303-1330, but in only 5 leases during the next century. The figures for Parchment Street (where there was far more real estate activity) show, as might be expected, just the reverse tendency: the street is mentioned in 14 leases before 1330 and in 31 thereafter. The transition may be supposed essentially complete by 1340.¹³

Something may also be said about the period when the transition began. The date of the first document speaking of 'Parchment Street' should offer a *terminus a quo*, and the earliest mention that I have seen is in a charter of about 1276-83.¹⁴ That the transition was in process in the 1290's is quite clear from two sources. On the one hand, there takes place at that time a change in organisation of the pipe rolls of the Bishops of Winchester: in the roll for 1291-92 a certain set of entries is headed *Fleschmongerstret*,

⁹ '... Tenementum in vico quod dicitur Alewarestret ... protendens versus occidentem super vicum quod dicitur Schortenestret et etiam cognominatur Juweriestret.' MS. BM Stowe 846, ff. 6v-7 (enrolled 1302-03).

¹⁰ '... Tenementum ... quod se extendit a predicto vico de Alwarestret usque ad vicum de Percheminestret versus orientem ...' *Ibid.*, f. 5 (enrolled 1302-03).

¹¹ These two episcopal registers, unedited, are to be found in the Hampshire Record Office. The Wodelok reference may be found on f. 14*, the Stratford reference on f. 5, of the respective manuscripts.

¹² In the light of the thesis of this article, it must be in just such a way that the reference of the Stowe MS. (f. 26; enrolled 1322-23) to 'ecclesia beati Martini de Alwarestret' is to be understood; the church of St. Martin is otherwise invariably located in Parchment Street.

¹³ This seems the most likely date from the rate at

which references to Alware Street fall off after 1330: it is cited once each in 1344-45, 1355-56, 1364-65, 1365-66, and 1390-91. These enrolments being simply belated registrations of earlier charters (the enrolment of 1355-56, for example, refers to a rector of St. Michael's Alwarestret who left that post in 1349), the dates given may post-date the actual use of the name by as much as ten or fifteen years. The final stages of decay were thus most probably in the 1330's.

¹⁴ Winchester College Muniments 1432. The document is undated, but Laurence de Anne is named as bailiff, and since he was mayor in 1284 and would not thereafter have had to accept so onerous a position, it must antedate that year. Mrs. Barbara Carpenter Turner has pointed out to me that Walter de Valle, named in this document as mayor, held that post in 1276 and occasionally thereafter, although the city records are unfortunately too incomplete to preclude a still earlier election.

but in the next roll we have, that of 1295-96, the identical entries are to be found under the heading Parcheminstreet, and so they are entered from then on.¹⁵ Apparently the episcopal exchequer had just recognised the change in names. At virtually the same time the accounts for the Hospital of St. John offer evidence of a similar kind. The first account roll for the Hospital covers the year 1293-94, and lists collectable rents, by streets, in correct topographical order. Between the headings for Alware Street and for Shulworth Street is to be found a list headed: 'Fleshmongerstreet and Parchemynstreet'.¹⁶ Again, there seems to have been some confusion as to which name should stand.

We may say with still greater confidence, then, that this shift in names did occur, and that the years of transition were about 1270-1340; we may even guess, from the evidence we have, that the shift from Fleshmonger to Parchment took place somewhat before the shift from Alware to Fleshmonger.¹⁷ Can we say anything at all about the reason for the change in names? Here we are on much less certain ground. But since most of the streets north of the High Street were named for their tenants' occupations, it may perhaps be that the occupational composition of our two streets was changing at this same time. To be really sure, an attempt to survey fully the 13th century population will have to be made, but I have noted certain suggestive passages in the few documents from that period which I have seen. The charter in which the earliest mention of Parchment Street is to be found, for example, mentions that Thomas le Macecrer (= butcher) had a tenement in Alware Street;¹⁸ the inquest of 1280 records a Henry le Macecrer in the same street;¹⁹ in a charter of the same period, the St. Denis cartulary refers to Thomas, Henry, John, and Geoffrey, 'carnifices', living there.²⁰ On the other hand, in the episcopal pipe rolls Walter le Parcheminer is among those listed as living in Fleshmonger Street in 1292 and in Parchment Street in 1296.²¹ Further investigation could confirm this apparent occupational relocation, and decisively explain the change in names.

For change there must certainly have been. Whatever doubts remain about reasons or dates, the single assumption of a name change permits enough different pieces of evidence to fall into place in a consistent, simple, reasonable interpretation to justify its acceptance as the basis for more detailed topographical studies of the district. The problem now will be to distinguish consistently between the two Fleshmonger Streets in the period of transition, since the knowledge that the same name was given simultaneously to two adjacent streets must be invaluable in settling the arrangement of tenements in that most confused area.

¹⁵ Hampshire Record Office. Eccl. Com. Var. 159286 = 1291-92 (11 Pontoise): the entries are headed 'fleschm' in both text and margin (membrane 24). Eccl. Com. Var. 159315 = 1295-96 (16 Pontoise): the same entries are preceded by a blank space in the text but are marginally indicated as 'parcheminstr' (membrane 16). Eccl. Com. Var. 159316 = 1296-97 (17 Pontoise): the same entries are headed 'parchemynst' in the text and 'parchem' in the margin (membrane 16).

¹⁶ WCA St. John's Hospital, Compotus Roll 1.

¹⁷ Since in both the episcopal and St. John's rolls Parchment Street is introduced before Alware Street disappears.

¹⁸ As above, n. 14.

¹⁹ PRO Ministers Accounts, sc 6/1283/9.

²⁰ MS. BM Add. 15314, f. 122v.

²¹ As above, n. 15.