

THE HANTACHENESELE IN THE WINTON DOMESDAY

By RICHARD COATES

This expression is a name or a description of a building in *Colobrochestret* (Colebrook Street) which was out of use, or no longer used for its former functions, by the time of the second Winchester survey of 1148 (entry 712; WEMA 120, 237); it *solebat ibi esse ubi probi homines Wint' potabant Gildam suam* ('used to be there where the honest men of Winchester used to drink their Guild'). It *remansit in manu regis* 'remained in the king's hand' in 1148.

In VCH (vol. 5) it was suggested that:

It is possible that the 'Hantachenesele' in the south-east of the city was the later Chapman's Hall, still later known as the 'Linea Selda.' The men of the 'Chepmanessela' might well be the men of the 'Hantachenesele,' to which may have been attached the 'selda ubi linei panni venduntur' in the lower part of the High Street, also mentioned in the survey. The Chapman's Hall frequently occurs in the Pipe Rolls As Mr. Round shows, this Chapman's Hall was identical with the 'Linea Selda' which King John gave to William his tailor for an annual rent of grey fur.

On the other hand, the scholars of WEMA suggest, with topographical reservations, that it might have been the hall at St John's Hospital (336), and Crummy *et al.* (2008: 221) reaffirm a close connection between the city and St John's Hospital. In footnote 15 in VCH, any connection with the later guildhall is rejected on topographical grounds.

This gets us no further forward with the origin of the name. An explanation was offered by Charles Gross (1890, appendix B), namely that it was the hall of the *hanse cnihten(e)* 'guild of the *cnihts*'. The scholars of WEMA (237–8) use

philological arguments to refute Gross's suggestion comprehensively, and there is no need to revive that particular debate. They might have added that *hanse* is really the Continental Germanic form of a word whose authentic Old English form is *hōs*. So far as I know, the name has not been discussed since, and the question of its origin is therefore unresolved. Gover does not mention it in his typescript *Place-names of Hampshire* (1961).

It is agreed that the final element is OE *sele* 'hall', which fits all the few known facts. The first element seems likely to be an OE **hand-tācn*, which is not recorded, but which would mean 'hand sign', and would be readily understandable as a translation of Latin *signum manuale*. In European legal and administrative contexts, including that of England, the *signum manuale* was the sovereign's official mark, or that of other high officials, showing the authenticity of the document in which it is found. It could take various forms, but for our purposes the only point of substance is its role as confirmation of the issuer's pleasure before seals came into general use. The *hantachenesele* must have been a hall associated with the business of issuing official documents under the highest authority. It is obviously no great surprise if the only known place so named in England was in the capital city, and that it was in royal hands.

Grammatically fastidious readers will note that the *-e* before *sele* suggests that the word may actually be found here in the genitive plural form **hand-tācna*, making the name 'hall of the signs manual'. But that is not a necessary deduction.

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