

Medieval Gloucester School Resource

Note to Educators and teachers



The following activities form the basis of a history walk around the historic Gloucester city centre, to familiarise school groups with the medieval history of Gloucester, as well as that of the medieval Jewish community of Gloucester, who were one of the first non-Christian minorities to live in Gloucester. This can lead into school based, individual, or group work, to follow-up the study visit.

The activities can be used with the digital trail already produced by the pupils of Kingsholme Primary School, for a pre-visit orientation, or as further information and inspiration!

On the tour it is recommended that the pupils complete the worksheets individually, or as a small group, as well as to take photographs, video, or other digital content for follow-up work. There are worksheets below for four groups to cover four walks through Gloucester, which may be adapted as required and pupils should exchange facts and information.

Using the school visit as the basis of follow-up individual, or group project, is particularly recommended, as the basis of written work, or it could be presented using I.T., perhaps as a Word document, a Power-Point, or Digital / Video production using Movie-Maker, or other suitable multi-media applications.

This resource is suitable for KS 2 – 3 and is relevant to the history, geography, Religious Studies and Citizenship curriculums and may also be a useful basis for discussing issues in regard to prejudice and discrimination.

Further information and a trail of Gloucester Jewish history is available on the JTrails web-site.

(This resource has been produced by Gloucester City Museum Education Department and JTrails, with assistance from the Heritage Lottery Fund and historical materials in partnership with the National Archives. The pupils at Kingsholme School have taken the location pictures)





A 13th century medieval Jewish woman —Mirabel of Gloucester. This is one of only two pictures of a medieval English Jewish woman. It is not intended to be flattering, but intended to make her look devilish, as the Church was keen to tell people that the Jews were in league with the Devil in the 13th century. (From the National Archives at Kew for the JTrails Gloucester Jewish Trail)

Medieval Gloucester Tour - Group 1

What is your place?

Gloucester Cathedral (St Peter's Abbey in the medieval period)

What happened there?

It was home to a group of monks from the Benedictine order. They had spiritual duties in the community, such as leading religious services and performing religious functions such as masses and prayers. They also had some responsibility to provide charity and alms (usually food and shelter, but could include clothing or even money) for the poor and needy in the parish. They would also provide medical care and hospice time arrangements for those that were sick and dying. The Abbey was also very powerful in political and financial circles. It was a huge landowner and therefore had many tenants that lived and farmed on its land. The Abbey was also involved in trading goods and would have been advisors to many politically important people, including royalty and other nobles.

Why was it important to the Medieval community?

Some of the Medieval population of Gloucester would have had the monks as their landlords. Others may have benefited from their charity if they were poor or ill. Others would have looked to the monks for spiritual guidance or advice about their everyday lives.

Why was it important to the medieval Jewish Community?

Jewish people may have found themselves with monks as their landlords, just like any other person in Medieval Gloucester.

The Cathedral also had links with the Blood libel that happened in Gloucester in 1168. On occasions and in different parts of the country, Jewish people would be accused of killing a Christian boy. Their motive was claimed to be revenge for the crucifixion of Jesus. These accusations were always false and usually started when the King was short of money as a quick way for the King to seize all the property and money from a Jewish population in one place and then exile the population. The blood libel in Gloucester revolved around a boy named Harold that was found by fishermen in the river Severn. It was alleged that the boy had been kidnapped and then crucified by the Jewish people in their synagogue with his body then disposed of in the Severn. This is unquestionably false, although the body of a boy was probably found in the Severn (perhaps he had fallen in a drowned?) and the boy's body was interred before the altar of Edward the Confessor.



The body of Little Hugh of Lincoln, who died in 1255 and the Jews of Lincoln were accused of killing him and his body was placed in a shrine for pilgrims to visit. The tomb was opened in 1791 by antiquarians (Picture: British Museum).

What is interesting about this place?

What is your place?

Bearlands

What happened there?

Medieval butchery.

The name 'Bearlands' comes from bare londe - an empty space. Medieval butchers would slaughter the animals as well as cut them up to make the cuts of meat, so it was a messy and smelly job. Bearlands was where the butchers were supposed to do all of their butchery and deposit all of the discarded blood, guts and bones, rather than fouling the rest of the city with them. All butchery was supposed to happen very early on a morning, before most people were up so they didn't have to see animals being killed, or walk through all of the blood and guts. However, this did not always happen!

Why was it important to the Medieval community?

Allowing this area to be used for butchery early in the morning meant that the community had fresh meat, prepared before they were likely to have got up in a dedicated area that they could avoid.

Why was it important to the medieval Jewish Community?

Jewish people prepare their meat in a way that follows their religious beliefs as religious Jews would only eat kosher meat from kosher animals. Their animals would have been slaughtered in the area around the synagogue by a slaughterman from the community, so apart from avoiding this area because of the smell and the mess, they would not have been very much involved in what went on at Bearlands.

What is interesting about this place?



What is your place?

Longsmith Street. It was called Smyth Street in the Medieval period.

What happened there?

This was the area where most of the City's metalworkers had shops or stalls or workshops adjoining their houses.

Why was it important to the Medieval community?

Metalworkers in the Medieval period were very importance as many everyday objects were made of metal. The smiths would make new metal items and mend old ones. Metalworkers that could be found in Medieval Gloucester included:

- **Blacksmiths.** Blacksmiths would make a whole host of metal objects from swords and chain mail, to trivets (tripods to stand pots on for over the fire) and metal plough bits and other fixings. Some Blacksmiths would also make horse shoes, although farriers would also do this.
- **Cutlers.** As the name suggested they made table cutlery. It would have been a very select audience that they were selling to though as special table cutlery was not widely used in England. Most people just used a general 'belt' knife (so called because it was kept tucked in your belt) for cutting. Few people used forks and spoons tended to be made of wood or bone. Only the rich tended to have special cutlery usually made out of iron.
- **Tinkers.** These were general metal workers that specialised in making and selling and mending everyday metal items.
- **Wiredrawers.** Metal wire is made by slowly and carefully drawing metal through increasingly smaller holes, until it gradually gets thinner and thinner. It needs to be done at an even pace otherwise the metal won't be of an even thickness. The local expertise of the wiredrawers would have helped when the pin making industry started to flourish in the early seventeenth century, as pins are made from drawn wire.

- **Bladesmiths** These people made swords and knives and would also sharpen them for people.
- **Farriers.** These were the people that made and fitted horse shoes. As Gloucester was passed through by people making the long journey into Wales, it was a good place to make sure your horse was properly shod as you wouldn't know when you would next get the opportunity. Many people would also take their horses to the farrier if they were ill. While the farrier had no official veterinary knowledge, his many years spend working with horses gave him a good knowledge of their illnesses and injuries and how best to solve them. Many problems horses get are with their feet, so the farrier was often in a good position to help them.
- **Bell founders.** The people that made bells were also known as Belleyeteres, Belters or Billiters. It was a highly skilled craft. If the bell wasn't struck in a perfect shape, or if one side was thicker than the other then the ring would not sound right. This was especially important for church bells that would have to ring peels. A curfew bell was also rung at 4am and 8pm. It wasn't a bell to tell people that they needed to go indoors, but rather that they needed to cover their fires. With so many wooden buildings cramped together in the city there was a real risk of fire, especially at night if fires were left unattended while people slept. The 8pm bell told people that they needed to put their fires out, while the 4am bell told people they could re-light them. The 8pm bell had to be followed, while the 4am was left to choice.

Why was it important to the medieval Jewish Community?



Just like other people in the Medieval Community Jewish people travelled and used metal items in their everyday lives. Some members of the Jewish community were also metal workers, in Gold and Silver and some were also bullion dealers, which meant that they would buy precious metals and melt them down for a profit. The picture shows a Jewish person with some scales, which would have been important in weighing and also checking the quality of coin, as clipped coin was under-weight.



A 13th century synagogue lamp made of bronze, from Lincoln. Medieval Jews liked to have lamps made of bronze for use in the synagogue or in rituals. This one had four wicks burning from a central reservoir fuelled with Olive Oil. It would have hung from a chain from the ceiling. This lamp is one of only four known examples. (Photo: M. Roberts)

What is interesting about this place?

Medieval Gloucester Tour - Group 2

What is your place?

Site of Medieval Castle (prison site today)

What happened there?

When the King was in Gloucester the castle would have been his residence. It was also the place where trials and anything needing high security would have been held.

Why was it important to the Medieval community?



Apart from having the status associated with a royal residence it is where the 'Trail of the Picks' would have happened. In the Medieval period coins were worth the same as the cost of the metal in them. So if you melted down a 1 shilling gold coin the actual gold in it would be worth 1 shilling. At the trail of the picks the man in charge of the mint where coins were struck would be

summoned to the castle. The King would pick a coin at random to check its weight and size and the purity of the metal in it. If the coin was found to be worth what it claimed to be then all would be fine. However, the penalty for the man in charge of the mint if the coins were found to be underweight or having been adulterated with other metals to make them worth less was severe. He would be killed!

Why was it important to the medieval Jewish Community?



The Royal castle was vital to the Jewish community, as Jews were the property of the king and the Constable of the Castle, who looked after the Jews for the king and was obliged to give refuge to the Jewish community in times of unrest, so the castle would have been a place of sanctuary for the Jewish community. It was also a place where many of their financial transactions would

have been recorded and stored in a chest, to prevent them for being stolen or destroyed, as the king made money from the money-lending activities of Jewish community. (Picture: Darius)



It was also a place of imprisonment. If a Jew was accused of a crime, he or she would be locked-up in the royal castle and then tried there and then, or more likely sent on to the Tower of London where many hundreds of Jews were executed, mostly on claims of coin clipping which was a hanging offence. It was easy to accuse Jews of this crime, even though the archaeological evidence is that they looked after the coin well. Even more-so than the rest of the population, Jews would have a strong interest in making



sure that the coins were not being issued underweight or mixed with other metals, or clipped, as it could lead to their deaths! The pictures show, a Jew unexpectedly ransomed and released from prison and a 13th century hanging of a convict (National Archives).

In this period, local Jews were very much the local bankers, or 'cash-point', as coin was very scarce and just getting hold of money could be difficult even if you had goods and assets to sell. Local Jews controlled about 1/3 of the supply making it available for people to go about their business.

A Horrible Historical Story - Murder at Gloucester Castle.

In 1220 a Gloucester Jew called Solomon Turbe was thrown from the high tower of Gloucester Castle, but survived the fall for a few hours afterwards; it was said that he was murdered because another Gloucester Jew, Abraham Gabbay, wanted him dead and it was claimed that he had paid people working at the castle, 10 marks each for the murder! Gabbay had claimed he had been previously attacked by Turbe and Gabbay was freed even though he was probably responsible. Turbe wouldn't talk, but his wife said that Gabbay was to blame. (Original texts were provided by the National Archives)

What is interesting about this place?

What is your place?

The Cross

What happened there?

The cross was and still is, the intersecting point of all the Gate Streets and so acted as the central focal point of the city centre.

The city's market was clustered around the cross. In the Medieval period there would have actually been a cross there to remind people that God is everywhere and always watching, so they should not try to cheat people or sell them inferior goods.

There would have also been a conduit at the cross. This would have been a source of drinking water for the city. The water came from Robinswood Hill via a series of lead pipes.

Why was it important to the Medieval community?

The market was the central focal point of any city centre and provided the main point where people could buy and sell their goods.

Why was it important to the medieval Jewish Community?

The Jewish community almost always lived right in the very centre of town where the most important markets and financial activity was to be found. This meant they were close to their customers who would borrow money, or trade to get the hard cash needed for buying things or doing business, other than by bartering.

The Jewish community would have been buying goods from the market. The conduit at the cross would have been a good supply of fresh water.

What is interesting about this place?

What is your place?

The New Inn (The actual building dates from a little later than the Medieval period. However, it got its name from the fact that another inn stood on that site until it was replaced in the Tudor period by the 'new' inn.)

What happened there?



Inns provided accommodation for travellers passing through Gloucester, as well as a place to eat and drink for people in the city. They would have been hot beds of gossip and information as news brought by travellers about other places in the country (or even abroad) would be exchanged over food and drink.

Stables would have been attached to the Inns to allow horses to have a rest as well.

Why was it important to the Medieval community?

Gloucester was the last city for travellers going across into Wales or Ireland. It was their last chance to get a decent night's sleep and to stock up on any supplies they may need for their journey. For travellers returning it was their first opportunity for a long while to replenish supplies.

Just like today, medieval people liked to know what was going on in other places and to find out the latest gossip. Inns would have been an excellent place to catch up on the gossip.

Why was it important to the medieval Jewish Community?

The Jewish population used the Inns in just the same way other people in the medieval community did and some of the most important members of the community would travel widely on business. Aaron of Lincoln, for example conducted business across 22 counties and had many agents working for him.

What is interesting about this place?

What is your place?

Possible site of the Medieval Mint in Westgate Street

What happened there?

Coins were struck at the mint.

Why was it important to the Medieval community?

The mint provided the coins in circulation. The coins issued from there were supposed to be worth as much as they claimed to be, as the King himself would check their value at the 'Trail of the Picks' at the Castle.

Why was it important to the medieval Jewish Community?

Medieval Jews often lived close to mints, as it meant that they were close to a good supply of hard cash which they needed to access to carry out their banking and money-lending activities. Also, some Jews were bullion dealers and probably supplied some of the precious metals needed to make the coins. Some coin making dies and the gold coins that they made are shown below, from the mint at the Tower of London. (Photo: M. Roberts)



Some of the Jewish population would have been involved with providing loans to business and people (like modern banks do today.). Therefore these people would have needed actual coins to give as the loans. The picture below shows some coins and a treasury contained found in a Jewish house in Colchester. The

owners of the money were almost certainly killed in 1278 for coin clipping and never came back for their money. (Photo: M. Robert)

Other Jewish people like the rest of the medieval population would have used coins to buy things.



What is interesting about this place?

Medieval Gloucester Tour – Group 3

What is your place?

Blackfriars Monastery

What happened there?



It was home to a group of Dominican friars. They wore black habits and that is where the nickname 'Blackfriars' came from.

They had spiritual duties in the community, such as leading religious services and performing religious functions such as masses and prayers. They also had some responsibility to provide charity and alms (usually food and shelter, but could include clothing or even money) for the poor and needy in the parish. They would also provide medical care and hospice time arrangements for those that were sick and dying. The Blackfriars from this monastery were certainly very generous with their alms – at the time of the reformation the monks living there were starving to death and still trying to share their food with the other needy of Gloucester. They also provided effective hospice care right up until their dissolution.

Blackfriars is also the site of the oldest library and scriptorium in Europe. As well as providing a library of books for people to consult (they could be read at the Monastery but not taken away, so it wasn't quite like a modern library.) the monks also copied books in the scriptorium. The books would have been works of art with beautiful illuminated letters at the start of chapters and illustrations in the margins. Each monk working in the scriptorium would have sat in his own curtained off area with his own window to allow as much natural light into the room as possible. The windows are carefully angled so they catch natural light but not allow the sun to shine directly in the monks eyes. They are also designed to allow enough space for the monk to freely move his arms to write. (Everyone would have written with their right hand.) One of the alcoves that would have made up the curtained off area still has a picture of the Virgin Mary scraped into the wall. The monks were highly dedicated, but even they got bored of copying things out sometimes!

Why was it important to the Medieval community?

Some of the medieval population of Gloucester may have benefited from their charity if they were poor or ill. Others would have had the monks as their landlords. Others would have looked to the monks for spiritual guidance or advice about their everyday lives.

Why was it important to the medieval Jewish Community?

Jewish people may have found themselves with monks as their landlords, just like any other person in Medieval Gloucester. Also, some of their most important customers were monasteries and churches, who would borrow money from them to go shopping in the markets, or for building project, particularly if buildings fell down or burnt down. There was also an exchange of knowledge between the Jews and monks, as some monks wanted to learn Hebrew and understand Jewish writings, so they would sometimes want to be taught by Jews.

What is interesting about this place?

What is your place?

Eastgate - Also known as Jewry Street in the medieval period.

What happened there?

Eastgate was a rich, high class neighbourhood. It was close to the markets and trades to allow people really to be at the centre of things. However, it was far enough away from the noisy and noxious activities (like butchery or tanning industries) for the residents not to be bothered by them.

Why was it important to the Medieval community?

It was where the people of high status or wealth would have lived. It was the posh end of the city. As one of the gated streets it was also one of the main ways in and out of the city.

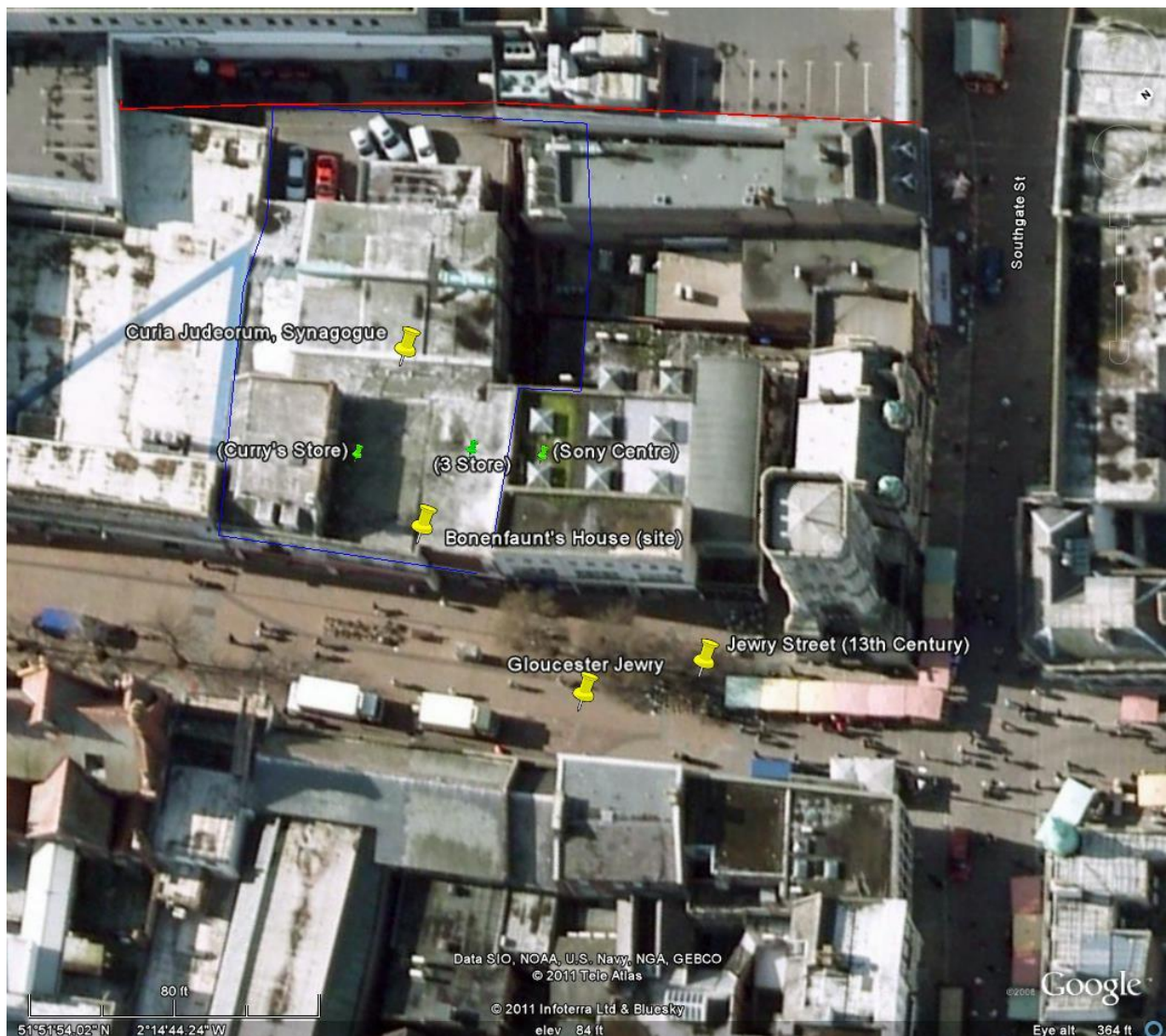
Why was it important to the medieval Jewish Community?

In 1239 there were 12 principal dwellings for richest members of the Jewish community and some other minor houses for poorer members of the Jewish community, nearer the cross end of Eastgate Street. Jewish residents include Bonenfaunt, Elias son of Isaac and Abraham son of Josce.

This location was close to the centre of the city and close enough to all the markets and customers for the Jewish businesses but away from the noisy and noxious trades that were not nice to live near.



The medieval synagogue and Curia Judeorum (Jews' Court), which would have been tucked out of sight behind the house of Bonenfaunt the Jew, who was the leading local Jew in the 13th century. This would have been the centre of Jewish life and learning and provided religious facilities, so a bakery for Matzah bread and a mikveh, or Jewish ritual bath. A medieval synagogue is pictured on the left and they were mostly sunken into the ground with high windows for privacy and security.



The medieval Jewish quarter and the site of the synagogue plotted on to Google Earth (M. Roberts).

What is interesting about this place?

What is your place?

Greyfriars monastery and Greyfriars Orchard

What happened there?



It was home to a group of Franciscan monks. They wore grey habits and that is where the nickname 'Greyfriars' came from.

They had spiritual duties in the community, such as leading religious services and performing religious functions such as masses and prayers. They also had some responsibility to provide charity and alms (usually food and shelter, but could include clothing or even money) for the poor and needy in the parish. They would also provide medical care and hospice time arrangements for those that were sick and dying.

Greyfriars also had a large orchard and their own water source that came in from Robinswood Hill. Water for the market cross conduit was probably diverted off from their source.

Why was it important to the Medieval community?

Some of the medieval population of Gloucester may have benefited from their charity if they were poor or ill. Others would have had the monks as their landlords. Others would have looked to the monks for spiritual guidance or advice about their everyday lives.

Why was it important to the medieval Jewish Community?

Jewish people may have found themselves with monks as their landlords, just like any other person in Medieval Gloucester. They may have also drunk some of the cider made by the monks from the apples in their orchard, as cider was their favourite drink!

What is interesting about this place?

Medieval Gloucester Tour - Group 4

What is your place?

Hedley's Tea Room (Example of a medieval building width)

What happened there?



Hedley's is a good example of the width of Medieval buildings. Although they were very narrow on the street fronts, buildings tended to be at least three storeys high and go quite a way back too. Upper stories would overhang the lower ones.

Most people used the front of their house as the shop for their business. Trading would either be done through the door or front room, or from a specially attached stall to the front of the house. The rest of the building would be living space, storeroom space and workshop space as well.

Most buildings were home to several families often sharing cooking facilities and the same dung and rubbish pits.

Richer families would take over neighbouring plots to extend their houses.

Why was it important to the Medieval community?

Building like this may have just been the preferred fashion. However, it did make best use of the street front, giving more houses and businesses the chance for a prominent position. The overhanging nature of the upper floors may have stabilised them and braced joints. (Remember medieval houses were not built using precise measurements. Few even contain any truly straight lines!)

Why was it important to the medieval Jewish Community?

Jewish houses would have been built on similar plot sizes. Richer Jews like other affluent members of the community would have taken over neighbouring houses to extend their living and business space. Many Jews also had shops (it is incorrect to think that most Jews were money-lenders, it is just that the records only concentrate on their activity that made the king most money!) and these shops were often the ground floor of their living accommodation. The shops would have been very small – a window with a stall and a small roof to cover it, perhaps not more than 6 feet wide. Jew would trade in cheese, wine, wool, corn and other commodities. Some even sold fire-wood! Some carried out other trades – some were early doctors, music and dance teachers and some taught sword fighting and were military specialists or even made ladders!



A 13th century Jewish house in Lincoln – the famous Jew's House. A small number of the most successful Jews lived in fine stone houses. The shops on the ground floor were Jewish shops in the 13th century. The door under the chimney is thought to have been the original entrance to the medieval synagogue, which lay behind the house to the right. (Photo: M. Roberts)

What is interesting about this place?

What is your place?

Cross Keys Lane

What happened there?

Example of the width of medieval Streets.

Why was it important to the medieval community?

Medieval streets were narrow and crowded. The upper floors of buildings would overhang giving such streets an enclosed feel. Street surfaces were uneven and became very muddy after rain or flooding and dry and dusty in the summer. Those that fell while walking along them could get some quite nasty injuries. While property owners on the main gate streets were often made to look after the bit of street in front of their property, up to the centre line, this rarely happened on the smaller side streets. Nor were they often lit. While there were no public street lights on the gate streets either, the inns often lit their fronts as an invitation to customers providing some lighting for passers-by. Such small dark streets must have been quite scary to walk along at night.

Why was it important to the medieval Jewish Community?



The Jewish community just like everyone else would have walked along these streets. After 1222, Jews were made to wear badges to show that they were Jewish, to help prevent them mixing with Christians and infecting them with heresy. This would mean that it would be easy to identify them and attack them on the street, particularly after dark. The picture shows Jews being expelled from England by the King's Bailiff in 1290 and the Jews are wearing the English Jewish badge. (National Archives)

What is interesting about this place?

What is your place?

Eastgate (Medieval Synagogue and Curia Judeorum) - The site that Curry's occupies today

What happened there?

Jews would worship at the Synagogue. It was sited away from the public gaze and noise and bustle of the rest of the city, despite its very central location.

The Curia Judeorum was a courtyard area with communal facilities for the Jewish population. It was about 300 foot (about 91 meters) in length. This area contained the Synagogue, accommodation for the rabbi and other Synagogue officials and the mikveh, the ritual baths for people to wash in before attending services or prayers. There would also be an area for slaughtering animals in the way that obeyed the Jewish rituals and customs as well as ovens for baking matzahs - the unleavened bread eaten during Passover.

Why was it important to the Medieval community?

The Synagogue and Curia Judeorum had most significance for the Jewish community. However, this area of Eastgate was the posh end of the city. Close to the cross and the business of the markets held around there, but far enough away from noisy and noxious trades it would have been where the very richest and most prominent people lived.

Why was it important to the medieval Jewish Community?

The Synagogue and Curia Judeorum was the centre of Jewish life serving the Jewish populations practical and spiritual needs.

What is interesting about this place?

What is your place?

Bull Lane

What happened there?

Example of the width of Medieval Streets.

Why was it important to the Medieval community?

Medieval streets were narrow and crowded. The upper floors of buildings would overhang giving such streets an enclosed feel. Street surfaces were uneven and became very muddy after rain or flooding and dry and dusty in the summer. Those that fell while walking along them could get some quite nasty injuries. While property owners on the main gate streets were often made to look after the bit of street in front of their property this rarely happened on the smaller side streets. Nor were they often lit. While there were no public street lights on the gate streets either, the inns often lit their fronts as an invitation to customers providing some lighting for passers by. Such small dark streets must have been quite scary to walk along at night.

Why was it important to the medieval Jewish Community?

The Jewish community just like everyone else would have walked along these streets.

What is interesting about this place?