

PARADISE STREET, LIVERPOOL :  
THE DERIVATION OF THE NAME

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AT some date between 1733 and 1739 the Liverpool street, which since its construction about 1721 had been known as Common Shore or Shoreditch, was renamed Paradise Street. The street's earlier names, however, remained in occasional use until 1745.

Liverpool street nomenclature has, in general, presented little difficulty to local historians. Paradise Street, however, has proved an exception to this rule, and more than a century ago the author of a Liverpool guide-book regretted his inability to trace the origin of its name.<sup>(1)</sup> Since then, several eminent local antiquaries have sought, without success, a satisfactory derivation.<sup>(2)</sup>

The most serious attempt to solve the problem was made in 1930 by the late Ronald Stewart-Brown, who in November of that year initiated a correspondence on the subject in *Notes and Queries*.<sup>(3)</sup> The twenty-seven replies published yielded little of real importance, but a letter dated 5 November 1930, in a long list of places where the street-name "Paradise" is to be found, included Rotherhithe, a Thames-side district in the Metropolitan Borough of Bermondsey. *The Victoria History of Surrey*<sup>(4)</sup> affirms that the present Paradise Street in Rotherhithe was in existence in 1658, and that it is on or near the site of a former messuage called "Paradise" from which it derives its name. A 1631 record of this messuage survives.<sup>(5)</sup> Today, Paradise Street, Rotherhithe, follows exactly the same course as in 1658.<sup>(6)</sup>

In 1709 the Common Council of Liverpool engaged Thomas Steers to construct its first dock. In his *Memoir of Thomas Steers*<sup>(7)</sup> the late Henry Peet showed that Steers had long and close associations with Rotherhithe; his two wives were Rotherhithe women, several of his children were baptised at the Church of St. Mary there, and it is most probable that Steers acquired his dock-making knowledge at the construction of Rotherhithe's Howland Dock.<sup>(8)</sup>

<sup>(1)</sup> *Pictorial Liverpool: A new and complete handbook* (Liverpool, 1848), p. 136.

<sup>(2)</sup> e.g. Sir James Picton, Henry Peet, Robert Gladstone and Ronald Stewart-Brown.

<sup>(3)</sup> See also R. Stewart-Brown, "The Pool of Liverpool", *TRANSACTIONS*, Vol. 82 (1930), pp. 88-135.

<sup>(4)</sup> Vol. IV, p. 84.

<sup>(5)</sup> *Chancery Inquisitions Post Mortem*, Vol. 472, p. 89.

<sup>(6)</sup> Early London maps showing Paradise Street include Faithorne's (1658), Roque's (1746) and Horwood's (1799).

<sup>(7)</sup> *TRANSACTIONS*, Vol. 82 (1930), pp. 163-241.

<sup>(8)</sup> Completed in 1700. This dock, reconstructed, is now the Greenland Dock.

Steers' first wife died in 1717, and early in 1721 he went back to Rotherhithe and married Ann Tibington, the widow of a local shipmaster. He set up house with her in Strand Street, Liverpool.

In 1733 he was granted a lease of land in the street known at that time as Common Shore or Shoreditch. Mrs. Steers borrowed £250 from her trustees and her husband expended the money in the erection of two houses, in one of which he resided until his death in 1750.

At some date between 1733 and 1739 Common Shore became Paradise Street,<sup>(9)</sup> and it is highly probable that the change of name was made at the instance of Steers, influenced probably by his wife. The earlier name had unsavoury associations. Before its laying out as a street, Common Shore had been an evil-smelling swamp and had probably become the common sewer.<sup>(10)</sup> It is easily conceivable that such a name would temper the pride which Thomas and Ann Steers had in their new home. Steers was a prominent member of the Common Council and a leading civic official, and he would have little difficulty in inducing the responsible authority (if, indeed, such authority existed) to sanction the renaming of a street, which had never properly been named. In seeking a name to replace Common Shore it is not surprising that Steers and his wife should turn their thoughts towards Rotherhithe with which they had such close sentimental ties.

<sup>(9)</sup> The earliest-known use of the name is in a lease dated 12 March 1739. R. Stewart-Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

<sup>(10)</sup> T. Troughton, in his *History of Liverpool* (1810), states that Paradise Street was earlier named "The Common Sewer". Quoted by R. Stewart-Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 94.