

# THE JEWS OF MEDIEVAL YORK AND THE MASSACRE OF MARCH 1190

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Borthwick Institute of Historical Research  
University of York

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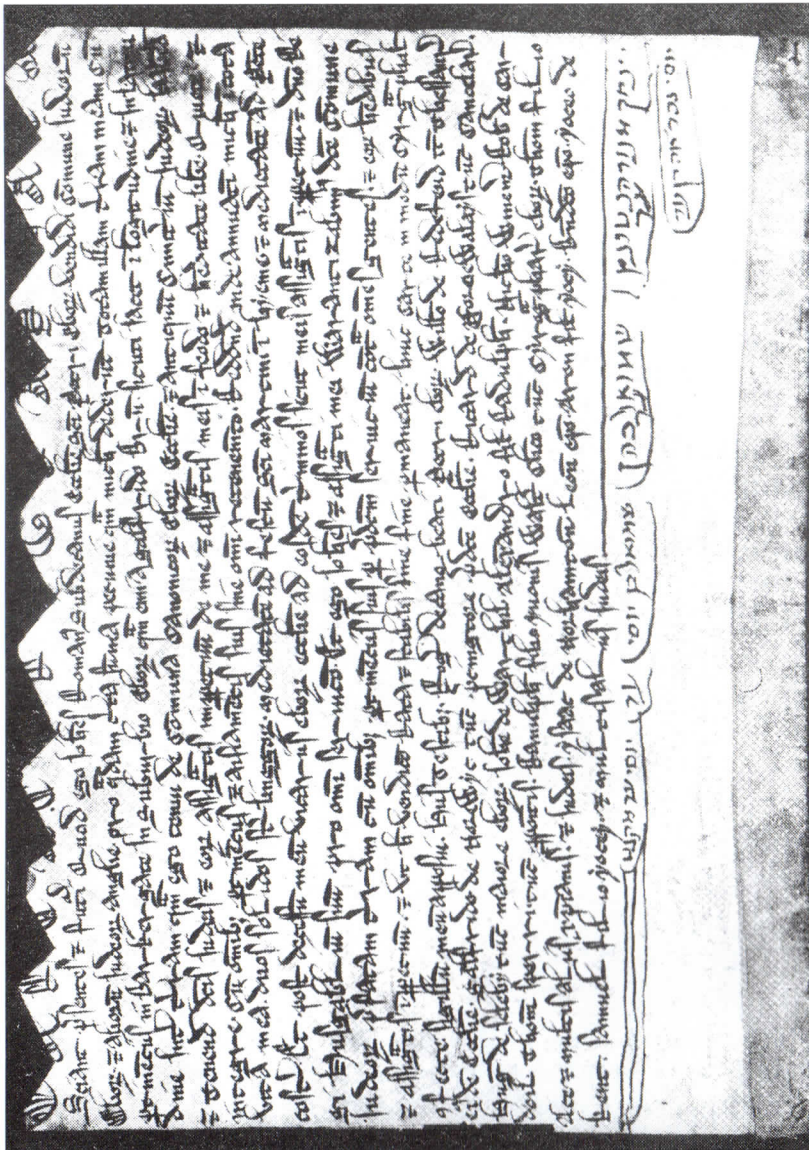
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Chirograph Recording Sale of Land Adjacent to the Old Jewish Cemetery  
to the Commune of the Jews of York, c. 1230 (see Appendix)

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R.B. Dobson

BORTHWICK INSTITUTE OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH

THE UNIVERSITY of York

First Published 1974  
Revised with postscript 1996

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This reprint 2002

ISBN 0 903857 86 3

First published as Borthwick Paper 45.  
Borthwick Publications (University of York),  
St Anthony's Hall, Peasholme Green, York, YO1 7PW.

*Front cover based on Francis Place's engraving of Clifford's Tower c.1680.  
The present tower was built in the mid 13<sup>th</sup> -century, some fifty years after the massacre.*

## FOREWORD

'There are few passages of our medieval annals more currently known and believed, or more frequently repeated, than the thrilling story of the Massacre of the Jews of York in the first year of the reign of King Richard I.' The comment made by the York antiquary, Robert Davies, almost exactly a century ago is even more valid today than it was then. Yet by an unfortunate irony the most famous of all the provincial Jewries of medieval England has been less well served either by local scholars or national historians than most of its counterparts. Davies's own remarkable pioneering investigation of 'The Mediaeval Jews of York' still remains the only detailed attempt to survey a vast and complicated topic. At the least it would seem worth-while to review that tragic story in the light of the transformation of the history of the medieval English Jewry at the hands of recent scholars.

Needless to say, this brief paper lays no claims to providing a comprehensive history of the medieval Jews of York. Like that history indeed, it falls into three natural parts: an attempt to interpret the extremely fragmentary and often intractable evidence for Jewish activity at York before 1190; a study of the great massacre itself; and a very cursory account, in epilogue form, of the York Jewry *redivivus* of the thirteenth century. So abundant are the original sources for this later period that it will be many years before its complete history can be written; but it would be surprising if future research should fail to confirm a story of remarkable prosperity followed by lingering decline, itself cut abruptly short by Edward I's expulsion of all the Jews from England in 1290.

The origins of my interest in the history of the medieval Jews of York derive from the enthusiastically learned teaching of Dr Cecil Roth, to whose published work and that of Mr H. G. Richardson and Professor J. C. Holt this study owes a very obvious debt. Among the many who have generously given me the benefit of their comments and assistance I should like to thank Professor Gerald Aylmer, Mr Bernard Barr, Dr David Palliser, Dr Richard Fletcher and, especially, Dr Paul Hyams. I am also indebted to the staff of the York Reference Library and the Mocatta Library of the Jewish Historical Society. Above all I am grateful to the late Mrs Norah Gurney, Director of the Borthwick Institute, for encouraging me to undergo the sometimes chastening but always interesting process of committing my thoughts about the Jews of York to writing. Norah Gurney's tragic death while this paper was in the press leaves me sadly unable to do more than express my thanks for the generosity with which she helped not only myself but all other contributors to this series during the last 15 years. Of her many great achievements, the strenuous editorial and administrative work involved in the production of the Borthwick Papers deserves to be remembered at this time.

## ABBREVIATIONS

- Adler M. Adler, *Jews of Medieval England* (London, 1939)  
*Cal. Jewish Plea Rolls* *Calendar of the Plea Rolls of the Exchequer of the Jews* (4 vols., London, 1905-72)  
 C.Ch.R. *Calendar of Charter Rolls*  
 C.Cl.R. *Calendar of Close Rolls*  
 C.P.R. *Calendar of Patent Rolls*  
 Davies R. Davies, 'The Mediaeval Jews of York', *Y.A.J.*, vol. III (1875), pp. 148-97  
*English Historical Review*  
 E.H.R. *Gesta Ricardi* *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi Benedicti Abbatis* (Rolls Series, 49, 1867), vol. II, pp. 72-250 (A.D. 1189-92)  
 Howden *Chronica Rogeri de Houedene* (Rolls Series, 51, 1868-71): vol. III (A.D. 1189-96) is cited without volume no.  
 Jacobs J. Jacobs, *The Jews of Angevin England: Documents and Records* (London, 1893).  
 Misc. J.H.S.E. *Miscellanies of the Jewish Historical Society of England*  
 Newburgh *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I* (Rolls Series, 82, 1884-9): vol. I (A.D. 1066-1194) is cited without volume no.  
 P.R.O. Public Record Office  
 Richardson H. G. Richardson, *The English Jewry under Angevin Kings* (London, 1960)  
 Rigg, *Select Pleas* *Select Pleas, Starrs, and Other Records from the rolls of the Exchequer of the Jews, 1220-1284*, ed. J. M. Rigg (Selden Society, vol. XV, 1901)  
 Roth C. Roth, *A History of the Jews in England* (3rd edn., Oxford, 1964)  
 Starrs and Charters *Starrs and Jewish Charters preserved in the British Museum*, ed. I. Abrahams, H. P. Stokes and H. Loewe (3 vols., Cambridge, 1930-2)  
 T.J.H.S.E. *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*  
 V.C.H. *Victoria County History*  
 Y.A.J. *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*

N.B.—The Pipe and Memoranda Rolls cited are all published by The Pipe Roll Society, with the exceptions of the Pipe Rolls for 31 Henry I, 2-5 Henry II and 1 Richard I, edited by Joseph Hunter for the Record Commission between 1833 and 1844.

## THE JEWS OF MEDIEVAL YORK AND THE MASSACRE OF MARCH 1190

### I

One of the most obvious attractions of the history of the medieval English Jewry is that it presents a story with a definite opening and a definite close, a narrative within the fixed limits of the Norman Conquest of 1066 on the one side and Edward I's expulsion of the Jews from England on the other. The burden of proof still rests with those who would wish to argue the case for the presence of resident as opposed to itinerant Jews in Anglo-Saxon England; and clear proof, despite many attempts to provide it, remains conspicuously lacking.<sup>1</sup> *A priori* the same argument applies to the possibility of a pre-Conquest settlement of Jews in York itself. All allowances made for the tentative hypothesis (no more than that) of a small Jewish mercantile community in Roman York,<sup>2</sup> the chances that the Anglian and Viking city was ever the home of a resident Jewish community seem infinitely remote. The two pieces of highly ambiguous evidence sometimes used to argue the contrary need not in fact detain us for long. Three of the clauses (Nos. 147, 150, 151) included in the collection of church canons traditionally known as the *Excerptiones* of Archbishop Egbert of York (c.732-66) do indeed forbid Christians from participating in Jewish religious services and from selling their co-religionists into the hands of Jews or pagans; but apart from the complete derivation of these clauses from Canons 29 and 37 of the fourth-century Council of Laodicea, it is now well established that the *Excerptiones* were compiled many years after Egbert's death and probably not even in England.<sup>3</sup> More puzzling is the entry in the D version of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for the year 952: 'In this year King

<sup>1</sup> Jacobs, p. 3; Roth, pp. 2-4; Richardson, p. 1. For the earlier polemical view that Jews were settled 'on British soil, long ere Saxon, Dane, or Norman coveted the possession of the British Isles', see M. Margoliouth, *The Anglo-Hebrews: Their Past Wrongs and Present Grievances* (London, 1856), p. 4; D'Bloussiers Tovey, *Anglia Judaica* (Oxford, 1738), pp. 1-4.

<sup>2</sup> S. Applebaum, 'Were there Jews in Roman Britain?', *T.J.H.S.E.*, vol. XVII (1953), p. 204.

<sup>3</sup> D. Wilkins, *Concilia* (London, 1737), vol. I, p. 111; cf. A. W. Haddan and W. Stubbs, *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 1871), vol. III, pp. 413-16; P. Fournier and G. Le Bras, *Histoire des Collections Canoniques en Occident* (Paris, 1931-2), vol. I, pp. 316-20; J. Parkes, 'Jews and Christians in the Constantinian Empire', *Studies in Church History*, vol. I, ed. C. W. Dugmore and C. Duggan (London, 1964), p. 78.

Edward ordered Archbishop Wulfstan [of York] to be taken into the fortress of *Iudanbyrig*, because accusations had often been made to the king against him.<sup>4</sup> As Charles Plummer pointed out long ago, the elucidation of the place-name *Iudanbyrig* is exceptionally difficult; but with breathtaking confidence one recent historian of York argued that 'the solution of a problem which has long puzzled students of history' might lie in its identification with the later Jewbury, a tract of land in the north-eastern suburbs of York recorded from the thirteenth century onwards.<sup>5</sup> The linguistic equivalence of the *Iudanbyrig* of 952 with 'Le Jeubry' of 1290 and later is itself somewhat suspect in view of the strong possibilities of textual corruption in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle at this point.<sup>6</sup> More generally, and quite apart from the specific difficulty of believing that a tenth-century English monarch would imprison a dissident archbishop of York in the immediate vicinity of his cathedral city, the inherent unlikelihood of there being a Jewish *faubourg* on the outskirts of any Anglo-Saxon town needs no urging.

Nor is there any evidence that the Norman conquest of England led to an immediate influx of Jews to York. Although William of Malmesbury's statement that it was the Conqueror himself who introduced Jews to England from Rouen has survived the critical scrutiny of modern scholars, many decades appear to have elapsed before members of the London Jewry began to settle in provincial towns. Admittedly the scarcity of governmental records for the reigns of William I and his two sons makes it hazardous to generalise with confidence on this important issue. At a period when the movements and business activities of English Jews were probably subject to much less restriction than in later years, it is certainly not impossible that they visited towns like York. On the other hand, the almost complete absence of references to Jews settled outside the metropolis in chronicles, charters and legal codes before the reign of Henry II is difficult to reconcile with any significant dispersal into the county towns before the middle of the twelfth century. So too is Roger of

<sup>4</sup> *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, A Revised Translation*, ed. D. Whitelock et al. (London, 1961), p. 73.

<sup>5</sup> C. B. Knight, *A History of the City of York* (York, 1944), pp. 94–6; see below, p. 47. For other attempts to identify *Iudanbyrig*, ranging from Jedburgh in Roxburghshire and Bede's *Ythan caestir* in Essex to the more likely Idbury (Ida's burg) in Oxfordshire, see especially *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel, A Revised Text*, ed. C. Plummer (Oxford, 1892–9), vol. II, pp. 148–9; *An Anglo-Saxon Chronicle from British Museum Cotton MS. Tiberius B. IV*, ed. E. Classen and F. E. Harmer (Manchester, 1926), p. 146.

<sup>6</sup> The entries in the D version of the Chronicle relating to events in northern England were probably added in the eleventh century by a York writer unfamiliar with place-names in the south: see D. Whitelock, ed., *The Peterborough Chronicle* (Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile, vol. IV, 1954), pp. 28–30. Cf. *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, ed. T. N. Toller (Oxford, 1898), p. 602, and *Supplement* (1921), p. 598.

Howden's explicit statement that until as late as 1177 'all dead Jews used to be transported to London to be buried'.<sup>7</sup> Although the famous solitary surviving Pipe Roll of Henry I's reign (1130–1) opens up to view the activities of a group of wealthy Jewish money-lenders in London itself, it may be even more significant that it contains no reference to any Jewish community elsewhere in the kingdom.<sup>8</sup> To this silence, despite several previous statements to the contrary, the city of York seems no exception. For Robert Davies, 'our first glimpse of the York Jews' was provided by the following entry in the Yorkshire section of the 1130–1 Pipe Roll: '*Benedictus filius Aldreti de Everwic reddit compotum de xv marcis argenti pro terra et debitis patris sui.*'<sup>9</sup> Davies's ingenious and unfortunately influential attempt to argue from this characteristically cryptic Pipe Roll entry that Benedict and his father Aldret were Jews can hardly survive even the most cursory scrutiny. Far from being of 'Israelitish origin' as Davies supposed, the name Aldret or Aldred is a common post-Conquest variant spelling of the exceptionally common Anglo-Saxon Christian name of Ealdred; Benedict itself was a name almost as popular among twelfth-century English Christians as Jews; and a Benedict son of Aldred is in any case a familiar figure in the Yorkshire sections of late twelfth-century Pipe Rolls, where he appears frequently in a completely unambiguous 'Christian' context.<sup>10</sup> Yet another and more recent candidate for the position of a 'probably early representative' of the York Jewish community can also be discounted. There is no proof whatsoever that the Grento de Everwic who appears in the 1130–1 Pipe Roll as a debtor to the crown for ten marks '*pro placito terrae uxoris suae*' was a Jew: Grento, like Aldret, is a name unknown among members of the twelfth-century English Jewry.<sup>11</sup>

In the inevitably frustrating search for the first recorded Jews of twelfth-century York, there is however one piece of evidence which provides a tantalising glimpse of another possibility. In a manuscript now at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, there survives an early fifteenth-century copy of a tract entitled '*Mauricius Prior de Kyrkeham contra Salomitas*' as well as a letter on the same subject addressed by Maurice to Archbishop Roger

<sup>7</sup> *Gesta Henrici* (Rolls Series, 49, 1867), vol. I, p. 182; Howden, vol. II, p. 137. For the relationship between these two chronicles see below, p. 23.

<sup>8</sup> *Pipe Roll 31 Henry I*, pp. 146–9; Jacobs, pp. 14–15; Richardson, pp. 8–9.

<sup>9</sup> *Pipe Roll 31 Henry I*, p. 26; 'Yorkshire Records', *Y.A.J.*, vol. III (1873–4), p. 397; Davies, p. 149.

<sup>10</sup> *Pipe Roll 1 Richard I*, pp. 78, 82; *Pipe Rolls 3 & 4 Richard I*, pp. 62, 209, 219; *Pipe Roll 5 Richard I*, p. 58. Cf. E. G. Withycombe, *Oxford Dictionary of Christian Names* (2nd edn., 1950), p. 11; Jacobs, p. 347.

<sup>11</sup> *V.C.H. Yorkshire, City of York* (1961), p. 47; D. Nicholl, *Thurstan, Archbishop of York* (1114–40) (York, 1964), p. 31; cf. Jacobs, pp. 352–3, 366.

(1154–81) of York.<sup>13</sup> Both are polemical works, designed to combat the minor heresy of those 'Salomites' who believed that Salome, the companion of the two Marys in their journey with Jesus to Jerusalem, was in fact a man and the husband of the Virgin's mother, St Anne. As Maurice's ingeniously learned treatise rested its case primarily on the author's ability to distinguish between the various Salomes who appear in the pages of Josephus, he was at elaborate pains to point out his own mastery of the Hebrew language. 'Wishing to follow the example of Jerome and to acquire a knowledge of Hebrew language and letters, I spent three years as a young man in such study; and I wrote out forty psalms in my own hand from the Hebrew psalter according to the copies of Lord Gerard once archbishop of York; and the Jews themselves admired the elegance of my calligraphy.'<sup>13</sup> This passage, it need hardly be said, bristles with uncertainties and ambiguities — not the least of which is that our knowledge of the very existence of a Maurice, prior of the Augustinian house at Kirkham in the East Riding, seems to depend upon this manuscript.<sup>14</sup> However, it would be unduly sceptical not to believe that Maurice (who gives his age as sixty-five years in his letter to Archbishop Roger)<sup>15</sup> may indeed have been a young student, quite probably at York, during the pontificate of Archbishop Gerard (1100–8). Is it possible to make the further inference that the Jews he mentions were themselves resident in the city of York during the first decade of the century?

The strongest support for such a view derives from what is known from other sources about the career and intellectual interests of

<sup>13</sup> Bodleian Library, Oxford, Hatton MS. 92, fos. 4–30, 30–37; an incomplete twelfth-century version of the tract *contra Salomitas* survives as Lincoln College, Oxford, Latin MS. 27, fos. 1–5. This latter manuscript derives from Sempringham, whose founder Gilbert (d. 1189) was the original recipient of Maurice's treatise. According to Maurice, some members of the first generation of Gilbertines had been tainted by the Salomite error: M. R. James, 'The Salomites', *Journal of Theological Studies*, vol. XXXV (1934), p. 295; cf. N. Ker, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain* (2nd edn., London, 1964), p. 177.

<sup>14</sup> 'Quia vero Ebraice lingue et litteris adiscendis ego emulatus Jeronimum quondam adolescentulus sub tribus annis studium impendi et de psalterio Ebraico iuxta exemplaria domini Gerardi quondam Eboracensis archiepiscopi xl psalmos manu mea scripsi, Judeis quoque ipsis literarum eleganciam admirantibus' (Hatton MS. 92, fo. 10).

<sup>15</sup> Thus Maurice, prior of Kirkham, does not figure in D. Knowles, C. N. L. Brooke and V. C. M. London, *The Heads of Religious Houses, England and Wales, 940–1216* (Cambridge, 1972), p. 168, which however and significantly has failed to identify any prior of Kirkham during the relevant period between 1153 and 1181. For this Maurice of Kirkham as a possible recipient (the alternative is Maurice of Rievaulx) of the *Epistola ad Mauricium* prefixed to Walter Daniel's *Life of Ailred of Rievaulx*, see the edition of the latter work by F. M. Powicke (Nelson's Medieval Classics, 1950), pp. xxx–xxxii; C. T. Clay, 'The Early Abbots of the Yorkshire Cistercian Houses', *Y.A.J.*, vol. XXXVIII (1952), pp. 31–2.

<sup>16</sup> Hatton MS. 92, fo. 37.

Archbishop Gerard himself. A distant relative of William the Conqueror, he certainly had close connections with the city of Rouen, an undoubted recruiting ground for the first generations of medieval English Jews, where he served as precentor of the cathedral church before entering the service of William Rufus. More interestingly still, Archbishop Gerard enjoyed a reputation not only as an exceptionally erudite scholar but also as a practitioner of the black arts.<sup>16</sup> As Hebrew letters were often used for casting spells, it has even been argued that the archbishop's possession of Jewish psalters may be due to his interest in 'the cult of Mephistopheles rather than of the Muse'.<sup>17</sup> More probably, Maurice of Kirkham's autobiographical reminiscences enable us to add the name of Archbishop Gerard of York to a group of cultivated Anglo-Norman prelates (like Abbot Gilbert Crispin of Westminster) known to have been interested in Hebrew scholarship either for its own sake or because of the light it could throw on Christian historical and theological problems. Set against a national background of remarkably harmonious (by later standards) intellectual collaboration, there seems to be no *a priori* reason to deny that Archbishop Gerard of York may have employed a small group of Jewish scholars at the very beginning of the twelfth century. Historians of the medieval English Jewry, normally condemned to deriving their evidence from administrative and financial records alone, are always in danger of overlooking the possibility that several of the first Jewish immigrants into this country came here to serve the cause of Christian scholarship rather than of economic need. But how far the Jewish scholars known to Maurice of Kirkham were either permanently settled in York or represented the learned fringe of a large Jewish community within the city are very different matters. They are probably best interpreted as exotic members of the large *familia* of a wealthy Anglo-Norman prelate, protected by their position in Archbishop Gerard's household from the harsh realities of urban life and completely dependent on his patronage for their livelihood. Maurice of Kirkham's diatribe against the Salomites may afford an unexpected glimpse of some of the earliest Jews at York; and in his incidental reference to the slightly inaccurate stress given by his Jewish acquaintances to their customary words of greeting (*shalom 'alekhem*) he indirectly confirms — what one would expect — that they had come to England from one of the great Jewries of Northern France.<sup>18</sup> But for the

<sup>16</sup> *Chronicon Henrici Knighton* (Rolls Series, 92, 1889–95), vol. I, p. 114; W. H. Dixon's *Fasti Eboracenses*, ed. J. Raine (London, 1863), pp. 158–63, provides the only comprehensive, if very uncritical, collection of references to Archbishop Gerard's career.

<sup>17</sup> R. Loewe, 'The Medieval Christian Hebraists of England: Herbert of Bosham and Earlier Scholars', *T.J.H.S.E.*, vol. XVII (1953), p. 234.

<sup>18</sup> Nicholl, *Thurstan, Archbishop of York*, p. 31.

certain emergence of a Jewish community at York organically related to local society, the historian must await the second half of the twelfth century.

According to William fitz Stephen, one of the most famous of Thomas Becket's biographers, the ending of the anarchy of Stephen's reign and the accession of the young Henry II in 1154 was a turning-point in the history of Jewish economic activity within England. 'Peace was everywhere . . . and there emerged in safety from towns and castles both merchants seeking fairs and Jews looking for creditors'.<sup>19</sup> Thanks to the survival of an uninterrupted sequence of Pipe Rolls from the second year of Henry II, such a generalisation can at last be put to some form of documentary test. By 1159 no less than nine Jewish communities were sufficiently established in English provincial towns to contribute, many of them substantially, to a *donum* levied by the king.<sup>20</sup> Although Norwich, Lincoln, Winchester, Cambridge, Thetford, Northampton, Bungay, Oxford and Gloucester all figure in this list, York is only conspicuous by its absence. Even more significantly, the Yorkshire sections of Henry II's Pipe Rolls consistently fail to record a single indisputable York Jew ('*Iudeus de Everwich*') until as late as 1176-7. It would of course be a dangerous error to treat the Pipe Rolls, informative though they are, as an infallible guide to the distribution of financial wealth and activity within the kingdom. Nevertheless, at a period when various Jews in other English provincial centres (most notably Jurnet of Norwich and Aaron of Lincoln) can be proved to have been engaged in a multiplicity of financial dealings throughout the country, the apparent absence of any counterparts in York inevitably provides matter for speculation. Why was a city later to become the centre of one of the most active Jewries of medieval England apparently so much slower than most other towns to develop a prominent Jewish business community?

Geographical distance, from Normandy as much as London perhaps, no doubt plays its part in explaining the reluctance of English Jews to take up residence in York during the early Angevin period: in the west of England too there is no evidence of substantial Jewish settlement until the last quarter of the century.<sup>21</sup> While too much is often made, in the twelfth

<sup>19</sup> '*ad creditores repetendos Judaei*': *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket* (Rolls Series, 67, 1875-85), vol. III, p. 19. '*Creditores*' is probably an unintentional slip, as Jacobs (p. 28) pointed out, for '*debitores*'.

<sup>20</sup> *Pipe Roll 5 Henry II*, pp. 3, 12, 17, 24, 28, 35, 46, 53, 65; Richardson, p. 9; Roth, p. 11. The largest contributions were made by London (200 marks), Norwich (72½ marks) and Lincoln (60 marks).

<sup>21</sup> The first Exeter Jew to be recorded occurs as late as 1181: *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. C. Roth and G. Wigoder (Jerusalem, 1971), vol. 6, p. 1022.

as in other centuries, of northern backwardness and primitivism, it may also be that the first years of Henry II's reign were ones in which the city of York was more than usually isolated from the main currents of national affairs.<sup>22</sup> But the most likely explanation for the apparently slow and hesitant beginnings of the York Jewry lies elsewhere. Modern historians of the medieval English Jews have sometimes reacted, understandably enough, from the view that the large-scale lending of money at interest was the only important economic function of the Angevin Jew. One would certainly be willing to concede that from the reign of Henry II onwards a number of York Jews, like their fellows in other towns, were probably engaged in a variety of other business activities — as pawn-brokers and pedlars, as physicians and landlords—which have inevitably left little trace in surviving records.<sup>23</sup> Especially intriguing is the possibility, raised by the interesting coincidence in location of English Jewish provincial communities and the sites of royal mints, that Jews may have played an important role in coinage operations on behalf of the crown.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand it seems highly unlikely that any activity other than that of money-lending on a massive scale could account for the emergence of a really substantial Jewish community. It is easy to forget that the settlement of medieval Jews in north European urban centres was always the exception rather than the rule.<sup>25</sup> The Jewish community in York itself had no important rival anywhere in northern England. It is hard to resist the somewhat paradoxical conclusion that although the Jews of medieval England were highly concentrated in urban centres, their functions were only marginally urban in any meaningful sense of

<sup>22</sup> Nicholl, *Thurstan, Archbishop of York*, pp. 15-16; V.C.H., *City of York*, p. 26.

<sup>23</sup> A York Jew named *Ursellus Medicus* is recorded in 1208: *Select Pleas of the Crown, 1200-25* (Selden Society, vol. 1, 1888), p. 57.

<sup>24</sup> The likelihood that their expertise in metal-work and as gold- and silversmiths would render some Jews highly qualified for work in royal mints finds occasional support in the records (see the suggestive name of David the moneyer noted by Roth, p. 11, n. 5). It would now seem that Joseph Jacobs (pp. 392-6) may have been unduly sceptical in rejecting the possibility that the moneyers' names inscribed on several of Henry II's pennies (which include that of *Isac of Everwic*) were those of Jews. The great majority of the Crown's official *monetarii* throughout the Angevin period were undoubtedly Christians; but that they employed Jews in the course of their minting operations seems highly probable; thus Nicholas, one of the workers in the Canterbury mint during the 1180s, may have been a converted Jew (Adler, p. 65).

<sup>25</sup> To the well-known absence of Jewish settlement in the booming east-coast ports of Angevin England one might add the example of the heavily 'industrialised' county of Flanders, where not a single Jew is recorded throughout the entire course of the middle ages: J. Stengers, *Les Juifs dans les Pays-Bas au Moyen Age* (Brussels, 1949), pp. 11, 87. For the (more readily understandable) absence of identifiable resident Jews in medieval Scotland and Ireland see Roth, p. 92, and L. Hyman, *The Jews of Ireland* (Shannon, Ireland, 1972), pp. 3-4.



that word: their financial services, as will soon be apparent, supported less the enterprise of merchants and burgesses than the activities of rural landlords. It was not, one may safely speculate, because of the city of York's own growing prosperity in the late twelfth century that Jews were persuaded to settle there. Of much greater importance was the existence within the city of an important royal castle which might (as it just failed to do in 1190) enable the Jews to protect their lives and enable the royal government to protect its investment in those lives. Of greater importance still was the emergence among the lords, gentry and religious houses of Yorkshire of an appetite for credit which the Jews were best equipped to satisfy.

With these very general considerations in mind, it is time to return to the difficult problem of the origins of significant Jewish business activity in York and its county. Perhaps one explanation for the hesitant beginnings of this activity is that until the later years of Henry II's reign northern landlords could still meet most of their need for credit by having recourse to Christian rather than Jewish usurers. Far from meeting new needs by new methods the Jewish financiers of Angevin England loaned money to clients already familiar with a complex and highly ramified system of credit. That local Christian usurers were at work in Yorkshire itself during Henry II's reign is testified by the case of two such men, Eudo son of Alured and Robert de Hokeswell, *usurarii*, some of whose chattels escheated to the sheriff of the county in 1178-9.<sup>26</sup> As might be expected however, the most wealthy Christian money-lenders of Angevin England were men not only much more prominent in public affairs but also in close contact with the king, his court and his government.<sup>27</sup> Among the many famous personalities involved in this lucrative business, ranging from William Trentegeruns of Rouen to Gervase of Cornhill, the most notorious is deservedly William Cade of St Omer in Flanders who seems to have died in or shortly before 1166.<sup>28</sup> Of major interest to the historian of the English Jewry are the revelations offered by the roll of debts outstanding to Cade from almost two hundred debtors, a document apparently prepared by clerks of the royal exchequer shortly after his death. Significantly enough the list of Cade's debtors includes many northern landlords, men whose heirs and descendants are

<sup>26</sup> *Pipe Roll 25 Henry II*, p. 23.

<sup>27</sup> On Christian usury in Angevin England, see especially Richardson, pp. 50-60, and the same author's 'The Chamber under Henry II', *E.H.R.*, vol. LXIX (1954), pp. 605-8.

<sup>28</sup> H. Jenkinson, 'William Cade, a Financier of the Twelfth Century', *E.H.R.*, vol. XXVIII (1913), pp. 209-27, with further contributions by that author and J. H. Round in the same volume, pp. 522-7 and 730-2; 'A Money-Lender's Bonds of the Twelfth Century', *Essays in History presented to R. L. Poole*, ed. H. W. C. Davis (Oxford, 1927), pp. 190-210.

known to have borrowed heavily from York Jews in the immediately subsequent generation. Robert de Gant (in debt to Cade for as much as 120 marks), Roger de Mowbray, Bertram de Bulmer and William de Vesci belonged exactly to that group of prominent northern knights and lords whose relations with the Jews of York were soon to be not only so close but so potentially hostile. Equally revealing is the fact that William Cade was engaged in massive credit transactions with at least one of those Yorkshire religious houses whose readiness to borrow money from Jews was to become so notorious a few years later. As early as the mid-1160s the abbot and monks of the Cistercian abbey of Roche in the West Riding, founded only twenty years before, were committed to delivering to Cade 22 pounds of wool and no less than 2,200 fleeces.<sup>29</sup>

The obscure origins of Jewish financial activity in Yorkshire are therefore perhaps best interpreted in terms not of a radically new economic phenomenon but of the replacement of the Christian usurer by his non-Christian equivalent. Such a replacement was no doubt often gradual and never absolutely complete: when the monk obedientiaries of Bury St Edmunds fell into serious debt in the 1170s, their single largest loan (of no less than £1,040) was apparently raised not from Isaac son of Rabbi Josce of London or Benedict of Norwich but from William fitz Isabelle, sheriff of London.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless the surviving evidence, despite its inadequacies, can leave us in no serious doubt that by the end of Henry II's reign Jews had succeeded Christians as the really substantial providers of private credit to English landlords. Both the exact chronology of this transformation, and the reasons for it, remain extremely mysterious. As credit operations in twelfth-century England may have been highly dependent on the protection and sanctions provided by royal officials and courts, no doubt the king's own initiatives were all-important. The decision of Henry II to turn from Christian to Jewish money-lenders in or very near the year 1164 probably carried in its wake the implication of a vast expansion of Jewish financial activity throughout England.<sup>31</sup> Nor can one avoid a historical explanation familiar at many periods in the long story of the Jewish people: Jews probably replaced Christians less because they were offering a new economic service than because they performed a well-established service more efficiently than their Christian competitors. In particular, the Jews resident in Angevin England enjoyed the inestimable advantage, for the purposes

<sup>29</sup> Jenkinson, 'William Cade', pp. 220-7.

<sup>30</sup> *The Chronicle of Jocelin of Brakelond*, ed. H. E. Butler (London, 1949), p. 2.

<sup>31</sup> This seems the most likely conclusion to be drawn from the important discussion in Richardson, pp. 50-61.

of money-lending, of forming a closely integrated minority group ideally qualified for mutual co-operation and organisation in business as well as religious matters. The financial syndicate, consortium or *societas*, dominated by a few exceptionally wealthy patriarchs, is visible at the very beginning of recorded medieval Jewish financial activity.<sup>32</sup> Individual Jewish families are in fact extremely unlikely to have settled in York without the backing and often the direct sponsorship of their wealthier compatriots in the south.

Some such hypothesis does at least make the obscure early history of Jewish settlement in York comparatively intelligible. Until the middle years of the reign of Henry II the few Jews whose business activities in Yorkshire were recorded in surviving Pipe Rolls and charters may well have been partners or agents of Jewish financiers south of the Humber: one possible example is the Samson *Iudeus*, whose obligation of 5 marks to the crown '*pro recto de debitis suis*' occurs fleetingly in the Yorkshire section of the Pipe Rolls for 1168–70.<sup>33</sup> Only very gradually and hesitantly do Jews resident in York seem to have amassed great financial power in their own right. The most specific reason for this delay was no doubt the dominance over money-lending throughout the country exerted by the famous Aaron of Lincoln during the twenty years after his first appearance as an important royal creditor in 1166.<sup>34</sup> When, probably in the early 1170s, the Yorkshire baron William Fossard junior involved himself in debts of more than 1,800 marks to Jews, it was Aaron of Lincoln who '*ad se totum debitum Willielmi trahebat*'; and by 1176 the monks of the Cistercian house of Meaux near Beverley were well aware that Aaron 'seemed the first and greatest of the Jews themselves'.<sup>35</sup> As late as 15 November 1182, it was with Aaron of Lincoln rather than a York Jew that the notorious Richard Malebisse had contracted his 'great debt'.<sup>36</sup> But the most striking demonstration of Aaron of Lincoln's financial ascendancy in the north is of course provided by the lists of his outstanding credits as compiled by royal exchequer officials during the years after his death in 1186. The special membrane added to the 1190–1 Pipe Roll and entitled '*Rotulus de Debitis Aaron Judeus in Lincoll' et Everwich'er*' is not

<sup>32</sup> Outside London the best documented Jewish business partnerships in the middle years of Henry II's reign are those of Jurnet and various other Norwich Jews: see *Pipe Roll 21 Henry II*, p. 20; *Pipe Roll 22 Henry II*, p. 15; V. D. Lipman, *The Jews of Medieval Norwich* (Jewish Historical Society of England, London, 1967), pp. 95–103.

<sup>33</sup> *Pipe Roll 15 Henry II*, p. 36; *Pipe Roll 16 Henry II*, p. 39.

<sup>34</sup> The most detailed account of Aaron of Lincoln's career is that provided by J. Jacobs, 'Aaron of Lincoln', *T.J.H.S.E.*, vol. III (1899), pp. 157–79, an article which now stands in need of serious revision.

<sup>35</sup> *Chronica Monasterii de Melsa* (Rolls Series, 43, 1866–8), vol. I, p. 174.

<sup>36</sup> *Starrs and Charters*, vol. I, pp. 118–19; vol. II, pp. 300–1.

only the indispensable guide to credit operations in northern England during the closing years of Henry II's reign but the single most important source of information about the Jewish community in York itself before the massacre of March 1190.<sup>37</sup> Until Aaron's own death, it may be suspected that most substantial money-lending by Jews in both Yorkshire and Lincolnshire took place under his overall supervision and often under his direction. Only the extreme inadequacy of the surviving evidence prevents us from concluding — what may indeed have been the case — that the Jewish business community at York originated as an outlying financial agency of Aaron of Lincoln himself. It was certainly only after Aaron's death, just four years before the 1190 massacre, that York's own Jewish financiers were able to come fully into their own.

The decisive factor in determining the date at which York began to develop its own community of wealthy Jewish money-lenders would therefore seem to be the increased demand for credit facilities on the part of northern landlords and the increased sophistication of the methods adopted by powerful Jews, like Aaron of Lincoln, to meet the demand. At a particular point of time — as in the history of any successful capitalist enterprise — the practical advantages and conveniences of establishing a branch headquarters would induce Jews to settle in York. What little evidence survives points to the 1170s as being the decisive period for the creation of an economically active Jewry in the city. By at least the middle of that decade Jews were beginning to acquire property in York itself. At some date before 1175 the master of St Peter's (later St Leonard's) Hospital in York felt it necessary to add to a charter leasing a piece of land on the marshes near the river Foss the express condition that the property should not be sold, given or exchanged in any way which might enable 'Jews to possess that land for their own uses'.<sup>38</sup> Another charter of about the same period records the grant in fee at a rent of 4s. od. per annum of '*unam mansuram terre in Fossegata*' by Abbot Clement of St Mary's, York,

<sup>37</sup> *Pipe Rolls 3 & 4 Richard I*, pp. 17–24; these lists of Aaron's debts continued to be enrolled on all subsequent Pipe Rolls until as late as 1205 and enable one to trace the very gradual process of their partial liquidation. It is important to add that the '*rotulus*' of 1191, far from listing all of Aaron's outstanding debts at the time of his death, comprises only the residue whose collection was transferred to the ordinary mechanisms of the exchequer after several years' preliminary work by the officials of the so-called '*Scaccarium Aaronis*' (Richardson, p. 117).

<sup>38</sup> *Early Yorkshire Charters*, ed. W. Farrer (Edinburgh, 1914–16), vol. I, p. 232. The occurrence of similar anti-Jewish prohibitory clauses in several later Yorkshire charters is of course an indirect tribute to the frequency with which real property in the county did pass to the Jews and to the fears held by many landlords that their own rights might consequently be jeopardised: see, e.g., *The Coucher Book of Selby*, vol. II (Yorkshire Archaeological Society, Record Series, vol. XIII, 1893), pp. 97, 154.

to '*Joceo iudeo filio David' et heredibus suis post eum*'.<sup>39</sup> Yet another indication that Jews were now beginning to move north in greater numbers is provided by a cryptic reference in the Pipe Roll for 1178-9 which records the payment of 6s. 1d. '*pro ducendo homine (i.e. to trial) qui retatus est de morte Judei*'. Although the Jew in question was not necessarily a resident of York, the entry is of some interest as the first recorded example of an anti-Jewish crime in northern England.<sup>40</sup>

Much more significant is the emergence during the 1170s of the earliest recorded '*Iudeus de Everwich*' in the person of Josce, the leader of the York community at the time of the massacre of March 1190. Josce's name is first mentioned in an undated Jewish bond or starr (the English word is derived from the Hebrew *shetar* or Latin *starrum*) of Aaron of Lincoln: in return for 1,260 marks paid to him by the monks of the abbey of Meaux, Aaron acquitted William Fossard of all the debts he owed to himself, to Josce of York and to six other Jews 'up to the feast of St Michael in the year 1176'.<sup>41</sup> For reasons already discussed, it seems entirely appropriate that this earliest indisputable reference to money-lending by a York Jew should occur in a document which makes clear that Jew's financial subordination to Aaron of Lincoln. Nevertheless in the following year (1176-7) Josce of York stands revealed as an important financier in his own right when he received payments amounting to 60 marks from the sheriffs of Yorkshire, Berkshire and Oxfordshire. Small though these sums '*in soltis per brevem regis*' are by comparison with some of the crown's remittances to the richest Jews of the period (e.g. over £500 to Aaron of Lincoln alone in 1168-9), they reveal that Josce had been making personal loans to the king.<sup>42</sup> For the remainder of his life Josce continued to conduct a thriving money-lending business, based no doubt on that substantial York house 'rivalling a noble citadel in the scale and stoutness of its construction'<sup>43</sup> which so caught the attention of his

<sup>39</sup> John Rylands Library, Manchester, Latin MS. 220, fo. 100, which must be earlier than 1184, the year in which Clement ceased to be abbot of St Mary's. The temptation to identify this Josce (who had bought the property in question from a certain William fitz William) with the leader of the York martyrs in 1190 must be resisted in view of the frequency of the name and the appearance of a Josce son of David as one of the London Jews subjected to the Guildford tallage imposed by Henry II at Christmas 1186 (*Pipe Rolls 3 & 4 Richard I*, p. 139; Jacobs, p. 89).

<sup>40</sup> *Pipe Roll 25 Henry II*, p. 16.

<sup>41</sup> *Pipe Roll 9 Richard I*, pp. 46, 61-2, translated (as the very first example of an English *shetar* to survive) in Jacobs, pp. 58-9. For a detailed discussion of Fossard's debts see Richardson, pp. 89-90.

<sup>42</sup> *Pipe Roll 23 Henry II*, pp. 14, 51, 70. These are the only allusions to royal borrowings from a York Jew in the twelfth century — not surprisingly when one remembers that after 1179 'when the king needs money, he takes it in the form of a tax' (Richardson, p. 63).

<sup>43</sup> Newburgh, p. 314.

Christian neighbours. Secure enough to offer mortgages on a twenty-year term, by the time of his death he held in seisin important estates or rents at Hessay, Hooton Pagnell, Askern and within York itself.<sup>44</sup>

It was during the years immediately previous to his fatal journey to Richard I's coronation at Westminster in 1189 that York's second 'great usurer', Benedict of York, established himself as a money-lender apparently even more active and wealthy than Josce. The two leaders of the Jewish community on the eve of the massacre of 1190 often worked together in close business co-operation: it was a debt of 41 marks to both Benedict and Josce which apparently persuaded Amfrey de Chauncey to grant a carucate of land in Skirpenbeck, ten miles east of the city, to the Dean and Chapter of York Minster in return for their relieving him of the responsibility for the repayment of the loan.<sup>45</sup> Like Josce, Benedict gradually began to acquire control over various landed tenements in the vicinity of York as a result of his money-lending activities, for example at Turgrimebi (presumably Thorganby on the river Derwent in the East Riding) and within York itself. Slightly further afield, the inability of Ralph son of Aldelin to repay a debt of 80 marks to Benedict the Jew of York led to a complicated settlement in the Curia Regis towards the end of June 1189, whereby Ralph's estate at Aldfield near Ripon was transferred to his brother William.<sup>46</sup> Nor were Benedict's business affairs confined to Yorkshire. He held two messuages in Northampton which escheated to the crown after his death and were later granted by King John to one of his greatest judges, Simon de Pattishall.<sup>47</sup> Many of Benedict's bonds, as well as much of the property pledged to him, also escheated to the king; traffic in these debts, and in others which passed into the hands of his Jewish heirs, continued for at least a decade after his decease and provide a retrospective tribute to the scale of his money-lending.<sup>48</sup> An even greater tribute is the fact that in the months immediately after Benedict's death by violence his sons were prepared or induced to pay the considerable sum of no less than 700

<sup>44</sup> *Rotuli de Oblatis et Finibus tempore Regis Johannis* (Record Commission, 1835), p. 122; *Pipe Roll 29 Henry II*, p. 10; *Pipe Roll 31 Henry II*, pp. 33, 77; *Pipe Roll 32 Henry II*, pp. 60, 85; *Pipe Rolls 3 & 4 Richard I*, p. 223.

<sup>45</sup> *Early Yorkshire Charters*, vol. II, p. 183, datable only between 1180 and 1190; for another example (of a loan of £60 from Josce, £30 from Benedict) see *Rotuli de Oblatis et Finibus*, p. 130.

<sup>46</sup> *Pipe Rolls 3 & 4 Richard I*, p. 223; *Abstracts of the charters and other documents contained in the chartulary of the Cistercian Abbey of Fountains*, ed. W. T. Lancasters (Leeds, 1915), vol. I, p. 23.

<sup>47</sup> *Rotuli Chartarum*, ed. T. D. Hardy (Record Commission, 1837), p. 52.

<sup>48</sup> *Curia Regis Rolls*, vol. I (1922), pp. 389-91; *Pipe Roll 3 John*, p. 160; Jacobs, pp. 195, 211.

marks 'pro habendis terris patris sui et debitis secundum cartas suas.'<sup>49</sup>

The varied and important financial transactions of Benedict and Josce are the only aspect of Jewish life at York before 1190 to be fully illuminated by surviving records. Otherwise our ignorance as to the composition of that community would be almost total were it not for the survival on the Pipe Rolls from 1191 onwards of a list of the still outstanding debts of York Jews to Aaron of Lincoln, a list appended to the much longer schedule of debts of Christians in Yorkshire to the same famous creditor. Any precise interpretation of the reasons for large-scale borrowing by Jews from other Jews is bound to be a matter for hazardous speculation. The York evidence does not appear to substantiate H. G. Richardson's suggestion that such loans 'seem to have been made largely to people in poor circumstances'.<sup>50</sup> On the contrary it may be suggested that at York Aaron of Lincoln's outstanding credits, often in the form of unredeemed bonds, were held by the most enterprising members of the Hebrew community there. Approximately a dozen York Jews appear in the 1190-1 and subsequent Pipe Rolls as debtors of Aaron of Lincoln. The heaviest obligations were those of Benedict, who owed three separate amounts of 185 marks, 20 marks and £30, as well as another 30 marks on behalf of his three brothers. By comparison the recorded debts of Josce of York to Aaron of Lincoln totalled less than 50 marks, including 12½ marks for a silver vessel ('*de vessella argentea*') which he was presumably holding in pledge. In addition to Benedict and Josce, the York Jews in debt to Aaron included several Samuels (not all to be identified with one another), Isaac son of Mosse, Dieudonné son of Aaron, Meir brother of Benedict as well as Cresse and Samson of Doncaster. Isaac and Dieudonné were expressly stated to have acted as Aaron of Lincoln's attorneys; while one of the York Samuels was identified as a partner or *socius* of Benedict.<sup>51</sup> The final impression left by this brief glimpse of the Jewish settlement at York before its temporary extinction in 1190 is therefore of a community dominated by a small and closely integrated élite of money-lenders and dealers in bonds. To this impression the Jewish sources for the massacre of 1190 enable us to add one additional and especially interesting element. No doubt as a consequence of its new prosperity the York community appears to have 'developed into a relatively important centre of Jewish studies'. The most notable Jewish author attracted to York towards the end of Henry II's

<sup>49</sup> *Pipe Roll 2 Richard I*, p. 66; *Pipe Rolls 3 & 4 Richard I*, pp. 67, 214; *Pipe Roll 5 Richard I*, p. 62; *Pipe Roll 6 Richard I*, p. 150; *Pipe Roll 7 Richard I*, p. 83.

<sup>50</sup> Richardson, p. 116.

<sup>51</sup> *Pipe Rolls 3 & 4 Richard I*, pp. 23-4, 222-3. For analogous lists '*De debitis Judeorum que debebantur predicto Aaron Judeo*' see *ibid.* pp. 51, 60, 90, 148, 158-60.

reign was clearly Rabbi Yomtob of Joigny, that 'famous doctor of the law . . . who is said to have come from parts beyond the sea to teach the English Jews'.<sup>52</sup> Among the other victims of the 1190 massacre were the scholars Rabbi Elijah, cited as an authority in the *Tosaphoth*, a certain Moscs, and even Joseph or Josce of York himself — the last of whom received a warm tribute on the orthodoxy of his learning: 'Whether he taught by mouth or book he was not among those who err'.<sup>53</sup>

By the date of Richard I's accession, the Jewish community at York was therefore displaying signs of unusual scholarly as well as financial activity. But the total size of the Jewry presided over by Josce, Benedict and their fellows remains almost completely a matter for conjecture.<sup>54</sup> According to Ephraim of Bonn, approximately 150 men and women lost their lives in March 1190, an estimate certainly to be preferred to the 500 males, '*exceptis mulieribus et parvulis*', mentioned by Roger of Howden.<sup>55</sup> Taken as an estimate of the total Jewish population of the city, the figure of 150 may not indeed be too widely off the mark and is certainly in line with the almost equally speculative assessments recently made in the case of other English provincial towns.<sup>56</sup> It would be surprising if there were ever more than twenty to forty Jewish households in the medieval city. Nevertheless there can be no doubt that these limited numbers sufficed to establish the York community as the one substantial English Jewry north of Lincoln. Indeed the only other urban centre in the north which ever showed clear signs of developing a regular Jewish community at all was Newcastle-upon-Tyne, perhaps the greatest of all twelfth-century English 'boom towns'. Even there a Jewish settlement was slow to emerge and quick to disappear. The first recorded Jew of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, a certain Samuel, is mentioned as late as 1190; and within little more than

<sup>52</sup> Newburgh, p. 318. The best survey in English of Yomtob's *responsa*, religious elegies and biblical commentaries is provided by C. Roth, *The Intellectual Activities of Medieval English Jewry* (British Academy, Supplemental Papers No. VIII, 1949), pp. 21-2.

<sup>53</sup> C. Roth, 'A Hebrew Elegy on the York Martyrs of 1190', *T.J.H.S.E.*, vol. XVI (1951), pp. 213-30. Roth's alleged identification of yet another York scholar in the person of Vivus or Vives (*Intellectual Activities*, pp. 22-3) must be treated with reserve in view of the ambiguities of his Hebrew second name and a very inconclusive reference in *Pipe Roll 24 Henry II*, p. 65.

<sup>54</sup> By Michaelmas 1189 there were certainly a large enough number of Jews in York for the government to hire carts for their transport to London (*Pipe Roll 1 Richard I*, p. 75).

<sup>55</sup> Jacobs, pp. 130-1; Roth, p. 272; *Gesta Ricardi*, p. 107; Howden, p. 33.

<sup>56</sup> V. D. Lipman, 'The Anatomy of Medieval Anglo-Jewry', *T.J.H.S.E.*, vol. XXIII (1971), p. 67; Lipman, *Jews of Medieval Norwich*, pp. 36-48, with the conclusion that the Jewish 'family of more than three or four children must have been a rarity'; C. Roth, *The Jews of Medieval Oxford* (Oxford Historical Society, New Series, vol. IX, 1951), pp. 30-1. Even the largest thirteenth-century French Jewries, like Narbonne and Perpignan, probably never exceeded a total population of 300 or 50: R. W. Emery, *The Jews of Perpignan in the Thirteenth Century* (New York, 1959), pp. 11-12.

a generation — in 1234 — Jews were expelled from the city for ever.<sup>57</sup>

Elsewhere in northern England the only indication of Jewish associations with places outside York derives from the highly problematic evidence of 'surnames'. The appearance of a Cresse and Samson of Doncaster among the York Jews of the early 1180s has already been mentioned; and at various dates throughout the next century there are references to a Solomon and Isaac of Beverley, a Jeremiah of Grimsby, a Manasser of Bradford, an Amiot and Vives of Pontefract, a Miles of Rotherham, a Vives of Wakefield, a Leo of Scarborough, a Manasser of Yarm as well as a Hugh and Christina of Kendal, two inmates of the London *Domus Conversorum* who were still alive as late as 1308.<sup>58</sup> As in southern England, where a similar pattern emerges from a study of Jewish second names, the problem presented by these toponymics defies easy solution. It seems scarcely possible that such names bear retrospective witness to a harmonious period in the history of Anglo-Jewish relations when individual Hebrew families found it economically and socially practicable to settle in small towns; and it would seem wiser to consider H. G. Richardson's alternative suggestion that the Jews whose names associate them with places outside the large county towns were those who had an occasional rather than permanently sedentary connection with the place in question. All in all, it seems much more likely that some York-based Jews regularly travelled to towns like Pontefract, Wakefield and Yarm in pursuit of business than that these boroughs ever possessed a community, however small, of resident Jews themselves. Admittedly Richardson's explanation of these intriguing Jewish second names is less than completely convincing; but then nomenclature expressed in terms of toponymics has always been an erratic guide to the geographical origins and distribution of medieval Englishmen. In the case of the medieval Jews it seems at present safest to conclude that a few individuals may indeed have sometimes established temporary business agencies within a few of the smaller northern towns; but only at York and, to a much lesser extent, at Newcastle-upon-Tyne was there a more permanent settlement.

<sup>57</sup> For references to Samuel, '*Judeus de Nouo Castello*' at the very beginning of Richard I's reign, see *Pipe Roll 1 Richard I*, p. 242; *Pipe Roll 2 Richard I*, p. 20; for the expulsion of the Jews from Newcastle, see *C.Cl.R.*, 1231-34, p. 466. The Jews of Newcastle left one legacy of their sojourn in the city — the street-name 'Jew-gate', later called Silver Street: E. Mackenzie, *A Descriptive and Historical Account of the Town and County of Newcastle upon Tyne* (Newcastle, 1827), vol. I, p. 180.

<sup>58</sup> *Cal. Jewish Plea Rolls*, vol. I, p. 44; vol. IV, pp. 17, 25; *Early Yorkshire Charters*, vol. II, p. 120; *Curia Regis Rolls*, vol. V, p. 309; *Abstracts of Fountains Chartulary*, vol. I, p. 234; Adler, p. 351; H. P. Stokes, *Studies in Anglo-Jewish History* (Jewish Historical Society of England, Edinburgh, 1913), pp. 80-1. The list of thirteenth-century Jews with names derived from Yorkshire place-names could be almost indefinitely prolonged.

What conclusions is it safe to draw from this inevitably arid survey of the fragmentary evidence for the activities of the York Jews before the massacre of 1190? Far from being, as has traditionally been assumed, a long-established and flourishing community, it might well be argued that the presence of a large and active Jewish settlement in the city was a comparatively new phenomenon. On the eve of their martyrdom, Benedict and Josce of York at least must have been familiar to Yorkshire landlords as money-lenders prepared to make advances of up to 40 or even 80 marks on the security of their estates. Nevertheless the recorded borrowings from York Jews before 1190 hardly begin to compare with the vast debts incurred to Aaron of Lincoln.<sup>59</sup> Similarly it was in Aaron's bonds that an unusually brisk traffic had developed towards the close of Henry II's reign, a traffic which gave the Yorkshire Cistercian houses in particular an opportunity to augment their estates by buying up large tracts of mortgaged land at a discount.<sup>60</sup> The liquidation of Aaron of Lincoln's great financial empire in the years immediately after his death must have had a direct effect on the position of the Jews of York. Until 1186 they seem to have lived under his shadow; four years later they were to pay a heavy price for inheriting his position as the leading usurers of the north. In this capacity they suffered not only from the royal government's attempts to foreclose on the greatest series of debts yet recorded in England but also from their own role as the crucial intermediaries in the redistribution of landed wealth throughout the north. As has so often happened in the long and tortured history of anti-semitism, the York Jews of 1190 brought to a climax political and economic pressures much more significant than the ones created by themselves.

## II

The massacre and mass-suicide of the York Jews on *Shabbat ha-Gadol* (the night of 16 March 1190) has become, in many ways deservedly, the

<sup>59</sup> For the list of Aaron's outstanding debtors in Yorkshire, still almost 80 in number five years after his death, see *Pipe Rolls 3 & 4 Richard I*, pp. 22-3, 221-2.

<sup>60</sup> The 'largest amount mentioned as owed to any Jew of the twelfth century' is the 6,400 marks, commuted by Richard I on 16 November 1189 to a cash payment to himself of only 1000 marks, owed to Aaron of Lincoln by nine Cistercian abbeys: this remarkable 'debt' is probably best interpreted as the result of trafficking in encumbered estates on the part of the monks of Rievaulx, Kirkstall, Roche and the other houses: *Memorials of Fountains Abbey*, vol. II (Surtees Society, vol. 67, 1878), pp. 18-19; Jacobs, pp. 108-9; Richardson, pp. 90-1; G. I. Langmuir, 'The Jews and the Archives of Angevin England: Reflections on Medieval Anti-Semitism', *Traditio*, vol. XIX (1963), pp. 216-18. But the exact extent of genuine as opposed to fictitious monastic indebtedness to the Jews remains a very open question.

single most famous incident in the history of the medieval English Jewry. There are certainly few episodes which remind us more forcefully of the dangers of discussing the fortunes of the Jews of York in purely local terms. An isolated and extraordinary catastrophe as regards the history of York, the pogrom of 1190 has only too many analogies elsewhere in England and Europe. Indeed the violent persecution of the Jews in the period immediately after Richard I's coronation belongs to that large category of phenomena which point to one of the central paradoxes of medieval public and political life: the way in which social communities so much more localised in their needs and aspirations than our own were nevertheless even more likely than their modern counterparts to be stirred into violent demonstrations of feeling as a result of national and even international movements. Admittedly the English Jews, no doubt because of their then numerical insignificance, had been spared the atrocities suffered by the Jewries of northern France and the Rhineland in the 1090s and 1140s. But the preparations for the Third Crusade, not only led by Richard I but with massive English participation, obviously created an unprecedented problem now that sizeable Jewish communities had emerged in several provincial towns. There is no need to stress the two most obvious dangers; that in 1189-90 both the English government and, to a lesser extent, the English Jews themselves were taken unawares owing to their lack of previous experience of mass assaults on Jewish communities; and that there was a direct correlation between crusading propaganda against the external Moslem pagan and active hostility to the internal Jewish 'infidel'. As we shall see, the tragic story of the York Jews in the spring of 1190 is a specific commentary on these two themes — governmental inexperience on the one side, and the deliberate exploitation of mass hysteria on the other.

Although the massacres of the Jewish communities at York and elsewhere during early 1190 were unquestionably the product of the peculiar political and emotional tensions released by Richard I's departure on the Third Crusade, such violent demonstrations of feeling were at the same time the consequence of a rising tide of anti-Jewish sentiment during previous decades. Although such changes in the climate of opinion are notoriously difficult to evaluate, most of the available evidence suggests that the rapid expansion of Jewish activity during the later years of Henry II's reign had begun to evoke a strongly critical reaction. Here again developments in York must be set within a national and indeed international context. The official exponents of clerical doctrine in the late twelfth century may have continued to expound the traditional Bernardine view that the Jews should be preserved as living symbols of the Passion, to be converted and not destroyed; but there is no doubt that

the pontificate of Alexander III (1159-81), and the Third Lateran Council over which he presided in 1179, marked an increasing papal obsession with the dangers to Christian souls of intercourse with the Jews.<sup>61</sup> Ten years before the great catastrophe of 1190 a long letter from Alexander III instructed Hugh du Puiset, the bishop of Durham whose associates were later involved in the York massacre, to take stringent precautions against the contagious effects of Jewish *superstitio* and *perfidia*.<sup>62</sup> Even more alarming than hardening papal attitudes was the increase in the number of violent assaults on the northern French Jews from the massacre of Blois (26 May 1171) onwards. In retrospect the series of savage acts of persecution against Jewish communities in northern France for the ensuing twenty years (until at least the atrocity at Bray-sur-Seine in March 1191) seem to represent a particularly significant and sinister development in the history of European anti-semitism.<sup>63</sup> The effect within England of these gratuitously sadistic massacres, at a period in this country's history when relations with the north of France were unusually close, is bound to have been considerable. Not only is there impressionistic evidence of an unusually large influx of French Jews into England (including the arrival in York of the famous Rabbi Yomtob from Joigny): the English Jews themselves may have become increasingly conscious that — like the thirty-one martyrs of Blois whom they mourned in their own 'Isles' — they too might be called upon to 'sacrifice themselves in honour of Unity'.<sup>64</sup>

Within England also, although less dramatically than in northern France, there is evidence of growing hostility towards the Jews during the 1170s and 1180s. Most spectacular was the rapid propagation of ritual murder accusations in the wake of the 'terrible precedent' set by the case of St William of Norwich in 1144, the first of all Jewish blood libels recorded in medieval Europe. Thomas of Monmouth's famous account of the origins of the cult of William of Norwich makes it inadvertently clear that there were many inhabitants of Norwich originally quite

<sup>61</sup> *Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta* (Centro di Documentazione istituto per le scienze religiose; Freiburg, 1962), pp. 199-200; E. A. Synan, *The Popes and the Jews in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1965), pp. 79-82; Jacobs, pp. 22-3.

<sup>62</sup> G. V. Scammell, *Hugh du Puiset, Bishop of Durham* (Cambridge, 1956), pp. 124-5.

<sup>63</sup> *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vols. 4, pp. 1113, 1322; 5, pp. 7-19; H. Gross, *Gallia Judaica* (Paris, 1897), pp. 117, 123-4; G. I. Langmuir, 'Judei Nostri and the Beginning of Capetian Legislation', *Traditio*, vol. XVI (1960), pp. 203-39. Robert Chazan's forthcoming book, *Medieval Jewry in Northern France: a Political and Social History* should do much to illuminate relations between English and French Jewries at this period.

<sup>64</sup> The English as well as the French Jews commemorated the Blois martyrs by a day of mourning; and it was in their memory, ironically enough, that Rabbi Yomtob of Joigny and York composed an elegy (Jacobs, p. 265; Roth, *Intellectual Activities*, p. 22).

unconvinced that the boy found dead in Thorpe Wood on 24 March 1144 had indeed been killed by the Jews.<sup>65</sup> But within a generation, and largely as a result of the propaganda produced by such interested clerical parties as Thomas of Monmouth himself and his bishop, William Turbe, it seems likely that large sections of the English population had been predisposed to accept ritual murder accusations at their face value. During the reign of Henry II three new Christian 'boy-martyrs' at the hands of the Jews had emerged in the persons of St Harold of Gloucester (1168), St Robert of Bury St Edmunds (1181) and the particularly incredible Adam of Bristol (by 1183).<sup>66</sup> The long-term effects of the establishment of such cults for such reasons on the way in which Christians viewed Jews everywhere must have been incalculable. Nor can York have been at all isolated from their pernicious influence. Not so many years before the massacre of 1190 a crippled inhabitant of the city, *Thomas Eboracensis*, made a long and painful journey to the tomb of St William at Norwich 'and receiving the remedy he hoped for, he left his crutches there as a token of his cure'.<sup>67</sup> But there is even more direct witness to the increasing tide of anti-semitism in late twelfth-century Yorkshire. The northern chroniclers of the period not only took pains to record blood libel allegations from all parts of the country but wrote of the Jews in a manner which reveals their complete commitment to the classic medieval Christian stereotype of the blaspheming and sacrilegious enemy of Christ.<sup>68</sup> Equally revealing of increasing hostility to the Jews is the way in which the oldest known manuscript copy of the Use of York, probably written at Whitby Abbey in the 1190s, was amended to prohibit the bending of the knees during the recitation of the famous Good Friday prayer *pro perfidis Judaeis*. By the end of the twelfth century it would seem that even in the midst of its formal devotions the church of York had forgotten, as Robert Fawtier put it, 'the gospel of forgiveness'.<sup>69</sup>

The anti-semitism of contemporary Christian observers is inevitably one of the greatest obstacles to a proper understanding of the pogroms of

<sup>65</sup> *The Life and Miracles of St William of Norwich*, ed. A. Jessopp and M. R. James (Cambridge, 1896), especially pp. 88, 96; Lipman, *Jews of Medieval Norwich*, pp. 50-7.

<sup>66</sup> *Historia et Cartularium Monasterii Sancti Petri Gloucestriae* (Rolls Series, 33, 1863-7), vol. I, pp. 20-1; Adler, pp. 185-6; Jacobs, pp. 45-7, 75; Roth, p. 13.

<sup>67</sup> *Life and Miracles of St William of Norwich*, p. 271.

<sup>68</sup> Perhaps the most interesting example, because it emanates from a monastery geographically remote yet under heavy obligations to the services of Jewish financiers, is afforded by *Chronica Monasterii de Melsa*, vol. I, p. 244.

<sup>69</sup> R. Fawtier, 'The Jews in the Use of York', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, vol. V (1918-20), pp. 381-5; the crucial addition is that of a 'non' to the instruction '*Hic flectamus genua*' on fo. 30 of the MS. For a guide to the voluminous literature about the implications of the prayer *pro perfidis Judaeis*, only removed from the Roman Good Friday liturgy by Pope John XXIII, see Synan, *Popes and Jews*, pp. 175-6.

1189-90. To the general rule that we are unable to witness the oppression of the York Jews from the viewpoint of the persecuted there are however some important exceptions. Indeed, and as Dr Roth has pointed out, the York massacre is virtually the only episode in the history of the medieval English Jewry to have been recorded in some detail by contemporary or near-contemporary Hebrew sources. Apart from its appearance in the *sefer zekhira* or martyrology of the Second and Third Crusades composed by Ephraim ben Jacob of Bonn, the tragedy was the subject of no less than three separate Hebrew elegies, one by Joseph of Chartres and two by Menahem ben Jacob of Worms. Although Rabbi Menahem, who died at Worms in 1203, may have met some survivors of the York massacre, neither of his poetic lamentations is at all historically specific. The best known, a *kinnah* of thirty stanzas 'On the martyrs of the Isles of the Sea in the year 4950 (A.D. 1190)' certainly succeeds, even in translation, in conveying an atmosphere of grief-stricken horror: 'Sword, wherefore turnest thou in all directions, consuming all around thee?'. But Rabbi Menahem fails to locate the catastrophe he laments in any particular part of England; and an attempt to suggest that in stanzas 4-7 he alluded not only to the fame of the York martyrs as exponents of the Torah but also to the violent death of Richard I ('He wrought his own doom') seems to be based on an over-literal interpretation of the conventional formulas of this type of synagogal poetry.<sup>70</sup> Much more informative is the elegy rediscovered at Munich thirty years ago and written by the French contemporary of Rabbi Menahem, Joseph ben Asher of Chartres. Joseph's bitter hostility, like that of Menahem, to 'the King of the Isles' seems to derive from the erroneous impression that Richard I was directly responsible for shedding the 'blood of innocent souls'; but his statement that the Jews 'were gathered together to the Fortress' may well allude to the royal castle at York just as his reference to their assailants as 'shepherds' could reveal his knowledge of rural participation in the massacre.<sup>71</sup>

Ephraim of Bonn's account of the massacre is however unquestionably the most valuable of all the Hebrew sources to survive. In the space of a few lines, the author conveys a comparatively detailed if no doubt slightly garbled description of the catastrophe which ensued when 'the Wanderers came upon the people of the Lord in the city of Evoric in

<sup>70</sup> S. Schechter, 'A Hebrew Elegy', *T.J.H.S.E.*, vol. I (1893-4), pp. 8-14; Menahem's other elegy is printed in A. M. Habermann, *Gezereth Ashkenaz ve Zarphath* (Jerusalem, 1936), pp. 147-51.

<sup>71</sup> Roth, 'A Hebrew Elegy on the York Martyrs of 1190', pp. 213-30. The career and writings of Joseph of Chartres are discussed in Gross, *Gallia Judaica*, pp. 603-4.

England on the Great Sabbath'. Of the 150 Jewish men and women alleged to have lost their lives, either by slaughter or by being burnt alive, 60 are said to have been killed by Rabbi Yomtob himself. Although these figures would appear to be more plausible than those provided by contemporary English chroniclers, one cannot of course be sure that the sources of Ephraim's information were absolutely reliable: he seems to have been under the impression that the butchery took place in the York synagogue or 'house of prayer', a belief demonstrably at odds with the most important Christian accounts. Living where he did, Ephraim is much more likely to have been correct in his account of the fate of the Hebrew manuscripts written by the York community. 'Their houses moreover they destroyed, and they despoiled their gold and silver and the splendid books which they had written in great number, precious as gold and as much fine gold, there being none like them for their beauty and splendour. These they brought to Cologne and to other places, where they sold them to the Jews'.<sup>73</sup> As always, it would be wise to remember that Ephraim's purpose was the commemoration of martyrs rather than an explanation of the reasons for martyrdom. To varying degrees, all the Jewish sources for the 1190 massacre must be set within the context of the great Hebraic literary tradition of lamentation which stretches back to Masada and the Psalms. But as that tradition has never been purely literary, as it has influenced action as well as thought, the work of Menahem of Worms, Joseph of Chartres and Ephraim of Bonn should not be unduly discounted: it provides us with our best opportunity to recapture, however fragmentarily, the thought processes of the persecuted rather than the persecutors.

Nevertheless it is to the English chroniclers of the late twelfth century that our detailed knowledge of the massacre of 1190 is almost completely indebted. As the accession of Richard I coincides with what is perhaps the most prolific of all periods in the history of chronicle writing in this country, the modern student of the anti-Jewish atrocities of 1189-90 is in the unusually fortunate position of being able to check several sources against each other. Despite various inconsistencies and a number of still unsolved textual problems, the famous story the chroniclers have to tell emerges with striking and generally credible clarity. Admittedly many of the numerous chroniclers who thought it obligatory upon themselves to describe the massacres were heavily dependent upon one another; but no

<sup>73</sup> The only reliable English translation of Ephraim of Bonn's account of the York Massacre, often at serious variance with that printed earlier in Jacobs, pp. 130-1, is to be found in Roth, p. 272.

modern historian can have justifiable grounds for complaint at a situation where he can rely on the comments of such highly individual and idiosyncratic writers as Ralph de Diceto, the Dean of St Paul's Cathedral in London, Richard of Devizes, the Winchester monk, and the anonymous compiler of the information later absorbed into the fourteenth-century Meaux chronicle.<sup>74</sup> More fortunate still is the fact that the two greatest of all medieval Yorkshire historians wrote detailed accounts of the York massacre within a very few years of the event. As a 'retired administrator of the second class' and a Yorkshire clerk who had inherited his father's rectory in the East Riding sometime in the mid-1170s, Master Roger of Howden was well placed to comment upon the activities of the Jews at both the national and the local level.<sup>75</sup> He did so not only in his massively comprehensive *Chronica* but also in the *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi et Regis Ricardi* (1169-92), now identified as an early version of his fuller and later history.<sup>76</sup> Despite its moments of vagueness, no doubt attributable to the author's own departure from England in 1190 (probably after the March massacre) on the Third Crusade, Roger of Howden's description of the York riots became the most influential of all the accounts used by later chroniclers: it was to Roger's story, for example, that Roger of Wendover and Matthew Paris of St Albans added their own characteristic and savagely anti-Jewish embellishments.<sup>77</sup> More valuable still is the famous set-piece on the York massacre composed by William of Newburgh, perhaps the most incisive and critical of all medieval English chroniclers and an author in an excellent position to know what really happened at York in the spring of 1190. Born at Bridlington in 1135 or 1136 and probably closely associated with the village of Rufforth, five miles west of York, he spent most of his active life as an Austin canon of Newburgh Priory, only fifteen miles north of

<sup>74</sup> *Radulfi de Diceto Opera Historica* (Rolls Series, 68, 1876), vol. II, pp. 69, 75-6; *The Chronicle of Richard of Devizes*, ed. J. T. Appleby (London, 1963), pp. 3-4, 64, 66-9; *Chronica Monasterii de Melsa*, vol. I, pp. 243-4, 250-2. Although the author of the Meaux chronicle, Abbot Thomas Burton (1396-9), relied heavily on the then fashionable derivative historical compendia of Ranulf Higden and John of Brompton, his inclusion of much significant independent material (borrowed from some earlier and now lost domestic annals of his house?) makes his chronicle an important authority for Jewish activity in northern England.

<sup>75</sup> F. Barlow, 'Roger of Howden', *E.H.R.*, vol. LXV (1950), pp. 352-60; Scammell, *Hugh du Puiset*, pp. 146-8; J. Taylor, *Medieval Historical Writing in Yorkshire* (St Anthony's Hall Publications No. 19, 1961), pp. 12-13.

<sup>76</sup> D. M. Stenton, 'Roger of Howden and Benedict', *E.H.R.*, vol. LXVIII (1953), pp. 574-82.

<sup>77</sup> *Rogeri de Wendover Flores Historiarum* (Rolls Series, 84, 1886-9), vol. I, pp. 166-7, 176-7; *Matthaei Parisiensis Historia Anglorum* (Rolls Series, 44, 1866-9), vol. II, p. 9; *Matthaei Parisiensis Chronica Majora* (Rolls Series, 57, 1872-83), vol. II, pp. 350-1, 358-9.



the city, where he died shortly before the end of the century.<sup>77</sup> William of Newburgh's treatment of the York riots shows him at his very considerable best: well-informed and emotionally involved, he was yet sufficiently detached from the atrocities to provide a comparatively impartial and well-balanced if sometimes over-calculated story. Like all modern narratives of the York massacre the one that follows will inevitably pursue the path he was the first to tread.

So complex is the course of events during the '*annus confusionis*'<sup>78</sup> which began the reign of Richard I that no attempt can be made here to trace those events except in outline. To all intents and purposes the story begins with the removal from the scene of the most formidable of all royal protectors of the English Jews in the person of Henry II, who died at Chinon on 6 July 1189. Five weeks later the arrival in England of his eldest surviving son was accompanied by general popular enthusiasm for the presence of the already famous new king, for the crusading cause to which he had by then been fully committed for nearly two years, and for the prospects of a new and milder departure in English governmental policy. Leading Jews as well as Christian prelates and magnates gathered at Westminster for the king's coronation on 3 September. Although prohibited from attending the official ceremonies, several Jews tried to make their way into Westminster Palace during the coronation banquet: a fracas at the gate led to a full-scale anti-Jewish riot which eventually resulted in the burning of the London Jewry and the loss of at least thirty lives. Of all the incidents of that turbulent day, the one which most caught the attention of both William of Newburgh and Roger of Howden was the fate which befell Benedict of York, who had travelled south to the coronation with his colleague Josce. Although the latter escaped the wrath of the London mob and returned safely to York, the severely wounded Benedict was in such despair that he accepted Christian baptism in the nearby church of the Innocents at the hands of a monk from his own city — William, prior of St Mary's, York. But when summoned before Richard I on the following day, Benedict recanted and was contemptuously dismissed by Archbishop Baldwin of Canterbury ('if he will not be a Christian, let him be the Devil's man'). According to Roger of Howden, Benedict accordingly suffered the unenviable fate of the

<sup>77</sup> Several of the details of William of Newburgh's career and work remain controversial: but see H. E. Salter, 'William of Newburgh', *E.H.R.*, vol. XXII (1907), pp. 510-14; B. Dickins, 'A Yorkshire Chronicler', *Trans. of the Yorkshire Dialect Society*, vol. V, pt. 35 (1934), pp. 15-26; *English Historical Documents*, vol. II (1042-1189), ed. D. C. Douglas (London, 1953), p. 322; Taylor, *Medieval Historical Writing in Yorkshire*, pp. 10-12.

<sup>78</sup> *Matthaei Parisiensis Historia Anglorum*, vol. II, p. 9.

lapsed convert; when he died at Northampton a little later his body could find burial in neither the Jewish nor the Christian cemetery there.<sup>79</sup>

The danger that the coronation riots of 3 September 1189 might provoke an immediate series of nationwide assaults on provincial English Jews was sufficiently real to induce Richard I to send messengers and letters throughout his kingdom ordering that they should be left in peace. Any prospect that this order could be permanently enforced was certainly put at risk by the king's own departure from Dover on 14 December. Richard's absence in northern France throughout the subsequent six months, at exactly the period when crusading detachments were slowly assembling in his English kingdom, was guaranteed to produce an emotionally charged and inflammatory situation. As so often in the history of medieval anti-semitism, the heightening of religious passions during the season of Lent seems to have been the pre-condition for converting anti-Jewish intent into brutal action.<sup>80</sup> The first outbreaks took place in East Anglia, at King's Lynn and Norwich, during the first week of February 1190. These initial riots then sparked off a series of explosions which passed from town to town according to an intelligible, if badly documented, geographical and chronological sequence. Ralph de Diceto and William of Newburgh testify to other mass onslaughts at Stamford (7 March), Bury St Edmunds (18 March) and Lincoln; and the Pipe Rolls refer to serious assaults on Jews, probably during the same spring months of 1190, at Colchester, Thetford and Ospringe in Kent.<sup>81</sup> Attacks on provincial English Jewries were indeed sufficiently universal to enable the caustic Richard of Devizes to engage in heavy sarcasm at the expense of the prudent citizens of Winchester who 'alone spared their worms'.<sup>82</sup> Although the riots were precipitated in a number of different ways, they clearly all conform to the classic stereotype of anti-semitic demonstration. A phase of vindictive Jew-baiting led almost inevitably to murder and then to a concerted attempt by the mob at the complete extermination, usually by arson, of the urban Jewries: the Jews themselves had no defence but hurried flight to the local royal castle.

<sup>79</sup> Although the details of Benedict's sad end are to be found only in Howden (pp. 12-13) and, more briefly, in the *Gesta Ricardi* (pp. 83-4), William of Newburgh's allusion (p. 313) to his 'cursed fate' makes it probable that he too knew the full story.

<sup>80</sup> The massacre of Stamford took place at the Lent Fair itself, that at Bury St Edmunds on Palm Sunday. For the coincidence of medieval anti-Jewish atrocities everywhere with the season of Lent, see the chronological index of C. Roth, *A Jewish Book of Days* (London, 1931), p. 313.

<sup>81</sup> *Radulfi de Diceto Opera Historica*, vol. II, pp. 75-6; Jacobs, p. 112; *Pipe Roll 2 Richard I*, pp. 1, 116; *Pipe Rolls 3 & 4 Richard I*, pp. 147, 203, 313; *Pipe Roll 5 Richard I*, pp. 46, 145; *Pipe Roll 6 Richard I*, pp. 36, 46; *Pipe Roll 7 Richard I*, p. 222.

<sup>82</sup> *Chronicle of Richard of Devizes*, p. 4.

To this general pattern the great York massacre was clearly no exception; but it owes its enduring fame as the *locus classicus* of medieval English anti-semitism to three other features:— the remarkable savagery with which the persecution was conducted, the unusual detail in which it was recorded by contemporary chroniclers, and William of Newburgh's allegation that the massacre was the product not only of misguided religious zeal but also of a calculated conspiracy on the part of impoverished local notables intent on liquidating their debts to the Jews by force. One stormy night, probably at the beginning of March, a band of armed conspirators took advantage of the confusion caused by a fire they may themselves have started to break into the York house of the recently deceased Benedict. After killing all its inhabitants, including Benedict's widow and children, they set the roof ablaze and carried off the treasure they found there. The next day the York Jews, under the leadership of Benedict's colleague, Josce, took the natural step of seeking protection from the royal constable of York castle: all but a few members of the community were in fact firmly entrenched behind the castle walls when another night attack, this time on Josce's own strongly-built house, occurred a few days later. On this second occasion popular emotion was so thoroughly aroused that rioting and plunder continued after day broke and was accompanied by the hounding of the few Jews still at large in the city: they were offered the alternative of Christian baptism, accepted by some, or death. 'But while all this was happening, the multitude who had escaped into the castle seemed to be in safety'.

At this point, and under the pressure of indiscriminate looting and killing in the city, the critical links of confidence between Jews and royal constable finally snapped. Securely ensconced in the keep of the castle but nervously anticipating treachery on the part of its custodian, the Jews refused to re-admit him after he went out on business. Equally understandably, the constable appealed for help to John Marshall, the sheriff of Yorkshire, who happened — perhaps not altogether coincidentally — to be in the vicinity with a large force of county *milites*. John Marshall's impetuous decision to eject the Jews from the castle by force was undoubtedly the most fatal of the many errors of judgement made at York during these turbulent days. As William of Newburgh makes clear, the sheriff's order to besiege the castle deluded 'all the workers and young men in the town as well as a large crowd of countrymen and many *milites*' into the belief that an onslaught on the Jews would have royal approval. By the time the sheriff had rescinded his order it was too late: the mob clustered around the foot of the castle keep was now in the grip of religious frenzy and a ready prey to the hysterical ravings of a maverick

white-robed 'hermit from a Premonstratensian canonry'.<sup>83</sup> This hermit, crushed by a stone rolling down from the wall of the keep, was the only Christian casualty throughout the entire siege.<sup>84</sup> According to William of Newburgh, the Jews were able to defend themselves successfully for several days, a tribute not only to the courage they found in desperation but also to the impregnability of the late twelfth-century English castle.<sup>85</sup> Only when the specially prepared siege machines were finally moved into position on Friday 16 March did it become obvious to Christian and Jew alike that the 'fatal hour was imminent'.

It was that evening — two days before Palm Sunday and on the eve of the Jewish 'great Sabbath' before Passover — that the tragic denouement occurred. Rabbi Yomtob of Joigny, the spiritual leader of the community, called on his co-religionists to anticipate their certain death in the heroic fashion hallowed by Hebrew tradition.<sup>86</sup> The tragic confusion which followed seems faithfully reflected in the three most detailed accounts of the mass-suicide. William of Newburgh, Roger of Howden and Ephraim of Bonn produced discordant descriptions of the tragedy, but all are agreed that a very considerable number of the Jews did decide to carry Yomtob's proposal into effect. Josce allegedly set the first example by

<sup>83</sup> As an Austin canon himself, William of Newburgh may have had no particular affection for the Premonstratensians; but this curious 'hermit' is extremely unlikely to have been a figment of his imagination. Richard Malebisse, the most prominent leader of the attack on the York Jews, founded a Premonstratensian abbey at Newbo in Lincolnshire eight years later; and one of his own squires, Richard of Cuckney, belonged to the family which had founded Welbeck Abbey of the same order a generation earlier: see H. M. Colvin, *The White Canons in England* (Oxford, 1951), pp. 165–8. The deduction that this hermit may have been in the retinue of Malebisse or his colleagues is therefore hard to resist.

<sup>84</sup> As York castle was apparently still of timber construction, it seems safe to suppose that the stone which caused the hermit's death had been fired by one of the Christian *ballistae* or siege-engines; but it must be admitted that William of Newburgh's stress on the importance of these weapons raises the uncomfortable suspicion that he had been reading Josephus's account of the first-century sieges of Jerusalem and Masada very attentively indeed.

<sup>85</sup> Roger of Howden, who provides the additional information that the Jews vainly tried to buy their safety by an offer of money to the mob, writes in terms which imply a siege of only a day and a night (Howden, p. 33; *Gesta Ricardi*, p. 107). The wealth of circumstantial detail provided by Newburgh, admittedly sometimes introduced to heighten the dramatic effect of his story, makes one a little more inclined to accept his version (cf. *Matthaei Parisiensis Chronica Majora*, vol. II, p. 359).

<sup>86</sup> The identification of the orator with Rabbi Yomtob derives exclusively from Ephraim of Bonn but seems to be beyond any reasonable doubt. As Davies (p. 170) and many other modern commentators have noticed, the two speeches put into the mouth of the rabbi by William of Newburgh are heavily reliant on the oration of Eleazar of Masada as related by Josephus, to whose readily accessible *De Bello Judaico* the chronicler specifically alludes in the course of his narrative: Newburgh, pp. 318–20 (cf. the much slighter speech recorded in Howden, p. 33, and *Gesta Ricardi*, p. 107); Josephus, *The Jewish War*, ed. G. A. Williamson (London, 1959), pp. 385–90; R. M. Wilson, 'The Contents of the Mediaeval Library', *The English Library before 1700*, ed. F. Wormald and C. E. Wright (London, 1958), p. 100.

cutting the throats of his wife, Anna, and of his sons. The terrible responsibility for killing the women and children then seems to have fallen to the fathers of each Jewish household in turn. The latter probably met their own fate by the knife of Rabbi Yomtob, who appears to have ended the slaughter by taking Josce's life just before his own. This mass self-destruction took place to the accompaniment of a raging fire — probably started on the instructions of Rabbi Yomtob — which consumed the valuables and bodies of many of the victims before imperilling the lives of the survivors.<sup>87</sup> The epilogue was almost as dramatic and even more horrifying. At daybreak on the following morning the 'wretched remnants of the Jews' appealed for mercy in return for Christian baptism; but as they left the castle under a calculatedly insincere promise of clemency, the 'cruel butchers' who followed Richard Malebisse and the other leaders of the pogrom massacred them all. Even William of Newburgh loses his customary poise in a vigorous denunciation of the execrable cruelty of murderers who despised 'men seeking Christian grace'.

The rest of William of Newburgh's story can be confirmed, in most of its important details, by both the narratives of Roger of Howden as well as various references in the Pipe Rolls for this and succeeding exchequer years. Immediately after the massacre the conspirators ('*conjurati*') made their way to York Minster where they extracted from the terrified custodians the Jewish bonds deposited there and burned them in the middle of the church.<sup>88</sup> They then dispersed, some across the sea to participate in the Third Crusade, others to the country where they awaited the results of the inevitable royal enquiry. They did not have to wait for long. On Easter Monday (26 March), little more than a week after the massacre, a messenger was already on his way from London to Normandy to inform the new Chancellor of England, William de Longchamp, of the York atrocities. Longchamp, together with Bishop Hugh du Puiset, his associate and rival as royal Justiciar, were apparently with King Richard himself at Lyons-la-Forêt in eastern Normandy when the news reached them.<sup>89</sup> Justifiably incensed at the insult to his dignity as well as the injury to his revenues, the king dispatched Longchamp to England with orders to punish the rebels as they deserved. Pausing in

<sup>87</sup> Roger of Howden refers to deliberate cremation and omits Newburgh's suspiciously macabre account of the throwing down of Jewish corpses to the mob on the following morning. The Meaux chronicle (vol. I, p. 251) makes no mention of the fire and adds that the Jews threw their money into the muddy water (? the moat) below.

<sup>88</sup> Newburgh, p. 322. It seems a little doubtful whether the reference to '*flammis sollempnibus*' justifies the inference of 'kindling the flames from the light on the High Altar' (Roth, p. 23).

<sup>89</sup> *Pipe Roll 2 Richard I*, p. 3; W. Stubbs, *Historical Introductions to the Rolls Series* (London, 1902), p. 218; K. Norgate, *Richard the Lion Heart* (London, 1924), pp. 112–15.

London long enough to assemble a large and expensive force of royal *milites* under the command of his brother Henry, William de Longchamp arrived in York about Ascension Day (3 May). By the time he reached the city, the leading perpetrators of the massacre had fled — to Scotland, according to William of Newburgh — leaving many of their lands and chattels temporarily at the Chancellor's mercy. As a matter of course, William de Longchamp dismissed the sheriff of Yorkshire and the constable of York castle summarily from their offices, replacing them by another brother, Osbert, and by Philip Puintell respectively.<sup>90</sup> Otherwise the Chancellor found it impossible to single out particular individuals for punishment. In the nature of things 'the promiscuous and numberless mob could not be called or brought to justice'; and in the face of the York citizens' obdurate claim that they had not been involved themselves, Longchamp imposed on them a series of heavy fines based on individual wealth rather than culpability.

A more interesting indication of the gravity with which the Chancellor and royal government regarded the York massacre was the taking of 'a hundred hostages from the citizens of the city, so that the latter should preserve their fealty and peace towards the king and kingdom and should stand trial in the court of the lord king concerning the death of the Jews'.<sup>91</sup> It seems clear enough that no formal trial ever did take place; writing seven or eight years later, William of Newburgh noted that no one had yet been brought to punishment for the slaughter of the York Jews. Reasons for such apparent leniency are not hard to suggest and must certainly include the unpopularity which would be incurred by any medieval ruler prepared to take extreme measures against Christian persecutors of the Jews as well as the unusually turbulent and insecure state of English national politics which preceded Richard I's return from Syrian crusade and German imprisonment in March 1194. By the autumn of that year the newly appointed Justiciar, Archbishop Hubert Walter, was to demonstrate that the lessons of the massacres of 1190 had been well digested by the English government. When the justices on eyre were dispatched through the English shires in September 1194 they were instructed to make a detailed report on the goods of the victims as well

<sup>90</sup> Newburgh, pp. 323–4; Howden, p. 34; *Gesta Ricardi*, p. 108; *Pipe Roll 2 Richard I*, pp. 4, 8, 58–9.

<sup>91</sup> Howden, p. 34 (the number of hostages is not mentioned in his earlier *Gesta Ricardi*, p. 108). The 60 pairs of fetters sent *ad prisiones custodiendos Lincol'* in 1190 (*Pipe Roll 2 Richard I*, p. 3) seem more likely to have been required to safeguard these York hostages than any other royal prisoners of the year. If so, these hostages were subsequently transferred from the royal castle of Lincoln to that of Northampton: by a payment of 10 marks at Michaelmas 1193, the citizens of York were finally acquitted by the exchequer '*pro habendis obsidibus suis qui fuerunt Norhant' propter occisionem Judeorum*' (*Pipe Roll 5 Richard I*, p. 72).

as the names of their murderers; and at about the same time a series of detailed ordinances called for the compulsory registration of all Jewish bonds and chattels in a few fixed urban centres, the critical step in the complete reorganisation of royal control over the English Jewry.<sup>92</sup> The York massacre was not only a tragedy but an influential tragedy: it helped to promote the closest relationship between state and Jewry yet seen in western Europe and to bring about a decisive transformation in the constitutional position of the medieval English Jews.

The novelty and sophistication of the policy adopted towards the Jews by Hubert Walter and his colleagues is itself an indication of the severe financial losses suffered by the crown in 1190. The extent of the damage caused to the king's own castle of York is, in particular, corroborated quite specifically by the royal Pipe Rolls. Somewhat surprisingly in view of its importance, the castle originally built in the angle between the rivers Ouse and Foss on the orders of William the Conqueror remained a timber rather than a stone structure until the expensive building operations of the period 1245-62.<sup>93</sup> The Pipe Rolls of the three Angevin kings, great castle-builders throughout all their dominions, rarely record an expenditure of more than a few shillings a year on the upkeep of their castle at York. All the more striking therefore is the unparalleled expenditure of £247 8s. 5d. on York between 1190 and 1194, a total unsurpassed during these years at any of Richard's English castles except Dover and the Tower of London.<sup>94</sup> This figure, which includes an outlay of over £190 on castle-works at York within six months of the massacre, amply confirms Roger of Howden's statement that before he left the city in the spring of 1190 William de Longchamp had ordered 'the castle in the old castellary (*castellum in veteri castellarario*) which William Rufus had built there' to be strengthened (*firmari*). There can be no reasonable doubt that the '*castellum*' in question was the wooden keep on the site of what is now called Clifford's Tower, and even less that it was in this keep, situated on the top of a high motte, that the Jews of York met their martyrdom.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>92</sup> A. C. Cramer, 'The Origins and Functions of the Jewish Exchequer', *Speculum*, vol. XVI (1941), pp. 226-9; Richardson, pp. 118-34; Roth, pp. 28-31; C. R. Cheney, *Hubert Walter* (London, 1967), pp. 92-3.

<sup>93</sup> A. J. Taylor, 'The Date of Clifford's Tower', *Archaeological Journal*, vol. CXI (1954), pp. 153-9; H. M. Colvin, ed., *The History of the King's Works* (London, 1963), vol. II, pp. 889-90; *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the City of York, vol. II: The Defences* (Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, 1972), pp. 59-61.

<sup>94</sup> T. P. Cooper, *The History of the Castle of York* (London, 1911), p. 24; R. A. Brown, 'Royal Castle-Building in England, 1154-1216', *E.H.R.*, vol. LXIX (1955), pp. 383-4, 393.

<sup>95</sup> Howden, p. 34. York antiquarians have surely made unnecessarily heavy work of Francis Drake's inherently unlikely identification of Roger of Howden's 'old castle' with the Old Baile across the river: F. Drake, *Eboracum* (London, 1736), p. 265; *Historical Monuments in the City of York*, vol. II, p. 60.

Some of the charred timbers encountered twelve feet below the surface of the present mound during an excavation in 1902-3 may conceivably be the most enduring of all memorials to the tragic night of 16 March 1190.<sup>96</sup>

There remains for final discussion the most intriguing of all the problems raised by the great York massacre — the identity and motives of the persecutors themselves. Even in twentieth-century conditions it has often been notoriously difficult to trace those responsible for anti-semitic atrocities; and the single most remarkable feature of William of Newburgh's narrative is the confidence with which he relates not only how the York Jews were martyred but also for what reasons and at whose hands. How far can his statements be substantiated? There is, in the first place, no doubt whatsoever that during March 1190 both the city and the county of York must have been suffering from a quite exceptional 'crisis of authority': not only the king and archbishop of Canterbury but also the most formidable northern prelate, Hugh du Puiset, and the most powerful Yorkshire magnate, Nigel de Mowbray, were absent abroad.<sup>97</sup> Since William of Aumale, allegedly 'the real King of the regions beyond the Humber under Stephen' had been compulsorily retired by the young Henry II, it seems to have been a cardinal point of Angevin policy not to allow the emergence there of an all-powerful magnate.<sup>98</sup> Such reluctance to permit the accumulation of authority in local hands is understandable enough, but clearly had particular dangers at a time when there had not even been an archbishop of York for ten years. Richard I's ill-judged decision to have his illegitimate brother Geoffrey 'elected' to the York see in August 1189 immediately provoked a violent struggle between various vested interests, already fully under way at the time of the massacre of the Jews. The fact that the strong hand of Rannulf Glanville as sheriff of Yorkshire had only recently (Michaelmas 1189) been removed can only have added to the opportunities of those who wished to exploit the general insecurity.

As always at times of popular disturbance, the 'large and anonymous mob' itself defies analysis; but there seems no reason to doubt the claim that it comprised a large number of country-dwellers in addition to the labouring classes, and especially the young men, of the city. More

<sup>96</sup> G. Benson and H. M. Platnauer, 'Notes on Clifford's Tower', *Annual Report of the Yorkshire Philosophical Society for 1902* (York, 1903), pp. 68-74; G. Benson, *Later Medieval York* (York, 1919), p. 24.

<sup>97</sup> *Charters of the Honour of Mowbray, 1107-1191*, ed. D. E. Greenway (British Academy, 1972), p. xxxii; Scammell, *Hugh du Puiset*, pp. 295-6.

<sup>98</sup> *English Historical Documents*, vol. II, ed. Douglas, p. 324; cf. Roger of Howden's extraordinary story that Richard I offered the county of York to Otto of Saxony in 1190 (Howden, p. 86).

interesting is William of Newburgh's allegation that many clerks participated in the riot, a charge most likely to be valid in the case of the poorer and unbeneficed priests of the city. Apart from the rabble-rousing Premonstratensian canon mentioned by William of Newburgh, members of the religious orders and the York clerical establishment probably remained aloof from the atrocities. As has been seen, Jewish bonds were actually in the custody of the Minster clergy during the massacre; and there is a strong presumption that the leading York ecclesiastics would not be likely to prejudice their relations with either Jews or king by direct participation in the pogrom.<sup>99</sup> The same argument almost certainly applies to the wealthier York citizens too. In an important and undeservedly neglected sentence William of Newburgh informs us that 'the *nobilitas et cives graviore*s of the town, fearing the dangers of the king's reaction, cautiously declined to take part in such madness'. Admittedly a detailed list of no less than 59 individuals 'amerced for the Jews' in the city of York does survive on the Pipe Rolls of Michaelmas 1190 and later; but it would certainly be illegitimate to suppose that all, or indeed any, of these men were personally guilty in view of the chronicler's explicit statement that William de Longchamp's punishment of the city had taken the form of a fine on each citizen according to his fortune. An analysis of the individuals listed and of their ameracements (ranging from the 100 marks levied on William son of Sirich to the half-mark imposed on Thurstan Galien) leaves one in no doubt that the list preserves something perhaps even more valuable than the names of the city's anti-semites: it provides the first reasonably comprehensive survey of York's richest inhabitants to survive.<sup>100</sup> At Michaelmas 1194, four years later and long before most of the original 59 citizens had completed their payments, Henry de Fissergate and five other new names appear on the exchequer accounts charged with heavy debts '*pro habenda pace sua de interfectione Judeorum Ebor.*'<sup>101</sup> But in these cases too it seems more likely that the culprits were being penalised for tax-evasion four years previously,

<sup>99</sup> Quite apart from the dealing of religious houses like St Mary's, York, in bonds, it seems probable that a certain amount of important Jewish business was actually transacted in the precincts of the Minster and other ecclesiastical establishments within the city: see *Curia Regis Rolls*, vol. I, p. 391, for a complicated transaction which took place in the *camera* of the archbishop of York ten years after the massacre.

<sup>100</sup> *Pipe Roll 2 Richard I*, pp. 68–70; *Pipe Rolls 3 & 4 Richard I*, pp. 69–70, 215–16. More than half of the 59 York citizens named figure as either holders of urban property or as witnesses to the charters printed in *Early Yorkshire Charters*, vol. I, pp. 174–249. They include, for example, a future mayor (Thomas Palmer) as well as a supervisor of the York castle-works (Warin de Cuningestreta) among their numbers (*Early Yorkshire Charters*, vol. I, pp. 177, 200; *Pipe Rolls 3 & 4 Richard I*, p. 61).

<sup>101</sup> *Pipe Roll 6 Richard I*, p. 161. Henry of Fissergate had recently been the lessee of the mill under York castle (*Charters of the Honour of Mowbray*, p. 184).

perhaps revealed by Hubert Walter's justices on eyre in the autumn of 1194, than for acts of violence against the Jews. Faced with such a financially painful demonstration of the effects of Angevin wrath, probably only a minority of the richer citizens of York are likely to have given 'their approval, counsel or aid' to the massacre of the Jews resident in their town.

Such scruples did not deter a prominent group of local Yorkshire *nobiles* from being the real villains of March 1190. Once more the Pipe Rolls of Richard I's reign provide detailed substantiation for William of Newburgh's allegation that the massacre of the York Jews was carried through from beginning to end by a conspiracy of indebted and pitiless landlords. To the only one of these men identified by William of Newburgh himself, 'Richard rightly called *Mala-Bestia*', the Meaux chronicle adds the names of three others, William Percy, Marmaduke Darell and Philip de Fauconberg, as well as that of the sheriff of Yorkshire, John Marshall.<sup>102</sup> Unfortunately the Pipe Rolls for Michaelmas 1190 and 1191 record only the sheriff of Yorkshire's profits (£74 10s. 7d. and £18 11s. 3d.) from the lands and goods of those who fled '*pro assultu Judeorum*' and not the names of the fugitives themselves. All the more valuable therefore is the record on the 1192 Pipe Roll of the fines levied on the three outstanding culprits by the new royal Justiciar, Walter de Coutances — in return for licence to take up their lands again until the return of Richard I to England. Richard Malebisse was fined 20 marks on his own account and on behalf of a certain Walter de Carton' as well as his esquire, Richard de Kukeneia or Cuckney; William de Percy a similar amount for his two esquires, Pikot and Roger de Ripum, as well as himself; and Alan Malekake owed only 5 marks '*pro rehabenda terra sua*'.<sup>103</sup> To this handful of names Robert Davies added, on rather tenuous grounds, two others — those of Robert de Gant and of Robert de Turnham or Thornham. The latter, a famous royal *curialis* and knight from Kent who played a swashbuckling role on the Third Crusade and later filled the office of seneschal of Gascony for Richard I and John, shows no signs of Yorkshire associations until his marriage to the Fossard heiress in the mid-1190s.<sup>104</sup> Robert de Gant, one of the leading figures among the

<sup>102</sup> Newburgh, p. 321; *Chronica Monasterii de Melsa*, vol. I, p. 251.

<sup>103</sup> *Pipe Roll 2 Richard I*, pp. 74–5; *Pipe Rolls 3 & 4 Richard I*, pp. 77, 221.

<sup>104</sup> *Early Yorkshire Charters*, vol. III, p. 328; *Rotuli de Oblatis et Finibus*, p. 461; *Chronica Monasterii de Melsa*, vol. I, pp. 105, 229, 231, 260; I. J. Sanders, *English Baronies: A Study of their origin and descent, 1086–1327* (Oxford, 1960), p. 67; J. C. Holt, *The Northerners: A Study in the Reign of King John* (Oxford, 1961), pp. 75, 105, 234. The fact that in 1199 Robert de Turnham paid 5 marks '*pro habendo feodo ipsius quod captum fuit occasione Judeorum*' (*Rotuli de Oblatis et Finibus*, p. 25) seems to have been misinterpreted by Davies.

northern baronage before his death in 1191, presents more of a problem. Despite his very considerable holdings of Yorkshire fees, there is no doubt that he was heavily indebted to the Jews and had often been on unhappy terms with the Angevin government. On the other hand, Davies's belief that he fled from York after the killing of the Jews was evidently based on a mis-reading of the 1190 Pipe Roll and there survives no direct proof of his involvement in the massacre.<sup>105</sup>

The list of Yorkshire knights certainly known to have been implicated in the killing of the York Jews can therefore only be a short one. Nevertheless sufficient information about Richard Malebisse, William Percy, Alan Malekake, Marmaduke Darell and Philip de Fauconberg survives to allow some speculation as to the motives for their violent anti-semitism. In the first place these men belonged to the middle rather than the higher levels of the Yorkshire baronage of their day; both in wealth and status they were surpassed by the leaders of county society, the Lacies, the Stutevilles, the Rooses, the Paynells, the Bruces — families closely involved in the local operations of the Angevin government and apparently not implicated in the 1190 massacre. Even the William Percy who assaulted the Jews in 1190 was only the head of a junior line (of Bolton Percy and Carnaby) of a still 'mildly distinguished Anglo-Norman house', not yet the great dynasty it was later to become.<sup>106</sup> Although not great magnates by the standards of southern England, William Percy and his fellows were nevertheless important landlords throughout their county: most can be proved to have held estates in the immediate vicinity of York itself, a city they must have known well. More significantly still, they appear to have been closely bound together by ties of acquaintance-ship and blood. Thus Marmaduke Darell was a tenant of the Percy fee at Wheldrake and attested charters of William Percy to the monasteries of Sawley and Fountains; similarly the Fauconbergs and Cuckneys were related to one another as well as being associated with the foundation of Welbeck Abbey in Nottinghamshire.<sup>107</sup> Alan Malekake not only

<sup>105</sup> *Pipe Roll 2 Richard I*, pp. 66, 74, 79; *Pipe Rolls 3 & 4 Richard I*, pp. xxvii, 67, 73, 214; *Early Yorkshire Charters*, vol. VI, *The Paynel Fee* (1939), p. 34; Holt, *The Northerners*, pp. 27, 68; Davies, pp. 164–5.

<sup>106</sup> William Percy II of the main line of the family had died in 1175 and his eventual successor, William Percy III, was only born in 1191–3. The identification of the persecutor of the Jews in 1190 with William Percy of Bolton Percy seems to be firmly established by the former's tenure of an important estate at Wharrah (Percy) in the East Riding: *Pipe Roll 2 Richard I*, pp. 60, 72, and cf. *Early Yorkshire Charters*, vol. XI, *The Percy Fee* (1963), p. 107. See also *Pipe Rolls 3 & 4 Richard I*, pp. 62, 72, 209, 218, 221; Scammell, *Hugh du Puiset*, pp. 26, 311–12.

<sup>107</sup> Dugdale's *Monasticon Anglicanum* (ed. Caley, 1817–30), vol. VI, p. 873; Scammell, *Hugh du Puiset*, pp. 226–7; Colvin, *The White Canons*, pp. 64–9.

witnessed the charters whereby the Malebisse family endowed Whitby's Benedictine cell at Middlesbrough but also several bequests by Bishop Hugh du Puiset of Durham: one of his fellow-witnesses on these occasions was Picot de Percy who testified to the authenticity of other Puiset charters in the company of Richard Malebisse.<sup>108</sup>

The exceptionally turbulent and well-recorded career of Richard Malebisse, the most notorious of the persecutors of the York Jews, calls for more detailed comment: it was Malebisse's readiness to resort to violence, his 'audacity' (to use William of Newburgh's word), which best enables us to appreciate the severity of the social and political tensions among the Yorkshire baronage at the end of the twelfth century. By 1190 Richard Malebisse, of Acaster Malbis and Copmanthorpe near York, had recently succeeded his father William — who probably died on crusade in the Mediterranean — as the senior member of an extensive family connection. Despite his family's possession of substantial estates in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire, for example at Beningbrough and Little Ayton, he was heavily indebted to Aaron of Lincoln by at least 1182.<sup>109</sup> On the fringes of influential governmental circles from an early date, he never received the financial security afforded by a really important royal office. Threatened with the deprivation of his keepership of Galtres Forest north of York on the accession of Richard I, he thereafter continually fell foul of the erratic processes of Angevin law and order. Soon after the partial forfeiture of his estates for his leading role in the York massacre of 1190, he became deeply involved in John's conspiracy against his absent brother, an offence for which he was excommunicated in December 1191 and had to pay the heavy sum of 300 marks three years later.<sup>110</sup> Only on John's accession to the throne in 1199 was he allowed to proffer a fine of £100, two morris-hawks (*austurcos Norenses*), two leashes of harriers (*leissas leporariorum*) and four palfreys in order to recover his full rights over the extensive properties of which he had been dispossessed because of his participation in the 1190 massacre and John's own rebellion.<sup>111</sup> A year later Richard Malebisse's attempts to convert his residence at Wheldrake into a regular castle, for the fortification of which he illegally purloined 250 oak trees from the royal forest of Galtres, justifiably aroused the fears

<sup>108</sup> *Cartularium Abbatiae de Whiteby* (Surtees Society, vols. 69, 72, 1878–9), vol. I, pp. 95, 112; *The Priory of Finchale* (Surtees Society, vol. 6, 1837), pp. 10, 15, 23, 24, 54.

<sup>109</sup> York Minster Library, 'Magnum Registrum Album', part 3, fo. 16v; *Abstracts of Fountains Chartulary*, vol. I, pp. 274–5; *Pipe Roll 26 Henry II*, p. 60; Jacobs, p. 77; *Early Yorkshire Charters*, vol. III, pp. 457–8; see above, p. 10.

<sup>110</sup> *Pipe Roll 2 Richard I*, pp. 60, 67, 71; *Pipe Roll 6 Richard I*, pp. 146, 163; Howden, p. 153; *Gesta Ricardi*, p. 223.

<sup>111</sup> *Rotuli de Oblatis et Finibus*, p. 41; Roth, p. 32, n. 1.

and suspicions of the citizens of York. Under constant threat of royal amercement, Malebisse continued to be both an unruly and a heavily indebted baron until the very end of his troubled career in 1210.<sup>113</sup> The 'Evil Beast' of Jewish memory stands confirmed in governmental records as the recalcitrant nobleman, 'oppressed by the exactions of the royal treasury', revealed to us by William of Newburgh.

Nor were Richard Malebisse's discontents, admittedly extreme, unrepresentative of the grievances felt by the other members of the Yorkshire baronage with whom he enjoyed close bonds of acquaintance or of kindred. Most intriguing of all these relationships are the ones which connect him not only with the Percy family but with the great Bishop Hugh du Puiset of Durham. Since the death of the head of the house, William, in 1175, the dominating figures in the Percy family had been his three daughters, Maud, Agnes and Adeliz. Maud and Agnes are known to have been aunts of Richard Malebisse, while Adeliz was no less a person than the bishop's erstwhile mistress and the mother of his child.<sup>113</sup> The existence of this unexpectedly close connection inevitably raises the suspicion that the massacre of the York Jews may have been only the most dramatic manifestation of what was potentially a political conspiracy on the grand scale. Perhaps a group of Yorkshire knights, relying on the sympathy if not the open support of Bishop Puiset, seized the opportunity of Richard I's absence from England to make a deliberately violent protest against the financial oppression of the Angevin government. Such a hypothesis would certainly make it easier to explain the severity of the measures taken by Chancellor William de Longchamp against Puiset as well as the Yorkshire *milites* in May 1190;<sup>114</sup> and easier also to explain why the conspirators were only restored to their estates after Longchamp had been supplanted as royal vice-gerent by Archbishop Walter de Coutances. Like the rebellion against King John in 1212-15 or Robert Thweng's obscure attack on wealthy Italian clerks in the early 1230s, the massacre of the York Jews might be seen as a deliberate reaction on the part of discontented northerners against what they regarded, with

<sup>113</sup> Howden, *Chronica*, vol. IV, pp. 117, 163; cf. Holt, *The Northerners*, pp. 161, 163; *Rotuli Litterarum Clausurarum* (Record Commission, 1833-4), vol. I, p. 58; *Pleas before the King or his Justices, 1198-1212* (Selden Society, vol. 83, 1963), vol. III, p. 125; *Early Yorkshire Charters*, vol. III, pp. 457-8; *Rotuli de Oblatis et Finibus*, pp. 384, 458, 462; W. P. Baildon, 'Acaster Malbis and the Fairfax Family', *Y.A.J.*, vol. XIX (1907), pp. 19-30.

<sup>113</sup> *Priory of Finchale*, p. 46; *Abstracts of Fountains Chartulary*, vol. I, p. 320; II, p. 817; Scammell, *Hugh du Puiset*, p. 311.

<sup>114</sup> Nothing Bishop Puiset is alleged by the chroniclers to have done seems to quite account for his sudden and sensational arrest by William de Longchamp at Tickhill or Southwell in May 1190 (*Gesta Ricardi*, p. 109; Howden, p. 35).

some justification, as victimisation at the hands of a Westminster government which refused to take them into partnership.<sup>115</sup>

In the last resort, however, the element of long-term calculation in the minds of the Yorkshire barons of 1190 must always remain conjectural. One can only agree with Bishop Stubbs's characteristically judicious statement of the possibilities: 'I should not like to accuse the Puiset and Percy connexion of a deliberate attempt to get rid of the evidence of their debts on this occasion, but so it may have been.'<sup>116</sup> To this conclusion one need only add that the precise level of political consciousness on the part of the baronial conspirators of March 1190 is of less importance than their undoubted economic vulnerability. Richard Malebisse and his fellows formed a smaller and less well-documented group than the famous 'northerners' of 1213; but there is no doubt that they too belonged to that class of 'habitual litigants' and 'speculative gamblers' revealed to us a generation later by Professor Holt.<sup>117</sup> Like their immediate heirs and descendants, the 'declining gentry' of late twelfth-century Yorkshire were well aware of the dire consequences of permanent exclusion from royal patronage: they were equally conscious that 'the Jews are known to be the royal usurers' and that a debt to a Jew was always in danger of being converted into a debt to the crown.<sup>118</sup> The massacre of the York Jews in 1190, like Magna Carta itself, was at least in part the product of a rebellion by the king's debtors. As so often in the future, not least at the time of their final expulsion from England in 1290, it was the Jews who had to pay the harshest price for the unpopularity of the royal government whose purposes they served.

### III

'A blacker page in English history than this I do not know.'<sup>119</sup> So dramatic and awe-inspiring is the catastrophe of March 1190 that antiquaries and historians have always been in danger of forgetting that no less than a century intervened between the temporary and the permanent

<sup>115</sup> For the inordinately heavy taxation of the late 1180s, including the Saladin Tithe, see *The Historical Works of Gervase of Canterbury* (Rolls Series, 73, 1879-80), vol. I, pp. 325, 422; F. A. Cazel, Jr., 'The Tax of 1185 in Aid of the Holy Land', *Speculum*, vol. XXX (1955), pp. 385-92. The best impression of the profits to be made from royal office-holding in the north is conveyed by Rannulf Glanville's great fortune in 1189, and by the willingness of William de Stuteville to pay 1,500 marks for the sheriffdom of Yorkshire in 1200 (*Rotuli de Oblatis et Finibus*, p. 109).

<sup>116</sup> Stubbs, *Historical Introductions to the Rolls Series*, p. 219, n. 8.

<sup>117</sup> Holt, *The Northerners*, especially pp. 17-18, 33-4.

<sup>118</sup> Newburgh, p. 323.

<sup>119</sup> W. Rye, 'The Persecutions of the Jews in England', *Papers read at the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition, Royal Albert Hall, London, 1887* (London, 1888), p. 150.

extinction of the medieval Jewish community at York. Yet in most ways the massacre of *Shabbat ha-Gadol* should be seen as the prologue rather than the climax of the drama of the Jews of York. According to the accepted view, 'It was many years before any community was re-established at York, and it never again attained the importance which it had enjoyed before that fiery night'.<sup>120</sup> In fact nearly all the evidence at our disposal points to a very different conclusion. Not only did Jews return to the city very soon after the massacre but they then proceeded to play a more prominent role in almost every sphere (except that of scholarship) than their martyred predecessors. The history of the thirteenth-century Jewish community at York is a subject which demands thorough investigation in its own right. Apart from a few scraps of often misleading factual information assembled by Robert Davies and an important but very uncritical study of the great Aaron of York by Michael Adler, it is a story which as yet remains completely untold.<sup>121</sup> This is certainly not the place to tell it in the detail that the wealth of published and unpublished sources demands. On the other hand, no account of the massacre of 1190 can properly stop abruptly short at 1190 itself. At the very least it is essential to point out that, like most resorts to violence and murder at most times, the York pogrom resolved nothing and altered little that was fundamental. The very combination of royal and local financial needs which had brought the Jews to York in the late twelfth century survived to ensure their renewed prosperity for many more years to come.

In the first place those Christians who may have hoped that the York massacre would put a permanent end to the presence of both Jews and Jewish business in the city must have been rapidly disillusioned. The destruction of an unascertainable number of bonds in the Minster and elsewhere during March 1190 did not prevent both Jews and royal government from continuing to enforce debts and mortgages incurred before that month.<sup>122</sup> Nor must one discount the possibility that several Jewish lives as well as many Jewish bonds escaped the holocaust: within a few months of the disaster the sons of the murdered Benedict of York were already sufficiently optimistic about their future prospects to undertake a payment of no less than 700 marks for the inheritance of their father's landed property and debts.<sup>123</sup> Admittedly the Meaux chronicler, writing much later, explicitly states that for many years after the massacre

<sup>120</sup> Roth, p. 24.

<sup>121</sup> Davies, pp. 176-97; M. Adler, 'Aaron of York', *T.J.H.S.E.*, vol. XIII (1936), pp. 113-55, reprinted in Adler, *Jews of Medieval England*, pp. 127-73, the version cited hereafter.

<sup>122</sup> E.g., *Memoranda Roll 1 John*, pp. 15, 24; *Pipe Roll 3 John*, pp. 159-60; *Rotuli de Oblatis et Finibus*, pp. 122, 130.

<sup>123</sup> See above, pp. 13-14.

Jews did not dare either to inhabit or enter the city; and it was no doubt for this reason, as is usually assumed, that the Jews of York make no appearance among the contributors to the Northampton Donum of 1194.<sup>124</sup> However it has recently been shown that 'the first signs of the revival of Jewish activity in Yorkshire appear in 1196'; and references to a *Samuel* and a *Walterus Judeus* in the Yorkshire section of the Pipe Roll for the preceding year enable us to put that date back to at least 1195.<sup>125</sup> By the opening years of the new century there is copious evidence that a number of Jews had begun to live in the city: most significantly of all, York had already become one of the twenty-seven urban centres in which royal repositories or *archae* for the registration of Jewish debts were eventually established.<sup>126</sup> In 1205 one Jew, by name Hoppetol, was languishing in the sheriff of Yorkshire's gaol on the charge, often repeated later in the century, of false coining. Three years later a much more unsavoury scandal raised the strong suspicion that a York Jew called Milo had killed his wife because of his affair ('*rem*') with another Jewess, Belina: it emerges from the course of the proceedings that there was then an organised '*commune Judeorum Eboraci*', capable of standing surety in its corporate character.<sup>127</sup> In 1218 this Jewish '*commune*' was one of the ten in the country (the others were at Hereford, Worcester, Lincoln, Stamford, Bristol, Gloucester, Northampton, Southampton and Winchester) placed under special protection by the government of Henry III's minority; and in May 1221 'our Jews of York', now firmly under the authority of local bailiffs of the Jews as well as the national justices of the Jews, were again confirmed in their immunity from external interference and, in particular, from the obligation to answer for any plea of debt in a Christian court.<sup>128</sup> The legal position of the York community had certainly never been more secure than it was by this date.

Nor is it difficult to see why so many Jews were prepared to disregard Richard of Devizes' sardonic advice to avoid 'York, full of Scotsmen, filthy and treacherous creatures, hardly men' and had moved into the city in considerable numbers.<sup>129</sup> From the beginning of the thirteenth

<sup>124</sup> *Chronica Monasterii de Melsa*, vol. I, pp. 251-2; I. Abrahams 'The Northampton Donum of 1194', *Misc. J.H.S.E.*, part I (1925), pp. lix-lxxiv.

<sup>125</sup> *Pipe Roll 7 Richard I*, pp. 86, 92, 93; *Pipe Roll 8 Richard I*, p. 187; Richardson, p. 15, n. 4.

<sup>126</sup> A reference to an '*archa domini regis apud Eboracum*' appears in a chirograph (Richardson, pp. 266-7; Jacobs, pp. 227-8) of 1205 or earlier; cf. Roth, pp. 91, 277.

<sup>127</sup> *Rotuli de Oblatis et Finibus*, p. 264; Jacobs, p. 233; *Select Pleas of the Crown, 1200-25*, p. 57; *Curia Regis Rolls*, vol. V, p. 256. Dr Paul Hyams has kindly informed me that an unpublished Plea Roll of the Exchequer of the Jews in the P.R.O., for Hilary Term 1278, refers to a '*librum Regis Judaice super quem iudei (of York) potuerunt sacramentum facere*'.

<sup>128</sup> C.P.R., 1216-25, pp. 157, 290.

<sup>129</sup> *Chronicle of Richard of Devizes*, p. 66.



century, and especially in the middle years of Henry III's reign, York was the centre of an unusually flourishing money-lending business. Although the financial activities of the York Jews have left no record so informatively revealing as the so-called Day Book Rolls of their Norwich counterparts, sufficient evidence survives in published or unpublished form to reveal the main features of their operations. All allowances made for a situation in which unredeemed debts and mortgages leave much less trace in the records than those which were speedily liquidated, it is clear that Jewish capital was in constant demand by a very large and variegated section of northern society. Most of the loans recorded in the York *shetaroth* of this period were for amounts of between 5 and 25 marks and seem to have been subject to the then standard interest rate of twopence in the pound per week. The techniques of money-lending, still basically those employed by Josce and Benedict of York in the late twelfth century, are perhaps best illustrated by the simplest possible example, a starr endorsed by the most famous of all thirteenth-century Jews, Aaron of York. On 17 June 1237 Thomas the Serjeant of (North) Allerton undertook to repay a debt of £6 to Aaron by the end of that month; if he failed to do so he would be subjected to interest at the rate of twopence 'for every pound for each week', his lands, rents and chattels to remain in mortgage to Aaron until both principal and interest had been discharged.<sup>180</sup> The way in which countless transactions of this type could rapidly lead to the impoverishment of the borrower, the profit of the Jew and the emergence of a vast and sophisticated traffic in bonds between Jews and Christians needs no particular urging.

Needless to say the single most important economic effect of such an extensive market in bonds, encumbered estates and property rents was the transfer of landed wealth from a wide variety of 'declining' families to more prosperous social groups, and particularly to those with influence at the royal court.<sup>181</sup> Although the copious source material still needs to

<sup>180</sup> Muniments of Dean and Chapter of Durham, I.I. Ebor., no. 15; *Feodarium Prioratus Dunelmensis* (Surtees Society, vol. 58, 1872), p. 205; J. T. Fowler, 'On certain Starrs or Jewish Documents, partly relating to Northallerton', *Y.A.J.*, vol. III (1875), p. 61; E. Birnbaum, 'Starrs of Aaron of York in the Dean and Chapter Muniments of Durham', *T.J.H.S.E.*, vol. XIX (1960), pp. 199-205.

<sup>181</sup> The grievance ventilated at the Oxford parliament of 1258 was not that the Jews lent money usuriously but that 'they hand over their debts and lands mortgaged to them to the magnates and most powerful men in the realm, who thereby enter into the lands of lesser men': W. Stubbs, *Select Charters* (9th edn., Oxford, 1913), p. 377. Despite Professor Postan's important speculations on these developments (*The Medieval Economy and Society*, London, 1972, pp. 164-5), the York evidence would suggest that it was the lesser squirearchy and the peasant free-tenants, rather than the 'knightly class' as a whole, which suffered most severely from this process.

be properly assessed, it seems clear enough that the great majority of the loans made by the York Jews in their most active period (c. 1220-c. 1258) were to the lesser gentry and free tenants of the north — and indeed of the south too.<sup>182</sup> On the whole, advances of capital by York Jews to the greater magnates, lay and ecclesiastical, seem to be less in evidence than during the days of Aaron of Lincoln. Moreover, by the reign of Henry III religious houses in northern England were apparently profiting more than ever before from their business connections with the Jews. Those ecclesiastical corporations which needed to borrow money for purposes of consumption or capital expenditure are considerably outnumbered in the surviving records by those which bought up unredeemed Jewish bonds at a discount in order to augment their estates.<sup>183</sup> The quite unsubstantiated legend that the famous north transept window ('The Five Sisters') of York Minster was directly financed by the York Jews is not absolutely incredible; but it must be said that a loan for such a purpose would be against the historical probabilities of the early thirteenth century.

A highly profitable money-lending business was of course the *sine qua non* of a Jewish settlement in thirteenth-century York; the inescapable corollary was inordinately heavy financial exploitation by the English government. Not surprisingly therefore, royal taxation records provide much the most striking testimony to the extraordinary wealth of the York community under Henry III. Before the end of John's reign and during the early years of Henry III, various unpublished '*rotuli Iudeorum*' among the exchequer records already reveal the manner in which numerous Christian borrowers were being compelled to repay at least part of their obligations to the York Jews whenever the latter were tallaged.<sup>184</sup> By 1219 Leo *Episcopus* of York and his son-in-law Aaron were classed for taxation purposes among England's six richest Jews. Two years later York actually headed the list of the 17 communities which contributed to the so-called *auxilium* (in effect a tallage) paid toward the dowry of the

<sup>182</sup> See the important lists of the numerous cyrographs of Aaron and Leo of York as well as of many other Jews deposited in the Cambridge *archa* during the reign of Henry III: Stokes, *Studies in Anglo-Jewish History*, pp. 252-75.

<sup>183</sup> For examples from the three very different northern monasteries of Durham, Malton and Meaux, see Muniments of Dean and Chapter of Durham, 4.13. Spec., no. 35; *Feodarium Prioratus Dunelmensis*, pp. 135, 175; Richardson, pp. 281-4; *Chronica Monasterii de Melsa*, vol. II, pp. 12, 55, 109, 115-16.

<sup>184</sup> P.R.O., E. 401/1564 (a *Rotulus Iudeorum* of 14 and 15 John which contains three lists of 34, 38 and 27 names respectively under an *Eboracum* heading); E. 401/3b (a *Rotulus Iudeorum* of 4 Henry III with a list of 23 names under the *Eboracum* heading). I am grateful to Mr Charles Kightly for his help in transcribing the York sections of these important rolls, the full implications of which will require detailed discussion after their eventual publication.

king's sister. Of a total payment of £564 3s. 5½d., York was charged with no less than £164 10s. od., more than twice as much as the Jews of London.<sup>135</sup> Historians have sometimes been reluctant to accept the possibility that the York community had developed, despite the catastrophe of its earlier history, into the wealthiest in the country. Yet as late as 1255 it was still being assessed for tallages at a higher rate than any other provincial English Jewry.<sup>136</sup> Only after that year, at exactly the time when there is clear evidence that Henry III had taxed the great Aaron of York beyond the point of recovery, did the financial history of the York Jews enter its final stage of rapid and pathetic decay. Perhaps the most revealing symptom of this decline is the readiness of York Jews to sell off their property within the city itself to Christian purchasers, often the leading citizens of the town.<sup>137</sup> The final survey of their holdings, made on the very eve of their final expulsion in 1290, records the names of only six Jewish property-holders in the city; of these Bonamicus alone, who later settled in Paris under the protection of King Philip the Fair, was at all prominent. A handful of houses and urban rents worth little more than £15 in all were a sad comment on how a particularly mighty community had fallen.<sup>138</sup>

The remarkable financial ascendancy of the York Jewry in the first half of the thirteenth century had been a reflection of the wealth of its greatest figures rather than of the community as a whole. The exceptional dominance of medieval Jewish society by a handful of very powerful patriarchs, a dominance encouraged for its own purposes by the royal government, may still be insufficiently appreciated. Perhaps no social group in medieval England provides a better justification for Carlyle's view that history 'is but the biography of great men'. There is certainly no doubt that the history of the thirteenth-century York Jewry will eventually have to be written in terms of biography. The task of

<sup>135</sup> Stokes, *Studies in Anglo-Jewish History*, p. 250; H. M. Chew, 'A Jewish Aid to Marry, A.D. 1221', *T.J.H.S.E.*, vol. XI (1928), pp. 92-111.

<sup>136</sup> In 1255 London was assessed at 180 marks, York at 50 marks, Winchester and Lincoln at 40 marks each, Canterbury at 30 marks, and Oxford and Worcester at 25 marks each: *C.P.R.*, 1247-58, p. 439 and cf. pp. 441-4; Lipman, *Jews of Medieval Norwich*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>137</sup> Among many possible examples (which include the large number of houses sold by Henna, widow of Aaron of York, in the 1270s and 1280s) see *Cal. Jewish Plea Rolls*, vol. II, pp. 156, 202, 244; *C.P.R.*, 1272-81, pp. 377, 380, 398. One of the reasons for these sales was no doubt the increasing reluctance of the English government to allow Christians to hold property from Jews by lease and the consequently punitive effects of the Provisions of Jewry (1269) and the Statutes of Jewry of 1271 and 1275.

<sup>138</sup> The 1290 survey of the property of York Jews (less fully recorded than in the case of several other towns) is printed from the original in the exchequer records by B. L. Abrahamis, 'The Condition of the Jews of England at the time of their Expulsion in 1290', *T.J.H.S.E.*, vol. II (1895), p. 105, and (less accurately) by Davies, pp. 192-4.

reconstructing the genealogical relationships of medieval English Jews is still in its infancy; but despite the complications caused by a mobile population, frequent name-changes and a very limited repertoire of Hebrew first names, such a study may one day transform our understanding of Jewish history in thirteenth-century England. Clearly the exceptional prominence of the York Jewry under Henry III owed nearly everything to the presence within the city of the two richest Jews of their age. Leo *Episcopus* or *Le Eveske*, active in most branches of Jewish life from at least 1219 until his death in 1244, lived through the halcyon years which coincided with the first half of Henry III's reign; after his decease, his son Samuel was required to pay a relief to the king of no less than 7,000 marks, the highest recorded figure for any medieval English Jew.<sup>139</sup> But even Leo's great wealth was overshadowed by that of his son-in-law, Aaron of York, at first the most powerful and influential and later the most ruthlessly taxed Jew in English history.<sup>140</sup> Although Aaron's most active and wealthy years coincided with those (1236-43) in which he held the office of Arch-Presbyter of the English Jews, he showed remarkable financial resilience until crushed under the weight of the savagely heavy royal tallages of the 1250s.<sup>141</sup> Even the normally unsympathetic Matthew Paris was moved to something close to pity at the spectacle of the deliberate extinction of such a fabulous fortune, evaporated long before Aaron's death in 1268.<sup>142</sup> Aaron of York's career will always be remembered as the *locus classicus* of the instability of Jewish fortunes and indeed of Jewish life in medieval England. Although his widow Henna remained quietly active in the York community her husband had adorned until the last decade of its existence, Jewish wealth had passed to other hands in other places.

The readiness to migrate from one community to another at short notice has always been a characteristic of Jewish history, a characteristic to which thirteenth-century England was certainly no exception. Far

<sup>139</sup> *Excerpta e Rotulis Finium* (Record Commission, 1835), vol. I, p. 412; Adler, p. 146; Roth, *Jews of Medieval Oxford*, p. 55, n. 4. Samuel, who died in 1250 leaving a dowry of £200 to his widow Pucella, inherited his father's surname of *Episcopus*, *L'Evesque* or *Cohen* (*Excerpta e Rotulis Finium*, vol. II, p. 93; *Cal. Jewish Plea Rolls*, vol. I, p. 116). Most of his property passed in turn to his sister Henna, widow of Aaron of York.

<sup>140</sup> Adler (p. 131) caused unnecessary confusion by identifying Aaron's wife, Henna, as the daughter rather than sister of Leo's son, Samuel; there is no doubt whatsoever that Leo *Episcopus* was Henna's father (Rigg, *Select Pleas*, p. 53; *Cal. Jewish Plea Rolls*, vol. I, pp. 210-11; *C.P.R.*, 1272-81, p. 380).

<sup>141</sup> *C. Ch. R.*, 1226-57, p. 225; *C.P.R.*, 1232-47, pp. 93, 137, 178, 187, 228-9, 246, 445, 480, 492; Stokes, *Studies in Anglo-Jewish History*, pp. 29-30, 244-5; Adler, pp. 137, 167.

<sup>142</sup> *Matthaei Parisiensis Chronica Majora* (Rolls Series, 57, 1872-83), vol. V, p. 136. The date of Aaron's death is fixed by a comparison of *Cal. Jewish Plea Rolls*, vol. I, p. 181, and *C.P.R.*, 1266-72, p. 255. For Henna's activities as a widow, see *Cal. Jewish Plea Rolls*, vol. I, pp. 232, 244, 271.

from being, as is usually thought, the son of the Josce of York who had been martyred in March 1190, the great Aaron *de Eboraco* himself had moved to the city from Lincoln several years after the massacre.<sup>143</sup> Similarly many of York's own resident Jews went elsewhere in the lean years of the 1250s and later. Like the great capitalist enterprises of the twentieth century, the financial dealings of the medieval English Jews defy understanding until it is appreciated that they operated at a national rather than local level: the history of any one community, York not excepted, can never be studied in isolation. To the very end indeed the Jewish community at York was an exotic and largely artificial growth in the city's history. What the Christian inhabitants of the thirteenth-century town thought of their Hebrew neighbours was no doubt largely conditioned by that inescapable fact. Isolated acts of anti-semitism, like Simon of Naburn's mysterious 'assault on the Jews in the water of the Ouse' in 1208, certainly did occur;<sup>144</sup> and the fact that — as far as we know — the York Jewish community was spared the blood libels and mob violence encountered elsewhere in Henry III's England probably owes more to fear of royal anger than regret for the atrocity of 1190.<sup>145</sup> On the other hand, many members of the city's governing class not only came to know Jews well in their capacity as bailiffs and chirographers of the York *archa* but also had a vested interest in maintaining their security.<sup>146</sup> The dispersal of Jewish property, and to a lesser extent of Jewish residences, throughout the city testifies to the necessity for at least some business co-operation and perhaps even to a prevailing atmosphere of passive tolerance: at one time or another York Jews are known to have held tenements in Coney Street, Micklegate, Hungate, Fossgate, Bretgate, Patrick Pool, Walmgate, Pavement, Castlegate, St Saviourgate and Feltergayle.<sup>147</sup>

Although the medieval Jewry, at York as elsewhere, therefore bore no

<sup>143</sup> Aaron of York certainly often appears in the records as son of Josce, but *not* — as Davies (p. 179) was the first to suggest — of Josce of York. The records of the 1221 Jewish aid (Chew, pp. 106–9) reveal that Aaron son of Josce was then known as Aaron of Lincoln. This identification ('*Aron' de Everwyk filius Joscei de Lincolnia*') is confirmed by an entry in the 1225–7 Norwich Day Book Roll (Lipman, *Jews of Medieval Norwich*, p. 224).

<sup>144</sup> *Pleas before the King or his Justices, 1198–1212*, vol. IV, p. 115.

<sup>145</sup> On 8 October 1266, in the aftermath of the anti-Jewish disturbances which accompanied the period of baronial reform and rebellion, Henry III ordered John de Selby, the mayor of the city, to protect York Jews against threats to their lives and goods (C.P.R., 1258–66, p. 679).

<sup>146</sup> C.P.R., 1272–81, p. 127; *Feodarium Dunelmensis*, p. 204; *Cal. Jewish Plea Rolls*, vol. II, p. 62.

<sup>147</sup> To the references collected in V.C.H., *City of York*, p. 48, n. 64, add especially York Minster Library, Vicars Choral Deeds, no. 85; *Cal. Jewish Plea Rolls*, vol. I, pp. 141, 247; vol. IV, p. 17; E. Brunskill, 'The Jews in Medieval York', *T.J.H.S.E.*, vol. XX (1964), pp. 239–45.

approximation to the later eastern European ghetto, it is evident that there was a particularly heavy concentration of Jewish residential property in Coney Street. Of the seven urban messuages still held by the York Jews at the time of their expulsion in 1290, four — including the dwelling of Bonamicus himself — were located in that street, then as now in the heart of the city.<sup>148</sup> It is possible to be even more precise: although the numerous references to Jewish property in thirteenth-century Patent Rolls and other sources are usually regrettably vague, a Fountains Abbey charter of c. 1230 reveals that only one tenement separated the house of Aaron of York from the church of St Martin's, Coney Street.<sup>149</sup> Immediately adjacent to Aaron's houses in *Coningestrete* lay those of his nephew, Josce le Jovene, who was hanged for felony committed at London in the late 1270s; these in turn adjoined a piece of land 'with buildings and appurtenances, and with a school (*schola*) built thereon, and with steps to the entrance of the said land' which lay — in November 1279 — between Coney Street and the Ouse.<sup>150</sup> It is hard to resist the cumulative impression that in the thirteenth century at least the side of central Coney Street facing the river was the location not only of the dwellings of York's richest Jews but of its synagogue too.<sup>151</sup> How far Robert Davies was justified in claiming — on the evidence of a now unidentifiable charter, William of Newburgh's allusion to '*in medio civitatis*', and some mysterious and no doubt undatable 'fragments of massive stone walls' — that the twelfth-century house of Josce of York also stood on this site must remain an open question. But there can be no reasonable doubt that the modern shoppers at Leak and Thorp's, like their countless predecessors who lodged at the famous 'George Inn', are as close as anyone can now be to the geographical centre of the medieval York Jewry.<sup>152</sup>

<sup>148</sup> Abrahams, 'Condition of the Jews in 1290', p. 105; Davies, p. 193. Bonamicus's houses were later bought from the king by William le Vavasour for the considerable sum of 70 marks: *Misc. J.H.S.E.*, part I (1925), pp. xiii–xiv.

<sup>149</sup> *Abstracts of Fountains Chartulary*, vol. I, p. 275; Drake, *Eboracum*, Appendix, p. xxii.

<sup>150</sup> C.P.R., 1272–81, pp. 334, 398; C. Ch.R., 1257–1300, p. 222; T. P. Cooper, *York: The Story of its Walls, Bars and Castles* (London, 1904), pp. 336–7. Among the many other prominent York Jews who held property and probably lived in Coney Street was Leo *Episcopus* (York Minster, Vicars Choral Deed, no. 63; Brunskill, *op. cit.*, p. 243).

<sup>151</sup> For '*schola*' as synagogue, see e.g. C.Ch.R., 1226–57, p. 307; C.Ch.R., 1257–1300, pp. 245, 253; C.P.R., 1292–1301, p. 18. Queen Eleanor's grant of the York *schola* and its surrounding area to John Sampson and Roger Basy, prominent York citizens of the period, on 15 November 1279 should doubtless be interpreted as a sign of the serious contraction in the size of the York Jewry by that date.

<sup>152</sup> Davies, p. 153. Cf. T. Widdrington, *Analecta Eboracensia*, ed. C. Caine (London, 1897), pp. 301–3; A. Raine, *Mediaeval York, A Topographical Survey* (London, 1955), p. 155. A tenement in Coney Street bequeathed by a fifteenth-century York mayor, Thomas Gare junior, was still known as the *Hyjudee* in 1438: R. B. Cook, 'Some Early Civic Wills of York', *Associated Architectural Societies' Reports and Papers*, vol. XXXV (1919), part 1, p. 63.

*Sic transit gloria.* Even those 'large houses like royal palaces' which so impressed William of Newburgh have proved to be evanescent memorials to the medieval Jews of York.<sup>153</sup> Admittedly the discovery of an allegedly medieval Jewish amulet in the cavity of a foundation stone when old Layerthorpe Postern and Bridge were demolished in 1829–30 caused some minor stir in Victorian antiquarian circles; but in the complete absence of any scholarly examination of this intriguing medallion, which takes the classic cabbalistic form of a talisman inscribed with magic Hebraic numbers and an invocation to Jupiter, it may be wisest to doubt whether it is of medieval provenance at all.<sup>154</sup> As so often in early medieval history, names have proved to be more enduring than objects: the most permanent legacies of the medieval York Jewry to the modern city are a couple of remarkable street names. One of these, the Jubbergate now bathetically designated Market Street, is unquestionably the most problematic of all York's place-names. The difficulties presented by the *-bret* element in the early spellings of this important street (*Jubrettegat*, *Jeubrettegat*, *Joubrettegat*) have understandably baffled a long line of York historians and antiquaries as well as place-name scholars; but it is fortunately a good deal simpler to conclude that the *Ju-*, *Jeu-*, *Jou-* prefix (which makes its first recorded appearance at more or less exactly the time when the Jews were expelled in 1290) must derive from the Middle English *Jewe*. The existence of two different Bretgates in the medieval city probably provides the explanation of why the *Ju-* prefix was frequently added to a street where Jews did in fact hold property and which led into Coney Street at a point not far away from the site of the synagogue and the houses of Aaron, Leo, and Bonamicus of York.<sup>155</sup>

<sup>153</sup> The time-hallowed view that medieval Jews were the pioneers of urban domestic building in stone ought perhaps to be approached with some caution in the light of recent research and the considered suggestion that at York itself stone chambers and halls may have been 'normal amongst the more wealthy merchants of the 12th and 13th centuries': *Inventory of Historical Monuments in the City of York*, vol. III (1972), *South-West of the Ouse*, p. lxi.

<sup>154</sup> For an engraving of the medallion see M. Margoliouth, *The History of the Jews in Great Britain* (London, 1851), vol. I, pp. 298–300; and for a vigorous attack on the view that it is of medieval Jewish origin see L. Loewe, *The York Medal, or the Supposed Jewish Medal* (privately printed from a letter to the Editor of the *York Courant*, 1843); cf. *Notes and Queries*, 6th series, vol. I (1880), pp. 354, 482; W. Hargrove, *The New Guide for Strangers and Residents in the City of York* (York, 1838), p. 45; C. Wellbeloved, *A Hand-Book to the Antiquities in the Grounds and Museum of the Yorkshire Philosophical Society* (8th ed., 1891), p. 228. Mrs E. Hartley is at present kindly investigating the whereabouts of this amulet, temporarily mislaid among the collections of the Yorkshire Museum.

<sup>155</sup> I am grateful to Professor Kenneth Cameron for his confirmation of this derivation and for his helpful comments on the problems. The most important attempts to grapple with the name 'Jubrettegat', neither completely convincing, are by H. Lindkvist, 'A Study on Early Medieval York', *Anglia*, vol. 50 (1926), p. 365; and A. H. Smith, *The Place-Names of the East Riding of Yorkshire and York* (English Place-Name Society, vol. XIV, 1937), p. 291; see

(cont. on p. 47)

The city's second Jewish place-name, the street called Jewbury immediately outside its north-eastern walls, is a good deal less ambiguous. Resisting the temptation to make unduly heavy weather of the *-bury* suffix, one can only be grateful for a contemporaneously precise identification of 'Le Jeubyry' with a plot of land used by the Jews as their cemetery in the years before 1290. There can be little doubt that the burial-ground of the medieval York Jews had always been on this site, one which conforms exactly to the general pattern of extra-mural Jewish cemeteries encountered elsewhere in the country.<sup>156</sup> In a deservedly famous charter of c. 1230, John le Romeyn, then Subdean of York Minster, recorded the sale to the commune of the York Jews of a plot of land in Barkergate adjacent to what was already *antiquum cimiterium Iudeorum*.<sup>157</sup> It is therefore on that site, immediately west of the river Foss and now under the tarmac of an unusually unsightly civic car park, that archaeologists will no doubt one day disturb the posthumous tranquillity of Jews who can have rarely been completely tranquil while alive. Even then the myth will surely be more potent than the facts. The absence of a sizeable Jewish community in the Victorian and twentieth-century city has a good deal more to do with York's failure to foster a thriving modern textile industry than with official ostracism on the part of the Jews themselves;<sup>158</sup> but this is still a story to ensure, in Isaac

(note 155 contd.)

the criticisms of Raine, *Mediaeval York*, pp. 163–4, and the important references now available in *York Memorandum Book B/Y* (Surtees Society, vol. 186, 1973), pp. 17, 19, 22, 51, 68–9). The *-bret* element seems more likely to refer to a possible settlement of post-Conquest Bretons in York than to any supposed 'Cumbrian Britons' (a suggestion I owe to Dr Richard Fletcher).

<sup>156</sup> Abrahams, 'Condition of the Jews in 1290', p. 105; Davies, p. 194. See M. J. Honeybourne, 'The Pre-Expulsion Cemetery of the Jews in London', *T.J.H.S.E.*, vol. XX (1964), pp. 155–9, for the most detailed analysis of the evidence for the location of medieval Jewish burial-grounds throughout England.

<sup>157</sup> York Minster, Vicars Choral Deeds, no. 22; printed as an Appendix below: see Frontispiece. Among the many medieval references to 'le Jubiry', 'le Jubery', 'le Jubericroft' not collected in *Place-Names of the East Riding and York*, p. 290, perhaps the most informative is Henry IV's grant to Robert de Gare of 'duo messuagia, duo cottagia, et unum croftam vocat' *Jewebury in Monkgate infra suburbia civitatis Eboracensis*: *Calendarium Rotulorum Patentium* (Record Commission, 1802), p. 238. *-bury* is clearly here being used in the late medieval sense of an urban area outside the main part of the town.

<sup>158</sup> A few European Jews settled at York in the late nineteenth century and in 1892 formed a Hebrew Congregation which has met quite regularly in Aldwark ever since; but in 1968 it still only numbered 45 out of a total civic population of 106,010 (*V.C.H., City of York*, p. 419; *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, sub York). The Jewish authorities I have consulted appear to disagree as to whether residence in York has ever been subject to an official ban (*herem*).

D'Israeli's words, that 'our heart however expands with sentiment'.<sup>159</sup> One can understand why even today a handful of Orthodox Jews still actively discourage their children from coming to settle — or even to study — in a city which brought their predecessors so much pain as well as no little profit.

<sup>159</sup> I. D'Israeli, *Curiosities of Literature* (London, 1863 edn.), vol. II, p. 79. The most influential, recent versions of the myth may be encountered in Joanne Greenberg's historical novell *The King's Persons* (London, 1963), and the opening pages of André Schwarz-Bart's best-selling *Le Dernier des Justes* (Paris, 1959).

## APPENDIX

## CHIROGRAPH RECORDING THE SALE OF LAND ADJACENT TO THE OLD JEWISH CEMETERY TO THE COMMUNE OF THE JEWS OF YORK, c.1230

(see Frontispiece, and above page 47, note 157)

Of all the surviving original documents relating to the history of the medieval York Jewry, the following (York Minster Library: Vicars Choral Deeds, no. 22) is unquestionably the most revealing. Master John le Romeyn the elder, who sold the land in question to the York Jews, had become the first recorded Subdean of York Minster in or about 1228; and the names of the York mayor and bailiffs (or reeves) who appear as witnesses make it clear that this chirograph dates from the very early 1230s. The distinction of the witnesses testifies to the close supervision of the Jewish community by both the ecclesiastical and civic authorities in York. Nor can there be much doubt that the York Jews bought the land specified below in order to extend their existing cemetery, itself a comment on their numerical growth at this period.

*Text*

Sciunt presentes et futuri Quod ego Iohannes Romanus Subdecanus Ecclesie Sancti Petri Ebor' vendidi Commune Iudeorum Ebor' et aliorum Iudeorum Anglie, pro quadam certa summa pecunie quam michi dederunt, Totam illam terram meam Cum pertinenciis in Barkergate in Suburbio Ebor' quam emi a Galfrido Brun sicuti iacet in longitudine et in latitudine inter terram quam ego tenui de Communa Canonicorum Ebor' Ecclesie et antiquum Cimiterium Iudeorum; Habendam et Tenendam dictis Iudeis et eorum assignatis imperpetuum de me et assignatis meis in feodo et hereditate libere Quiete et integre, Cum omnibus pertinenciis et asiamentis suis sine omni retenemento; Reddendo inde annuatim michi in tota vita mea duos solidos sterlingorum, medietatem ad festum Sancti Martini in hyeme et medietatem ad Pentecost'; Et post decessum meum vicariis Ebor' ecclesie ad eosdem terminos sicut meis assignatis imperpetuum, et domino Regi Husgablium suum pro omni seruicio. Et ego Iohannes et assignati mei Warantizabimus dicte Commune Iudeorum prefatam terram cum omnibus pertinenciis suis per predictum seruicium contra omnes gentes et eorum heredibus et assignatis imperpetuum; et ut hec vendicio Rata et stabilis sine fine permaneat, huic Carte in modum Cyr(o)graphal' confecte sigillum meum apposui. Hiis Testibus: Rogero decano beati Petri Ebor', Willelmo de Redefend tunc Thessaurio eiusdem Ecclesie, Galfrido de Norewyc tunc precingtore predictae Ecclesie, Ricardo de Norcie Walays tunc Cancelario, Hugone de Seleby tunc maiore Ebor'; Johanne de Warthil, Alexandro filio Radulphi, Nicholao Winemer, Roberto de Cardoil, Thome Sperry, tunc prepositis; Ranulpho filio Yuonis, Waltero Clerico, tunc Cyrographariis Ebor'; Thome filio Ace, et multis aliis Christianis; et Iudeis, Ysaac de Norhamton', Leon' episcopo, Aron filio Yocy, Benedicto episcopo, Yocoo de Kent, Samuel filio Yocoy, et multis aliis Iudeis. (On the next line are added — in Hebrew script — the signatures of five Jewish witnesses, viz. Isaac of Northampton, Samuel Cohen, Samuel son of Josce, Josce of Kent, Josce nephew of Aaron.)

*Translation*

Let those present and to come know that I, John Romanus, Subdean of the church of St Peter of York,<sup>1</sup> have sold to the commune of the Jews of York and of the other Jews of England, for a certain sum of money which they have given to me, the whole of that land of mine (with its appurtenances) in Barkergate in the suburb of York which I bought from Geoffrey Brun:— as it lies in length and breadth between the land which I have held from the commons of the canons of the church of York and the ancient cemetery of the Jews. To be had and to be held by the said Jews and their assigns for ever, from me and my assigns, in fee and inheritance, freely, quietly and intact, with all its appurtenances and easements, without any withholding whatsoever. To be rendered to me from that land, yearly for all my life, two shillings sterling, one moiety at the feast of St Martin in the winter and the other moiety at Whitsuntide; and, after my death, these sums are to be rendered to the vicars of the church of York, as my assigns, for ever at the same terms, as well as his housegable to the lord king for all service. And I, John, and my assigns will warrant to the said commune of the Jews the aforesaid land with all its appurtenances, because of the aforesaid service, against all people, their heirs and their assigns for ever. And in order that this sale may remain eternally valid and established, to this charter, made in the manner of a chirograph, I have affixed my seal. These being witnesses: Roger, Dean of (the church of) the Blessed Peter of York; William of Redefend, then Treasurer of the same church; Geoffrey of Norwich, then Precentor of the said church; Richard of Norcie Walays, then Chancellor (of the said church);<sup>2</sup> Hugh of Selby, then Mayor of York; John of Warthill, Alexander son of Ralph, Nicholas Winemer, Robert of Cardoil, Thomas Sperri, then reeves;<sup>3</sup> Ranulph son of Ivo, Walter clerk, then Chirographers of York; Thomas son of Ace, and many other Christians. And Jews, Isaac of Northampton, Leo episcopus, Aaron son of Josce, Benedict episcopus, Josce of Kent, Samuel son of Josce, and many other Jews.<sup>4</sup> (For a previous printed edition and translation of this deed, see Adler, pp. 164–7. Four other Vicars Choral Deeds of York Minster Library (nos. 52, 63, 85, 298) also relate to property transactions involving thirteenth-century York Jews: they have now been printed in E. Brunskill, 'The Jews in Medieval York', *T.J.H.S.E.* vol. XX (1964), pp. 239–45).

<sup>1</sup> Master John le Romeyn the elder was Subdean of York Minster by June 1228: see *York Minster Fasti* (Yorkshire Archaeological Society, Record Series, vols. CXXIII, CXXIV, 1958–9), vol. I, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> For these four dignitaries of York Minster, see *York Minster Fasti*, vol. I, pp. 3, 13, 18–19, 23.

<sup>3</sup> The bailiffs of the city of York (alternatively known as 'reeves' at this early date) were Thomas le Graunt, Nicholas Winemer and Robert de Karleol in 1230, replaced by Thomas Sperri, John of Warthill and Alexander fitz Ralph in 1231–2: R. H. Skaife, 'Civic Officials and Parliamentary Representatives of York' (MS. in York City Reference Library), vol. III, p. 879.

<sup>4</sup> All six of these Jews contributed to the royal *auxilium* paid by the York Jewry in 1221: see H. M. Chew, 'A Jewish Aid to Marry, A.D. 1221', *T.J.H.S.E.* vol. XI (1928), pp. 106–7. 'Aaron son of Josce' can be safely identified with the famous Aaron of York.

## Postscript (1995)

Readers of this Borthwick Paper, first published twenty-one years ago, may well suppose that it is already beginning to show signs of its considerable age. Perhaps so: but to the author's own relief, nearly all he wrote about this harrowing and perennially fascinating subject in 1974 is what he would still write now. Contemporary attitudes towards the medieval York Jews and the massacre of 1190 have admittedly changed a great deal during the last two decades: but this transformation owes much less to the work of professional historians than to the dramatic rise of interest in the medieval English Jewry among modern Christians and Jews alike. Ironically enough, it was only after the small eighty-year-old Hebrew Synagogue in Aldwark finally closed its doors in 1975 that the massacre of the York Jews on Shabbat ha-Gadol finally came to fulfil its present symbolic role as the supreme English example of the evils of anti-Semitism and of the need for reconciliation between Christians and Jews. Perhaps the critical date in this transition was 31 October 1978, when a memorial tablet to the York martyrs of March 1190 was unveiled at the foot of Clifford's Tower in the presence of the Archbishop of York and of the Chief Rabbi of England.<sup>1</sup> Thereafter, and especially since the octocentenary of 'Clifford's Tower Commemoration' between 15 and 18 March 1990, the massacre has become – what was certainly much less the case in 1974 – the focus for choral music, poetry and a new form of ecumenical pilgrimage.<sup>2</sup> After centuries during which the York atrocities of March 1190 were deliberately remembered as infrequently as possible, they have at least found a significant place within whatever the 'English Heritage' is supposed to be.<sup>3</sup>

Such far-reaching developments were not at all anticipated when this paper was written in the early 1970s: but in some ways it is even more curious that one of its rather casual concluding prophecies was to prove true with something of a vengeance. When supposing, in 1974, that it would be 'under the tarmac of an unusually unsightly civic car park that archaeologists

<sup>1</sup> Although prepared with the co-operation of the Ancient Monuments Division of the then Department of the Environment, the creation of this memorial tablet was due to an initiative from the Jewish Historical Society of England.

<sup>2</sup> *Clifford's Tower Commemoration, York, 15–18 March 1990: A Programme and Handbook* (York, 1990), passim; but also see Jon Silkin's earlier impressive poems on the massacre in his *The Principle of Water* (London, 1974).

<sup>3</sup> See K. Jeffrey, *Clifford's Tower and the Jews of Medieval York* (English Heritage, 1995); cf. C. Richmond, 'Englishness and Medieval Anglo-Jewry', *Immigrants and Minorities*, 10 (1991), pp. 42–59.

will no doubt one day disturb the posthumous tranquillity of Jews who can rarely have been completely tranquil while alive', it would have been impossible to predict that proposals to develop the medieval Jewish burial ground at York were in fact to be brought before the City Council as early as July 1980. But so they were: and as the long awaited and authoritative account of the resulting if incomplete archaeological investigation makes clear, the now famous Jewbury excavation of 1982-83 took almost everyone by surprise.<sup>4</sup> One possibility mooted at the time was the creation of a memorial garden on the site, but in the event the demands of modern capitalism (the need for a multi-storey car park over the cemetery to serve Sainsbury's then new store on Foss Bank) triumphed over all other considerations. The York Archaeological Trust only had time to investigate approximately half of the burial ground: and now the solitary memorial to the Jews of medieval York at Jewbury itself is a plaque briefly visible to those who drive into a car park perhaps only a little less unsightly than the one it has replaced.<sup>5</sup>

No attempt can be made here to do justice to the complexities of the York Archaeological Trust's elaborate Jewbury excavation report, now essential reading for the history of medieval Jewry not only in York but in England and indeed western Christendom as a whole. In many ways this impressive piece of collaborative scholarship carries all the greater conviction because it is careful not to try to prove too much: it already seems absolutely clear that the Jewbury excavation of 1982-83 is much more important for the questions it raises than those it answers. Apart from the familiar difficulties involved in trying to relate medieval archaeological to documentary evidence, the principal problem facing members of the York Archaeological Trust when attempting to assess the significance of the 475 inhumations so scrupulously examined at Jewbury was the lack of other comparable large-scale excavated medieval Jewish cemeteries.<sup>6</sup> That said, it seems to be one of the most important consequences of the Jewbury excavation that it has dispelled the previously pervasive myth of uniformity in Jewish burial custom throughout medieval Christendom. Much more

4 P. V. Addyman, 'Circumstances of Excavation and Research', in *The Jewish Burial Ground at Jewbury* (York Archaeological Trust, 12/3, 1994), ed. J. Lilley et al., pp. 298-300.

5 N. Pevsner & D. Neave, *Yorkshire: York and the East Riding* (2nd edn., Harmondsworth, 1995), p. 248. For a photograph of the memorial plaque see *Clifford's Tower Commemoration*, p. 84.

6 J. Lilley, 'Interpretation of the Excavated Remains', in *Jewish Burial Ground at Jewbury*, pp. 360-5.

disappointing for the study of the medieval York Jewry was the complete absence of tombstones and grave goods at the Jewbury site. However the latter is to be explained, the inevitable result is to make the detailed scientific study of the skeletons themselves much the most significant part of the archaeological investigation. Here again the evidence can often prove less than clear cut: but minute study of the physical, and especially dental, features of the human remains at Jewbury raises the tantalising possibility that the thirteenth-century Jewish population of York may indeed have been distinctive in a variety of ways, not least in practising a dietary regime different from that of their Christian neighbours.<sup>7</sup>

More relevant to the traditional concerns of medieval Jewish historians is the ingenious use made of the Jewbury burial statistics to suggest that the probable average total size of the Jewish population in thirteenth-century York was 260, with a possible life-expectancy at birth within that population of some 24 years.<sup>8</sup> Such calculations, undoubtedly tentative, are not altogether impossible to reconcile with this author's earlier and equally hazardous supposition that 'it seems unlikely that there can have been more than 150 or so Jews in York at the accession of Edward I'. That particular estimate was made within the context of a detailed – but certainly not comprehensive – discussion of the declining fortunes and ultimate extinction of the thirteenth-century York Jewry, a discussion in which I attempted to expand and elaborate upon the third section of this Borthwick Paper.<sup>9</sup> On the evidence of royal tallages and other sources it proved possible to confirm that the remarkable prosperity of the York Jewry during the halcyon years of Aaron of York was brought to an end by its remorseless and sustained taxation at the hands of Henry III in the 1240s and 1250s. Whether or not, as seems likely, the year 1255 marked the critical watershed in the fortunes of the York Jewry, thereafter (and long after Aaron's own death in 1268), the history of the community presents a *locus classicus* of a religious minority

7 K. M. Dobney, 'Study of the Dental Calculus', in *Jewish Burial Ground at Jewbury*, pp. 507-21. Some documentary and literary evidence for the probability that 'the Jews' diet set them apart from their host society' is assembled in R. R. Mundill, 'The Jews in England, 1272-1290' (D.Phil. thesis, Department of Mediaeval History, University of St Andrews, 1987), pp. 24-6.

8 M. H. Williamson, 'The Size of the medieval Jewish population in York', in *Jewish Burial Ground at Jewbury*, pp. 526-38. These calculations naturally depend on estimates (not at all easy to make) of the total size of the Jewbury cemetery and of the extent to which Jews not resident in York were interred there at different periods between the 1170s and 1280s.

9 R. B. Dobson, 'The Decline and Expulsion of the Medieval Jews of York', *T.J.H.S.E.*, vol. xxvi (1979), pp. 34-52; cf. p. 43.

under relentless and increasingly irreversible pressure. Whatever may have been the case in thirteenth-century England's other provincial Jewries, the Jews of York could clearly find little consolation from Edward I's novel experiments in controlling the business activities of his only significant religious minority.<sup>10</sup> According to all the available evidence, the Jews of York had lost almost all their economic significance well before 1 November 1290, the day on which the community there joined the fate of all English Jews in being condemned to 'a perpetual exile and without hope of remaining'.<sup>11</sup>

However, one of the more familiar paradoxes of the history of medieval English Jewry is that it tends to be most fully documented in its final and declining years. It is therefore hardly surprising that since this paper was first published, some new insights into the melancholy state of the York Jews during the reign of Edward I have appeared in the most recent volume of the *Plea Rolls of the Exchequer of the Jews* and various other sources.<sup>12</sup> As many more relevant judicial and financial records in the Public Record Office still wait to be edited and assessed, it need hardly be said that this account of the Jews of Medieval York still remains a preliminary foray into an almost inexhaustibly fascinating subject. Indeed during the last two decades the most important contributions to our understanding of the Jews of medieval York have tended to emerge from scholars not primarily interested in York at all. Much more research on various aspects of medieval Anglo-Jewry is currently in progress than was the case in 1974: but it is already clear that recent investigation of themes as diverse as Jewish marriage customs, royal tallages and the contradictory currents of thirteenth-century Christian ideology have raised questions highly applicable to the Jews of medieval

10 R. R. Mundill, 'Anglo-Jewry under Edward I: credit agents and their clients', *T.J.H.S.E.*, vol. xxxi (1990), pp. 1-21. The wealth of Bonamy of York, the most important Jewish property-holder in the city at the time of the Expulsion in 1290 and perhaps the last great financier in the history of the medieval English Jewry, certainly seems to have been based on money-lending (Dobson, 'Decline and Expulsion', pp. 44-46).

11 What little remained of the once remarkable wealth of the Jews of thirteenth-century York was used to subsidise such personal royal enterprises as the construction of the life-size bronze effigy of Henry III still at Westminster Abbey (Dobson, 'Decline and Expulsion', p. 48).

12 *Plea Rolls of the Exchequer of the Jews, V, Edward I, 1277-1279*, ed. S. Cohen, rev. P. Brand (J.H.S.E., 1992); Z. E. Rokéah, 'Money and the Hangman in late 13th-century England: Jews, Christians and coinage offences alleged and real', *T.J.H.S.E.*, vols. xxxi (1990), pp. 83-109, and xxxii (1993), pp. 159-218; R. R. Mundill, 'The Jewish Entries from the Patent Rolls, 1270-1292', *T.J.H.S.E.*, vol. xxxii (1993), pp. 25-88.

York.<sup>13</sup> Quite as significant is the recent publication of a series of detailed studies of other English Jewish communities, notably perhaps those at Worcester, Hereford, Cambridge and London.<sup>14</sup> Perhaps, as this Borthwick Paper began by claiming in 1974, the Jewish settlement at York is still – and for an obvious and notorious reason – 'the most famous of all the provincial Jewries of medieval England'. It now seems quite as important to stress that although the twenty or more Jewish urban communities in medieval England shared common problems and a common persecution, their fortunes often diverged in remarkably different ways. The experience of the Jews in thirteenth-century England self-evidently exposes to our views the most sombre and fundamental issues medieval Christendom has to offer to the present: but that experience was firmly grounded on the particularities of their local history – on a Jewbury and a Jewbrettegate – too.

R.B.D.

13 E.g., E. Cohen & E. Horowitz, 'In search of the sacred: Jews, Christians and rituals of marriage in the later Middle Ages', *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, vol. 20 (1990), pp. 225-49; R. B. Dobson, 'The Role of Jewish Women in Medieval England', in *Christianity and Judaism*, ed. D. Wood (*Studies in Church History*, 29, 1992), pp. 145-68; R. C. Stacey, *Politics Policy and Finance Under Henry III, 1216-1245*, (Oxford, 1987), pp. 132-59; *ibid.*, 'The Conversion of Jews to Christianity in Thirteenth-Century England', *Speculum*, 67 (1992), pp. 263-83; G. I. Langmuir, *Towards a Definition of Antisemitism* (Berkeley, California, 1990); R. I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society* (Oxford, 1987); M. Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge, 1991); J. A. Watt, 'Jews and Christians in the Gregorian Decretals', in *Studies in Church History*, 29 (1992), pp. 93-105. For a useful if already somewhat out-dated survey see R. Stacey, 'Recent Work on Medieval English Jewish History', *Jewish History*, 2 (1987), pp. 61-72.

14 J. Hillaby, 'The Worcester Jewry, 1158-1290: Portrait of a Lost Community', *Transactions of the Worcestershire Archaeological Society*, 3rd ser., 12 (1990), pp. 73-122; *idem*, 'A Magnate among the Marchers: Hamo of Hereford, his family and his clients, 1218-1253', *T.J.H.S.E.*, vol. xxxi (1990), pp. 23-82; R. B. Dobson, 'The Jews of medieval Cambridge', *T.J.H.S.E.*, vol. xxxii (1993), pp. 1-24; J. Hillaby, 'London: the 13th-century Jewry revisited', *ibid.*, pp. 89-158.



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