

## JEWISH HERITAGE WALK

### **A walk visiting the sites of mediaeval and modern Jews in York.**

William the Conqueror invited Jews into England from Normandy to help trade; early Mediaeval Kings were pro-Jewish because they were useful financiers- very little evidence of Jews pre-conquest. But from time of Edward I (1272) Jews persecuted, as part of general drive of Catholic Church to repress dissent.

#### **St. Wilfrid's R.C. Church (1864)**

To the top left of Christ is a female figure representing 'SYNAGOGUE', and to the top right another representing 'CHURCH'. 'SYNAGOGUE' is the old testament dispensation, dependent on the Law of Moses which has proved a broken staff. 'CHURCH' represents the new dispensation since Christ, and is shown with a pastoral staff and communion chalice. 'SYNAGOGUE' is blind (hence the blindfold) whereas 'CHURCH' is shown as a crowned queen. This is a 19th c copy of Mediaeval representations of Judaism.

Bottom left is a winged angel driving Adam and Eve from Eden. Eve has usually got the blame for tempting Adam into eating the forbidden fruit, but Adam was as much to blame.

Bottom right is the Annunciation - the Archangel Gabriel (male) announcing to Mary that she is to be the Mother of Christ.

This is, therefore, an anti-semitic carving contrasting the disobedience of Adam and the Jews with the obedience of Mary and the Church. This anti-semitism reflects much in Mediaeval art.

**Minster Exterior West Front** New (1998) carvings depict Genesis cycle including Adam and Eve, Noah and Abraham. Artist Rory Young of Cirencester. Illustrate common origin of Judaism + Christianity.

#### **Site of Archbishops Palace**

Look through to Deans Park to remains of Archbishop's palace. In early 12<sup>th</sup> C Maurice Prior of Kirkham records he learnt Hebrew from Jewish scholars in the household of the Archbishop

**St. Michael-le-Belfrey Church** Window to left of organ, looking from inside, or 4th from West/right looking from outside. Contains a panel recording the donation of the window in c.1530 by Martin Soza, born in Spain, and a goldsmith. Soza is a Jewish Sephardi name (Sephardi Jews were from Spain/Portugal; Ashkenazi from Germany and E. Europe). Goldsmith is a classic Jewish trade. The Jews were driven out of Spain in 1492, so Martin Soza probably left about then, came to England, converted to catholicism, married and eventually became sheriff of York.

**Minster Five Sisters Window** (c.1260) Often called Jewish window as financed partly by Jewish loans. Look through S. Transept Door to view it.

**Minster Chapter House** After 1190 Massacre mob burst into Chapter House where copies of deeds and loans and debts owed to Jews kept and burnt them.

#### **Jewbury**

Excavated 1982-3. Probably first used in 1177 when Henry II gave Jews licence to have a burial ground in any City of England. It is known definitely in 1230 when land sold to York Jews for their cemetery. Remains of nearly 500 individuals excavated and re-interred by plaque. Prior to this all Jews had to be taken to London for burial. Jewbury about one acre and in 13th c. had home of 'Jacob the Cemetery Keeper'. Skeletons North-South, some disarticulated - perhaps brought a distance for burial.

The only large scale excavated Jewish burial ground in Europe. Very little disturbance of previous burials - an orderly cemetery. No markers; perhaps wooden. Remains of nails in coffins, in variance with

modern practice. Some coffins substantial, as perhaps brought some way. Remained pasture after 1290 till 19th c. Average height 5'5", male 5'1" female - slightly shorter than rest of Christian population. Clustered by sex and age. Seem to have had distinctive facial characteristics.

Total number of burials estimated 600 adults, 400 children - high infant mortality - rest died late 40's-50's. Women seem to have lived longer than York average (compared with St. Helen on Walls). No burials tie in with 1190 massacre. Anaemia and T.B. common cause of death.

In 1984 Chief Rabbi Lord Jakobovits put a stop to examination of bones and were re-interred. 'If these bones lie at peace, civilisation can surely rest.'

### **Aldwark**

Synagogue here (now RAF Association) it was in boarded up part of building, behind and to left of main block on Aldwark. Jews left England in 1290. Forbidden to practise money lending from 1275. Finally expelled as Edward I had found better source of finance in Florentine bankers. Returned under Cromwell in 1656 to help trade and hasten end of World as Jews had to be converted first before Christ would return. First reference to York Jews after 1290 is Isaac Solomon an embroiderer in Petergate 1756. Jews returned in numbers from 1880's - high point 1903, 124 Jews. Synagogue here behind joinery shop. Work ceased when service on, as joiner's wife a Jewess. Opened 1892. Closed in 1975 on death of last joiner. Jews left voluntarily, as numbers dropping.

### **Spen Lane**

Benedict, who died in 1190 massacre, lived here, in a stone house 'like a royal palace'. House sacked by mob in 1190. Benedict = Baruk (meaning 'Blessed').

### **Jubbergate** (Jew-bret-gate)

Street of Jews in Breton (ie French/foreign) quarter. Originally Bretgate - street of Bretons. Main Jewish area in York, but no ghetto - lived all over York - North Street, Fossgate, Hungate, Coney Street, etc.

### **Coney Street**

Aaron, wealthiest Jew in England, and in 1236-1243 Arch-Presbyter of Jews of England, lived here in 13thc. Synagogue near St. Martin le Grand, about where 'Next' now is. Aaron lent money for 5 Sisters window. He was son of Josce/Joseph who perished in 1190 massacre.

### **St. Mary Castlegate**

In Jeffery Iverson's book 'Bloxham Tapes'. Bloxham was an hypnotist. He hypnotised Jane Evans a Welsh housewife. She had had six previous lives. These were in 3rd c. Eboracum, a Jewess Rebecca at time of massacre, a servant to a 15th c. French Merchant, a 16th c. Spanish maid, a sewing maid in 18th c. London and a 20th c. American nun. She gave description of 1190 massacre, including much detail about anti-infidel feeling leading up to third crusade. She refers to Henry II as protector of Jews. She says she hid in a church outside castle by Coppergate in York. Excavations in 1975 revealed a crypt she said she had hidden in.

The fact that some Jews survived the massacre suggests that some must have been sheltered by Christians.

### **Cliffords Tower**

Plaque unveiled 1978 by Jewish Historical Association. There was a service of Reconciliation and Repentance in 1990 at site attended by Chief Rabbi (Immanuel Lord Jakobovits) and Archbishop of York. At the unveiling a descendant of Richard Malebise of Acaster Malbis sent a note of regret for the actions of his ancestor.

Richard I crowned in September, 1189, after death of Henry II. Some Jews attempted to enter the coronation banquet at Westminster to make gifts. An anti-Jewish riot broke out and one York Jew, Benedict, was wounded. He was possibly baptised, but subsequently recanted. He died at Northampton on his way home and was accorded neither Christian or Jewish burial. Richard left England in December, 1189, and issued orders that Jews were to be left in peace. But in Lent, and with the crusade, there was anti-Jewish rioting in King's Lynn, Norwich, Stamford, Lincoln, etc. Early in March 1190, a group of men broke into Benedict's house on Spen Lane and carried off his treasure, killing his widow and children, and setting house on fire.

The Jews led by Josce, (Joseph), sought refuge in Castle. The Constable of the Castle gave them refuge, but when he went out, they refused to re-admit him. John Marshall, the Sheriff of Yorkshire, decided to eject the Jews. The mob took this as a signal for general anti-Jewish slaughter. On 16th March (Friday), the eve of the Jewish Sabbath, machines were moved into place to besiege the tower. The Rabbi Yom Tob of Joigny called on the Jews to commit suicide rather than be murdered. This they did and killed their wives and children first. Then Yom Tob killed Josce, then himself. This was followed by a raging fire, probably started by Jews. A few survived, and in moving begged for mercy in return for baptism. This was granted, but they were murdered. The only Christian casualty was a white robed Premonstratensian hermit killed by the fall of a stone from the castle. The ringleader was one Richard Malebisse, called 'Mala bestia' (evil beast) of Acaster Malbis. He and his co-conspirators (Percy, Fossard) were heavily indebted to Jews and wished to escape debts. They then went to Chapter House and burnt Jewish bonds, the evidence of their debts. These minor rebellious barons were resentful of Royal rule and attacked the Jews because they were seen as instruments of Royal financial control; their sons were the ones who forced King John to sign Magna Carta.

Richard was very angry and sent chancellor, William de Longchamp to punish rebels. Sheriff and Constable dismissed. Malebisse fled to Scotland. City was heavily fined, and debts due to Jews had to be paid to King.

The Jews however returned in even greater number, and in 1240's two York Jews, Leo Episcopus and Aaron of York recognised as richest Jews in England.

Two famous elegies on massacre:- Joseph of Chartres and Menachen ben Jacob of Worms in 13th c. There was a ban on Jews living in York placed by Rabbinical authorities in Egypt, but this was ignored or not known of by many, as Jews did resettle in York. It is regarded as lifted since 1990.

Daffodils planted 1995-6 to flower early on anniversary of Massacre; also six petals and yellow colour symbolize yellow star of David.