ARCHAEOLOGY AND EDUCATION IN YORK

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RESUM:

Aquesta breu ressenya de la història de York proporciona els antecedents de la formació del York Archaeological Trust, que va ser fundat l'any 1972 amb motiu d'una planificació a càrrec de les autoritats locals per tal de construir un cinturó intern al voltant de la ciutat fortificada medieval, i així intentar resoldre els problemes de trànsit de la ciutat. Durant els darrers 26 anys, el YAT ha crescut des d'una petita unitat arqueològica de salvament fins a una respectada organització internacional que ofereix experiències d'educació patrimonial d'alta qualitat a milions de persones cada any. Aquest treball mostra el desenvolupament i l'àmbit d'acció del servei educatiu.

RESUMEN:

Esta breve reseña de la historia de York proporciona los antecedentes de la formación del York Archaeological Trust, que fue fundado en 1972 con motivo de una planificación a cargo de las autoridades locales para la construcción de un cinturón interno alrededor de la ciudad fortificada medieval, en un intento por resolver algunos de los problemas de tráfico de la ciudad. Durante los últimos 26 años el YAT ha crecido desde una pequeña unidad arqueológica de rescate hasta una respetada organización internacional que ofrece experiencias de educación patrimonial de alta calidad a millones de personas cada año. Este trabajo muestra el desarrollo y ámbito de acción del servicio educativo.

ABSTRACT:

This brief survey of the history of York provides the background to the formations of the York Archaeological Trust which was established in 1972 because the local planning authority intended to construct a inner ring round, around the walled medieval city, in an attempt to solve some of the city's traffic problems. Over the last 26 years the Trust has grown from a small rescue (salvage) archaeological unit into a internationally respected organisation delivering high quality heritage education experiences to millions of people each year. This paper outlines the development and scope of the education service.

RÉSUMÉ:

Ce bref exposé de l'histoire de York offre les antécedénts de la formation du York Archaeological Trust, fondé en 1972 à l'occasion d'une planification à la charge des autorités locaux pour faire la construction

d'une circonvallation autour de la ville médiévale fortifiée, et, comme ça, essayer de résoudre les problèmes de circulation routière. Pendant ces 26 annés, le YAT a grandi et a passé d'être une petite unité archéologique de sauvetage à une respectée organisation international qui offre des experiènces d'éducation patrimoniale d'haute qualité à des millons de personnes chaque année. Ce travail montre le développement aussi que le cadre d'action du service educatif.

INTRODUCTION

"The history of York is the history of England" King George VI

Since the foundation of a Roman fortress nearly 2000 years ago, York has been an Anglo-Saxon archbishops' seat and centre of learning, the capital of a Viking Age kingdom, and the northern focus of Norman and medieval government in the British Isles. To the first antiquaries, in the 16th century, York was 'the second city of England, the Queen City of Northern Britain'. This remains true now, when commercial, cultural and educational centres are renewing the city. Underneath the modern developments, in essence, York remains what a 19th century writer described as 'an ancient city still'.

This brief survey of the history of York provides the background to the formations of the York Archaeological Trust which was established in 1972 because the local planning authority intended to construct a inner ring round, around the walled medieval city, in an attempt to solve some of the city's traffic problems.

The mission statement of the York Archaeological Trust for Excavation and Research Ltd., Policies for 1995-2005 states:

'York Archaeological Trust is a charity set up to carry out archaeology in York and elsewhere and to convey the results to the public at every level to educate the public in archaeology.'

This echoes the first paragraph in the Trust's Memorandum and Articles of Association, the official legal document that defines the Trust's purpose:

'The object for which the Trust is established is to advance the education of the public in archaeology and history or similar and to acquire and to promote knowledge of the past of and in York and elsewhere'.

The Trust is governed by a Board of Trustees and is advised by advisory committees responsible for education, academic research and collections. A quinquennial review is undertaken which examines of all aspects of the Trust's work.

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archaeological unit into a internationally respected organisation delivering high quality heritage education experiences to millions of people each year. This paper outlines the development and scope of the education service.

First remember what it says on the US Archives Building in Washington: 'The Heritage of the Past is the Seed that brings forth the Harvest of the Future'. No-one knows better than those engaged in education that 'meeting the challenge of change' is nothing new. We have been doing it almost incessantly in the education field for 26 years. Those changes of the past quarter century are very much the seed whose harvest we shall be reaping in the next decade. Even the changes now working their way through the educational system have roots in the past. They are either natural growths from what has gone before or reactions –pendulum swings to change the metaphor– against it.

25 YEARS OF RESCUE ARCHAEOLOGY

With the justification behind us, let's now turn back to 26 years of archaeology in York. 1972 saw the establishment of my own organisation, a charity set up to carry out excavation and archaeological recording in and around York. The city was faced at that time with a massive re-development programme: outer ring road; inner ring road; multi-storey car parks; commercial development; housing schemes; and even an imaginative city centre conservation scheme, the Esher Plan: all of which paid scant attention to the below-ground archaeology. The Trust was formed at the instigation of the local learned society the Yorkshire Philosophical Society and the Council for British Archaeology. These local and national archaeologists were acutely aware of the archaeological richness of York.

YORK'S PAST

Founded in A.D. 71 as a legionary fortress for the IXth legion, Eboracum rapidly also became a civilian centre, with a separate city, the Colonia Eboracensis, facing the fortress across the River Ouse. Latterly capital of the province of Lower Britain, Eboracum was the heart of its region and on more than one occasion, when Roman emperors visited it, the seat of the Roman Empire. Two Emperors died here, Septimius Severus and Constantius Chlorus; and one of the greatest of them all, Constantine, was proclaimed here in 306. Everywhere under the city centre there are well-preserved remains of all this.

In subsequent centuries York, now called Eoforwic, remained important. Site of the first missionary church in the North where Paulinus baptised the King of Northumbria Edwin in 627; seat of the archbishopric from 735 onwards; centre of an Anglo-Saxon court and ecclesiastical culture renowned

throughout Europe; and target for Viking conquest in 867. From 876 the city was capital of a Viking Kingdom of Jorvik; in 1067 captured by William the Conqueror and massively fortified by two castles; eventually girt with 5 kilometres of defences and 5 great gates; enriched in the Middle Ages with 8 monasteries; 44 churches; 23 hospitals; 5 guildhalls; probably over 2400 houses –and great buildings like the medieval Minster. Seat of government and residence of the King during the 14th century Scottish wars, York became in the 16th century the meeting place of the Council of the North.

YORK'S ARCHAEOLOGY

If the city's pre-eminence has been less in later centuries that has been a blessing in terms of preservation of the historic environment. A vast proportion of its ancient buildings have survived. Below ground the deep archaeological layers, replete with artefacts and information about this remarkable past, lie –or at least in 1972 lay– equally remarkably preserved, often in beneficial waterlogged conditions which ensure even organic materials, from textiles and leathers to plants and insects all survive –latent social and environmental history.

YORK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

That was what the Trust was formed to save. Crucially and fortunately for us today it was formed as an educational charity. That ensured that right from the start the Trustees had one ultimate aim clearly in view "to educate the public in archaeology". However much survey, crisis work, rescue excavation, conservation, curating, archiving, researching and publishing the Trust's teams do, the Trustees never forget the public beneficiaries –nor the educational aim. 25 years on we have carried out over 1000 excavations, published over 50 hefty scientific tomes and conserved and catalogued over 100,000 artefacts, not to mention millions of samples of animal bones, soils and sediments, building materials, human bones and so on. These, ultimately destined for long-term curation in the Yorkshire Museum, are mostly still in the curatorial care of the Trust, giving it, for the time being anyway, one of the largest archaeological holdings in Britain.

YORK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST AND EDUCATION

Where does the education come into all this? The answer is just about everywhere. The Trust firmly believes that archaeological data is only being recorded so that it can be used. We are committed to the idea that it should be used at every educational level. Hence our third appointee in 1972, after myself and our Head of Conservation Jim Spriggs, was Sheila Goater, an ex-primary school teacher and amateur historian, who became the Trust's Education Officer. Sheila was instructed to invite herself into local schools to

offer talks about archaeology coupled to trips to active archaeological sites in the city. We wanted quite consciously to brainwash the future population of York about the interest, fascination and importance of what we were doing. 25 years on those children are today's city decision-makers –and we have a city that accepts its archaeology as one of its strengths and glories.

While Sheila, on good Jesuit principles, concentrated on primary schools, and the minds of the 7-year olds, the Trust encouraged her and its staff to take the broadest possible approach to the educational effort. At appropriate levels the work of a Trust like York's can be relevant to education in primary, secondary and tertiary stages right up to the University of the Third Age. Archaeology's strengths in adult education have been clear ever since the pioneering days of the British Summer Schools in the 1950s and the initiatives of adult educators like the Trust's own first chairman the archaeologist Professor Maurice Barley –doyen of adult education in the East Midlands.

At a less formal level the Trust also saw the virtue – within its educational remit – of harnessing the interest of the general public. Sheila Goater therefore also took on the establishment of the 'Friends of York Archaeological Trust'. This is a separate charity whose members at one and the same time support the Trust, and systematically benefit from lectures, visits to Trust projects, expeditions and a quarterly bulletin *Interim*. Mrs Goater still organises the Friends –leading 50 of them off next week to inspect excavations (and I believe wine cellars) in Tours, France. She reckons the Friends links her regularly, directly and indirectly, with 800 people.

THE COPPERGATE EXCAVATION AND THE JORVIK VIKING CENTRE

Mrs Goater's site tours for schools led rapidly to the opening of excavation sites to the public. In the mid-1970s one of these proved especially productive of Viking age remains. With a little gentle professional marketing it also proved highly attractive to the public. The Trust embarked on a systematic development of the active excavation for educational and touristic purposes. At Coppergate walkways, speaking posts, exhibitions and souvenir shops were constructed, guidebooks, postcards and souvenirs created, a vigorous marketing campaign pursued; and over a million people eventually visited the excavation. To the Trust that, too, was educating the public in archaeology. And it worked. School parties were of course regular visitors. My own best satisfaction has come, however, in later years when not a few of my younger archaeological colleagues round the nation confess to first being bitten by the archaeology bug on a visit as a child to Coppergate. Many of the 1970s generation archaeology students, too, gained their own fieldwork experience by working on the huge Coppergate team.

The sequel to Coppergate is well known. The Jorvik Viking Centre was built by the Trust in the excavation hole, below the city's new Coppergate shopping centre, because we were convinced, with our experience on the dig, that here was the very best way possible of educating the public in archaeology. It was based on simple principles of effective communication, restricting the information to about eight main messages. Systematically presented in a sequential way, the messages are repeatedly reconfirmed, often subliminally, using advanced display technology and subtle design devices. The Jorvik Viking Centre worked spectacularly. The 11 millionth visitor passed through its portals on 27 August 1998. Visitor surveys show consistently high levels of satisfaction. They also show that our eight simple messages, about Jorvik, the Viking age and about archaeology are all successfully and –usually– accurately implanted. The Trust basked in quiet satisfaction when it read in the *National Curriculum History Working Group Final Report* (p. 36) in 1990 that Viking raids and settlements were included in Key State 2 History Study Unit 2 on Invaders and Settlers: and that Viking York was specified as essential information. 20 years before it certainly wouldn't have been.

The Jorvik Viking Centre at one stage had to restrict school parties to one every 13 minutes. Jorvik, with its striking methods of conveying information and systematic presentation of data, became an extremely effective way of conveying the specific requirements of Key State 2. Commercial publishers saw the opportunity and supported the offering with a host of Viking-related publications. The Trust, through its picture library, often supplied the illustrations for these, and of course it produced its own guidebooks and teachers' packs, the latest being a sophisticated teachers' aid supplemented by artefact playing cards, prepared by one of Britain's foremost archaeological educators Tim Copeland (Copeland, T 1996. *Jorvik Viking Centre Education Resource Pack*, York, Jorvik Viking Centre). Our latest School Information Update, currently on the desks of teachers throughout the nation courtesy of a comprehensive educational marketing campaign, offers costumed interactive interpreters, special events, school discounts, free pre-visits for teachers, education resource material and national curriculum links. Like any popular show this leaflet quotes from the reviews "Vikings –No study is complete without a trip to the Jorvik Viking Centre" (*The Independent)* and "Enjoyed by over 11 million people".

To summarise, therefore, the Jorvik Viking Centre is a purpose-designed educating machine, developed on principles of efficiency and cost-effectiveness; predicated on academic integrity, educational values and the belief that learning can –indeed in these circumstances ought-to be fun; and using advanced modern techniques of presentation, persuasion, delivery and

marketing. This approach certainly has lessons for the future.

THE ARC (ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCE CENTRE)

It rapidly became clear in the mid 1980s that the Trust had vastly underestimated the potential of Jorvik. It was too small in many ways, but in particular was too small for us to maximise its benefit to visiting school groups. Our techniques of persuasion, it became clear, were delivering to us at the exit batch after batch of young people enthused about archaeology, avid for more, and psychologically in exactly the right mood to learn: and we lost them into the crowds of Coppergate at precisely this vital moment. We should have planned in an education centre, so these lessons could be consolidated. With Boots, Marks & Spencer, Body Shop, Principles and Fenwicks all around us there was no scope for belated second thoughts. The ARC was the result, a purpose-designed Archaeological Resource Centre in the restored and converted medieval church of St Saviour about 300 m away.

The two main themes at Jorvik are about Viking urban life and about how archaeology works and why it's important. ARC develops the second theme. It provides a sequence of experiences, worked out after extensive focus group research, that introduce the routines of modern archaeology. Visitors start with an AV or live presentation on what archaeology is and does and how it works. Thereafter everything is participatory, presented in 3 archaeological activity areas. All visitors are encouraged to sort and identify the contents of an archaeological finds tray –hands-on with real archaeological material; they may then extract real scientific specimens –beetles, bones and so on– from real ancient soil samples. Challenge exercises in identifying pottery from Roman to Tudor, or ancient animal bones follow. Words are conspicuous by their absence.

A second archaeological activity area utilises archaeology by experiment. Challenges here include opening a replica Viking chest with replica Viking keys used on a replica Viking lock. You can drop spin; weave on a warp-weighted loom; assemble Roman shoes; write your name in magnetic runes; or try making a mosaic. The third archaeological activity area introduces computer routines used by the Trust to catalogue or interpret finds – and allows further exploration of the Viking World through our CD-ROM *World of the Vikings* or –to be published shortly– our *Roman Britain* CD-ROM. A final experience in the ARC is a visit to the mezzanine where, in glass fronted offices, York Archaeological Trust researchers are engaged in much of the same routines that visitors have experienced in the activity zones. A recent innovation, with literacy needs in mind, is a story telling zone, offering sagas or Dark Age legends.

ARC was conceived wholly as an educational exercise but, because the Trust has no public finance, it had to be low cost, self-financing and easy enough to run that it didn't distract from the Trust's ongoing academic work. Since 1990 when it opened until recently it was managed by Dr Andrew Jones, himself an archaeological professional, but also a charismatic and dedicated archaeological educator. There were a small number of paid assistant managers –the total staff were never more than 4– but they could draw on a vast army of volunteer interpreters. This proved the key to the ARC experience –friendly and helpful well-trained archaeological demonstrators (docents to use the American term). Ours included a wide range of talent, from young people on work experience or work placement, or as volunteers in their own time; students from universities and colleges of further education; retired people; people with free time; out-of-work people; museum staffs from all over the world –Spain; Japan; Zimbabwe are some recent origins. All undergo a detailed induction and embark on a three stage training course, related to different parts of the ARC. The emphasis is on learning and developing skills to undertake specific defined tasks. All benefit enormously from this experience as exit interviews and evaluation forms demonstrate. Indeed work experience is one of the most important educational benefits to have come out of the ARC. Some of our older staff tell us that it has transformed their retirement. Some of our sheltered workers tell us it has helped to reintegrated them to ordinary life. Parents of some of our teenage workers tell us it has transformed introverts, settled career courses, or guaranteed passions for archaeology; and some people tell us that work experience at the ARC has even got them museum and teaching jobs.

In addition to its excellent work with young people and volunteers the ARC has been involved with the production of three oral history publications, the first on the parish of St Saviour *Rich in all but money: Life in Hungate* 1900-1938 (Wilson 1996a) and others on the areas of Fishergate and Walmgate (Wilson 1996b & c).

Excavation has also been an important aspect of the work of the ARC. In 1990 it was possible to organise walking tours for school groups from the ARC to excavations at Back Swinegate. However, the implementation of the City Council's policy for the protection of archaeological deposits, coupled with changes in funding have seen a remarkable reduction in the scale of archaeological excavation in the city since 199?. No longer is it possible for students and volunteers to assist with rescue excavations. At the same time the number of young people wishing in taking part on excavations continues to rise, partly because of the success of the Jorvik Viking Centre and the ARC, and partly because of the influence of television programmes such as Time Team (Channel 4) and Meet the

Ancestors (BBC). The Council for British Archaeology, the national umbrella organisation for archaeology in the British Isles has seen substantial growth in enquiries -from 484 in 1993 to 1006 in 1997 and 'this year promises to be a bumper year' (Jenny Hudson, CBA 25/9/98 pers. comm).

To respond to this demand the ARC organised a residential archaeological holiday in 1993 (Jones 199?) and has run excavations and tours at a post-medieval ropeworks in central York, Ellerkers, from 1994-6 when leaseholders moved out and YAT annual reports for 199-. Also in 1996 the erection of a flagpole in the churchyard of St Saviour's church in order to better advertise the ARC provided a opportunity for ARC students to carry out a small scale (1 metre square) excavation within a post-medieval and medieval cemetery. Although disarticulated human remains were found during excavation, no *in situ* inhumations were disturbed. These examples demonstrate that, with guidance from a professional excavation team, low priority rescue and research archaeological can be carried out by relatively untrained archaeologists with very limited technical or financial resources. Perhaps those of us interested in education should let professional teams continue their high-tech, efficient, computer-based recording on project-managed sites where well-endowed developers and use our creative talents to be involved in projects which fall through the cultural resource management net.

In order to attract visitors to the ARC and to make best use of it as an educational resource during quiet periods and imaginative programme of special events and press campaign has been executed. Details of some of these events follow.

BARLEY HALL: HOUSE OF THE GOLDSMITH

The York Archaeological Trust's third experiment in conveying the results of archaeology to a wide public is Barley Hall. The concept here is the rebuilding of an existing city-centre medieval house as it would have been in 1483. After meticulous structural survey and comprehensive excavation the 14th and 15th century structure was reconstructed and fitted out on the basis of excavated artefacts and on the inventory of one of the former inhabitants of this or a nearby house. The object is to use the living history technique. First person costumed interpreters in role will live, day-by-day, throughout the year 1483.

We learned at Jorvik that only 3 things are important for a successful archaeological education centre: location; location; location. Barley Hall is 20 metres off the right location. We determined at Jorvik and at ARC that our projects must either break even or make an operating surplus. Labour intensive living history can probably

hardly ever do that. For other reasons, too, mainly lack of capital, Barley Hall is less of a success so far: but educationally it delivers curriculum requirements remarkably well. We have set up a separate charity, the Barley Hall Trust, to address these issues and crack the problem without hopelessly distracting the main Trust.

OTHER INITIATIVES IN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Conscious of the exceptional archaeological resource at York and the now exceptional concentration of archaeological expertise the Trust has consistently been seeking new ways of sharing it. The 1980s saw an experiment in the provision of archaeological scholarships –when 10 teenagers selected by national competition came to York for a residential week to experience archaeology, from digs and surveys, through labs to site presentation and museums. Some built on this and are now archaeology PhDs. Others gained a lifelong interest. One or two realised it wasn't for them. We found it inspiring – but draining and expensive of staff time and nervous energy. Similarly we have, on an off, been the locale of a Young Archaeologists Club – and indeed were its national organisers for several years. Archaeology it seems to us, is a natural for the National Grid for Learning, and our initiatives for electronic delivery of archaeology are teaching us a lot – if nothing else. Visit our website at: http://www.jorvik-viking-centre.co.uk.

We have developed a Memorandum of Association with the University of York, and do our best to make the huge research collections and specialist officers available both for routine tertiary education teaching and for research programmes and postgraduate researchers. We currently run several certificate courses in continuing education in collaboration with the University of Leeds; and we welcome researchers and professionals seeking original data or organisational experience and know-how from all parts of the world.

THE LESSONS OF 25 YEARS

The York Archaeological Trust's strength is that it is independent. Set up to educate the public in archaeology it inherited no presumptions about how this should be done. Nor did it inherit any frameworks into which it had to fit, nor rulebooks. Though its Jorvik Viking Centre, ARC and Barley Hall are all Museums and Gallery Commission Registered Museums the Trust's philosophy is not that of a museum. It thinks of itself as an organisation which must find the best ways of first carrying out archaeology; then of disseminating it to educate the public. It also has to overcome its greatest weakness –lack of any secure source of finance.

With the publication in July of the Department of Culture, Media and Sport's *Comprehensive Spending Review: A new approach to investment in Culture*, things are set to change

fundamentally in the museums world. There is talk of devolution of responsibility for local authority museums in the air. Experiments like Sheffield's creation of a new Museum Trust for its museums are in progress. The York Archaeological Trust's experience of self-financing but none-the-less educationally and curatorially effective independent solutions may just possibly be a lesson to heed as we look ahead and meet the challenges of the future. It may be relevant even in York, where the local authority, propelled by Best Value initiatives, is looking radically at its own provision of museum services.

The Trust's flexibility and opportunism has also been one of its strengths. Amongst the challenges facing us at the moment in the museum education field are the rapid changes in emphasis in the curriculum. As history ceases to be mandatory while literacy and numeracy are becoming absolute priorities is archaeology likely to become even more of a luxury option? We think not –largely because archaeology deals with every aspect of human behaviour in the past– and it can be pulled in to use in the present. That is why Jorvik and the ARC this year offer deliverables in English, Maths, Science, History, Design and Technology, Information Technology, Art and Geography, all tagged to Key Stage requirements. Give teachers what they perceive they need, not what you feel would do them good.

We have perceived a trend in schools saying they can no longer fit a visit into the curriculum; or that with the advent of seatbelts or for other reasons, trips by coach are now too expensive; or that, with devolved funding, trips out are no longer a priority; that is, for whatever reason, they can no longer come. If the mountain won't come to Mohammed what about taking Mohammed to the mountain? We have toyed with the ideas of a mobile ARC –a double-decker bus full of hands-on archaeology parked in the playground. It might work: but how much more cost-effective to deliver the best of what we have in our museums electronically– purpose designed to fit into all those Key Stage requirements and the National Grid for Learning? We are reasonably certain that that will be one of the lines of development in our part of the museum world, and believe many of you will be there with us.

CONCLUSION

What the YAT have learned, above all else, from 25 years of effort to educate the public in archaeology at York, however, is that the future is what you make it. That is why, as the millennium looms, the curriculum changes and the whole geography of museum provision threatens to alter, this conference is so timely. I do hope it helps to inspire those devoting their lives to education in museums firmly to grasp their own fate.

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Fig. 1: Jorvik Viking Centre. Time Tunnel – Recent York dwellers are followed bt more distant figures leading deeper and deeper into the past. ©York Archaeological Trust

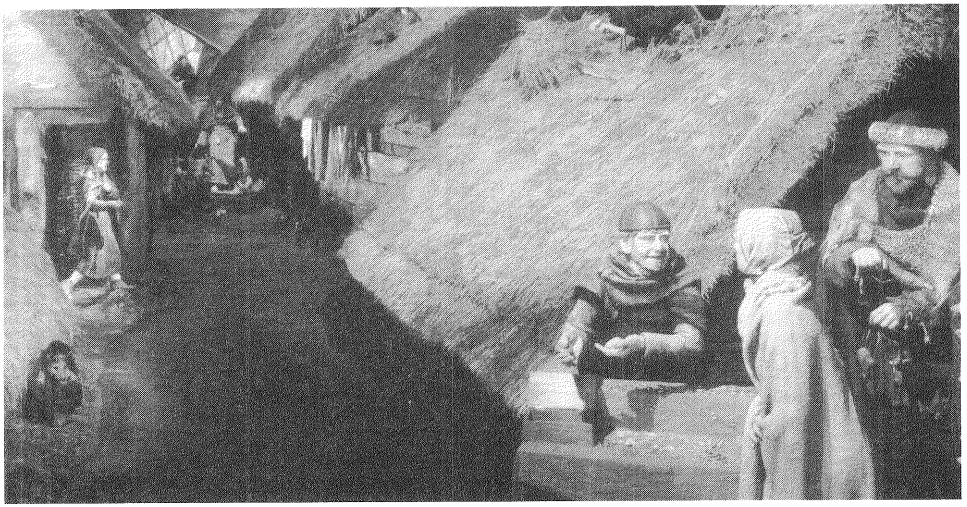

Fig. 2: Jorvik Viking Centre. The Street. The year is 948 and Coppergate's closely packed houses and workshops are filled with activity. ©York Archaeological Trust