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A Facebook history page noted a massacre of British Jews. Cue the laughing emojis.

A post about a medieval pogrom in York, which recently hired its first rabbi in 800 years, was flooded by antisemitic trolls.



A view of Clifford's Tower, the site where an estimated 150 Jews were killed in a medieval pogrom in 1190. (Photo by Ian Forsyth/Getty Images)

By [Grace Gilson](#) March 20, 2025

The Facebook page British History has a devoted but not particularly emotive following. Multiple times a day, it posts an image and factoid from, well, British history, to a handful of comments and thumbs-up emojis.

But when it showed followers an image of Clifford's Tower in York, England, over the weekend and informed them about an antisemitic massacre of 150 Jews that took place there in 1190, [the response was different](#).

More than 1,600 people applied Facebook's "laughing" emoji, signaling that they were making light of one of the starkest instances of antisemitic violence in British history. The massacre took place when an estimated 150 Jews who had taken refuge inside the tower chose to take their own lives rather than be forcibly converted; a few who sought to escape were murdered.

Several commenters rejected the hateful responses. "Disgusting to see so many people laughing at this post. Totally think you're in the wrong group," one wrote.

The original poster, British History, replied to another comment decrying the antisemitic reactions saying that they had blocked many of the offenders.

But a handful of antisemitic comments remained. When one commenter noted that Jews were later expelled from England and not allowed to return until the 1650s, he got a reply of his own: "Should have kept the law !!" It got 265 approving responses, compared to 100 signaling anger.

The proliferation of mocking emojis and antisemitic comments reflects a familiar dynamic for anyone engaging with Jewish content online in recent years, particularly as multiple social media platforms, including Facebook, have recently relaxed their policies against hate speech. Earlier this year, Meta, which owns Facebook, [rolled back restrictions](#) on free speech and stopped automating the detection and removal of hate speech.

The British History post about the massacre at Clifford's Tower went up on its 835th anniversary. The same day, members of York's Jewish community and local officials gathered for [a memorial service](#) that takes place every year and doubles as a Holocaust memorial ceremony.

It was the second ceremony to include Rabbi Elisheva Salamo, the first rabbi to work in York since its Jewish population was wiped out in the massacre. "Helping to rebuild what was once one of England's most vibrant Jewish communities is an honor and a privilege," she told [The Guardian](#) when she was hired.

At [the ceremony](#), Barbara Boyce, York's former lord mayor who was involved in the decision to memorialize the Holocaust locally, said she feared that contemporary discourse was redolent of the hate espoused before the massacres the ceremony was memorializing. "Social media has become an echo chamber that reinforces people's prejudices," she said. "Opinions, however ill-informed, can be published."