

UNIVERSITY *of* York

This is a repository copy of *Anglian York*, by Ailsa Mainman.

White Rose Research Online URL for this paper:
<https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/165480/>

Version: Accepted Version

Article:

Richards, Julian D orcid.org/0000-0003-3938-899X (2020) *Anglian York*, by Ailsa Mainman. *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*. ISSN 0084-4276

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00844276.2020.1778331>

Reuse

Items deposited in White Rose Research Online are protected by copyright, with all rights reserved unless indicated otherwise. They may be downloaded and/or printed for private study, or other acts as permitted by national copyright laws. The publisher or other rights holders may allow further reproduction and re-use of the full text version. This is indicated by the licence information on the White Rose Research Online record for the item.

Takedown

If you consider content in White Rose Research Online to be in breach of UK law, please notify us by emailing eprints@whiterose.ac.uk including the URL of the record and the reason for the withdrawal request.



eprints@whiterose.ac.uk
<https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/>

Anglian York by AILSA MAINMAN, Blackthorn Press, York, 2019, 162pp, 50 colour and black and white illustrations. Price Pb £19.95; Ebook £6.99. ISBN 9781906259525.

As Ailsa Mainman reminds us, it is relatively easy to visualise the stone fortress and colonia of *Eboracum*, or the timber workshops and houses of *Jorvik*, but *Eoforwic* - Anglian York - is harder to get to grips with. The written sources have been usefully collated in David Rolleson's 1998 *Sources for York History to AD 1100*, and they underline York's importance as an ecclesiastical centre with a major church and library. The archaeology of the period is fragmentary, however, and not well understood. It was last reviewed in 1999 in *Anglian York: A Survey of the Evidence* by Dominic Tweddle, Joan Moulden and Elizabeth Logan, and whilst there have been several significant excavations since then, much of the information is inaccessible in unpublished grey literature reports. We lack a coherent setting which provides a context for the manufacture of the magnificent 8th-century Anglian helmet recovered in the Coppergate development watching brief for example. Mainman's new book is therefore timely and will be welcomed by archaeologists, historians, and indeed anyone with a general interest in York's past. As an early medieval specialist and former Assistant Director of York Archaeological Trust no one could have been better qualified to write it.

Mainman begins by describing the search for Anglian York, but notes that one of the reasons it remains so elusive is not just that the artefactual evidence is ephemeral but also that York's 8th-century landscape was undulating and that in some places Anglian layers would have been close to the surface and have been destroyed by later building foundations and cellars, whilst in other places they are deeply buried and may lie up to 8m below modern street levels. It is clear that strategic use of York's deposit model in identifying suitable areas for investigation has the potential to add to our current knowledge and may yet reveal the Anglian equivalent of Coppergate. The book then follows a roughly chronological approach, starting with the Roman legacy and early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries before turning to the establishment of the church of St Peter, and the continued uncertainty surrounding its location. However, this also allows some chapters to have a thematic focus, and that on the late 7th and 8th century burials is one of the most interesting, drawing on unpublished reports and new radiocarbon dating and analysis of Anglian skeletons recovered during excavations at the Queen's Hotel and Belle Vue House sites. Here isotope analysis has revealed several incomers to York, from the Pennines or Dales and Wolds. The chapter on commercial York inevitably concentrates on the now well-known material from Fishergate but includes more recent information from work near the River Foss at George Street and Dixon Lane. Whilst there is some evidence for planning, and some trading and manufacture, Mainman is sceptical that this yet amounts to a *wic* on the scale of *Hamwic* or Ipswich. Meanwhile, piecing together evidence from a series of small excavations along both banks of the Ouse she demonstrates that there is now evidence for widespread occupation from at least the mid-8th century. Mainman continues her review with the Ousegate/Coppergate and Castlegate area, which was to become a thriving part of the Anglo-Scandinavian town, and where there was certainly Anglian activity, including two early churches nearby. Finally, and appropriately, she returns to the ecclesiastical area within the Roman fortress, and the hoards of stycas which were buried on the eve of the attack by the Viking Great Army on All Saints Day AD 866. The overall picture that emerges is that Anglian York is still elusive but by combining study of artefactual evidence with tantalising glimpses of postholes and other structures that are emerging whenever there is an opportunity for excavation we are gradually improving our understanding.

All this is usefully illustrated, including hitherto unpublished photographs of recent excavations, as well as two fascinating views of the River Ouse when it was lowered in the 1890s to allow construction of a new sewage system, but which show what it might have been like at low tide before the construction of Naburn lock in the mid-18th century. Mainman writes in an accessible style, managing historical and archaeological detail but presenting the reader with a much-needed overview. There is a deliberate focus on York, which keeps this short book of manageable length, and overall this provides an invaluable state-of-the-art survey of the evidence.

University of York

JULIAN D RICHARDS