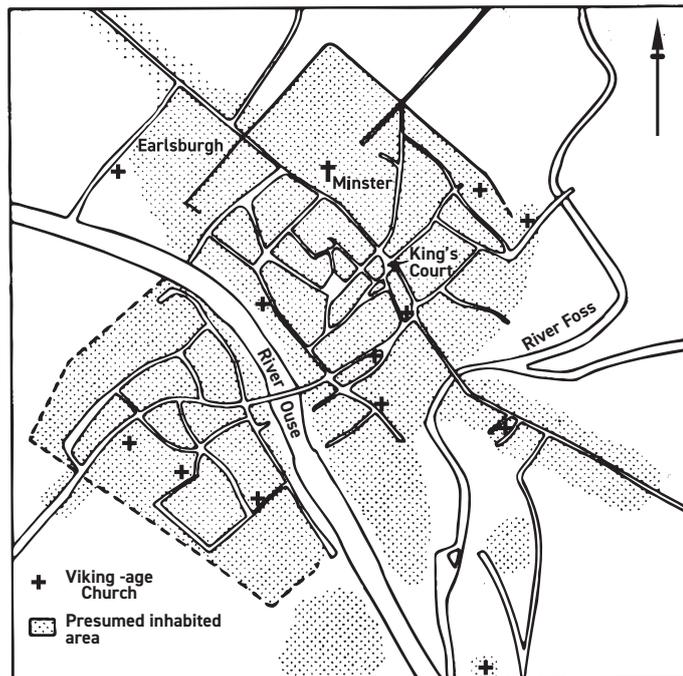


VIKING-AGE YORK

The City 1. Jorvik - A Viking City

Peter Addyman

In AD 866, when the Vikings set off from East Anglia to capture York, it was already a place of great importance. Originally a Roman stronghold, and later the capital of the Anglian Kingdom of Northumbria, the city had strong defensive walls and must have contained a royal palace. The Church in York was headed by an archbishop, and had long been famous throughout Europe for its fine library and scholars. York's communications were good: roads following natural ridges across the marshy Vale of York linked the city to the fertile lands of East Yorkshire and to the Pennine uplands in the west. The river Ouse linked York to the North Sea, and brought trading ships to the city from many countries.



Map of Jorvik in the late Viking-age.

Map to show areas of Scandinavian settlement evidence drawn from distribution of Scandinavian place names.

■ Areas of intensive Scandinavian settlement.

Viking kings, either Danish or Norse, ruled York with only one interruption from AD 866 to 954. The only break came when Alfred the Great's powerful grandson, King Athelstan, briefly regained control for the English from AD 927 to 939. But in AD 954 Eric Bloodaxe, the last Viking king, was expelled, and York finally became part of the new kingdom of England.

Many of the Vikings who had settled in York stayed behind, however, and continued their prosperous life as traders and craftsmen. Under the Vikings, York lay at the centre of a huge area of Scandinavian settlement in north-eastern England; the city had grown larger, and had become a more important centre for manufacturing, crafts and trade than ever before. In about AD 1000 a writer described York as "filled with treasures of merchants from many lands, particularly the Danes," and when William the Conqueror had Domesday Book drawn up in 1086 to list England's wealth, York was second only to London in size and prosperity.

