Early Medieval York

Course Description

This interdisciplinary module will introduce students to selected topics in the history of York from the era of Roman rule to the time of Archbishop Wulfstan. As a Roman military and administrative centre, later an archbishopric, an important centre for trade, and the place of a Viking royal court, York was a place of signal importance throughout the early Middle Ages. At the same time, the changes that it witnessed also make its history a microcosm of larger trends in early medieval history. Visitors to the city today are quickly reminded of its history by various physical remains—scanty for the Roman and early Medieval era, but still impressive. Written sources for the city’s history reflect the same paradox – the written records are fragmentary and incomplete, but offer moments of illumination. Seminar topics for this module will cover selected moments, texts, and archaeological remains from the city’s early medieval past (see list below) and will emphasise the interplay of textual and material evidence. Students will be encouraged to integrate academic study with first-hand acquaintance with their surroundings. The University is a centre of expertise on the city and so module is able to draw on the expertise of staff in a number of departments.

Learning Outcomes

After successfully completing this module, students should:

- have successfully developed knowledge and understanding of aspects of the history and culture of York in the early Middle Ages, to ca. 1100
- have developed skills in the handling and interpretation of relevant primary evidence (both textual and material)
- have developed an understanding of the role of interdisciplinary study in illuminating one city’s history

Teaching Programme

The module will be taught by staff from a number of disciplines, including history, literature and archaeology. The seminar programme may include the following topics, and is subject to change:

Module briefing: The History of York and Urban History
From Roman to Anglo-Saxon York
Looking back from Domesday and the York’s earliest original documents
Environmental Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon York
Learning in York and Yorkshire: Alcuin and Æthilwulf
Archaeology of Viking Age York
York on the Ground: Walking Tour with student presentations
Literary Culture of Viking Age York
York's Archbishops in the Tenth- and Eleventh-Centuries

Preliminary Reading

- Ordnance Survey Historical Map and Guide: Roman and Anglian York (York, 1988)