



# *The Archaeological Journal*

## **Book Reviews**



**THE SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES OF NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE, 1813–2013.**  
Edited by David J. Breeze. Pp. 76, Illus 170. The Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne, 2013. Price: £7.99. ISBN 090 1 08267 8.

Anniversaries, usually a centenary or as in this case a bi-centenary, are viewed by most learned societies as requiring a commemorative volume. This book is the response of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne, one of our oldest archaeological societies, to that expectation. But it avoids the established form of such volumes, full of worthy if heavy prose supported by a wealth of references.

Instead the Society has, rightly in my view, opted to produce a well-illustrated, multi-authored book that eschews entirely the academic reference. We are told that these, together with suggestions for further reading, can be found on the Society's website although I could not find them when I looked: a strike in cyberspace perhaps? But this absence in no way diminishes the appeal of this publication. After opening with a short history, which lives up to its title, we are offered in fifteen equally concise contributions a survey of the activities and interests of the Society. These include pieces on Northumbrian Minstrelsy and Hadrian's Wall, as well as the more traditional Research and Excavation, or Publications. The collections of the Society are both wide-ranging and important, and they are given due consideration here. Overall, these essays are a timely reminder of the range of interests to be found in our senior archaeological societies. Of course, these contributions are not entirely free of the self-congratulation that characterize all such works but perhaps after two hundred years of largely successful activity a certain amount of congratulation is in order.

'Society of Antiquaries' is a term that betokens societies established before the surge in archaeological societies in the decades after 1840. Reading this volume prompts one to realize that our three senior Society of Antiquaries — London, Scotland and Newcastle upon Tyne — while sharing many things in common, have nevertheless managed to generate markedly different characters. What particularly comes across in the case of the Newcastle upon Tyne Society is its close relationship with its region. Norman McCord's piece on 'The Society and the Region' is then as unexpected in a volume like this as it is welcome. In singling this out I do not want to suggest that the Society should be seen as just another local society. It most definitely is not. With monuments like Hadrian's Wall in its area, it has, particularly but not exclusively in Roman Studies, consistently supported and published work of international importance.

In difficult economic times that are likely to affect learned societies adversely, looking back at their history and what they have achieved should be an important part in

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developing our strategies for the future. To encourage the widest possible number of our supporters to engage with these issues we need more well-produced, reasonably-priced volumes like this one.

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