

The bulk of this wonderful book is an extended essay: ‘The Origins of the National Museum of Denmark 1807–1848. An Account of the Years of the Royal Commission for the Preservation of Antiquities Based on the Commission’s Minute Books’. In it we have the best discussion to date of the history of Danish archaeology during those vital years before the revolution that swept Europe in 1848. Jakobsen has mined the minute-books of the Royal Commission to great effect, providing significant detail as well as assured synthesis. It’s a significant achievement that is enhanced by high quality production of the many illustrations that grace the text.

Jakobsen’s account is supported by two editorial appendices. The first, written by Fischer-Hansen, examines the role of Frederik Münter in the establishment of the Royal Commission. Although only short it provides important contextual detail concerning the influence of antiquarian scholarship in Sicily on Münter, who acted as a vector for ideas about the investigation and management of antiquity to move from Sicily to Denmark. The second appendix presents a very brief history of the Royal Society of Nordic Antiquities. The volume is completed by the publication (in Danish) of a transcription of the minute books of the Royal Commission.

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Susan Pearce (ed.) 2007. *Visions of Antiquity. The Society of Antiquaries of London 1707–2007*. 488 pages; ISBN 9780854312870 (hbk). 116 photographs and line drawings in colour and b&w.

Reviewed by **Tim Murray**

2007 was a bumper year for institutional histories, with the Society of Antiquaries of London celebrating its tercentenary, and the Danish National Museum (a comparative new-comer at 200 years). This is a very welcome development as the history of archaeology, which has been booming in recent years, has featured much biography and general survey, but comparatively little on major institutions.

Having said that I need to stress that Susan Pearce sees things somewhat differently. “In no sense is the volume intended to be a ‘history’ of the Society” (p. 7). Instead she sees the objective of the book as being focused on a celebration of the Society. “The papers in this volume are intended to investigate the ways in which the Fellows of the Society of Antiquaries, at various moments in time, came to understand the past, and their relationship to it, and to show how these are interpreted at the beginning of the twenty-first century” (p. 6). All of this may well be perfectly true, but by the time we get to the end of the 15 substantive chapters our knowledge of the Antiquaries is significantly advanced over the Society’s previous history – Joan Evans’ *History of the Society of Antiquaries* (1956).

These substantive chapters cover a great deal of important ground, not least of which is the evolving relationship between antiquarianism and the professionalized disciplines of archaeology and history (to name just two) that came to the fore during the nineteenth century. The essays are all of a uniformly high order, but there are standout contributions on the nature of antiquarianism, the historical context of the Society, the great excavation projects sponsored, and the development of the visual and textual languages of antiquarianism.

Visions of Antiquity is a handsome production – generously illustrated and beautifully designed. Many of the contributions clearly demonstrate the value of the Society’s splendid library and its great archive. There is much new knowledge here.

Susan Pearce and her collaborators have done an excellent in bringing to light the rich and varied contributions of the Society’s Fellows to the illumination of the past. *Visions of Antiquity* is an adornment to the history of our discipline.