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Editor

Paul Frodsham

**NORTHUMBERLAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL GROUP**

## THE NORTHUMBERLAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL GROUP

**THE NORTHUMBERLAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL GROUP (NAG)** exists primarily to further the knowledge of the archaeology of Northumberland and surrounding areas. NAG undertakes its own fieldwork projects and occasionally supports other projects undertaken by members. A lecture programme, social events and a series of excursions are organised each year, and members receive *Northern Archaeology* which is published annually. *Northern Archaeology* is also available by subscription to non-members.

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**NORTHERN ARCHAEOLOGY** is the annual NAG journal and includes a variety of papers concentrating principally on the archaeology of Northumberland and adjacent areas. Occasional special editions are published to cover particular themes. All communications regarding contributions to the journal should be addressed to the Editor at the address below, or c/o Northumberland National Park Authority, Eastburn, South Park, Hexham, NE46 1BS. All potential contributors are encouraged to consult the Editor as early as possible when considering the preparation of a paper (please note that *Northern Archaeology* is prepared for publication on a home computer and all contributions should be submitted on disk in a suitable wordprocessor format). Enquiries about back numbers (most volumes are still available, though many are now in very short supply) should be addressed to the Secretary at the address below.

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## Editorial

For a number of reasons *Northern Archaeology* did not appear last year, so this is a double volume representing 1997 and 1998. I should apologise to those contributors whose papers were delivered to me over two years ago, but I hope that all NAG members will find something of interest in this volume and that the long wait eventually proves worthwhile!

A glance at the contents page will demonstrate that this volume is dominated by papers on prehistory. I should stress that this is not due to any policy on the part of your Editor, but little other than prehistory is currently being offered for publication. The content of our first paper will be familiar to many as it records the results of the NAG excavation at Titlington, in which many members took part. Peter Topping is to be congratulated for pulling this report together, and thus maintaining NAG's excellent recent publication record. This publication record has been an important element in securing permission from the government to excavate the scheduled hillfort at Wether Hill, Ingram this summer, an excavation in which all members are invited to participate. Hillforts are something of the flavour of the month at present, as demonstrated by the papers by Clive Waddington and colleagues in this volume. This is largely as the result of an initiative by the Northumberland National Park Authority, which hopes to secure several hundred thousand pounds from various sources for research into hillforts and their associated prehistoric landscapes over the next few years, including support for the NAG project on Wether Hill.

It is interesting to note that a Neolithic presence has been suggested at both Harehaugh (on the basis of a radiocarbon date and the recovery of flints) and Humbleton Hill (on rather more tenuous grounds, initially suggested by your editor!). The possibility that a number of our so-called hillforts could have much older origins is an interesting development that will only be resolved through fieldwork in years to come, and it would be nice to think that much of this fieldwork could eventually appear in *Northern Archaeology*. We must also remember that once built, hillforts represented a commanding presence in the landscape and the reoccupation of some during the Dark Ages must be a strong possibility. Also, as Sandra Melia reminds us with regard to Humbleton, some hillfort sites, if

not actually the forts themselves, remained significant long into post-medieval times.

There are also several other papers in this volume dealing with the Neolithic, which is interesting given that our last volume was dedicated solely to the Neolithic and some may have thought that the subject had been exhausted for the time being. The recognition of the early Neolithic settlement at Bolam by John Davies is a crucially important development in Neolithic studies, and suggests that other similar sites could be discovered by similar methods if others were to adopt John's meticulous approach. Neil Stevenson's contribution suggests that many Neolithic (and other) sites may await discovery on the lowlands through air photography, and it is to be hoped that more resources can be found for exploratory air photography over the next few years. Jan Harding's paper demonstrates how much we can learn from the careful analysis of known monument complexes. Some readers may not regard such research as a priority (arguing that sites should be conserved and saved for the future, for analysis when we have invented new techniques and methods of investigation) but I believe that it is absolutely essential that we undertake a number of such research projects each year to maintain public interest in, and support for, archaeology. After all, without public support and public funding there would be very little archaeology of any kind done in this country. The argument put forward by Stan Beckensall and your Editor for the dating of virtually all of our rock art to the Neolithic may not find favour with all readers, but few scholars would argue that most of our rock art is indeed Neolithic. However, the dating of rock art is likely to remain an area of debate for some time unless new scientific techniques become available.

The final paper in this volume, by Huw Prothero, is a good example of the kind of work undertaken by NAG members on an amateur basis that provides essential information for the County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). Once on the SMR, all of these sites can be protected from damaging developments, whereas many of them were unknown prior to Huw's research.

If all goes to plan then volume 17 of *Northern Archaeology* will appear in 1999, to be followed in 2000 by a special 'millennium' edition consisting of invited

contributions from acknowledged experts charting the archaeology of Northumberland from the earliest times through until the recent past. This will provide a much needed overview of Northumberland's archaeology, drawing on a lot of recent and as yet unpublished research, and with luck it will sell well and provide some extra funds to support a number of NAG projects.

Finally, I repeat my call for all NAG members to offer papers (however short) for publication. While we do welcome papers from non-members, *Northern Archaeology* remains first and foremost the journal for members to publish their own research, so if any readers have any work that they would like to consider publishing then please don't hesitate to get in touch.

*Paul Frodsham*  
*June 1998*