

Senhouse Roman Museum

The Museum's Collections

The bulk of the material housed in the Senhouse Roman Museum is contained within the Netherhall Collection which is the property of the Senhouse family. This is believed to be the oldest collection of antiquities surviving in Britain, having been started by the Senhouse family in the 1570s. The collection includes Roman funerary monuments, military altars and votive slabs, native religious sculptures, other fragments of sculpture and a number of miscellaneous items, including a prehistoric cup-and-ring stone, Roman pottery, glass and bronze artefacts.

The Netherhall collection generally dates to the Roman occupation and was recovered from the site of the Roman fort and civil settlement adjacent to the Museum. The collection was established by John Senhouse in the reign of Elizabeth I and first recorded in 1599 by William Camden in his *Britannia*. Subsequent members of the Senhouse family continued to add to the collection. In 1870 Humphrey Pocklington Senhouse made one of the most outstanding discoveries in British Roman archaeology when he unearthed 17 military altars from a series of pits adjacent to the fort. The Netherhall Collection is considered to be of international significance due to the large number of Roman military altars and inscriptions including an almost complete sequence of annually dedicated altars to Jupiter by the Cohors I Hispanorum. These altars and other inscriptions within the collection are an important source of information about auxiliary units and their commanding officers. In addition the collection includes an unusually extensive group of native religious sculpture also recovered from Maryport.

Since the Museum opened in 1990 additional material has been acquired, usually by gift, and this material constitutes the Museum's own collection, distinct from the Netherhall Collection. The Museum is a repository for Roman material recovered by excavation and as casual finds from West Cumbria. The majority of these objects are archaeological material from the Romano-British period and West Cumbria. The collection also includes supporting documents, photographs and artefacts associated with the Battery and the Senhouse family of a post-Roman date. Notable additions to the Museum's collection include objects recovered during a five year programme of excavation 2011 to 2015 at the findspot of the cache of 17 military altars in 1870 and the site of the adjacent temple complex. These excavations were initiated by and primarily funded by the Senhouse

Museum Trust and directed by Newcastle University. The finds from the excavation were gifted to the Museum by the landowners Hadrian's Wall Trust.

The Museum's collections also include material relating to the Cumbrian Coast, notably the Richard Bellhouse archive, finds from the excavation of the north eastern corner of the fort in 1966, material from Milefortlet 21 (Swarthy Hill) and finds from Beckfoot Roman fort and cemetery.

Themes and priorities for future collecting

Material recovered from the adjacent Roman fort and civilian settlement and its environs. In particular material recovered from Camp Farm.

Material that will enhance the Netherhall Collection of Roman altars, sculptured stone and associated non-Roman items.

Material that will further the aim of presenting an interpretation of the Roman heritage of Maryport and the associated coastal defence system of Cumbria of the Roman occupation period.

Material artefacts that will assist in presenting an interpretation of the history of the Battery building. This material will include documents, photographs and artefacts from the 19th century onwards.

Material artefacts that will assist in presenting an interpretation of the history of the Senhouse family with particular reference to the Netherhall Collection. This material will include documents, photographs and artefacts from the 16th century onwards.