



ROMAN HERITAGE: UNEARTHING POTENTIAL IN THE NORTH WEST

'The Romans left so much amazing stuff in the North West that you can almost hear the tramp of the marching legions as you walk in the footsteps of those hobnailed sandals.'

Adam Hart-Davis, writer and broadcaster

Who do we think we are?

From Carlisle to Chester, the North West was part of the Roman Empire and its unique story is still being discovered.

Chester was a magnificent legionary base and up the west coast, forts at Ribchester and Lancaster marked the way to the frontier at Hadrian's Wall in Cumbria – a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

'This was not the land of villas, mosaics and polite educated society... the North West was part of the Roman military world.'

Guy de la Bédoyère, Time Team expert

The Roman invasion signalled the end of the prehistoric era in Britain and tracing this exciting history helps us understand who we are as a region.

In the North West we have over 30 museums with treasures that tell the story of the Romans in Britain. These museums care for a host of historically significant artefacts – from tools to textiles and coins to tombstones. There are also more than 60 Roman outdoor sites discovered to date.

Renaissance North West funded a Roman Heritage Project from 2007 – 09 to raise the profile of this wonderful heritage. Through this project, museum experts and scholars are now better equipped to uncover hidden gems, find out more about the history of outdoor sites, and link the threads across the region and the UK to bring this fascinating part of our heritage to life.



What did the Roman Heritage Project do for us?

Between 2007 and 2009, 16 museums in the region were supported by Renaissance North West to open up their Roman collections to the public.

23 projects were funded including six revamped displays of Roman material, two new exhibitions and five education projects.

Almost 200 Roman objects have been taken out of storage and are on public display and even more are now available on museum websites, for example:

- I** an internationally significant tombstone from Lancaster has been restored and displayed at Lancaster City Museum
- II** a rare woodworking plane has been conserved and displayed at Warrington Museum & Art Gallery
- III** digital images of 1,500 coins can be viewed on the Blackburn Museum & Gallery website and there is an educational CD resource for schools.

New displays and exhibitions have modern interpretation and are more interactive to increase learning and enhance the visitor's experience. Museum websites have been improved to direct people to the information they need before and after their museum visit.

Museum staff are now able to access Roman experts, archaeologists and historians to develop their own skills and expertise.





Lancaster City Museum – Claire Wood

Roman events attract media attention and unprecedented visitor numbers

'Our Roman heritage is now big business. Visits to Roman sites, the Roman material in our museums and the wealth of programmes on television feed our curiosity and whet our appetite to learn more.'

David Shotter, Centre for North West Regional Studies, Lancaster University

- I The Manchester Museum's Big Roman Saturday attracted over 500 visitors
- II More than 400 visitors attended the Condate Roman event in Northwich, Cheshire
- III The Minerva Festival in Chester was celebrated by over 1000 visitors
- IV Over two days, 1000 visitors watched Roman re-enactments at Ribchester Museum.

'Fantastic and informative.'

'It was very educational and entertaining.'

Visitor responses

'The Roman activities were fully booked and feedback from participants was extremely positive. Visitors felt they learned a good deal about life in Roman Britain, and were keen to learn more.'

Sandra Cruise, Rossendale Museum

The Roman Heritage Project stimulated public interest by linking with the Portable Antiquities Scheme which records treasures found across the country by people with metal detectors.

'Since the Portable Antiquities Scheme was set up in 1997, over 2000 Roman objects have been recorded from the North West. Most discoveries are found by members of the 14 metal detecting clubs in the region, but sometimes people uncover items gardening or out walking.'

Frances McIntosh, Portable Antiquities Scheme

The British Museum's 2008 blockbuster exhibition about Emperor Hadrian attracted 255,000 paying visitors. Neil MacGregor, Director of the British Museum, described it as *'one of the histories the world needs today'*.

In the run up to the exhibition, one of the star objects, a bronze head of Hadrian, was put on display at Tullie House Museum & Art Gallery in Carlisle where it generated national publicity.



Tullie House Museum & Art Gallery – Adam Naylor/Whalley

Learning outside the classroom: Romans and schools

Children study the Romans at primary and secondary school as part of the National Curriculum. Museums across the region use Roman objects and related material to provide educational sessions, activities and learning resources for schools.

Learning with museum objects allows children to imagine what the world was like hundreds of years ago and how the past influences the present. Using artefacts in formal learning sessions encourages children to handle, explore, question and discuss. It brings the topic to life in a way that photographs, books and the internet cannot.

As schools move away from teaching traditional subjects, studying the Romans through the objects they left behind provides schools with a strong basis for exploring Human, Social and Environmental Understanding, and Scientific and Technological Understanding.

Visiting museums and outdoor sites allows schools to take part in the Government's Learning Outside the Classroom agenda.

In 2008, over 1,500 school children visited Tullie House Museum & Art Gallery and used their Roman artefact loan boxes.

The Roman Heritage Project developed five education projects including:

- I** a school session at The Beacon in Whitehaven that explores what life was like for Roman soldiers in the North West
- II** a programme of learning activities about the famous Lindow Man at the Manchester Museum that examines the link between the history of Roman and Iron Age Britain.

*'The pupils enjoyed being detectives to find out about objects.'
'Good to see and study real Roman things with local connections.'*

'Much more interesting and stimulating than studying from a text book.'

Feedback from teachers



Lancaster City Museum – Claire Wood

The following learning resources have been developed for use by schools, families, community groups and general visitors:

- I** replicas of Roman objects for use in handling sessions
- II** Roman costumes for role play and re-enactments
- III** art and craft activities such as making shields, chariots, swords and mosaics
- IV** new material produced for education packs.

Resources and expert advice from staff working at museums in the North West is available to be shared with museums and other heritage organisations.

For information about items and resources available for loan from Manchester Museum contact Bryan Sitch, Head of Human Cultures 0161 3061582 bryan.sitch@manchester.ac.uk

For Tullie House Museum & Art Gallery contact Chris Smith, Schools Outreach Officer 01228 618718 chris@carlisle.gov.uk

The Hadrian's Wall Education Forum builds partnership between Roman sites along the Wall, runs educational events, develops resources and shares knowledge. Contact Maggie Birchall, HWEF Chair 01912 369347 maggie.birchall@twmuseums.org.uk

Roman heritage draws in tourists

Roman heritage plays a significant part of the North West's tourism offer, drawing visitors from within and outside the region, and from abroad. Attractions include the world-famous Hadrian's Wall, the historic cities of Lancaster and Carlisle and Britain's largest Roman amphitheatre in Chester.

Museums such as Manchester Museum, Lancaster City Museum and Tullie House Museum & Art Gallery have Roman treasures of regional, national and international importance. Senhouse Roman Museum in Cumbria has the oldest collection of Roman artefacts in Britain!

Hadrian's Wall attracts over 1.1 million visitors a year and 72% of walkers who visit Hadrian's Wall go to one or more other cultural attractions.

'Spanning nearly 2000 years of history, a visit to Hadrian's Wall is a must for anyone living in or visiting the North of England.'

English Heritage

Chester employs three professional Roman soldier re-enactors who give tours in the city centre which generates an annual visitor spend of £500,000.

We can use the wealth of Roman heritage in the region to ignite the public's imagination to:

- I increase promotion of the North West as a destination to national and international visitors
- II attract more visitors who stay longer and spend more
- III create a vibrant and sustainable visitor economy
- IV encourage more people from within the region to visit new places in the North West
- V secure additional investment in Roman heritage to help preserve it and make it more accessible to the public
- VI improve the quality of the visitor experience and increase opportunities for learning.

'It was the Romans who first joined up the North West. Telling their story more coherently would add to the offer of all sorts of places from Chester to Carlisle. We know that overseas visitors come because of our heritage, and they want to learn the stories behind our places.'

Andrew Backhouse,
Heritage Tourism Executive for the North West

Where do we go from here?

'The Roman Heritage Project has demonstrated the need to co-ordinate museum approaches to region-wide themes such as the Romans to maximise the impact, develop effective story lines, prevent duplication and to raise quality and standards.'

Dr Nigel Mills, World Heritage and Access Director,
Hadrian's Wall Heritage Ltd.

Sharing expertise, ideas, objects and resources was key to the Roman Heritage Project. Other organisations such as archaeological trusts, conservation studios and museum friends' groups also contributed to the project. Together they have been able to achieve more than they could have done alone.

The group that led the Roman Heritage Project continues to meet and work together. For more information visit www.rhinonorthwest.org or contact Malcolm Chapman at Manchester Museum malcolm.chapman@manchester.ac.uk

Funding from Renaissance North West enabled a number of museums to lever additional funds from organisations such as the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Mellor Archaeological Trust.

'The support from Renaissance North West has been invaluable as for the first time we are aware of the whole range of Roman artifacts in the region. It has been a great opportunity to bring North West practitioners together to deepen their understanding, and develop a unified promotion of our Roman heritage. This should lead to opportunities for collaborative working in future.'

Andrew Backhouse,
Heritage Tourism Executive for the North West

There is still more that can be done to promote Roman heritage in the North West through our museums and heritage sites. Taking a collective and collaborative approach to further development, delivery, promotion, advocacy and fundraising will maximise this potential.

See also:

www.hadrians-wall.org

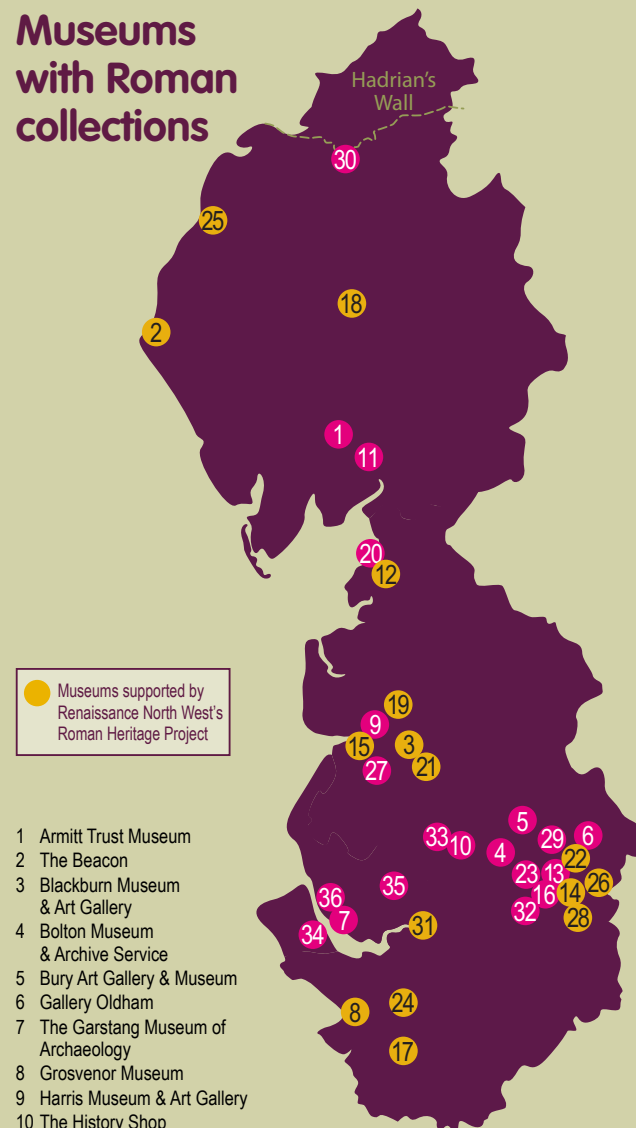
www.culture24.org.uk

www.curriculum.qca.org.uk

www.roman-britain.org

www.finds.org.uk

Museums with Roman collections



- 1 Armit Trust Museum
- 2 The Beacon
- 3 Blackburn Museum & Art Gallery
- 4 Bolton Museum & Archive Service
- 5 Bury Art Gallery & Museum
- 6 Gallery Oldham
- 7 The Garstang Museum of Archaeology
- 8 Grosvenor Museum
- 9 Harris Museum & Art Gallery
- 10 The History Shop
- 11 Kendal Museum
- 12 Lancaster City Museum
- 13 Manchester City Galleries
- 14 The Manchester Museum
- 15 Museum of Lancashire
- 16 Museum of Science & Industry
- 17 Nantwich Museum
- 18 Penrith Museum
- 19 Ribchester Roman Museum
- 20 Roman Bath House
- 21 Rossendale Museum
- 22 Saddleworth Museum & Art Gallery
- 23 Salford Museum & Art Gallery
- 24 The Salt Museum
- 25 Senhouse Roman Museum
- 26 Setantii Museum
- 27 South Ribble Museum
- 28 Stockport Story Museum
- 29 Touchstones Rochdale
- 30 Tullie House Museum & Art Gallery
- 31 Warrington Museum & Art Gallery
- 32 The Whitworth Art Gallery
- 33 Wigan Pier Heritage Centre
- 34 Williamson Art Gallery & Museum
- 35 World of Glass
- 36 World Museum Liverpool

Museums for changing lives

Renaissance is the Museums Libraries and Archives Council's (MLA) national £300 million programme to transform England's regional museums. For the first time ever, investment from central government is helping regional museums across the country to raise their standards and deliver real results in support of education, learning, community development and economic regeneration. Renaissance is helping museums to meet people's changing needs and to change people's lives.

For more information including case studies from the Roman Heritage Project and its legacy visit www.renaissancenw.org.uk or contact the Renaissance North West team on 0161 235 8810

RENAISSANCE
NORTH WEST
museums for
changing lives

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