
59 Tullie House, Carlisle

Theme: Heritage and mining

Location

59 Tullie House. The museum is in Castle Street in the centre of the city [NY 398 560].

Description

Tullie House Museum has outstanding Roman and Borderland exhibitions. It also has some fantastic rocks.

The Museum is home to an extensive collection of Cumbrian minerals, a legacy of the county being one of the richest mining regions in Britain. There are many other exceptional items in its collections: including 160-million-year-old Jurassic ammonites from west of Carlisle and 250-million-year-old mysterious 'vertebrate' prints left in Permian Penrith Sandstone.

It also has a large collection of Neolithic axes from the Langdale 'factory'. These are made from one very specific layer of fine-grained rock, a 450-million-year-old blue-green-grey volcanic ash called a tuff, found high up on scree slopes between Pike of Stickle and Harrison Stickle. Stone age craftsmen roughed out the axes and then honed and polished them on lower ground elsewhere; production was on an industrial scale. The finished axes have been found at archaeological sites across Britain and the unworn state of many means they are interpreted as much more than a utility item: they were ceremonial and highly valued. Their distribution also shows just how connected Stone Age society was.

I've got a confession to make. When I should have been doing my school homework in Tullie House Library Reading Room in the 1960s, I used to sneak into the museum and gaze at the birds and animals, and fossils and rocks, in their glass cases. Tullie House must take some of the credit (or blame) for the career that followed that allowed me to write this book.

Photographs

(Photo 59-1) Fossil 'vertebrate' prints in Penrith Sandstone. Taken with kind permission of Tullie House Museum, Carlisle.

(Photo 59-2) Langdale axe. Taken with kind permission of Tullie House Museum, Carlisle.

(Photo 59-3) Langdale axe factory.



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(Photo 59-2) Langdale axe. Taken with kind permission of Tullie House Museum, Carlisle.



(Photo 59-3) Langdale axe factory.