

Friday 24 November

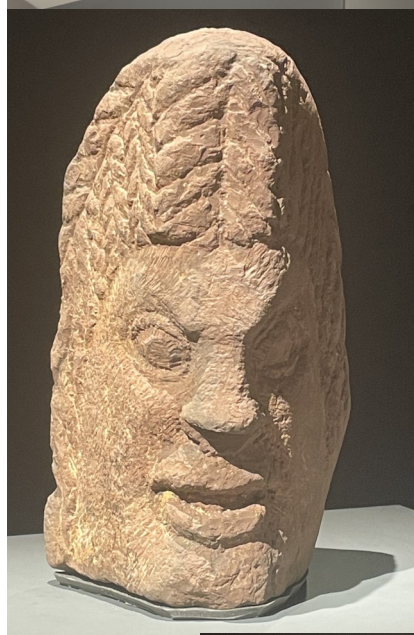
RAILWAY 99

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|------------|------|------|---------|
| Hexham | | 0803 | £3.55 * |
| Carlisle | 0900 | | |
| Carlisle | | 1145 | 554 £2 |
| Keswick | 1308 | 1330 | 555 £2 |
| Windermere | 1433 | | |
| Windermere | | 1459 | £18.30 |
| Oxenholme | 1518 | 1533 | |
| Carlisle | 1614 | 1622 | £4.60 * |
| Hexham | 1716 | | |

I booked a day to Glasgow and had a good journey across to Carlisle. Then it went pear-shaped. The 0922 Avanti service was cancelled. We were told the train was cancelled “due to a delay at the depot”. That was a lie - the train had only left Euston a few minutes late, and had just been terminated at Preston (which it had reached on time). Ticket acceptance had not been arranged on the Trans-Pennine which runs a few minutes earlier - I’d have to wait until 1002. Feeling decidedly p****d off with a railway industry that does not serve its passengers, I gave up and wandered into Carlisle - Cathedral looking lovely. After a cooked breakfast I felt better.

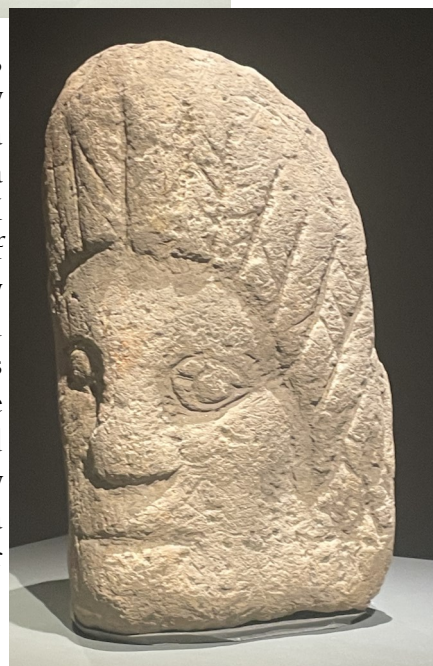


Tullie House is a wonderful museum, but I haven’t had a proper visit for several years. (I tended to meet Clare in the café, and that’s the afternoon gone. They have an exhibition “Digging Deeper, uncovering Roman Carlisle” which was a bit smaller than I had expected, but still worth a visit.

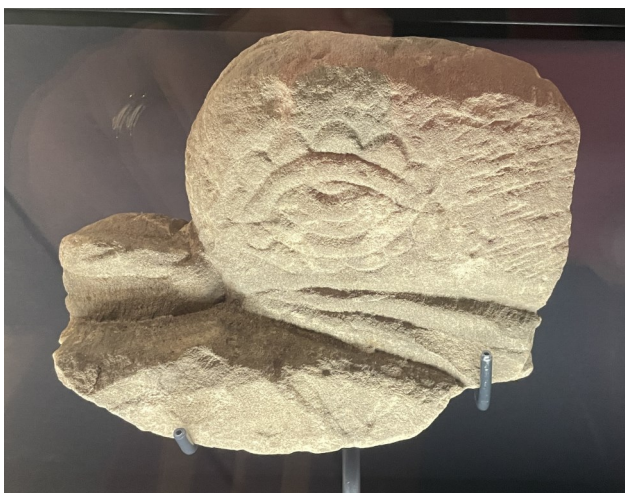


The stone heads come from the Stanwix Bathhouse - probably a pair, but made of different sandstones. Lots of theories about them - the conclusion seems to be that they were

architectural, i.e. they decorated a building or a structure. I wonder if they designated the Ladies and the Gents (and will they excavate a wheelchair one?).



It was good to see that a Roman cat had left its mark - Selwyn approves of this. A rather lovely Dolphin too.



They have a lovely collection of Intaglios. These are carved pieces of semi-precious stone that would sit in a fitting in a finger ring. They are found all across the Empire, but Stanwix Bathhouse has an incredible number of them. They have found 70 to date - one of the largest number found from a single site anywhere in the Empire. They have those that can be described as “genuine high-end”, set into rings worn by the wealthy - and they have “cheaper imitations worn by those wanting to present a wealthier version of themselves”. They range from semi-precious stones such as red jasper and cornelian, and some are made of cheaper moulded glass. You can imagine the hot and wet conditions of the baths loosening the adhesives used to secure them into their ring settings. You can also imagine the annoyance of their owners when they lost them.



I then went and explored the main Roman gallery - which is excellent. Brooches and lamps and deities - I liked the boy hugging a goose. Geese were the sacred bird of the goddess Juno, the wife of Jupiter, the main Roman god. The lead ingot was fascinating too - probably from the mines up near Alston, but I wonder how many similar ones made their way out of the Peak District on pack horses south through my old parishes.





I had a quick spin round the other museum galleries - worth a longer look, and another visit to go and see the pictures before the whole museum closes from Christmas 2023 to Summer 2024 for refurbishment. Not a lot of notice.

I grabbed a Stagecoach Lakes bus timetable from the display in the gallery, then had an amble through The Lanes, a visit to the Hospice bookshop and ended up at the bus station. I had done a bit of research looking at bus connections and the Windermere branch. The 554 to Keswick, a ride on the top of a double decker bus. Out of Carlisle to Dalston, a diversion through Thursby, then to Wigton, Bothel, and down past Bassenthwaite and into Keswick. The bus station is next to Booths supermarket, so I had a mince pie and coffee as I waited for my connection. (Booths have recently announced that they are getting rid of self-service tills - I like Booths). Nice mince pie.

The 1330 bus was another double decker, slightly moderner, on the route through to Lancaster. It also got a lot fuller. Grasmere, Rydal, Ambleside, Windermere - all full of parked cars, not easy to get the bus through. Scenery was lovely. Thirlmere, Grasmere, Rydal Water and Windermere. At some point next year perhaps I can combine this with a boat trip on Windermere and a ride on the Lakeside and Haverthwaite. Apparently a £12 NW Explorer Ticket covers all the Stagecoach buses in Cumbria, plus the 685 from Newcastle to Carlisle via Hexham, and as far south as Chester. Do I fancy a day out from Hexham to Chester? The Stagecoach app tells me I could leave at 0629, change at Carlisle, Keswick, Lancaster, Preston, Southport and Liverpool, and get to Chester at 2025. Anyone up for a trip? (Today's ride cost £4, two x £2 singles).





The ticket office at Windermere was closed, so I used the ticket machine. £18.30 for a single (with railcard) to Carlisle - which makes the £4 bus fares look a real bargain. A little research later showed me that if I had simply purchased a single from Windermere to Oxenholme it would have cost me £4.75, then a single from Oxenholme to Carlisle would have been £6.30 - a saving of £7.25. (And as no one checked my ticket between Oxenholme and Carlisle I wonder why I should buy a ticket). The rail industry has succeeded in fleecing me again. Still, the Northern guard let me use my advanced ticket on the train back to Hexham (even though I was running early).