

## Site Collections Development Statement

Name of Museum: English Heritage – Richborough Roman Fort and Amphitheatre

Name of Governing Body: English Heritage Trust

Date on which this policy was approved by the Acquisitions, Loans and Disposals Committee:  
14<sup>th</sup> September 2022

Policy review procedure:

The Site Collections Development Policy is owned by the Senior Curator for the geographical area. It will be reviewed at least once every five years as part of a cyclical process managed through Registry.

Date at which this policy is due for review: 14<sup>th</sup> September 2025

Arts Council England will be notified of any changes to the Site Collections Development Policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of the collections.

### 1. Management Arrangements and scope

- 1.1 This policy covers all the museum artefacts managed by English Heritage from, or associated with the site whether they are held on site, at another English Heritage site or store, or on loan to a third party. This policy does not cover artefacts associated with other English Heritage sites which are stored or displayed at this site.
- 1.2 The site and its collections form part of the National Collection of English Heritage.

### 2. Relationships to other relevant policies/plans of the organisation

- 2.1 The national *Collections Development Policy* approved by the Board of Trustees on 9 November 2016, (together with any amendments to, or replacements for, the policy approved by Trustees), apply to the site. In the event of any disagreement between this site policy and the national policy the national policy will apply.
- 2.2 Without limitation to the above all the procedures, all ethical and legal considerations set out in the national policy apply to acquisitions, disposals and loans from or to the sites collection.
- 2.3 Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in exceptional circumstances.

### 3. History of the collections

- 3.1 Richborough was subject to investigation by antiquarian researchers from 1792 onwards, and a number of early excavations took place here. The finds from these known excavations, as well as a number of other stray Richborough objects unearthed before 1920, are scattered in museums throughout the country (section 9 below).
- 3.2 Over 95% of the Richborough collection held by English Heritage is the result of a series of excavations between 1922-1938, led by J.P. Bushe-Fox. This work encompassed almost all of the area within the fort as well as the external ditches. It also involved a pair of small temples outside the walls of the fort.

- 3.3 The extraordinary quantity and quality of material found at Richborough was recognized as significant at the time. A small number of pieces were transferred to the British Museum but the vast majority were housed on site in a museum purpose built in 1929 to allow visitors to view the finds; the first such museum constructed by the Office of Works.
  - 3.4 At some point between the 1930s and 1950s, human remains which had been sent to the Royal College of Surgeons for investigation were incinerated following a loss of provenance.
  - 3.5 Further periods of significant excavation took place under Tony Wilmot in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These covered the two temples previously excavated by Bushe-Foxe (2001), the fallen east wall and medieval dock (2008), a post hole from the Claudian gateway (2020), and the amphitheater (2021). This material is still with Historic England pending publication but is expected to become part of the English Heritage collection.
  - 3.6 A small amount of material from Richborough was recovered by the police following night hawking in 2008.
  - 3.7 A watching brief during toilet construction works in 2014 produced a minimal number of objects.
  - 3.8 Over the years English Heritage has also acquired a few photographs, documents and small items of social history related to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, via donations.
4. An overview of the collections
- 4.1 The collection consists almost exclusively of archaeological material supported by an excavation archive, and some ephemera. It contains approximately 56,000 coins, a further 9,000 small finds, 1,000 glass fragments, c.20,000 bulk finds, and c.500 pieces of architectural stonework (most of which are small).
  - 4.2 This is an internationally significant collection: it is one of the largest single site Roman collections in the country and covers the entire period of Roman occupation from the Claudian invasion of 43AD to the departure of the Legions in 410AD. In addition, for an archaeological assemblage, an unusually high proportion of objects are substantially complete, in good condition, and of display quality.
  - 4.3 Less than 1% of the collection is on display (approximately 400 objects following the 2022 redisplay), with the remainder in offsite storage at Dover Castle.
  - 4.4 There is a very strong weighting within the collection towards the Roman period, but around 5% of material relates to the site's ongoing Saxon and later medieval use, as well as to 20<sup>th</sup> century social history of the excavations.
  - 4.5 There is a small quantity of human remains (around 5 boxes), though this is probably only around 15% of those that were originally excavated (see 3.4 above). These do not just represent Roman remains but also part of a Saxon cemetery.
  - 4.6 The site has no loans or working objects.
  - 4.7 Highlights of the collection include:
    - 4.7.1 The exceptionally large and complete coin collection which covers the entire Roman occupation: there is at least one for each emperor who ruled

Brittannia for a year or more.

4.7.2 Several high quality imported copper alloy statuettes and weights. These include an early second century steelyard weight in the form of a satyr, probably Silenus.

4.7.3 60 crates of complete and reconstructed ceramics, including three complete, late first century, mica-dusted vessels.

## 5. Themes and priorities for future collecting

5.1 The main priority for ongoing collecting is archaeological material found within the scheduled area (pink on the map below), to further inform our understanding of the Roman and post-Roman use of the site.

5.2 Visual representations of the site (eg paintings, prints, photographs) may be acquired if they are of exceptional quality or if they document the appearance of the site at a time, or from an angle, that is not otherwise known.

5.3 Objects and ephemera related to the 20<sup>th</sup> century social history of the site are of interest, especially where they can throw light onto less well represented groups. For example, the workers from the 1920s and 30s excavations and the families of custodians.

5.3 In particular we are likely to be interested in:

5.6.1 Archaeological material relating to post-Roman occupation of the site.

5.6.2 Photos and/or accounts of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century excavations - especially relating to the unskilled workers and children.

## 6. Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal

6.1 There is very little potential for disposal from this collection with the exception of around 15 boxes of unaccessioned, featureless, plain samian without contexts. There may also be some possibility to rationalize architectural marble.

## 7. Collecting policies of other museums

7.1 English Heritage will take account of the collecting policies of other museums and other organisations collecting in the same or related subject areas or fields. It will consult with these organisations where conflicts of interest may arise or to define areas of specialism in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.

7.2 Specific reference is made to the following museums and organisations:

7.2.1 Sandwich Museum – regarding 20<sup>th</sup> century local history.

7.2.2 British Museum – regarding the coin collection.

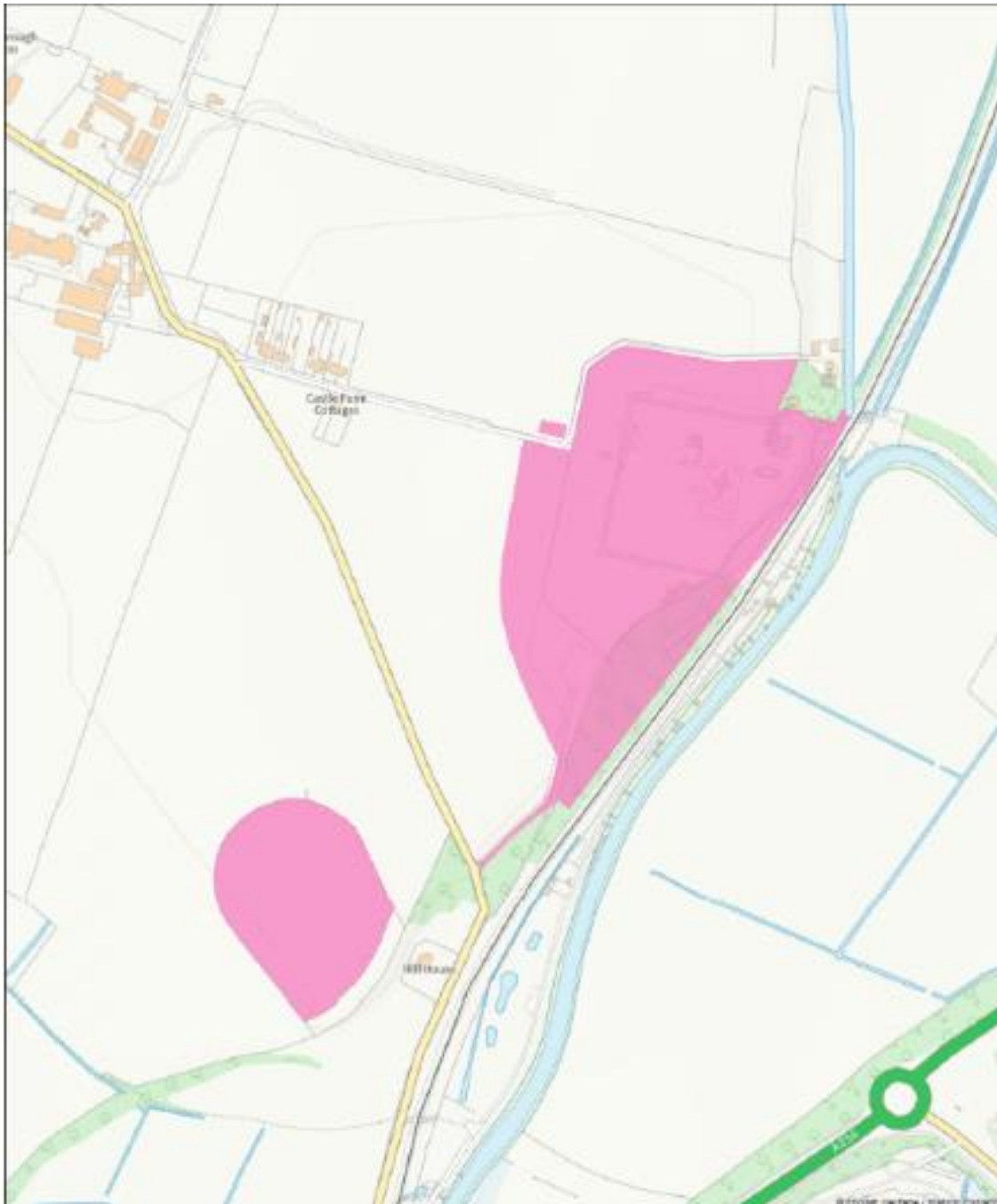
7.2.3 Liverpool World Museum – regarding the William Rolfe collection.

7.2.4 Maidstone Museum – Regarding the Rev. R. Drake and George Dowker excavations.

7.2.5 Guernsey Museum – regarding the Frederick Corbin Lukis collection.

7.2.6 Cambridge Museums (various) – regarding the Rev. John Battely collection.

8. Plan of the Scheduled Area



9. Collections Not Held by English Heritage

9.1 British Museum

- 418 catalogued objects including 360 coins, almost all of which are Roman, as well as several Iron Age and Anglo-Saxon coins. This list is incomplete, as they also have two coin hoards, at least one of which is uncatalogued.
- The head and neck of a swan (a reproduction of which is in the site museum), several brooches, three finger rings including one inset with an amethyst intaglio showing a leaping lion, and an iron dagger hilt with an inlaid silver-gilt cocked-hat pommel.
- Most of this material comes from Bushe-Fox's excavations but many of the coins

were donated individually by local people.

#### 9.2 Liverpool World Museum

- 90 catalogued objects, mostly ceramics and animal remains. They are from the collection of William Rolfe of Sandwich, which was acquired by Joseph Mayer of Liverpool c. 1857. Some of them are published.

#### 9.3 Maidstone Museum

- 25 catalogued objects, belonging to the Museum and to the Kent Archaeological Society, but their Collections Manager advised that this list is likely to be incomplete due to a documentation backlog. Most catalogued objects are coins but there are also two brooches and a few other pieces.

- These objects are from excavations undertaken between the 1860s and the early 1900s. Some excavations were carried out by the Rev. R. Drake and George Dowker. These records suggest Maidstone should also have fragments from a colossal bronze statue, some marble fragments, and additional coins, but the Collections Manager was unable to identify them in the collection.

#### 9.4 Sandwich Guildhall Museum

- The Ministry of Works loaned the museum about 30 objects in October 1926 including ten Roman coins, a gaming die, two pins and two needles, a glass flagon neck and over 15 ceramic vessels which are still on display there. The status of these objects needs clarification as there is no current loan agreement in place.

- Since the loan, several other objects found locally have been donated to the museum. Most significant is a detachable marble sculpted head from an over life-sized statue.

#### 9.5 Guernsey Museum

- There are 25 objects from Richborough in the collection of Frederick Corbin Lukis (d. 1871) at Guernsey Museum. These came originally from the collection of one of the Oxenden Baronets of Dean in Kent, though which member of the family collected them is uncertain.

- The assemblage includes 13 bone hair pins said to be from a grave, two brooches and a nearly complete glass vessel containing cremated human remains. The museum also has an original illustration of some of the finds by Lukis himself and a watercolour painting of 'a collection of objects from Richborough' believed to be by a member of Lukis's family, which depicts the glass vessel and various ceramics no longer in the collection.

#### 9.6 Ashmolean Museum

- 16 objects including a bronze statuette of Vulcan, a silver finger ring, several ceramic vessels, bronze tweezers and an Anglo-Saxon coin.

#### 9.7 Battely Collection, Cambridge

- Based on eighteenth century publications, this collection includes a Minerva weight, two statuettes of Mars and Cupid, a stud with a human head, two seal boxes, two keys, two ring keys, two spoons and a brooch.

- The collection was excavated in 1745 and was originally held by Trinity College Library. However, only two objects remain – a ring and tankard handle. The Library's

collections were split between the Fitzwilliam Museum and the Archaeology and Anthropology Museum in 1914 and the documentation did not detail the site of origin for each object.

- NB. 17 objects labelled as Battely Richborough Collection are in the Archaeology and Anthropology Museum but some of these may be from Reculver – some clarification would be possible with reference to the publication on Battley's work .

9.8 The Beane House of Art and Knowledge, Canterbury

- A stamped silver ingot. Listed as on loan from the Richborough Trustees in 1905 so current ownership is uncertain

9.9 Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford

- I samian bowl

9.10 Natural History Museum

- A piece of oolitic limestone.

9.11 Institute of Archaeology, University College London

- Possibly have two objects. In the 1970s they had several Richborough objects in a teaching collection, the majority of which have been returned. The two remaining on their collections database have no location detailed, so they may also have been returned to us.

9.12 Unknown Location

- Some small wire and pin sections from the Bushe-Fox excavation were used as samples by Dr Chris Caple during his 1986 PhD. The location of these samples is now unknown as they do not appear to have been stored at Fort Cumberland as originally believed.

9.12 Science Museum

- ? – Possibly a small number of objects used as props in an old display.