



Collections Cataloguing Volunteer

The Rum Story heritage attraction in Whitehaven wants to recruit local Collections Cataloguing Volunteers. Working alongside a conservator you will catalogue The Rum Story's collection for the first time. This will help us understand the cultural and historical significance of our collection, which will enable us to share and preserve it much more effectively and responsibly.

The Rum Story

The Rum Story tells the history of the Jefferson family's business, which involved rum, shipping and the trafficking and enslavement of African people. This history sits alongside a wider history of Whitehaven as a significant shipping port, built on mining, then by wealth generated by the Transatlantic trade of enslaved African people.

Set in the original shop, cellars, warehouses and office of the family business, the attraction depicts life in 18th century Whitehaven. It's run by [Whitehaven Harbour Commissioners](#), a not-for-profit organisation.

The Rum Story Re-Imagined

From 2025-2030, we are working to make The Rum Story more accessible, inclusive, engaging and anti-racist. This is what we call The Rum Story Re-Imagined Project. We want lots more people, from all walks of life, to visit and come back. We want to tell the history in a more honest, in-depth way. The attraction talks about enslavement, but the way history is told is often shaped by who had the power and means to dominate the narrative at the time. We want to ensure that narratives that are not currently told, or which are told in a harmful way, are heard and told better.

In 2025, in partnership with Anti Racist Cumbria and with funding from the Heritage Fund, we consulted and engaged with over 1,000 people to create a set of recommendations to improve it. We've implemented some of these already, but most remain to be delivered over the next four years.

Role and responsibilities

Collections Cataloguing Volunteers will do things, such as to help:

- Organise, pack and produce a basic inventory and condition check on the archival collection in our storage room
- Produce a digital inventory of the collection, detailing everything in it with descriptions and photographs - this includes items that are displayed, stored items, and deposited in archives
- Produce a digital catalogue of it, documenting significance and public engagement potential

- Produce a digital index for it with topics and keywords for easy reference/navigation
- Implement our five-year plan in other ways too, using your skills and experience, e.g. through research

You will be based behind the scenes of the attraction and will work with a small team of volunteers under the guidance of a professional conservator. You will be line-managed by Development Manager, Katy Haigh.

This is a voluntary role, but we will cover travel and meal costs provided these fit within our expenses policy, are agreed in advance and are evidenced by receipts.

Skills and qualities needed

We are looking for people who live in West Cumbria who:

- Are methodical
- Have good attention to detail
- Are practical
- Are happy to get their hands dirty
- Don't mind hard work
- Have good IT skills (not essential)
- Have great team-working skills
- Are interested in The Rum Story's history
- Are committed to The Rum Story Re-Imagined Project's aims and approach
- Are willing to learn

We particularly welcome applications from Black and Global Majority people.

Further information

Working at The Rum Story involves working with challenging and potentially triggering histories of enslavement and its legacies. Because of this we have a fund that all team members can access for racial trauma and wellbeing support from Rowan Carr, who is qualified in Embodied Coaching and Somatic Approaches to Healing Racial Trauma.

We will also support you with:

- Training in anti-racism, histories of enslavement and heritage conservation
- The opportunity to debrief after volunteering days
- Access to desk space/meeting rooms while they are unused
- Access to free training resources that are available to the team

To find out more or apply, email katy.haigh@rumstory.co.uk telling her a bit about you, why you're interested in this role and why you think you have the skills and qualities to do it well. We want to be flexible and inclusive so please don't be afraid to ask any questions.

Learn more about The Rum Story by visiting rumstory.co.uk or by following us on Facebook @The Rum Story – Official or on Instagram @therumstory.