



Human Remains Policy

2024-2029



**CORINIUM
MUSEUM**

DISCOVER
ARCHAEOLOGY

HUMAN REMAINS POLICY

COTSWOLD MUSEUM SERVICE
CORINIUM MUSEUM, CIRENCESTER
RESOURCE CENTRE, NORTHLEACH

Date approved by the governing body: awaiting approval
Date Policy is due for renewal: 2029

Introduction

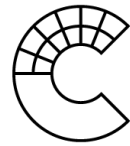
This Policy sets the principles governing the holding, display, care for and study of human remains held by the Museum according to the recommendations of the Code of Practice published by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in October 2005. The Code of Practice was developed to provide guidance to museums in relation to the Human Tissue Act 2004. This Policy will be reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years.

Definitions

In this Policy the following words and expressions shall have the following meanings:

- “Code of Practice” means *Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums*, published by the Department for Culture Media and Sport in October 2004;
- “Museum” means Cotswold Museum Service to include the Corinium Museum and the Resource Centre;
- “Collection” means the whole or any part of the collection of the Cotswold Museum Service;
- “District” means the Cotswold District. A local government district in Gloucestershire, England.
- “Human Remains” means the bodies, parts of bodies and cremated remains, of once living people from the species *Homo sapiens sapiens* (defined as individuals who fall within the range of anatomical forms known today and in the recent past). In this policy human remains include:
- (i) osteological material (whole or part skeletons, individual bones or fragments of bone and teeth);
 - (ii) soft tissue including organs and skin, and slide preparations of human tissue;
 - (iii) any of the above, that may have been modified in some way by human skill and/or may be bound-up with non-human materials, to form an artefact composed of several materials; and
 - (iv) artworks composed of human bodily fluids or soft tissue;

However, human teeth, hair and nails, being essentially body parts shed during a lifetime, are not normally considered by the Museum to be subject to the principles set out in this Policy.



In the Human Tissue Act 2004, 'relevant material' is defined as:

- (1) In this Act, "relevant material" means material, other than gametes, which consists of or includes human cells.
- (2) In this Act, references to relevant material from a human body do not include-
 - (a) embryos outside the human body, or
 - (b) hair and nail from the body of a living person.

It is believed that the Museum holds no remains that are covered by the Human Tissue Act 2004.

Principles

This Policy covers the following areas recommend by the Code of Practice:

- Acquisition
- Loans
- Storage, conservation and collections management
- Display
- Access, research and educational use
- Claims for return of human remains and de-accessioning
- Images

Human remains have a unique status, are often of high research value, and should be treated with dignity and respect. The study of human remains provides one of the most direct and insightful sources of information on the varied ways different societies have conceived of death and disposed of the remains of the dead. In addition to furthering the public understanding of other cultures, human remains in museum collections help advance important research in fields such as archaeology, human biology, palaeoepidemiology, the history of disease, bioarchaeology, physical anthropology, forensics and genetics.

The purpose of this Policy is to lay out professional standards concerning the collection, care for, study and use of human remains held as part of the Collection. The Collection contain approximately 1400 human remains. The majority of these were recovered during excavations conducted across the District in the past 60 years of Prehistoric, Roman, Saxon and Medieval date. These are used for research, teaching and in appropriate examples, interpretative display.

This Policy follows best practice within the museum profession. It has been prepared in consultation with the policies prepared by other museums (particularly those of the British Museum, Manchester Museum and the National Museum Liverpool) and upon the following national guidelines:

- Guidance for the Care of Human remains in Museums (DCMS) 2005
- The Human Tissue Act of 2004
- ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums 2013
- The Museums Association's Code of Ethics 2015

Management of the Collection

The Museum Director holds overall responsibility for the Collection. The Collections & Education Manager shall ensure that Museum staff operate and maintain written rules of guidance for the care and display of human remains. This is to ensure that, whether during handling, storage or display, human remains are treated with care, respect and dignity, whether they are part of the Collection or held on loan. In ensuring staff operate and maintain written rules of guidance for the care and display of human remains, the Collections & Education Manager will follow the Code of Practice.

The Museum will continue to add to the Collection and lawfully hold human remains ensuring that, as far as is possible, provenance has been clearly established, there is no suspicion of illicit trade and that the remains are of potential public interest to the Museum audience.

The Museum is committed to documenting the human remains in its care. The Museum will maintain an assessment of the research carried out on human remains in the Collection. The assessment will identify the current state of knowledge concerning them and their future research potential. It will publish an inventory on the Museum website, in accordance with the Code of Practice. Requests to access object records relating to human remains should be submitted in writing to the: Collections & Education Manager, Corinium Museum, Park Street, Cirencester, Gloucestershire, GL7 2BX or email: corinium@freedom-leisure.co.uk

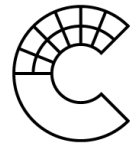
Acquisition

In accordance with the Collections Development Policy, the Museum will continue to acquire human remains and to add them formally to the Collection. However, the Museum will only do so if satisfied, as far as possible, that:

- it can hold the remains in a lawful manner
- provenance has been clearly established
- there is no suspicion of illicit trade
- the remains are of potential value to the Museum and to research

It is anticipated that the Museum will acquire human remains mainly from archaeological excavations conducted across the District. These excavated remains are subject to a Home Office licence or directions. The transfer of the remains to the Museum is conducted in accordance with legal requirements and published professional standards of archaeological investigation (Gloucestershire Archaeological Archive Standards 2017: A Countywide Standard for the Creation, Compilation and Transfer of Archaeological Archives in Gloucestershire).

Any acquisition of human remains less than 100 years old will be subject to the legislation set out in the Human Tissue Act 2004, and the Museum will be guided by the Human Tissue Authority.



Loans

Loans in and out of the Museum of human remains for display or research purposes are permitted. Before authorising any loan of human remains to other institutions the Museum will seek the assurance of the borrower that it is able to satisfy the legal, ethical and practical considerations set out in the Code of practice. The Museum will also ensure that these considerations are followed when it borrows human remains from other institutions.

Storage, conservation and collections management

Human remains in the Collection shall be stored in conditions that are actively managed and monitored to meet standards of security, access management and environmental control proportionate and appropriate to their age, origin and modern, cultural significance.

Display

The Museum may display, or put on loan, human remains from the Collection. The Museum gives careful thought to the reasons for, and circumstances of, the display of human remains. Where human remains form part of an exhibition, either long or short-term, they will be displayed in a culturally appropriate, sensitive and informative manner and will always be accompanied by explanatory and contextual interpretation. Display of human remains for aesthetic or artistic purposes alone will not be permitted.

A notice alerting visitors to the display of human remains is located at the entrance. Display methods will aim to prepare visitors for viewing human remains respectfully and will warn those who may not wish to see them at all.

Access, Research and Educational Use

The Museum currently provides access to its collection of human remains through academic research and public display. All requests for teaching and research, including sampling and analysis, must be made by completing the Museum Human Remains Research Request Form.

In carrying out or permitting research on human remains in the Collection the Museum will remind researchers of their ethical obligations with regard of human remains. Researchers will be expected to follow the relevant principles of this Policy and the Code of Practice. The Museum reserves the right to refuse analysis of the human remains Collection. Final decision for agreeing access to human remains for research lies with the Museum Director.

The Museum will not allow access to any human remains while the outcome of a claim for their return to a source community is pending.

Claims for return of human remains

Claims for repatriation, reburial and de-accession will be determined on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the Museum.

This will involve consideration of a number of factors including the legal status of the remains, how they were originally acquired, their cultural, spiritual and religious significance and their scientific, educational and historic importance. The Museum will normally only



consider a claim for repatriation from a community when it is made through the relevant national government or national agency.

For any request to be considered, the claimant would have to establish a sound evidential base for their claim. All requests for de-accessioning, repatriation and reburial must be submitted in writing to the Museum Director. A Human Remains panel, made up of the Museum Director, Collection & Education Manager and an archaeological osteologist or human remains specialist from a local archaeological unit or University, will review each case and make an advisory decision. Final approval for transfer from the Museum's possession is subject to confirmation by the Museum's Governing Body.

If other circumstances arise in which the Museum wishes to de-accession human remains, the team will be pro-active in establishing whether any genealogical or cultural descendants exist who might wish to make a claim for return or reburial. Appropriate de-accessioning procedures will be followed in this case.

Images

Requests for images of human remains held in the Collection must be requested in writing to the Collections & Education Manager and will be subject to approval by the Museum. Any images of human remains used in Museum publications, including the internet, will also be subject to approval. The Museum does not add digital images of human remains to its electronic catalogue/database.

References

Church of England & English Heritage (2017) *Guidance for Best Practice for Treatment of Human Remains Excavated from Christian Burial Grounds in England* 2nd Edition C. of E, English Heritage [APABE ToHREfCBG FINAL WEB.pdf \(archaeologyuk.org\)](#)

DCMS (2005) [Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Museum Association (2015) *Code of Ethics for Museums* (Museum Association) [20012016-code-of-ethics-single-page-8.pdf \(museumsassociation.org\)](#)

To request a copy of this policy or to make an enquiry regarding the human remains collection held by the Museum please contact:

Collections & Education Manager
Corinium Museum
Park Street
Cirencester
GL7 2BX

corinium@freedom-leisure.co.uk