

DYFED ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

HUMAN REMAINS POLICY



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DYFED ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST ('DAT')

HUMAN REMAINS POLICY

Introduction

This document outlines the policy adopted by DAT towards the recovery and treatment of human remains. The study of human remains has the potential to provide information on many aspects of the lives of past populations, including demographic and social information and ritual practices. This policy is concerned not only with the strategy for recovery and analysis of human skeletal remains for information purposes, but also with ensuring that remains are treated with due sensitivity at all times and that legislation is correctly followed.

Definition of human remains

Human remains are the bodies, and parts of bodies, of once living people from the species *Homo sapiens* [and other hominids]. They include bones, teeth, hair, skin and other organs and body fluids. Human remains also include 'artefactual' human remains. These are any of the above which have been modified or incorporated into artefacts together with other materials. Examples are cups made from human skulls.

Policy

DAT adheres to all current legislation relating to the exhumation of human remains. Relevant legislation includes the Burial Act 1857, Section 25 - the regulation of the exhumation of human remains, the Disused Burial Grounds (Amendment) Act 1981 and the Pastoral Measure 1983. Normally, unless the excavation is in consecrated ground, thereby falling under ecclesiastical jurisdiction and requiring a Faculty, all excavation of human remains in England and Wales, whether cremated or inhumed, requires a 'Licence for the Removal of Human Remains' from the Ministry of Justice under Section 25 of the Burial Act. The Ministry of Justice should be contacted for clarification if there is any doubt as to whether a Licence is required. If the presence of human remains is known in advance, a Licence can be obtained prior to the excavation. All the conditions set out in the Licence must be adhered to.

It is permissible to excavate human remains in view of the public, as long as this is stipulated in the Licence, but normally the lifting of human remains must not be publicly visible. The remains are to be treated with respect at all times and, following analysis, arrangements made for re-interment or deposition in an appropriate museum in full consultation with the relevant parties. Health and safety measures with regard to disease must be adhered to, as laid out in the DAT's Health and Safety Rules.

Excavation and post-excavation treatment of human skeletal remains will affect the quality and quantity of information the specialist will be able to extract during analysis. Where the presence of human remains is known or strongly suspected in advance of excavation, the relevant specialists should be involved in the project at the outset, enabling them to give site-specific advice and thereby exploit the maximum potential of the evidence. In such a case, the specialists will either be

working on the site or will make regular visits. In the situation where human remains are discovered unexpectedly, the specialists will be consulted immediately. DAT staff should follow procedural advice given in IFA Technical Paper No. 13 'Excavation and post-excavation treatment of cremated and inhumed human remains' (J. McKinley and C. Roberts 1993). On-site recording of skeletal remains is to be carried out using pro-forma record sheets. Decisions regarding sampling and sieving of grave deposits should be made prior to the excavation, in conjunction with the human bone specialist, and project-specific requirements are also integrated into the strategy. The strategy is subject to continual review and any amendments are agreed and documented after full consultation.