



HUMAN REMAINS POLICY

Revision	Revision Date	Owner	Reference	Comment
00 - New	September 2015	Registrar	COL-POL-033-00	New policy to meet legal and ethical standards, and to respond to changes in corporate policy

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1. Introduction and definition

The Royal Armouries will adhere to all national and international statutes of law, including specifically in relation to human remains but not limited to, the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Human Rights Act 1998 and the Human Tissue Act 2004.

The Royal Armouries acknowledges that under the laws of England and Wales there is no recognised concept of property in human bodies or tissue.

The Royal Armouries adopts the definition of human remains as set out by DCMS Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums 2005 (DCMS 2005). In this regard we use the term human remains to mean:

‘The bodies and parts of bodies, of once living people from the species Homo Sapiens (defined as individuals who fall within the range of anatomical forms known today and in the recent past). This includes osseous material (whole or part skeletons, individual bones or fragments of bones and teeth), soft tissue including organs and skin, embryos and slide preparations of human tissue.

Human remains also include any of the above that may have been modified in some way by human skill and/or may be physically bound-up with other non-human materials to form an artefact composed of several materials’.

The Royal Armouries has a very small collection of items identified as human remains and has introduced this policy to meet legal, ethical and professional standards in collections management.

2. Acquisition

In accordance with the Royal Armouries Collections Development policy, we will continue from time to time to acquire human remains where relevant.

The Royal Armouries will collect human remains in a legal, ethical and due diligent manner in accordance with our Collections Development Policy.

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

3. Inventory

In keeping with our Documentation policy, the Royal Armouries is improving the cataloguing and inventory of our human remains.

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4. Loans

Human remains may be loaned to or from other institutions for a variety of reasons, such as display or research. The Royal Armouries will ensure that any institution seeking to borrow human remains satisfies legal, ethical and practical considerations set out in the DCMS 2005. We also ensure that these considerations are followed if we borrow human remains from other institutions.

5. Storage, conservation and collections management

Human remains at the Royal Armouries properties are stored in appropriate conditions. Storage is actively managed and monitored and meets suitable standards of security, access management and environment. Wherever possible in the storage, conservation and care of human remains, the wishes of the genealogical descendants or cultural communities, or relevant faith organisations, may be sought where possible and taken into consideration where known.

6. Display

The Royal Armouries gives careful thought to the reasons for, and circumstances of, the display of human remains.

As outlined in DCMS 2005, research carried out by other museums holding human remains show that the vast majority of museum visitors are comfortable with, and often expect to see human remains as an element of the Royal Armouries display.

The Royal Armouries may put on public display human remains in the Royal Armouries collection or on loan from other museums. In these instances, however, due consideration will be given to their appropriateness of their inclusion as well as the method and context within which they are displayed.

Where source communities exist and can be contacted for advice on the proper methods of display, the Royal Armouries will as far as possible seek their advice.

Human remains in our collections that are the subject of a pending claim will not normally be displayed.

7. Access research and educational use

The Royal Armouries currently provides access to collections of human remains through academic research as outlined in our Access policy.

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Where research is requested, we will seek to ensure that researchers are reminded of the ethical and legal obligations with regard to human remains. Any physical examination and handling of the remains will be done sensitively and respectfully.

8. Claims for return or reburial of human remains

Should claims arise the Royal Armouries will consider requests for return or reburial of human remains on a case by case basis. This will involve consideration of a number of factors including legal status of the remains, how they were originally acquired, their cultural, spiritual and religious significance and their scientific, educational and historic importance.

For any request to be considered, the claimant would have to establish a sound evidential base for their claim.

9. Deaccessioning

As a national museum listed in Section 47 of the Human Tissue Act 2004, we are granted the power legally to deaccession human remains where they are those of a person reasonably believed to have died less than 1000 years before the date that section 47 came into force.

Claims for the return of human remains to source communities are considered in the above. If other circumstances arise in which the Royal Armouries wishes to deaccession human remains, we will be proactive in establishing whether any genealogical or cultural descendants exist who might wish to make a claim for return or reburial. We will also fulfil any legal, religious or civil requirements relating to exhumation licenses, for example as a result of rescue archaeology, and ensure that any disposal is carried out safely and respectfully according to the Human Tissue Act 2004.

10. Review

This document will be reviewed annually and updates in corporate policy and plan, legislation and international conventions will be amended or added where relevant.

This document will be reviewed by the Registrar and approved by the Director-General and Master of the Armouries.

11. Risk Management

The associated risk of non-compliance with this policy is:

Impact of non-compliance: High
Likelihood of non-compliance: Low

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12. Effective date

This policy is effective from the date of signing.

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Director General & Master of the Armouries

Date.....

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