



Human Remains Policy

1. Statement of Purpose

Leeds Museums and Galleries (LMG) defines human remains as 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 osteological material (whole or part skeletons, individual bone and teeth), soft tissue including organs and skin, embryos and slide preparations of human tissue, hair and nails taken post mortem (*DCMS Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums, 2005 & clarification on definition 2008*).

2. Legal Framework

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

LMG acknowledges that under the laws of England and Wales there is no recognised concept of property (i.e. right of ownership) in human bodies or

tissue only custody (*DCMS Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums, 2005*). The exceptions are where remains have been treated or altered through the application of skill, to make them into an artefact. LMG remains responsible for the proper and sensitive care and management of human remains within its custody.

3. Due Diligence

LMG will exercise due diligence in all aspects associated with human remains and its management of those collections.

4. Ethical Framework

LMG acknowledges that the ethical issues raised by human remains within museums are complex. LMG will adhere to the *ICOM code of ethics* (2006), the *Museums Association Code of ethics* (2007), *DCMS's Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums* (2005), and the Guidelines published by English Heritage in collaboration with the Church of England (2005) on the ethical, archaeological, scientific and legal considerations associated with excavation, study and archiving of human remains and associated artifacts and

grave-markers from Christian burial sites in England.

5. Leeds Collections

The holdings of human remains within Leeds Museums and Galleries Collections have been developed over the history of the organisation. We are investigating, evaluating and researching the holdings to develop a full understanding of the material we hold. LMG believes that there are public benefits for the retention of human remains. These include display, research, and teaching, to enable us to understand the history of the world and our place within it.

6. Collecting and Disposal

LMG will collect and dispose of human remains in a legal, ethical and due diligent method with full provenance, in accordance with Leeds Museums and Galleries Collections Development Policy.

7. Access and Use

LMG will provide access and will use human remains and images of human remains in a respectful and culturally appropriate, sensitive and informative manner. LMG will not use human remains in marketing campaigns, other than artefactual material and bones, and the latter only after discussions and agreement at the Human Remains Working Group on a case by case basis. We will keep abreast of best practice in the field, current thinking and positions of interested groups and will consult as appropriate and where possible.

8. Repatriation Claims

Any requests for repatriation of items will be dealt with in an open and constructive manner, on a case by case basis within its legal position and taking into account all ethical implications and available guidance.

9. Collection Descriptions

9.1 Archaeology

The human remains collection in the LMG archaeology collection, although not large, ranges widely in terms of both date (Prehistoric to early Modern) and geography (overseas, UK-wide and local).

Nesyamun, the mummified remains of an Egyptian priest who died c.1100 BC, is the highlight of the Egyptology collection. Other overseas human remains include two Egyptian skulls, one from a Turkish cemetery; and the urn and cremated remains of a Roman from Ventimiglia.

One of the largest and most significant local collections is the skeletal remains of 14 individuals from the Romano-British site of Dalton Parlours, 10 of these being infants or neonates.

The rest of the collection is a miscellaneous group of human skeletal and cremation material from the UK. This includes Bronze Age skulls from Barham Downs, Kent; Roman skeletons from Ferry Fryston, Castleford; and fragments of human bone from Harewood House north tomb, as well as material from many other sites.

The unprovenanced human remains have recently been investigated and have shown a wide range of pathologies, non metric traits and representations of demographic traits, which have great potential for teaching and learning.

9.2 Fine and Decorative Arts



Within the Fine and Decorative Arts Collections there are very minor holdings of items containing or using human remains. Within the Fine Art Collections there are human remains used within art works which are all pre-mortem. The Decorative Arts Collections contain two lockets containing hair associated with Temple Newsam and one lock of hair mounted on card

associated with Lotherton Hall. All are provenanced to individuals.

9.3 Social History, Dress and Textiles

The human remains in these collections consists primarily of hair, made into jewellery items and mainly from the Victorian era.

9.4 Natural Science



The human remains holdings in the Natural Sciences consists mainly of unprovenanced skeletal material, some hair and nail samples.

9.5 World Cultures

Only one un-artefacted skull is part of LM&G permanent Anthropology collections, an Indian skull marked "Skull of Hindoo. Bank of Ganges" on the forehead and "Presented by H.C. Marshall Esq." on left side (LEEDM.F.1981.0099), which is typical of collecting attitudes by many colonial Victorian visitors to this holy site for cremations in India. Five other, presumably European, historic skulls came on loan from Salford in 1982 (LEEDM.F.L.1982.16,17,18,19,20), only one has a source attribution, an old museum label pasted on top: PRESENTED BY THE FEOFFEEES OF THE CHETHAM LIBRARY, MANCHESTER. These five skulls came together with three skull casts representing "Gibraltar Man" (Neanderthal), Java Man, "Rhodesian Man" (LEEDM.F.L.1982.13,14,15) and "Piltdown Man" (the famous forgery, LEEDM.D.T.0522.1-8). This group of skulls and casts reflects late 19th century interests and is part of the history of the study of human evolution by local antiquarians and scholars. Leeds will be discussing the formal transfer of this loan with Salford shortly, as the material complements human remains in the Leeds Archaeology collections.

Leeds has five artefacted human bone items from Tibet, two ornamented skull

cups (LEEDM.F.1959.0041 and LEEDM.F.1959.0042), a plain skull bowl (LEEDM.F.2007.2.201), a thigh bone trumpet (LEEDM.F.2007.2.200) and prayer beads that are most probably made of human bone (LEEDM.F.2007.2.202). The last three items were transferred from Hampshire County Museum and Archive Service in 2007. Tibetan use of the bones of respected religious leaders and saints in the making of vessels and instruments for veneration is world famous and it is appropriate to research and display them in accordance with Tibetan Buddhist beliefs, following the good example of Glasgow, Liverpool and Edinburgh Museums, with contact from Tibetan Buddhist inspired communities in the UK (such as Samye Ling in the Scottish Borders).

Leeds has a Jivaro shrunken head, purchased in 1947 at the sale at Scarthing Well Hall near Tadcaster, a house that then belonged to the Maxwell-Stuart family. These heads are of enemies, artefacted by boiling and heating with sand to miniaturise them. They are made up of skin and hair alone (removed from the skull). No history of how or when this particular example was collected is known, and current research is attempting to determine whether this is a real human shrunken head (and if it is Jivaro made or another Ecuador people used by local fakers), or an imitation made using another mammal (usually sloth or Howler monkey). This head will be displayed in an exhibition by young curators for the Cultural Olympiad at Leeds City Museum in 2012, called Treasured, in which they will tackle the ethical issues on collecting directly (including the collection of human remains), and so engage in a useful debate with our local public.

We have also put the status flag of human remains on a broad range of items which incorporate human hair in the Anthropology collections, as we cannot be certain that the hair in these cases was taken from living rather than

dead humans (though the former is more likely). The human hair items include Chinese mandarin que or pigtails, A Daoist embroidery where the figures have real hair moustaches and beards, Gilbert Island swords and knives with human hair bindings, and a Turkish doll with a real hair moustache.

We believe it is not ethical to acquire any skeletal remains for the Anthropology or World Culture collections in the future, and would also hesitate and take specialist advice if offered sacred bone items, from Tibet or elsewhere.

10. Further reading

David, A.R. and Tapp, Dr E (eds) (1992) 'The Mummy's Tale: The Scientific and Medical Investigation of Natsef-Amun, Priest in the Temple at Karnak'.

Fletcher, J (2011) 'Unprovenanced Human Remains at Leeds Museums and Galleries', Interim Report [unpublished].

Wrathmell, S. and Nicholson, A (eds) (1990) 'Dalton Parlours: Iron Age Settlement and Roman Villa'.



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