

Human remains policy

This policy details Historic Royal Palaces' approach to human remains in the HRP collection and how this will be carried out in line with the professional standards for Collections Management.

Industry standard terms have been used throughout and a glossary can be found at the end of this document.

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**Historic
Royal Palaces**

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1 Introduction

Historic Royal Palaces has developed a policy for human remains in its collections according to the recommendations of the Code of Practice published by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in October 2005. The DCMS Code of Practice was developed to provide guidance to museums in relation to the Human Tissue Act 2004.

2 Inventory of HRP's collection

The HRP collection contains approximately 30 items identified as human remains. These include bone fragments and other skeletal material.

3 Human remains definition

HRP adopts, with minor modifications, the definition of human remains as set out by the DCMS 2005 Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums. 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 bone 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'.

Additionally, and in accordance with the Human Tissues Act of 2004, the Museum includes in its definition of human remains, hair and nail that were removed after the death of a once living person who died less than one hundred years prior to the date that the Human Tissues Act came into force.

Hair and nail removed from a living person and with their consent will not be included in this definition. (Please refer to Part 1 sections 1-7 of HTA 2004 for a definition of consent as used in this policy.)

4 Acquisition

In accordance with HRP's Collection Development Policy, we will continue from time to time to acquire human remains through archaeological exploration and add them formally to the collections.

However, we will only retain them if we are satisfied, as far as possible, that:

- we can hold the remains in a lawful manner
- the remains are of potential value to us and to research

It is anticipated that HRP will acquire human remains mainly from archaeological excavations conducted in the UK. These excavated remains are subject to a Home Office licence or directions.

The transfer of the remains to us is conducted in accordance with legal requirements and published professional standards of archaeological investigation.

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 we will be guided by the Human Tissue Authority.

5 Inventory

In keeping with our on-going cataloguing and inventory check programme, which aims at a full and complete inventory of HRP's collection, HRP is continuously improving the documentation of our human remains. HRP is working towards full catalogue records and photographs where appropriate of the human remains in the collections.

6 Loans

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

7 Storage, conservation and collections management

Human remains at HRP's 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.

8 Display

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 HRP displays. HRP gives careful thought to the reasons for, and circumstances of, the display of human remains.

HRP may put on public display human remains in the HRP collection or on loan from other museums. In these instances, however, due consideration will be given to the 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, HRP will as far as possible seek their advice.

HRP may also seek the advice on best practices from similar institutions with similar collections and mandates.

Consideration will be given to the possible sensitivity of our visitors to viewing human remains.

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

9 Access, Research and Educational Use

HRP currently provides access to its collections of human remains through academic research.

Where research is requested, we will seek to ensure that researchers are reminded of the ethical and legal obligations with regard to human remains and that they are provided with written guidelines. Any analysis which requires sampling will only be undertaken according to our sampling procedures. Any physical examination and handling of the remains will be done sensitively and respectfully, to maintain the dignity of the deceased.

10 Claims for return or reburial of human remains

Should claims arise, HRP 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 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 Trustees 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.

11 De-accessioning

Claims for the return of human remains to source communities are considered above. If other circumstances arise in which HRP wishes to de-accession 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 licences, 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.

Historic Royal Palaces is subject to Arts Council England standards on de-accessioning and developed its disposal policy according to DCMS Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums 2005.

12 Review of policy

This policy will be reviewed every three years, with due consideration for any changes in legislation or ethical issues relevant to the study, display and care of human remains that may have arisen during the period since the previous review.



Appendix 1:

Legal, Ethical and Standards Framework

HRP's Collections Management Policy Framework is informed by legislation, ethical codes and appropriate sectoral standards.

A. Legislation applying to all Collections Management Policies

HRP's Royal Charter, 1998, as amended 2006

The Public Records Acts, 1958, as amended 1967

The Data Protection Act, 1998

The Freedom of Information Act, 2000

Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, UNESCO, 1970

The Requirements of HM Customs & Revenue

Copyright Act 1911 and 1956

Copyright and Related Rights Regulations, 2003

Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988

Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act, 2003

Disability Discrimination Act, 1995 (as amended)

Equality Act, 2006

Human Rights Act, 1998

Race Relations Act, 1976

Racial and Religious Hatred Act, 2006

Sex Discrimination Act, 1975

Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974

Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations, 1999

The Environmental Information Regulations, 2004

COSHH: Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations, 2002

The Treasure Act, 1996

B. Ethical codes applying to all Collections Management Policies

Code of Ethics for Museums, ICOM, 2006 (including the ICOM 'Red List')

Code of Ethics for Museums, Museums Association, 2008

Combating Illicit Trade: Due Diligence Guidelines for Museums, Libraries and Archives on collecting and borrowing Cultural Material, DCMS, 2005

DCMS Code of Practice Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums, October 2005

UK Export Licensing for Cultural Goods – Procedures and guidance for exporters of works of art and other culture goods, DCMS, 1997

Statement of Principles issued by the National Museum Directors Conference on spoliation of works of art during the Holocaust and World War II period, 1998;

C. Sectoral standards applying to all Collections Management Policies

Spectrum: UK Museum Collections Management Standard

PAS197:2009: Code of practice for cultural collections management, BSi and Collections Trust

Accreditation Standard, Arts Council England, 2011

D. Memoranda of Understanding applying to all Collections Management Policies

MoU with The Royal Household, 2010

MoU with the Royal Armouries, 2010

MoU with the Royal Fusiliers Museum, 2010

MoU with the Chapel Royal HCP, 2011

MoU with the Royal Mint Museum, 2011

E. Collections Information Policy

Spectrum: UK Museum Collections Management Standard v0.4

ISAD(g): General International Standard Archival Description, International Council on Archives, 2007

Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules ('AACR', Joint Steering Committee, 2nd ed., 2002 revision): international library documentation standard. In process of supersession by Resource Description and Access ('RDA', 2010, revisions through 2013)

MARC ('machine-readable cataloguing') data standards (Library of Congress, 1999, revisions through 2013-)

Art and Architecture Thesaurus, The J.Paul Getty Trust

F. Collections Access Policy

Loans between National and Non-national Museums – New standard and practical guidelines, National Museum Directors' Conference, 2003

Display Case supplement, UK Registrars' Group

Standard Facilities Report, UK Registrars' Group

Standard Facilities Report Security Supplement, UK Registrars' Group

Government Indemnity Scheme Guidelines for Transport, July 2012.

G. Collections Care and Conservation Policy

PAS 198:2012 Specification for managing environmental conditions for cultural collections

Benchmarks in Collections Care for Museums, Archives and Libraries, 2007

Statement of Principles issued by the National Museum Directors Conference on environmental conditions for lending, 2010

'Bizot' Group Agreement: Achieving sustainability for galleries and museums, 2013

PD 5454:2012 Guide for the storage and exhibition of archival materials.

Codes of Ethics: ICOM-CC /ICON

Institute of Conservation's (ICON) Conservation Register 2013



Glossary

Accessioning: The process of formally recording the admission of a new object or group of objects into the collection.

Accession Register: A bound paper record of all objects which are, or have been, part of the organisation's permanent Collection.

Accreditation: The scheme administered by Arts Council England (ACE) which assigns accredited status to museums and organisations with collections management that meets the standards set out in ACE's publication: The Accreditation Standard.

Acquisition: The legal process of transferring ownership of an object from one person or organisation to another.

Agents of Decay: The ten ways in which a collection can be damaged include; thieves, vandals, displacers, fire, water, pests, contaminants, radiation (light), incorrect temperature or humidity and disassociation. The Framework for the Preservation of Museum Collections, published by the Canadian Conservation Institute, lists mitigating actions based on building features, portable fittings and procedures which can protect an object or collection.

Agents of Decay Strategy Board:

An HRP Board which meets biannually to steer collection risk management. It aims to reduce the probability and impact of physical and environmental risk to the collection, whilst balancing conservation and commercial use. Led by conservators, the Board is made up of senior staff from the curatorial team, surveyors, maintenance, visitor services and operations.

Archaeological archive: The objects, information, images, records and plans created through an archaeological excavation.

Cataloguing: The process of documenting an object on the Collections Management System.

CCC: Conservation and Collection Care, HRP's conservation team.

CM Team: Collections Management Team responsible to ensure we have governance policies and procedures in place for the management of the collection.

CMS: Collections Management System. HRP's collection database jointly managed with the Royal Collection Trust.

Collection access: Means of making use of, engaging with, communicating with or lending objects or information.

Collection development: Adding to, researching, reviewing and removing items from HRP's collections in accordance with our policies.

Collection information: Information and knowledge collected, created, held and maintained about an object, group of objects, events or activities associated with objects in the collection.

Collections management: The strategies, policies, processes and procedures related to collections development, information, access and care.

Collection risk management: The process of identifying and quantifying conservation-related risks to the collections; and planning and implementing mitigation measures to reduce those risks.

Conservation records: Reports and photographs recording the condition and treatments carried out on all objects, including testing of materials to be used in the treatment or display and any investigations relevant. Working notes, time and cost estimates and material lists are also part of these records.

Conservation science: The interdisciplinary research field encompassing all technological and scientific work that can benefit conservation.

De-accessioning: the process of formally removing an object from the collection.

Designated collection: A group of objects identified as a pre-eminent collection of national and international importance held in England's non-national museums, libraries and archives. The Designation Scheme is administered by Arts Council England (ACE).

Disposal: The legal process of removing an object from the collection – by destruction, transfer or sale.

Documentation: The information, images and records held about objects. It also refers to the process of creating the records.

Government Indemnity Scheme: A scheme under which the government is responsible for the payment of compensation, in the event of loss or damage to items which are on loan to a collections-holding organisation in the UK. Borrowing organisations do not have to pay any premiums under the scheme, but they are required to accept a minimum liability.

HRP: Historic Royal Palaces.

HRP collection: those items owned by Historic Royal Palaces and containing the permanent and support collections.

Handling collection: Objects intended for demonstration or handling which have not been accessioned and are not part of the permanent collection. Managed by the Learning & Engagement Team.

'In-situ': Objects managed by the Royal Collection Trust and displayed at an HRP-managed property in their original locations. Collection Care is managed according to a Memorandum of Understanding reviewed and renewed at regular intervals.

KPI: Key Performance Indicator – CCC has defined four KPIs for environmental risk management – relative humidity, visible light, ultraviolet light and dust.

Loan: An object (or a group of objects) belonging to another organisation or individual given to HRP for a fixed term subject to a separate contract, usually for display or exhibition purposes.

Loan Agreement: A contract between HRP and the owner detailing the terms and conditions of the loan which includes the fixed term period.

Object: An item which forms part of HRP's collection: permanent (recorded in the accession register); support; temporary (e.g. a loan); or those used for educational handling.

Object files: Paper filing system containing original documents related to permanent collection objects which complements and backs up the online database.

Permanent collection: Formally accessioned objects acquired by HRP in accordance with a written acquisition policy.

Preventive conservation: The mitigation of environmental, physical, chemical and biological risks to the collections and decorative interiors within HRP's care, informed by the Agents of Decay framework.

RCDC: Royal Ceremonial Dress Collection. A Designated collection formed of HRP owned and loan items managed by HRP.

Safeguarding: The process of planning and supervising an activity taking place in proximity to historic collections and/or interiors in order to prevent or reduce the risk of damage occurring as a result.

SOIE: State of the Interior Estate: an Excel-based survey tool that quantifies and prioritises conservation treatments for the entire collection in HRP's care, established in 2004.

Source: The owner or creator of an object prior to its addition to the collection.

Support collection: Objects which have not been accessioned and are not part of the permanent collection. Support collections may include replica or reproduction items, or objects acquired to supplement an exhibition.

The collection: Those items owned by HRP (permanent or support collections), under the care of the Royal Collection Trust and in situ at the HRP-managed palaces or on loan from the Royal Armouries, and many other lenders.

Top Ten conservation campaigns: A list of the top ten most vulnerable objects, exterior or interior decorative features in the collection, drawn up in 2006, and reported on annually to enable Trustees to monitor progress made in conserving the collection against the investment of staff and financial resource (£1.7m over ten years, excluding salary).

Transfer of Title: A legal term to describe the formal process of a change of ownership of an object from one person or organisation to another.

Treatment conservation: Treatments carried out on HRP and RC objects in the care of HRP. Textiles are conserved by in-house textile conservators while all other conservation treatments are commissioned externally.