

REPATRIATION OF HUMAN REMAINS

Thank you for your recent freedom of information request for the following information:

I am carrying out some research into the storage, retention and repatriation of non-European ethnological human remains held in UK regional museums or archives some of which are owned, managed or funded by UK local authorities.

To assist with this could you please let me have the following information under the Freedom of Information Act. All of these questions relate to human remains that are under 1,000 years of age. If your organisation is not covered by the Freedom of Information Act please consider supporting this research anyway and providing the information voluntarily. A link to the research will be provided to all contributors when it is published:

1. How many non-European human remains do you have in your collection or collections managed by organisations which you fund or control? If you do not have the exact number then please provide an approximation based on your normal method of counting.
2. How many human remains do you have in your collection which originated in:
 - a. Canada
 - b. New Zealand
 - c. Australia
3. How many requests for the repatriation of human remains have you had from communities, individuals or institutions outside of Europe since the Human Tissue Act 2004 came into force?
4. Of these requests, how many were:
 - a. Approved in full, with all of the requested remains being returned to the communities/individuals in question.
 - b. Approved in part with some of the requested remains being returned.
 - c. Not approved.
 - d. Still awaiting a decision.
5. For those requests which were not approved please provide a copy of the final decision letter setting out the reasons.
6. How many human remains have you repatriated to their country of origin proactively without receiving a request?

Thanking you in advance for your assistance with this important research project which should help to reconnect numerous Indigenous communities with their lost ancestors.

Nottinghamshire County Council can advise that we do not hold the specific information requested and would make the suggestion that this request is directed more at museums and other institutions who hold archival material, but in line with providing advice and assistance under the Freedom of information Act we are able to confirm the following:

We currently have a very small number of fragments of human remains (3 small finds bags) that are undergoing analysis as part of small-scale watching brief works in graveyards where community projects have been carried out and the remains have been recovered under Church Faculty permission. One is a deconsecrated medieval graveyard where an MOJ license was obtained. None of the remains we have are dateable or identifiable to an individual as they are only very small disarticulated fragments that have been recovered largely during the digging of small trenches for services (fragments of skull and phalanges mostly; anything small that can get missed when burials are removed to the charnel house).

It is unlikely we have any fragments of non-European humans within the very small amount we currently are processing as they are fragments of redeposited material from medieval graveyards. Having said that it would be impossible to tell from the fragments we have, or the archaeological situation of them, what their origin was.

We have had no repatriation requests. We don't hold archival material of human remains; the only reason we have any currently is because they are being recorded as part of ongoing work. Once this work is finished the remains will be reburied in the graveyards from which they were recovered.

I trust the above information is of assistance to you.

If you wish to raise any concerns about the way your request was dealt with, then please write to the Team Manager, Complaints and Information, County Hall, West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 7QP or e-mail foi@nottscc.gov.uk quoting the reference number above.

With kind regards

Lorraine Hayes
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