

## **CASE 1**

### **QUERY**

Dear Dr Elders,

#### **Application to the Advisory Panel for the Archaeology of Christian Burials in England;**

##### **Holton-le-Clay St Peter**

I am writing to ask for advice from the Panel on the issue of human remains from Holton-le-Clay St Peter, which are currently part of the holdings of the Biological Anthropology Research Centre at the Department of Archaeological Sciences, University of Bradford.

##### Background

The assemblage was excavated by Lindsey Archaeological Services in 1990-91 and transferred to the Department in 1992 for analysis and report. The University/the Department accepted and kept the remains in good faith and, at the time, were not in possession of information that would have detailed the conditions of a faculty. In 2004, the Reverend Woadden of St Peter asked for the remains to be returned for reinterment. In response, we asked that the remains be kept in our custody as they are of significant scientific value and importance. Aided by your kind mediation later that year we applied for extension to the faculty in a letter sent to the Reverend. Eighteen months later it is now required by the Lincoln Diocesan Registry to return the remains forthwith to comply with the conditions of the faculty, without any recognition of our request to extend its duration. We are intending to renew our request by formally writing to the Registrar. I would like to ask the Panel to consider and advise whether this request is justified and the remains should stay above ground for the time being to be eventually transferred to the Church Archive of Human Remains at Barton-on-Humber.

##### Significance of the collection

The assemblage consists of 14 individuals, comprising nine foetal/neonate remains, three infants and two young children. They date from the medieval period, bar one individual buried in the 18<sup>th</sup> /19<sup>th</sup> century, and are in exceptionally good condition. The age range and state of preservation make them very rare and sought-after reference material. They are of particular importance to research and (postgraduate) teaching in our department, which has an internationally recognised reputation for excellence in human osteoarchaeology and forensic anthropology.

Foetal, perinatal and infant skeletal remains provide the comparative source material for studying mortality patterns and to help understand living conditions in the past, with a view to elucidate the study of perinatal and infant mortality in threshold and developing countries today. In a forensic context such remains aid in the establishment of improved techniques to identify and analyse perinatal and infant individuals and thus contribute to an increasingly important agenda where biological anthropology is serving justice at a national and international level.

Collections of the kind represented by the remains from Holton-le-Clay therefore ultimately support academic and societal responsibility in our attempts to understand the past for the benefit of the present and future. It is important that such reference material is available to those institutions which have a proven record of excellence and which are able to provide standards of curation and long-term storage that is compliant with the highest requirements. I therefore kindly ask you to benevolently consider and support our request to keep the Holton-le-Clay assemblage as part of the research collection at the Biological Anthropology Research Centre in Bradford.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Holger Schutkowski  
Reader in Biological Anthropology  
Biological Anthropology Research Centre  
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**RESPONSE FOLLOWS**

## Advisory Panel on the Archaeology of Christian Burials in England (APACBE)

### Case1

21st June 2006

Advice to Dr Schutkowski of the University of Bradford regarding human remains excavated from the churchyard of Holton-le-Clay St Peter, Diocese of Lincoln

The Advisory Panel (see [www.britarch.ac.uk/churches/humanremains/index.html](http://www.britarch.ac.uk/churches/humanremains/index.html)) has considered your request for advice, and makes the following comments. The advice is not intended to supplant that of the DAC, Chancellor or other curatorial body in this case. In general, the advice flows from the principles set out in the Church of England/English Heritage guidance document, which can be accessed through our web site, see above.

Church Archives of Human Remains such as that being developed at Barton-on-Humber St Peter are envisaged as the normal place of rest for human remains of “significant future research potential” (Guidance Summary, 5d). Material might be lent out under controlled conditions for study, but not on a long-term basis for teaching or for use as a reference collection.

The Panel agrees that the Holton-le-Clay assemblage is a useful teaching tool, but does not consider it to be of “significant future research potential”. If this assemblage is not held for the purposes of teaching, which under the terms of the faculty and of Canon Law is not possible, its significance is diminished to the point where one would not normally argue against return to the church for reinterment.

The Panel’s advice is therefore that the material is not of sufficient future research potential to justify a request to the Chancellor to vary the terms of the original faculty, and that the remains should be returned to the church of Holton-le-Clay St Peter.

We hope this advice is useful.

Chair, Joseph Elders  
Secretary, Simon Mays