

# Appendix C – repatriation and restitution of objects and human remains.

Guidelines on the procedure for dealing with repatriation and restitution of objects and human remains from the collection of the Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery (RAMM), Exeter, December 2025.

## Background

This document should be read in conjunction with RAMM's Collections Development Policy and its Appendix B: Human Remains Policy 2026-30.

RAMM's governing body is Exeter City Council (ECC). It will act on the advice of the museum's professional staff to make a decision to return human remains, objects or specimens to a country or people of origin. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis. All legal and ethical implications and available guidance will be taken into account.

RAMM follows UK museum sector guidance on repatriation and human remains, namely:

- *Museums Association Code of Ethics, Additional Guidance* (2015): to 'Deal sensitively and promptly with requests for repatriation of items in the museum's collection, both within the UK and from abroad. Take into account: the law; current thinking on the subject; the interests of actual and cultural descendants; the strength of claimants' relationship to the items; their scientific, educational, cultural and historical importance; and the consequences of retention and repatriation for a range of stakeholders.'
- *Restitution and Repatriation: A Practical Guide for Museums in England* published by Arts Council England (September 2023)
- *Museum Accreditation Scheme Guidance* issued by Arts Council England (ACE, December 2024)
- Collections Trust template and checklist for recording and researching restitution and repatriation claims (2015)
- *Restitution and Repatriation: Guidelines for Good Practice* published by the Museums & Galleries Commission (2000)
- *Guidance for the care of human remains in museums* issued by DCMS (2005)

# The process of repatriation requests at RAMM

## 1. Accessing information about the collections at RAMM

The collections at RAMM contain over one million items. Around 20,000 of these can be viewed online at [rammcollections.org.uk](https://rammcollections.org.uk).

Information not published online is available on request, in line with RAMM's Access Statement (2025). In person visits to view the collections can also be arranged.

Prior to making a formal request for repatriation, RAMM encourages individuals, cultural groups, museums and government departments to enter informal conversations with the Collections Team. Please email [ramm.enquiries@exeter.gov.uk](mailto:ramm.enquiries@exeter.gov.uk) and you will be put in contact with the most appropriate member of staff.

## 2. Making a formal request

Individuals, cultural groups, museums (or similar organisations) and government departments wishing to make a request for repatriation of artefacts or human remains from RAMM's collection should make their request in writing to the Museum's Collections & Content Manager, or designated member of the museum's Management Team. The request must:

- clearly identify the artefacts they are requesting
- provide a background to their claim
- provide an assessment of the significance of the object(s) to their community
- describe the proposed future use of artefacts

## 3. RAMM's response to the request

In dealing with repatriation and restitution claims, RAMM is committed to:

- acting promptly
- treating requests with sensitivity and confidentiality
- recording and documenting any claims
- investigating any potential competing claims for the same material
- forming a recommendation by undertaking a multi-faceted review of factors, including, but not limited to, the scientific or cultural importance of the artefacts, the strength of claimants' relationship to items and the consequences of either retention or repatriation.

#### **4. Making a decision**

RAMM is a service of Exeter City Council (ECC, the governing body) and all decisions on repatriation of artefacts and human remains rest with them. A full report on requests for repatriation will be presented with an officers' recommendation at a meeting of the Executive Committee of ECC where councillors will make a decision.

Claimants will be notified of the outcome of the committee's decision on the next working day, UK time.

#### **5. How long will this take?**

The process of evidence gathering and report writing can take several months before presentation at committee. Claimants should expect complex cases to take on average one year to process.

A positive outcome from the Executive Committee will require further discussions with relevant museum staff on the logistics of transferring ownership. This may include securing the required export permits from the UK government and import permits for the receiving country.

#### **6. Contact details**

Formal requests for repatriation of artefacts and human remains from RAMM's collections should be sent to:

Dr Julien Parsons  
Collections & Content Manager  
Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery  
Queen Street  
Exeter  
EX4 3RX

[julien.parsons@exeter.gov.uk](mailto:julien.parsons@exeter.gov.uk)

The contact information may be updated from time to time as appropriate.