



Heneb

What should I do if I think I have found human remains?

What to do

1. The first thing you should do is contact the police informing them that you have found what you believe to be human remains – this equally applies to development sites where human remains are discovered unexpectedly.
2. Leave them where they are and don't disturb them in any way. **It is illegal to move human remains without a proper licence.**
3. If possible, take photographs of the remains and of the wider location.
4. Note your location as specifically as possible. This may be possible on site if you have a map, Smartphone or other technical devices which can access GPS.
5. The police will investigate the remains and determine how old they are likely to be.
6. If the remains are less than one hundred years old then an investigation may take place to determine whether a crime has been committed, although the likelihood of an investigation increases if the remains are less than fifty years old.
7. If it turns out that the remains are of archaeological significance, then the police will contact the regional archaeological service directly.

How can I be sure they are human remains?

It can be difficult for an untrained individual to be certain whether remains are in fact human, especially if the remains are substantially decomposed. As a result, the police and archaeologists are occasionally called out only to discover that the remains belong to an animal or are in fact not bones at all.

The more complete the skeleton, the easier it will be to identify the remains. Some bones are more obviously identifiable as human, most commonly the skull because of the shape of the cranium and the teeth. However, if teeth are found in isolation, they will be harder to identify without analysis because some human teeth can be very similar to those of other mammals.

Typically, human burial has religious or spiritual connotations and as a result burials are deliberate and deep. Therefore, if bones are found on/near the surface then they are less likely to be human. Nevertheless, there are some circumstances in which human bones may move closer to the surface. For example, the cliffs at Cwm Nash have been slowly eroding and as a result human remains are now visible in the side of the cliff.

