

Appendix I

Request for the Reburial of Human Remains and Grave Goods, Avebury

COBDO, 2008



Windmill Hill, Avebury

Resting place of Charlie, a 3 year old child now on public display at Avebury

The Council of British Druid Orders believes it would be beautiful to rebury the human remains of 'Charlie', a 3 year old child currently displayed in the Alexander Keiller Museum, Avebury, along with the partial skeletal remains of 7 ancestors taken from the Kennet Avenue, Avebury. The Council feels, very strongly, that reburial is the most loving and respectful act for the sacred relics of our ancestral remains and is both morally desirable and spiritually important. We invite you all to be part of this process.



West Kennet Avenue, Avebury

The Council believes all requests for reburial should be treated on a case-by-case basis.



Stone Circle, Avebury Village

The Council's requests for reburial broadly fit into 3 categories:

1. Ethics – display and storage as immoral and disrespectful
2. Belief – that human remains contain and connect to the spirit of ancestor that, through decay, become part of the landscape
3. Genetic relationship – mtDNA (female) providing an unbroken link between our ancestors and people today, thereby supporting our request for reburial under guidelines provided by the DCMS.

These 3 categories suggest CoBDO's ethical claim for reburial may be supported by articles 9 and 10 of the Human Rights Act. This Council wish to make clear that the continued withholding of our ancestral remains against the requests of the Council severs the connection between ancestor, land and Druid. We view reburial as essential to the healing of ancestral landscapes and therefore to Druid identity. In summary, reburial corrects the injustices unknowingly carried out by archaeologists and museums in the past. Qualitative research among Druids, Pagans and the public clearly suggest support for this Council's calls for reburial at Avebury (see attached document).

Background

The Council of British Druid Orders agreed with English Heritage and National Trust that quarterly meetings would address the Council's requests for reburial at Avebury. These are the human remains and grave goods of our ancestors currently displayed or archived at the Alexander Keiller Museum. English Heritage and National Trust proposed working toward an online public consultation. The Council agreed to follow the current DCMS guidelines (*DCMS 2005. Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums*), also requesting English Heritage and National Trust consider including CoBDO in the final decision making, especially in relation to matters of spirituality. CoBDO suggested the formation of an Ethics Advisory Panel to discuss more fully matters of spirituality that inform and feed into the reburial issue. From this panel, it is hoped new guidelines may more adequately balance the theory and practice of archaeology and museology with the ethical and spiritual concerns of Council.

Views represented below have been ratified at Council and accurately reflect those of its members. Points below follow the *DCMS 2005. Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums*.¹

3.3 Procedural Matters

National Trust kindly permitted CoBDO access into the Alexander Keiller Museum for 2 beautiful healing ceremonies during the current period of negotiations. By permitting access and ceremony, the ancestors, landscape and Druids were collectively honoured. The Council views this as a positive step forward. Quarterly meetings with English Heritage and National Trust in London, Swindon and Bath resulted in English Heritage and National Trust recommending a public consultation on the Council's requests for reburial. CoBDO consider these meetings to be good practice and were highly informative.

3.3.1 Clarification of Proposal for Reburial

The Council of British Druid Orders wish to request the return and reburial of several ancestors currently held at the Alexander Keiller Museum:

'Charlie' 20000828 (78509004) 3 year old child taken from Windmill Hill.

Male skeleton 78509009 partially decayed taken from Kennet Avenue stone 22b and ceramic sherds.

¹ <http://www.culture.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/0017476B-3B86-46F3-BAB3-11E5A5F7F0A1/0/GuidanceHumanRemains11Oct.pdf>

Skeleton 78509013 disarticulated remains taken from Kennet Avenue stone 29a and beaker sherds.

Skull fragment 78509014 taken from Kennet Avenue stone 25a and beaker sherds.

Male Skeleton and 2 children 78509014 disarticulated remains taken from Kennet Avenue stone 25b and beaker sherds.

Male skull fragments and other disarticulated fragments 99909016 taken from Kennet Avenue stone 18b and beaker sherds.

Grave goods were given to the ancestors by tribes people to accompany them into the Otherworld (Heaven, Avalon, the Underworld), and remain the property of the ancestor. The Council therefore wish to include grave goods within this reburial request.

3.3.1a. Status of CoBDO

The Council of British Druid Orders was initiated following conversations between Tim Sebastian and representative members of the Ancient Order of Druids at Stonehenge. Initially Tim Sebastian was asked if there was a way in which his Order, the Secular Order of Druids might work with other Druids to seek common ground and to encourage more of the Stonehenge Festival movement to identify with the (broad) Druidic movement. It is Tim Sebastian's genius to have seen a larger possibility: a Council bringing all the British Orders into conversation to achieve mutually agreed aims in many arenas. After the founding meeting of the Council, at Tim Sebastian's house in Mells, Somerset, other interested Druids joined with Tim to work toward shared ideals and objectives.

CoBDO currently have many Full Member groups, some being less active at present. In addition, the Council have associates, including foreign Druid Orders and academics, as well as contacts with other diverse organisations and individuals.

On 4th June 2006 in Bath a Reburial Officer was unanimously voted onto the Council by all attending. Minutes from this meeting are available at <http://www.CoBDO.org/june2006m.htm>

Groups and individuals present:

Tim Sebastian (Secular Order of Druids) (Hosting)
Veronica Hammond (Cotswold Order of Druids)
Denny Price (Glastonbury Outer Order of Druids) (Chair)
Steve Best (Outer Order of Druids (Exmoor)) (Acting Scribe)
Barry Brett (Insular Order of Druids)
Debbie King (Insular Order of Druids)
Hawk (Order of the Sidhe)
Drew Bennett (Glastonbury Order of Druids)
Thomas Daffern (Order of Wandering Peace Poets, Bards and Druids)
Miranda (Secular Order of Druids)
Rollo Maughfling (Glastonbury Order of Druids)
Tim Hall (Bard of Ynys Wytrin)
Sarah Rooke (Berengaria Order of Druids)
Simon Spring (Secular Order of Druids)
Oddie, Secular Order of Druids
Lydia (Herald/Swordbearer, Glastonbury Outer Order of Druids)

At the following meeting held in Taunton on 4th September 2006, the Reburial Officer presented to the Council a draft request for reburial, and this was passed unanimously by all present. Minutes from

this meeting are available at <http://www.CoBDO.org/sept2006m.htm>

Groups and individuals present:

Steve Best (Outer Order of Druids (Exmoor)) (Hosting)
Michael Nisbet (Outer Order of Druids (Exmoor)) (Scribe)
Paul Davies (Oddie) (Reburial Officer)
Brian Conquer (Hibernian Order Druids)
Bernard (Berni) (Observer)
Terry (Avebury)
Lydia (Herald/Swordbearer, Glastonbury Outer Order of Druids)
Susanna Lafond (Battle Chieftain, Loyal Arthurian Warband)
Liz Murray (Universal Druid Order) (Liaison Officer)
Rowena Stone (Order of Wandering Peace Poets, Bards and Druids)
Denny Price (Glastonbury Outer Order of Druids) (Chair)
Howie Davies (Mystic Order of Druids)
Jill Willmott (Herald of Berengaria Order)
Tim Sebastian (Secular Order of Druids) (Conservation Officer)
Rollo Maughfling (Glastonbury Order of Druids) (Stonehenge Officer)
Barry Brett (Insular Order of Druids)
Debbie King (Insular Order of Druids)
Thomas (Tom) Daffern (Order of Wandering Peace Poets, Bards and Druids)(Peace Officer)

Following a CoBDO meeting held on 2nd December 2007 in Glastonbury, a new Committee for Reburial was formed. This group met for the 1st time at the George and Pilgrim, Glastonbury to discuss in detail ways to move forward our reburial request. At this meeting, we agreed to press ahead with our request - reburial back into the Earth Goddess from which our ancestors were originally taken. Councils are therefore mandated by their constituency to support my requests.

3.3.1b. Cultural Community and Spiritual Significance.

A scientific link between modern Druids and prehistoric tribes people can neither be proved or disproved, and any request to suggest a cultural or spiritual link with a prehistoric past therefore seems unreasonable.

Members of this Council have firm beliefs in relation to ancestors, and our request for reburial therefore draws upon beliefs and ethics that are extant. This Council therefore favours a Code of Ethics and the Vermillion Accord written by the World Archaeological Congress, and referenced at the end of this document.'

CoBDO has shared interests as a Druid Community within society. The Council's request for reburial is therefore socially relevant and spiritually important. This is best understood within the frameworks of ritual history and current spiritual belief (alongside social anthropological and post-processual theory). Our requests are therefore political in nature as much as they are spiritually focussed in the present landscape. They serve to question an assumed authority over matters that refer to Avebury as a sentient Goddess and a sacred site of which ancestral remains are a part into which pilgrimage is regularly made and our spiritual beliefs performed.

The development of Modern Druidry can be read in Appendix 2: Druids: Past to Present

Ethics and Belief.

- The human remains of our ancestors have meanings that extend beyond those of data.

- Burial communicates a final act, and this is seen in the methods and practice of burial. The burial should therefore remain sacrosanct. Any un-natural disturbance must be more carefully considered.
- The grave is part of the Earth Goddess and burials are given into Her keeping. Druids are the guardians and representatives of these living spiritual ancestral landscapes. Dis-interment through un-natural processes violates the sanctity of the grave, and may therefore be viewed as offensive to the spirit of Goddess, ancestor and Druid. Our hearts cry out! Reburial into Earth is therefore the most loving and respectful act for landscape, ancestor and Druid.
- We feel our spiritual concerns are presently under-represented and, through dialogue, this Council seeks to address this imbalance.
- Ideally, the best place for our ancestors is in the Earth where their human remains are embraced and protected by the soils of the Avebury Complex. Reburial is therefore our preferred option.
- By using plastic models and virtual reality displays in museums, we feel education is possible without the unethical display or storage of our ancestral brothers and sisters.
- Our ancestors are a whole part of the Avebury complex that is spiritually important within a European context and should be respected by all and represented by those who understand the spiritual relationships between ancestor, landscape and pilgrim.
- Retention of our ancestral remains against the wishes of this Council on the basis of non-existent research techniques that may or may not be developed is an unconvincing argument. Such reasoning suggests guardianship is being used by the museum as an assumed authority over spiritual matters that are extant.

Belief and Ethics

- The human remains of our ancestors contain, within bone, the spirit of person. Bones are people and are living links between land and transcended spirit.
- Decay is an important spiritual process of life, with decay aiding the process of rebirth in the Otherworld (spirit transcended into heaven, Avalon, the Underworld etc), and reincarnation back into this life. Display and storage interferes with the natural process of decay.

Buried with meaning, and blessed with love, the bodies of our ancestors help make sacred this Earth. Through decay our brothers and sisters become part of Her body. In return this Earth gives Her spirit to the ancestor. Ancestor and landscape become one.

As pilgrims, we enter into the ancestral landscape and through ritual acts also become part of the spirit of place. Through meditation, poetry and prayer we respect and respond to all that is sacred – every stone, tree, flower, insect, bone, every ancestor. And when we call to and honour our ancestors, they answer and part-take in our ceremonies, and when they come, they come as spirit people blessed with the spirit of the land into which they were placed – the womb of the Great Goddess from which we are reborn.²

² The Council feels that though it is clear that no single form of words can ever express this matter adequately for all, the substantial majority of its members would be unlikely to find in this description anything to which material objection could be made, and further that for many it might well be found wholly acceptable as an expression of the dictates of their individual

- The human remains of Charlie and the Kennet Avenue ancestors are everyone's family and belong to us all. Modern research on mtDNA from the University of Oxford clearly proves an unbroken genetic link between people today indigenous to Europe and our long dead. Statistically, these range between 43% and 2%. Women therefore carry our ancestral line from our deep past and into the future. Oxford also state that male DNA traces back through deep time. Until this research is disproved I will assume that members of the Council, like all people indigenous to Europe, have a 'close genetic' claim for reburial as stated in the DCMS Guidance (ibid: 26). We all have a close and unbroken cultural and spiritual relationship with the human remains of our ancestors. It is time to remember who we are - the ancestors reborn. This genealogical claim therefore informs and underpins the main points of our request for reburial that are based upon ethics and belief.
- We feel an Ethics Advisory Panel would help to address any potential conflicts between archaeology and museology and the views expressed above.

3.3.1c Age of Remains.

The age of our ancestral sisters and brothers is of educational value, and many people have benefited from this knowledge. For the Council however, the location of the body is of greater importance. Our spirituality is located within nature and sacred landscapes such as Avebury. Ancestors should be an intimate part of a whole living landscape and remain part of Avebury. Following this thinking, reburial is an essential part of the ritual functioning of ceremony. Druidic associations with Avebury therefore emphasise spiritual thought and practice rather than matters that refer to chronology. For Druids, age is a matter of history but not an essential part of ceremonial structure or practice.

3.3.1d Acquisitions in Care

The Council contests the need for the permanent displacement of our ancestors from the Earth mother into which they were intended to rest. Permanent displacement of our ancestors works against the stated wishes of the Council. The continued holding of our brothers and sisters by the museum fosters bad will and serves to disconnect the Druid from our spiritual heart. It seems to us a theft of identity and culture. It is a violation of the grave, and we are unhappy and seek redress.

3.3.1e Law and Guidance

The Council recognises current inadequacies in Law permitting reburial of human remains from Christian burial grounds while permitting the immoral display and treatment of the human remains of non-Christian ancestors taken from Avebury. We accept DCMS Guidelines support this legal locus and go some way to addressing insufficiencies in current Law, and hope to work with English Heritage, National Trust and DCMS on producing guidelines for the reburial of non-Christian ancestors. We believe that while the human remains taken from Avebury have lingered in the museum unclaimed, an automatic privilege for further excavation, display and retention should no longer be assumed. Without careful consideration of the ethical and spiritual views of Council, such a thinking process is, we believe, ill advised.

3.3.1f Scientific and Educational Value

This Council believes the needs of archaeology, museology and medical research should not outweigh the spiritual value of human remains. Rather, each should balance, complement and support the other. However, we recognise a clear potential conflict of interest between the thoughts and practices of museums, archaeologists and those of this Council, and seek further dialogue in order to resolve these

conscience. CoBDO June 2007. Similarly, in the US and Australia, differing tribes have differing views on ancestors and their remains.

issues.

3.3.1g Past Uses

Charlie remains on public display and was, at one time, displayed with her head removed and a plastic model in place. The Council wish to highlight these practices as disrespectful to the skeletal remains of a 3 year old child. The 7 ancestors removed from Kennet Avenue have suffered destructive testing. This was carried out without proper and full consultation with CoBDO as requested by Council and advised in DCMS Guidance (2005, 3.3: 25). 2 of the ancestors from Kennet Avenue also include the human remains of young children.

3.3.1h Future Healing

Reburial back into the Earth from where our ancestors were taken is the most favourable wish of the ancestors, landscape and Council. Ancestral landscapes have no voice and, in this way, the Council speaks for the ancestors.

3.3.1i Record of Remains

The Council wish to invite the Alexander Keiller Museum to make models of our ancestral remains for display in museums in order to permit reburial.

3.3.1j Other Options

Reburial is the main concern of ancestor, Earth Goddess and Council. As Druids, we are unwilling to deny or support archaeology or museology. However, as logical people, we all understand the potential value of education and request involvement in communicating our spirituality with field archaeologists and curators/trustees within museums.

For Tim Sebastian
Committee for Reburial //
Council of British Druid Orders
www.cobdo.org www.cobdowest.org

March 2007 (revised February / March 2008)

Peace and Love and Light to this Earth, womb of the ancestors from which we are reborn



With thanks to Tim, Graham, Miranda and Rob, Marco, Sue, Simon Spring, Denny, Steve, Jhereck, Howie, Brian, Mary, Dell, Will, Jamie, Chaz, Rowena, Tia, Sam, Conrad, Fin, Adam, Clare, Emma, Robert, Jenny, Philip, Piotr, Simona, Jethan, Mel, staff at the Bell in Bath and last, but not least, our collective ancestors.

Academic papers that positively feed into the English reburial campaign may be found on the websites of Honouring the Ancient Dead, the Association of Polytheist Traditions and the World Archaeological Congress. These organisations are not affiliated to the Council of British Druid

Orders.

<http://www.honour.org.uk/node/41> *Respectful Treatment And Reburial: A Practical Guide* by Emma Restall Orr (Honouring the Ancient Dead) and Piotr Bienkowski (University of Manchester). Paper delivered at the conference *'Respect for Ancient British Human Remains: Philosophy and Practice* Manchester Museum, 7 November 2006.

<http://www.manygods.org.uk/articles/essays/reburial.html> *A Live Issue: Ancestors, Archaeologists and the Reburial Issue in Britain* by Robert Wallis and Jenny Blain 2006.

<http://www.worldarchaeologicalcongress.org/site/res/WAC%20submission%20on%20Human%20Remains%20UK.pdf> *DCMS Consultation Document. Care of Historic Human Remains. A consultation on the Report of the Working Group on Human Remains.* Submission from the World Archaeological Congress.

Further interest:

<http://www.cobdo.org/>

<http://www.cobdowest.org/reburial.html>

<http://www.cobdowest.org/news.html>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/science/2007/feb/05/religion.artnews>

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/wiltshire/6385675.stm

<http://www.nepforums.co.uk/thisissomerset/printthread.php?Cat=&Board=Chat&main=4785&type=thead>

<http://www.sacredsites.org.uk/>

[http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0043-8243\(200010\)32%3A2%3C252%3AQSAAN%3E2.0.CO%3B2-N](http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0043-8243(200010)32%3A2%3C252%3AQSAAN%3E2.0.CO%3B2-N)

<http://www.nps.gov/history/nagpra/>

http://pcwww.liv.ac.uk/~Sinclair/ALGY399_Site/reburial.html#reburial_uk

<http://www.aboriginalheritage.org/>

<http://www.aboriginalheritage.org/sites/legislation.php>

<http://www.grahamharvey.org/publications.htm>