
Association for Public Service Excellence Conference 2014

Update from Ministry of Justice on coroner, cremation and burial law matters

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Ministry of Justice

Coroners and the implementation of coroner reform



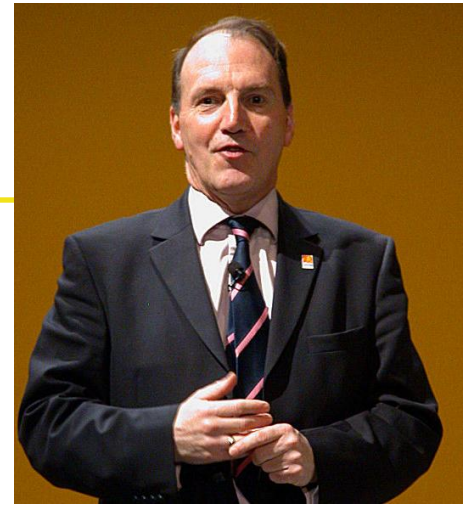
- Responsibility for coroner law and policy
- Coroners and Justice Act 2009 implemented on 25 July 2013
- Aims of the Act:
 - Bereaved people at the heart of the coroner system
 - Coroner services delivered locally but with national standards
 - More efficient system of investigations and inquests
- Chief Coroner
- Rules and regulations
- Mergers of coroner areas

Chief Coroner and his seven pillars of coroner reform

1. Consistency across coroner areas
2. Merger of coroner areas
3. Appointments
4. Coroners more answerable to the public
5. Investigations
6. Inquests
7. Reports to prevent future deaths



Minister and *Guide to Coroner Services*



- Simon Hughes MP, Minister of State for Justice and Civil Liberties
- Support for bereaved people
- *Guide to Coroner Services*
- Review of impact of implementation of reform

Cremation and Department of Health reforms



- MoJ responsibility for cremation law and policy
- Current system of three doctors including crematorium medical referee
- Department of Health proposed reforms
- Medical referees to be replaced by medical examiners
- Consultation paper to be published on the DH website in due course

Changes to Cremation Regulations



- MoJ has three questions in the DH consultation document:
 - Stillborn babies
 - Cremation of body parts
 - Authorisation of cremation by coroners
- Consultation on draft Cremation Regulations with impact assessment
- Currently formulating policy
- Revalidation of doctors acting as medical referees

Other cremation work

- Applying existing legislation to deal with queries
- Planning applications for crematoria



Burial space



- Ministry of Justice responsibility for burial law and policy
- Secretary of State's responsibilities and duties
- Legislation very old
- Media Interest
- 78% cremations in England and Wales; 66% in Scotland
- Simon Hughes interest

Reuse of burial space in London

- London Local Authorities Act 2007
- Low take up
- Why?
- Simon Hughes meeting stakeholders:
 - All Party Parliamentary Group for Funerals and Bereavement
 - MPs
 - Faith groups



Churchyard closures

- Processing applications to close Church of England churchyards
- Lengthy process
- Privy Council completes the process with Orders in Council
- Reasons for closure today:
- Variations



Churchyard closures – a couple of cases

- Ripon Cathedral
- Implications for building work
- Widening of staircase



Exhumations generally

- Section 25 of the Burials Act 1857
- Licence from the Secretary of State
- Licences to exhume single sets of buried human remains:
 - 1,200 applications for exhumation licences received each year
 - Over 1,000 applications received since January this year



Exhumation from consecrated ground

- Exception to the general rule in Church of England burial grounds
- Faculty from the Church of England
- New legislation
- Guidance



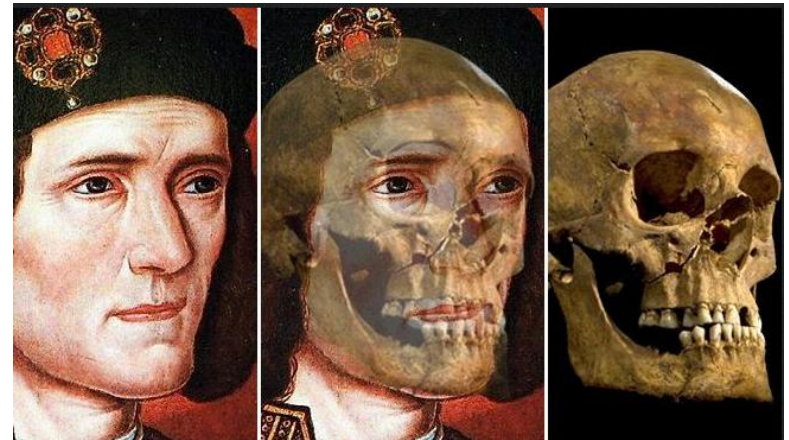
Archaeological exhumations

- Archaeological excavations
- Building and construction work
- Over 260 licences granted since January, often urgently



King Richard III

- Licence granted in September 2012
- Huge public, media and parliamentary interest
- Legal challenge brought by the Plantagenet Alliance Limited
- Administrative Court judgment
- Arrangements for reburial



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