The evidence from excavations will be turned into data - does this image appropriately contextualise the remains as part of the wider excavation? If this image enters the public sphere, for outreach or otherwise published, would the remains be sensationalised or educational?

A good rule of thumb is: if you cannot share the data about the individual or the site, you should not take/share the image.

The dead are a vulnerable population, and their excavation and study exposes them. It is your responsibility to ensure the remains are not viewed as props, as a joke, or otherwise sensationalised. What steps are you taking to ensure the individual in this image is treated with respect?

PHOTOGRAPHS OF HUMAN REMAINS
ON PERSONAL DEVICES

We know photos of human remains sometimes need to be taken on personal devices, for research, outreach, or as field notes. Here are some considerations and suggestions of ways you can improve your ethical practice in these situations.

**WHY ARE YOU TAKING THE PICTURE?**

Who is going to see this image? How will the file be stored? Does the photo respect the digital imaging rules established by the institution responsible for the remains?

**WHO ARE THE LIVING PEOPLE WHO MAY BE AFFECTED BY THIS PICTURE?**

- Will the photo be offensive or impactful to descendant or local communities?
- If the image becomes public, could it pose a risk to the site? e.g. potential of nighthawking/trespassers or public controversy.
- Is there anyone who might access the files accidentally? (e.g. in your phone picture gallery, shared drives...)

**ARE YOU BREAKING ANY CODES YOU’VE AGREED TO?**

Most commercial archaeology companies and professional organisations have limits on what they consider ethical practice in their codes of conduct. Photos on personal devices might break these codes.

**HOW IS THE PICTURE CONTEXTUALISED**

- The evidence from excavations will be turned into data - does this image appropriately contextualise the remains as part of the wider excavation?
- If this image enters the public sphere, for outreach or otherwise published, would the remains be sensationalised or educational?
- A good rule of thumb is: if you cannot share the data about the individual or the site, you should not take/share the image.

**DOES THIS PHOTO RESPECT THE INDIVIDUAL’S DIGNITY?**

The dead are a vulnerable population, and their excavation and study exposes them. It is your responsibility to ensure the remains are not viewed as props, as a joke, or otherwise sensationalised. What steps are you taking to ensure the individual in this image is treated with respect?

BABAIO does not condone photographing or sharing images of human remains for personal entertainment, particularly when human remains are posed or made to be used as props. For further guidance and more detailed ethical considerations, please refer to the references below.

**RESOURCES:**


BABAIO Recommendations on the ethical issues surrounding 2D and 3D digital imaging of human remains (2019)

BABAIO Code of Ethics (2019)