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and First Class post
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Dear Mr Livingstone.

As a fellow resident of Dunfermline I am sure that you are as disgusted as I am by the recent vandalism to the 'Babies Memorial' at Dunfermline Cemetery, which was reported in the Dunfermline Press on 1st inst., and I'm sure that your officers will do their utmost to apprehend those responsible and justice will follow.

I believe it is important to honour and respect our dead and to this end a few years ago had memorial headstones erected on the long-unmarked graves of my parents in Yorkshire and my grandfather in Sunderland. Sadly I have also experienced vandalism like that at the cemetery when a memorial stone to my late son, decorated by one of his friends and placed on a cairn at the top of Lochnagar, was removed.

Such events lead me to ponder on my long standing concerns regarding more historic desecrations, namely, those carried out by Thomas, 7th Earl of Elgin in the Ottoman occupied territory at Athens in the early 19th century. Then, by his own admission before the 1819 Westminster Select Committee examining his actions, Elgin gave evidence, supported by a detailed Memorandum of his pursuits in Greece, to the effect that he had employed several hundred men to open up burial sites and remove their contents. And again it is evident from the official record of the Earl's submission to the parliament that many non-human contents and markers from the graves looted were itemised and offered for sale to the government.

The parliament bought some of Elgin's plunder, mainly the architectural masonry from the temple to the goddess Athena, The Parthenon, but declined to buy the funerary items which were retained by the Earl. Parliament apparently thought purchasing such controversial items was beyond the pale, that is, beyond the flimsy justification of preservation of the arts that could be attributed to buying the Parthenon masonry.

Elgin's funerary items were no accidental acquisitions as part of a geological dig; they were part of an industrial scale violation of sepulchres. Edward Dodwell, who, like Elgin, plundered graves in Greece during the same period, wrote in his memoir 'A Classical & Topographical Tour Through

Greece , during the years 1801, 1805, and 1806', (London, 1819), Vol. I, p.431-432', that his ten man team, with sledge hammers and levers could crack open 30 tombs a day.

Elgin's team of hundreds of men must have done untold damage in their grave robbery. For every one of the many whole urns that Elgin tried to sell to parliament there must have been ten that were shattered by the ravages of his tomb robbers, who were only interested in finding valuables within the vessels.

It is a matter of record that some of the proceeds of the 7th Earl's funerary looting were later sold by his descendants to the British Museum, some to private buyers, such as the Getty Museum and some stele (grave markers) are retained by the family at their Broomhall House where they adorn the walls, as evidenced by press photographs and articles.

I hold strong views that the actions of our government's looting in the past, though not out of keeping with the imperial mores of the day, were unforgivable outrages. On two occasions in the past this led me to write to your predecessors, asking them to investigate what I saw as the Scots Law crime of reset (possession of stolen goods) at Broomhall House, Limekilns. [LINK](#)

Sadly your predecessors didn't share my views on the reset of items obtained by sacrilegious theft being a crime without time-bar, and after investigation, politely advised me that there was no proven evidence of criminality at Broomhall House.

But times change and in these more enlightened times there is a trend by many countries toward repatriation of cultural artefacts looted long ago in foreign lands. We are no different here in Scotland where on 25th March this year Aberdeen University decided to return a Benin Bronze sculpture, pillaged during the invasion of Benin City by British troops in 1897. Given this landmark development I would respectfully ask you to reopen my complaints to Peter Wilson, Chief Constables of Fife, dated 23rd February 2004 and Norma Graham, Chief Constable of Fife, dated 7th of December 2009.

I appreciate that during the current pandemic you will have many pressing and important matters to deal with, but this matter is as important to me now as it was on previous occasions, perhaps even moreso in light of recent events, so please treat this letter as an update of my previous complaints with new evidence.

I would of course be happy to meet with you to expand on my complaint or clarify any matters that you have queries on.

Yours sincerely,

Tom Minogue