

Greece wants Marbles for Olympics

By **Dalya Alberge**
Arts Correspondent

GREECE yesterday asked Britain to return the Elgin Marbles to Athens in time for the Olympic Games in 2004.

George Papandreou, the Greek Foreign Minister, testifying to the House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee which is holding an inquiry into the illicit antiquities trade, said that the move would be "a symbolic gesture" of friendship at a time when "all the world will be watching".

Referring to the founding of the Olympic Games in ancient Greece in 776BC, he observed that the return to Athens would be "in a sense, a homecoming". The Greek Government has said that by 2004 it will have built a museum designed to house the marbles.

Mr Papandreou said that there would be benefits in the return of the Marbles for Britain as well as Greece. He said: "I think we can both do something which is very important for world culture." It would be a "win-win situation for both Greece and Britain". He added: "The UK will demonstrate leadership and vision not just in the field of cultural heritage protection and management,



Visitors view the Elgin Marbles at the British Museum. The Greek Foreign Minister told MPs yesterday that Athens wants the sculptures back in time for the 2004 Olympics

but in the broader domain of international cultural relations and cultural diplomacy."

Mr Papandreou offered Britain a permanent series of rotating loan exhibitions in place of the Marbles, but his officials said it was too early to elaborate on which antiquities could be made available. An-

other alternative for the British Museum, he said, was to fill its gallery with replicas "so perfect that these can be distinguished from the originals only through elaborate chemical analysis". He declined to say whether Greece was proposing joint ownership of the Marbles, but said that his

country was open to ideas including custody by the European Union or the United Nations.

Mr Papandreou said: "Who owns the sculptures is unimportant and irrelevant. What matters is where they are and where they should be. We're talking about the greatest national symbol of Greece."

Greece has been demanding the return of the Marbles since the country's independence from Turkey in 1829. The 2,500-year-old Marbles were removed from the Parthenon in 1801 by Lord Elgin. Last year, the British historian William St Clair claimed that bribes paid by Lord Elgin cast

doubt on Britain's legal claim to the sculptures.

Mr St Clair told *The Times* that parallels could be drawn between the Marbles and the looting of art today.

But Robert Anderson, the British Museum director, said yesterday that Elgin had permission from the Ottoman Em-

pire authorities to remove the Marbles. According to a 1998 MORI poll, 39 per cent of the British public said the Marbles should be returned to Greece, while only 15 per cent said they should remain in the British Museum.

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Woman leaves £5m to art fund

By **Dalya Alberge**

A WOMAN has left her multi-million-pound fortune to Britain's leading art charity, with the wish that the money be used to "save art".

Brenda Knapp, who died last September at the age of 96, left shares and property worth more than £5 million to the National Art Collections Fund, which helps museums and galleries to secure important works of art.

The bequest is the largest in the fund's history and will be put towards the purchase of works of art for public display.

The fund described Mrs Knapp, a supporter of the fund since 1986, as a dedicated art lover. Her father and her husband, Hubert Saville Knapp, who died in 1978, had been accountants.

Mrs Knapp did not have any children and she spent the last years of her life at the Arbrook Nursing Home at Esher, Surrey. Staff had no idea of her wealth.

The fund also announced yesterday that it had made a £100,000 grant to the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge towards buying a £255,000 landscape by Degas.