

THE PARTHENON SCULPTURES

NEWSLETTER NO. 8

THE AMERICAN COMMITTEE FOR THE
REUNIFICATION OF THE PARTHENON SCULPTURES

AUGUST 2009

ON THE OPENING OF THE NEW ACROPOLIS MUSEUM

By Michael J. Reppas
President and Legal Advisor of ACRPS, Inc.

It was indeed a unique honor to attend the gala opening of the New Acropolis Museum – and what an incredible achievement that museum is! President Papoulias of Greece so rightfully proclaimed that now “the whole world can see the most important sculptures from the Parthenon together...[because] some are missing, it is time to heal the wounds on the monument by returning the marbles that belong to it.” Minister of Culture Antonios Samaras, later surprised everyone by reunifying the head of Iris to the panel display of the east frieze of the Parthenon where it belonged, tangibly demonstrating the good that can be achieved when a remnant of the Acropolis is returned and reunited with its missing parts in Athens. “May we join more pieces in the future, to reunite the Parthenon,” he said. The symbolism and the historical significance of this act rang clear to all who support the cause of the return of the looted Parthenon Sculptures from the British Museum to the New Acropolis Museum.

Athens has not celebrated with so much enthusiasm since the 2004 Olympics, and the reason for the celebration was clear: the long awaited opening of the New Acropolis Museum, which is truly one of the most incredible and unique pieces of art that one can appreciate – even though it is a museum, it is a work of art as you will see when you visit it – which you must. Filled with antiquities of the Acropolis, the museum magically takes each visitor back in time to Greece’s glorious past, whereby each person can experience firsthand the marvels of ancient Greek architecture, sculpture, and art. A mix of ancient beauty and modern dignity truly makes the New Acropolis Museum a must see for everyone. Undoubtedly, it is one of the top museums of the world.

As representatives of the American Committee for the Reunification of the Parthenon Sculptures, Dennis Menos and I were fortunate to receive invitations from the Greek Ministry of Culture to attend the opening ceremonies for the new museum. Indeed it was a phenomenal event, covered by press from around the world and hopefully viewed by many of you on your television or computer screens.

On your next trip to Greece, plan for at least one full day in Athens just to visit the Acropolis and the New Acropolis Museum. You will not be disappointed. The museum is open daily from 8am to 8pm, but is closed on Mondays. Tickets can be purchased by going to its Website at www.theacropolismuseum.gr They are currently priced at only one euro.



Members of the International Association for the Reunification of the Parthenon Sculptures at the entrance of the New Acropolis Museum.

EDITORIAL

A MUSEUM WITH A MISSION

By Dennis Menos

The New Acropolis Museum has been variously described as magnificent, exquisite, and being in a class by itself.

All that unquestionably is true, but above all else, the new museum is a building with a mission: to convince the UK authorities that the Parthenon Sculptures no longer belong in London. The old pretext, that Greece lacks a suitable exhibit area for them, no longer holds. An extraordinary exhibit hall, far superior to the Duveen Gallery in London, occupies the top floor of the New Acropolis Museum. It is here that the sculptures wrongfully removed from the temple by Lord Elgin will be placed.

Much of the world has received this message: Early in July, for instance, the *Guardian* newspaper in Britain asked its readers whether time had come for the Parthenon Sculptures to be returned to Greece. A total of 124,974 persons responded -- 94.8% in the affirmative. A few days earlier, the House of Representatives of Cyprus unanimously adopted a resolution calling on the British government to end the adventure of the marbles by "reintegrating this unique element of global heritage to the natural space where it belongs." The message was received also by the Scottish government when it declared through its spokesman that "the people of Greece have a right to receive back one of their most important cultural treasures." So did also Gough Whitlam and Malcolm Frazer former Prime Ministers of Australia, who urged the British Museum to "right one of history's great wrongs" by returning the Parthenon Sculptures to Greece.

Closer to home, US Congressman David Payne of NJ sponsored a Concurrent Resolution expressing the sense of the Congress that the Parthenon Marbles should be returned. The list goes on and on.

Clearly, the world has received the message! But as of this writing, the British Museum has not, or at least is pretending not to have received it.

How long the British Museum will continue playing its game of offering idle 'excuses' to justify inaction (see the story which follows), only time will tell. In its anxiety over the change of the status quo, it acts as if the construction of the New Acropolis Museum has no bearing on its hold of the Parthenon Sculptures. It ignores the calls for reunification by prominent supporters at home and abroad, and turns a deaf ear to the thousands of tourists (many of them British citizens) who, after visiting the New Acropolis Museum, wonder why no action has been taken as yet to return the Sculptures.

Common sense suggests, of course, that the British Museum cannot stall forever. Sooner or later, worldwide pressure will compel it to abandon its present policy of evasion. It will be forced to enter a dialogue with proponents of reunification -- **and finally do what is right.**

EXCUSES, OLD AND NEW

Most of us are all too familiar with the idle excuses advanced by the British Museum for refusing to deal with the Parthenon Sculptures issue in a fair and pragmatic manner. Such as the assertion that as a 'universal museum,' the British Museum needs to retain the Parthenon Sculptures to tell the complete story of human cultural achievement through the centuries; the claim that Lord Elgin acquired the sculptures 'legally'; the so-called constraints placed on the Museum by the British Museum Act of 1963 that prevent it from acting; etc, etc.

Add the newest excuses, courtesy of Neil MacGregor, the Director of the British Museum: "The controversy about the Parthenon Sculptures' return to Greece," he proclaimed early in July "is **yesterday's question**. The real question is how the Greek and British governments can work together so that the sculptures can be seen in... China and Africa." Besides, remarked the Director a few days later, by removing the Parthenon Sculptures from the temple and placing them in the new museum where people can view them closely, the Greek government simply... "**continued Elgin's practice**".

How Director MacGregor concluded that the return to Greece of the Parthenon Sculptures is "yesterday's question", and that it was more important that they be seen in China and Africa rather than in Greece, is a mystery to us. Polls taken as recently as July of this year confirm an overwhelming support by the people of Britain for the return of the Parthenon Sculptures to Athens, not elsewhere.

Equally perplexing is his claim that Greece followed Elgin's practice when it removed the rest of the Parthenon Sculptures from the temple, "so that they can be easier seen and admired by the public". Presumably, that would absolve Lord Elgin for his looting of the Parthenon. Director MacGregor certainly must know that the reason the Parthenon Sculptures were taken down from the temple by the Greek government, as was the case with the Caryatids from the Erechtheion, was to protect them from possible erosion. The decision had nothing to do with the public's ease or difficulty of viewing the sculptures.

Time has come for Director MacGregor to stop making up idle excuses for his reluctance to do what is right. As our friend and colleague, Professor Anthony Snodgrass, Chairman of the British Committee for the Reunification of the Parthenon Marbles, recently pointed out, the time has come for the two sides to "begin sensible negotiations on the issue of the Parthenon Sculptures, and to do so as equals, without any prior stipulations about ownership and possession. Only then can the possibilities for the transmission of the sculptures to other countries, whether physical or virtual, be seriously discussed."

AN ABSURD OFFER

One can only speculate: Why would the British Museum want to offend the entire Greek nation as it was about to celebrate its latest cultural accomplishment -- the opening of its magnificent New Acropolis Museum?

Yet, this is precisely what it did, on June 10, when it announced that it was prepared to loan to the New Acropolis Museum for a period of 90 days the Parthenon Sculptures in its possession, *if Greece only would acknowledge that they are the property of the British Museum.*

Acknowledge... "British ownership" of the sculptures carved on the temple of Goddess Athena by the master sculptor Pheidias two thousand four hundred years ago?

The offer was immediately rejected by the Greek government, and rightly so. "No Greek government can ever accept such terms," commented Greek Culture Minister Antonios Samaras. "For to do so, would legitimize the snatching of the marbles and the carving up of the monument 207 years ago."



Michael Reppas and Dennis Menos of the American Committee for the Reunification of the Parthenon Sculptures along with colleagues from Sweden and the United Kingdom at the reception following the opening of the New Acropolis Museum.



Members of the International Association for the Reunification of the Parthenon Sculptures at the conclusion of their tour of the Parthenon.

DECLARATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE REUNIFICATION OF THE PARTHENON SCULPTURES

Ed. Note: The "International Association for the Reunification of the Parthenon Sculptures" is an association of National Committees from seventeen nations that share the goal of reuniting in the New Acropolis Museum all surviving Parthenon Sculptures. The Association is led by an Executive Board consisting of: David Hill (Australia), Chair; Professor Dusan Sidjanski (Switzerland) and Anna Marangou (Cyprus), Vice Chairs; Dennis Menos (USA), Secretary; and Matthew Taylor (UK Marbles Reunited), Treasurer.

At the meeting of the International Association held in Athens, on June 18 and 19, 2009, on the occasion of the inauguration of the New Acropolis Museum, the following Declaration was unanimously adopted by all Association members present, for dissemination to news media worldwide.

- The International Association for the Reunification of the Parthenon Sculptures views the completion of the magnificent New Acropolis Museum (NAM) as historic. We congratulate Greece on this major achievement.
- We believe that the NAM is now one of the world's leading museums and will result in even more visitors to the Acropolis each year as it provides the ideal venue for reunifying the Parthenon Sculptures held in London.
- The NAM was designed to allow all the surviving Parthenon Sculptures to be exhibited properly in their original configuration within the sight of the Parthenon. This cannot be achieved in the smaller Duveen Gallery of the British Museum.
- We support the efforts of the Greek Government to renew negotiations with the United Kingdom with the purpose of reunifying the Parthenon Sculptures.
- We urge the United Kingdom to begin the process of reunifying the Parthenon Sculptures in the NAM.
- We welcome the return of pieces of the Acropolis from Sweden and Germany and we encourage the Vatican and Italy to extend their loans to the NAM.
- We believe the occasion of the 2012 London Olympics would be an appropriate time to return the Parthenon Sculptures to Greece.
- We offer our services as mediator to assist in the reunification of the Parthenon Sculptures.
- UNESCO has recognized the Acropolis as world heritage which is of universal cultural significance and supreme symbolic value.

THE AMERICAN COMMITTEE LAUNCHES A TOURING PARTHENON EDUCATIONAL EXHIBIT

The American Committee is pleased to announce the U.S. debut of its newly created touring educational exhibit entitled "All Sides of the Parthenon: Reconstruction and Reunification." The exhibit is scheduled to open at the renowned Coral Springs Museum of Art in Florida, in May 2010.

About fifty extraordinary photo images, including colossal 10' panoramas taken inside the Parthenon by photographer Peter C. Yalanis of Sunrise FL, will provide the main focus of the exhibit. A certified copy of a panel of the Parthenon frieze will likewise be available for viewing, as well as original artifacts from the Golden Age of Greece. A simulated archaeological dig for children is planned.

A number of lectures and presentations by distinguished scholars and experts will be offered during the course of the exhibit. Topics of discussion will include historical analyses of the Parthenon and classical Greece, legal and moral considerations of "Who Owns the Past," and much more. Stay tuned for updates on this incredible event.

AMENDING THE BRITISH MUSEUM ACT OF 1963

The British Museum's typical answer, when the matter of the return of the Parthenon Sculptures comes up, is to point to the provisions of the British Museum Act of 1963. Under this statute, the Museum Trustees are prohibited from returning objects in the Museum's collection unless there are duplicates -- which in the case of the Parthenon Sculptures of course there are none.

The British Government has repeatedly stated that it has no plans to change this law. This notwithstanding, legislation is moving now through Parliament that would allow artworks looted by the Nazis that have ended up in UK museums, including the British Museum, to be returned to their rightful owners. On June 29th the legislation cleared the House of Commons and now goes to the House of Lords.

A logical question arises: If artwork looted by Nazis can be returned to their owners, why not the Parthenon Sculptures looted by Lord Elgin? Supporters of this view have introduced an amendment to the British Museum Act. Under its terms, the Museum Trustees would be allowed "to transfer objects in the possession of the Museum to another institution, if the objects in question would be more appropriately displayed in the recipient institution by reason of its historic links with the country or region where it is situated".

PLEASE JOIN OUR COMMITTEE AND HELP US RETURN TO GREECE THE PARTHENON SCULPTURES IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM. CONTRIBUTIONS ARE URGENTLY NEEDED FOR PRODUCING AND MAILING PUBLICITY MATERIALS, ESSENTIAL TRAVEL, AND MISCELLANEOUS ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES PROMOTING OUR CAUSE. FORMS FOR JOINING OUR COMMITTEE AND/OR OFFERING CONTRIBUTIONS ARE AVAILABLE IN OUR WEBPAGE: www.parthenonsculpturesusa.org

NOTICE:

The American Committee for the Reunification of the Parthenon Sculptures, Inc. (ACRPS) is the only IRS recognized Not-for-Profit organization in the United States, formed expressly to educate the American public about Greece's most acclaimed Parthenon Sculptures now in London and to demand their return to Athens. We encourage all supporters of this noble cause to join us. Contributions and membership fees are considered by IRS as charitable donations and are fully deductible. Payment of membership fees and/or donations should be made to Alexandros Alexandrou, Treasurer, at 12201 St. James Road, Potomac, MD 20854. Please make checks payable to ACRPS, Inc.

VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED TO TAKE THE LEAD IN ESTABLISHING PARTHENON COMMITTEES IN MAJOR U.S. METROPOLITAN CENTERS, TO RECRUIT SUPPORTERS AND ORGANIZE EVENTS. VOLUNTEERS ARE ALSO NEEDED TO ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN LIAISON WITH U.S. CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS. Please contact Michael Reppas, ACRPS, Inc., President and Legal Advisor at (305) 822-8422 or by E-mail at Reppas@Reppaslaw.com

**WE ASK LONDON,
"WHY NOT?"**

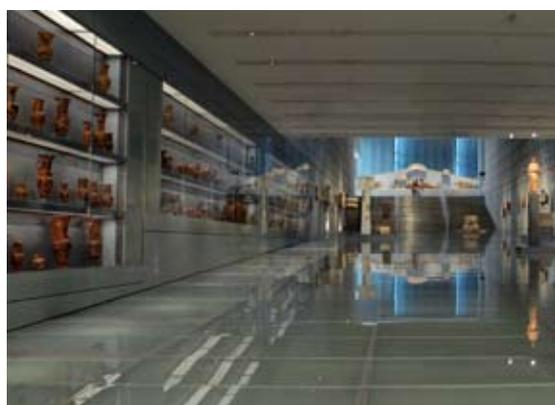
THE PARTHENON SCULPTURES is the official Newsletter of the American Committee for the Reunification of the Parthenon Sculptures, Inc. Dennis Menos at DMenos@msn.com is editor; Cimon Psira at ameragreek@verizon.net is responsible for design and layout.



The New Acropolis Museum is open

“ **The British response to the opening of the New Acropolis Museum was un-British. In fact it's embarrassing**

Andrew George MP - Chair, Marbles Reunited



For those who attended, the official opening ceremonies passed off with the smooth efficiency that characterised the Athens Olympics of 2004.

In terms of official representation however this was hardly Britain's finest hour: with the high-level presence from China, from the EU and many individual European countries and from UNESCO. The absences of the Director of the British Museum and the Chairman of Trustees, the Prime Minister, the responsible Minister and indeed the Head of State were noted. This did not give rise to much surprise or resentment: the Museum, at least, had sent representatives and the British Ambassador was there.

In the debate over the London sculptures from the Parthenon, it has been clear to many British people for some years what would be the right action to take. The difference now is that the New Acropolis Museum makes the rightness of that response so obvious and so natural - as a result, the Board of Trustees and the Director of the British Museum are faced with a difficult choice between two stark alternatives: either to act with courage and decisiveness, swallow their pride and begin talking to the Greek representatives as equals; or to lay up decades of stress and embarrassment for their successors.

Visit www.theacropolismuseum.gr to find out more about the new museum. ■



Who said what about the new museum

‘It’s time to heal the wounds of the monument with the return of the marbles which belong to it’

Karolos Papoulias, President of Greece

‘To recognise British ownership would be tantamount to accepting that what Elgin did was right’

Antonis Samaras, Minister of Culture for Greece

‘In London they tell a story of Greek classical culture, in the world cultures, in ancient civilisations at large’

Ian Jenkins, British Museum

‘The problem is not legal. It’s ethical and cultural’

Professor Dimitris Pandermalis, President of the Organisation for the Construction of the New Acropolis Museum

‘The New Acropolis Museum creates a natural thirst to see the actual re-assembly completed’

Christopher Hitchens, journalist and writer

‘The British Museum should, with generosity and grace, hand back the marbles’

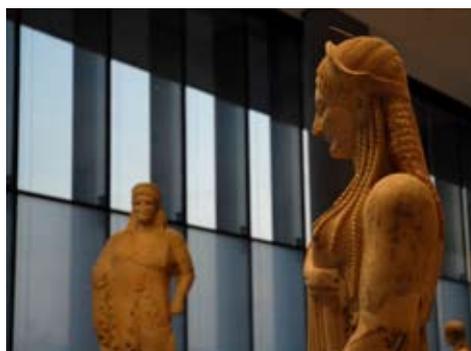
Rowan Moore, Evening Standard

‘What could present more of a challenge than designing a major new building to stand at the foot of the Acropolis, revered as one of the great architectural achievements of Western civilization?’

Christine Pirovolakis, Wall Street Journal

‘The British Museum has not argued that there was nowhere for the sculptures to be seen in Athens’

Hannah Bolton, Head of Press and Marketing British Museum



The Parthenon Marbles:
Significant dates

1801 Greece was under Ottoman rule and Lord Elgin, the British ambassador to Constantinople, begins transporting the Parthenon sculptures from the Acropolis to Britain. The collection amassed by Elgin eventually included 247 feet of the original 524 ft Parthenon frieze plus 17 figures from the east and west pediments, as well as 15 metope panels.

1816 Lord Elgin faced bankruptcy and British Parliament purchases the Marbles from Lord Elgin for £35,000. The following year, the sculptures are put on permanent display at the British Museum, where they remain to this day.

1833 The first recorded request for the return of the Parthenon Marbles is made by Greece to Britain.

1938 Art dealer Lord Joseph Duveen funded a new gallery to display the Marbles. The sculptures were subjected to a notorious and controversial cleaning that damaged their surface. The new gallery was completed in 1938, but because of delays caused by World War II, the sculptures were not displayed there until 1962.

The Duveen Gallery remains the home of over 100 pieces from the Parthenon today.

1981 Former actress Melina Mercouri is appointed as Greece’s minister of culture. Mercouri spearhead an international effort to lobby the British government for the return of the Parthenon Marbles. This passionate campaign defined her eight years in office and kick started today’s global interest in the issue of reunification.

September 2003 Ground is finally broken on the site of the New Acropolis Museum. The new building designed by Swiss-born architect Bernard Tschumi, is intended to strengthen efforts to secure the return of the Marbles.

June 20 2009 Official inauguration of the New Acropolis Museum, which features a third floor exhibit intended to one day house the surviving pieces of the Parthenon Marbles.

Students protest at the British Museum



Forty five secondary school students and five teachers from the 2nd General Lyceum in Argostoli (Kefalonia), visited London in order to stage a peaceful protest for the return of the Parthenon Sculptures to Athens at the British Museum on Sunday 03 May 2009. This protest was supported by Marbles Reunited.

Marbles Reunited is a British campaigning organisation and Friends of the British Committee for the Reunification of the Parthenon Marbles.

The Parthenon Sculptures, removed from the Parthenon in Athens between 1801-1812, were subsequently bought by the British Government in 1816 and placed in the British Museum's Duveen Gallery, where they have remained.

The first recorded request for their return was made by Greece in 1833. The British Museum has long argued why these sculptures should remain in London. One such argument was that Greece had nowhere to display the sculptures.

The New Acropolis Museum, designed by Swiss architect, Bernard Tschumi at a cost of around 130 million Euros, officially opened on 20 June 2009. It holds around 4,000 artefacts and has an exhibition space of 14,000 square metres.

At present the British Museum's policy remains the same, that the Parthenon Marbles

the largest collection of Parthenon sculptures outside of Greece, will remain in London. Greece has however received fragments from Heidelberg, Palermo and the Vatican.

Yannis Kosmatos from the Second Lyceum of Argostoli, Kefalonia commented "Our primary goal has been to sensitise students and the community, as well as voice our protest

These unique sculptures were created to tell a story and they are best displayed together in Athens

against the displacement of the marbles. We have divided the students into two groups, one considering the art, history and literary references to the marbles, the other the various efforts made to bring back the monuments.

"The protest we staged at the British Museum on Sunday 03 May, 2009 was heartfelt with some students holding banners, others playing Greek music while some performed traditional Greek dances. These unique sculptures were created to tell a story and they are best displayed together in Athens. We hope that the Director of the British Museum will see the merit of rejoining what has been divided unjustly for two centuries." ■

British Museum 'huge breakthrough', a propaganda stunt according to the British Committee for the Reunification of the Parthenon Marbles

The announcement of a "huge breakthrough" by the British Museum, with the discovery of blue paint on some figures from the Parthenon Marbles, looks uncommonly like a propaganda stunt, timed to divert attention from the opening of the New Acropolis Museum in Athens.

For generations it has been common knowledge among art historians and archaeologists that the Parthenon and its sculptures would originally have been decorated. Lawrence Alma-Tadema's painting of 1868 — Pheidias and the Parthenon Frieze— depicts the sculptor showing Athenian citizens around his team's handiwork high up on the scaffold.

By the mid-nineteenth century, a lively debate was raging in British scholarly circles over the question of polychromy, the colouring of sculpture.

What is more, ordinary viewers can still see, with their own eyes, traces of it (in this case, dark green) surviving on the drapery in at least one of the original slabs, from the West Frieze of the Parthenon, which is in the new museum in Athens.

Today, even virtual reality reconstructions of the Parthenon use nineteenth-century sources such as Benoit Luvion's Cross-Section of the Parthenon of 1879-81 as their guide to the use of colour on the Parthenon. These late nineteenth-century sources were themselves drawing on much earlier research by architects such as Jacques-Ignace Hittorff (1792-1867) and Quatremère de Quincy (1755-1849) which had established beyond doubt that Greek temples and sculptures were coloured.

Professor Anthony Snodgrass, Chairman of the British Committee for the Reunification of the Parthenon Marbles commented "it hardly needs 'a new imaging technique' to tell us what we can see for ourselves."

No doubt the British Museum's sculptures also once preserved some of their colour - that is, until Lord Duveen's drastic 'cleaning' operation of 1937-1938, which was designed deliberately to erase any trace of patina or colour.

"By all means let the debates over the proper care of the Parthenon Marbles continue - but on a grown-up level, please" concludes Professor Anthony Snodgrass.

Professor Anthony Snodgrass is a Fellow of the British Academy and Professor Emeritus of Classical Archaeology, University of Cambridge. www.parthenonuk.com



Marbles Reunited hits the London streets

Marbles Reunited has embarked on its first advertising campaign and rolled out the first livered London taxi. Starting May 2009, this will be travelling across London for 12 months. The outside of the taxi shows fragmented parts of the Parthenon Sculptures here in London. The inside flip seats and receipts briefly explain why the Marbles should be Reunited and the web address is there for those that want to find out more about Marbles Reunited and the campaign.



We will be delighted to receive photos from anyone who spots the taxi on the streets of London; particularly if the person getting out of it is a curator at the British Museum or an official from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. If you or your business would like to help us to sponsor additional taxis in the future, please email us to find out more ■

International Association for the Reunification of the Parthenon Sculptures

www.parthenoninternational.org

The day before the official inauguration of the New Acropolis Museum, the IARPS held a meeting in Athens, attended by representatives from sixteen of their seventeen member organisations.

Decisions were taken relating to the internal running of the organisation that will in future allow it to react more rapidly and raise its profile. As part of an expanded five person executive, Matthew Taylor from Marbles Reunited was elected as treasurer, alongside members from Australia, Cyprus, Switzerland and the USA.

The IARPS hope to organise a worldwide Parthenon Day on June 20th every year to draw awareness to the issue. Other plans include the creation of an international online petition and publication of brochures for distribution at the New Acropolis Museum.

The IARPS heard about other restitution organisations in Chile, France and the Ukraine that they hope will become members, along with other countries that have yet to set up organisations. Members were also encouraged to create honorary boards of invited high profile members such as celebrities and political figures who support the issue.

A media declaration was prepared, which was made public in a press conference following the meeting. A copy of this will soon be available for viewing on the website of the IARPS.

How you can help our campaign

If you would like to support us, please consider becoming a member of our campaign. Membership of Marbles Reunited is open to anyone, the only pre-requisites are that you must be over eighteen years old & support the return of the Parthenon marbles to Greece.

Thousands of postcards are available, just drop us an email to campaign@marblesreunited.org and we will send you up to ten to distribute to all those you know that support the return. All you and your fellow supporters need to do, is fill in the back with your message and post it to the British Museum.

Marbles Reunited is entirely funded through voluntary donations. Please get in touch if you would like to contribute, have skills to offer, or have other suggestions. ■



Marbles Reunited website updated



Marbles Reunited are adding to & expanding their website. In addition to the much acclaimed front page graphics illustrating the fragmentation of the Parthenon Sculptures between London and Athens, new pages giving more detailed information about reasons for return, the campaign and its current events are now being added. It will also soon be possible to register as a campaign member online rather than printing and posting the form. We are gradually adding our previous newsletters and other items of information to expand our web based presence and let people understand more about what we do and why they should support us.

Have a look at our updated web site at www.marblesreunited.org.uk ■

Newsletter sponsors

This issue of *Marbles Reunited News* was kindly sponsored by the Macedonian Society of Great Britain www.macedonia.org.uk

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