



SEÁN SHERLOCK TD

25/1/2023

Dear Tanaiste

I write to seek your advice on a matter of which, I am sure you will take a personal interest in.

The matter relates to the Mount Keefe Chalice which, is currently housed in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. It was sold to the Museum in 1929. I understand that the chalice was created in 1590. The chalice is the subject of a story written by Neil Michael in the Irish Examiner, dated 23/1/2023.

I am very interested in seeking the return of the chalice to Cork. I really do believe that objects and records of local interest, deepen community pride and interest in heritage. The chalice is symbolic of many other antiquities and items of Irish origin which are housed in British Institutions. Another example are the Annals of Inisfallen which are housed in the Bodleian Library along with other ancient Irish Manuscripts.

I seek your guidance on whether the Department of Foreign affairs might liaise with the Cultural Institutions to initiate discussions on what might become a formal bi-lateral process with the UK and it's institutions on the principle of decolonising Irish artefacts. While I do understand that some items were purchased, I am also of the view that research and provenance work is required to identify items that should form part of Ireland's national collection, rather than the UK's collection.

Globally, the debate goes on around cultural revitalisation of museums, in the context of how to treat artefacts, human remains and antiquities where they were acquired within a colonial setting. Ireland, as I understand it, has moral obligations to return objects that belong to other nations, but, in our case, we also deserve to have items repatriated. Such a bilateral process would require us to catalogue any items that may be of interest to the UK and further afield.

I believe that Ireland could lead the way in beginning this conversation and leading on, for example, creating a bi-lateral framework with the UK, within which a process could be devised to decolonise many hundreds of artefacts acquired by possibly less than transparent means. I would be grateful for an opportunity to discuss this further with you.

One would not want the language of this process to become reductive but rather expansive and thoughtful in its approach. One would wish the principle of goodwill to attach itself to any process that might be devised.

I believe that our own National Museum could provide much guidance in that respect.

Thank you for your consideration of my correspondence.

I look forward to your reply.

Kindest regards,

Seán Sherlock TD