

Dear -

Your letter was forwarded by the Chief Executive to me in my capacity as Director of Museums and Archives with managerial responsibility for the Hunterian Collection. Thank you for your email concerning the remains of Charles Byrne, known as 'The Irish Giant', we value your feedback and have logged your observation.

The Royal College of Surgeons believes that the value of Charles Byrne's remains to living and future communities currently outweighs the benefits of carrying out Byrne's apparent request to dispose of his remains at sea (no Will nor testament survives - there is no direct documentary evidence of his burial wishes).

A vivid example of the value of having access to the skeleton is the current research into Familial Isolated Pituitary Adenoma (FIPA), the condition that caused Byrne's unusual height (7'7") and early death. This links Byrne to living communities, including genetically related FIPA patients who have requested that the skeleton should remain on display in the museum. For example, earlier this year a screening programme was carried out to identify potential carriers of the AIP gene responsible for his condition.

At the present time, the Museum's Trustees therefore consider the educational and research benefits to merit retaining the remains rather than destroying them.

Yours sincerely

Sam Alberti

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