

News statement



Theft and vandalism of war memorials 2012

Date: Thursday 25th October 2012

Status: Immediate release

Starts

War Memorials Trust today announces an encouraging reduction in the number of thefts from war memorials compared to the same point in 2011, but warns that there are still a worrying number of thefts taking place.

In 2011 three incidents of theft or attempted theft were reported each month but in October 2011 this dramatically increased to three incidents each week. Including reports of vandalism there were sixty attacks on memorials in 2011; more than one a week. In comparison during 2010 there were 21 reports related to theft and vandalism and so far 2012 has seen 20 such reports. Whilst the 2012 attacks remain too high at two incidents a month a fall of two-thirds from 2011 should be welcomed.

It is believed contributory factors to this decline include greater awareness of war memorials and the public anger at such thefts, a fall in the price of metal, campaigns such as In Memoriam 2014 and advice available from organisations such as the Trust to help local communities prevent theft and educate people about what our war memorials represent. No research has been undertaken to investigate this further and there are likely to be other issues which have also impacted upon this fall.

War Memorial Trust's Director Frances Moreton commented: "It is always distressing when attacks on war memorials take place but particularly so at this time of year when communities gather for their Remembrance Services and the importance of memorials and the names on them are so poignant. We are of course delighted to see that the number of theft cases reported to us has reduced significantly compared to this time last year. We are encouraged by this reduction but one theft case remains one too many so there is still a problem and we will continue to work with communities to offer advice through our helpsheets and In Memoriam 2014 to prevent future incidents."

The Trust along with the SmartWater Foundation launched the In Memoriam 2014 project in October 2011. In Memoriam 2014 protects memorials at risk of theft or damage by marking them with a forensic liquid called SmartWater. The crime prevention fluid, which is being made available at no charge, not only makes memorials uniquely identifiable, it also offers robust traceability should a theft occur. This will act as a significant deterrent to those considering desecrating our war memorials by massively increasing their chances of detection and subsequent arrest.

Ends

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Notes to editors

1. For details of specific cases of theft in 2012 please see the associated appendix. The numbers are provided below for recent years.

Year	Theft or attempted theft	Vandalism
2010	14	7
2011	40	20
2012	14	6

2. For the recent press release and further information on the In Memoriam 2014 project please visit www.warmemorials.org/im2014-press/.
3. Numbers of reported thefts are based on thefts reported directly to WMT and those the charity has picked up as being reported in the press. There is no obligation for anyone to report thefts to WMT and as such there may be other cases of which we are unaware.
4. War Memorials Trust has a helpsheet with advice to prevent theft which is available from our website at www.warmemorials.org/uploads/publications/189.pdf.
5. War Memorials Trust has an educational programme aimed at helping young people in schools and youth groups learn about war memorials. Resources and information can be found at www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org.
6. War Memorials Trust is an independent registered charity. Established in 1997 due to concerns about neglect and vandalism it works to protect and conserve war memorials. It provides advice, information and administers grants schemes that assist the repair and conservation of war memorials across the UK. As a charity the Trust relies on voluntary contributions to undertake its work. Supporters include annual and life members, donors, charitable trusts and corporate contributors.