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1 IN MEMORIAM 2014

Thieves getting the message that war memorials are off-limits

Newly released figures have revealed thefts from the nation's war memorials have fallen by around two thirds since the launch of an initiative to protect this key piece of the UK's heritage.

In Memoriam 2014, a partnership between War Memorials Trust and the SmartWater Foundation, was launched in October 2011, when reports to the Trust of thefts from and of memorials were running at an average of three each week. In total the charity identified sixty cases of theft and vandalism attacks during 2011.

However, the latest update from War Memorials Trust shows a huge drop in the number of incidents of theft and vandalism reported to the Trust, with only 20 recorded so far in 2012.

In Memoriam 2014 is seeking to protect every war memorial in the UK from the threat of metal theft by encouraging custodians to register all commemorative sites and take up an offer to mark each one for free with SmartWater's forensic marking kits. The project was established to commemorate the one hundred year anniversary of the start of World War I.

Both partners recognise the significant role the media has played in generating awareness of this important issue and are expressing their gratitude for that support. It is hoped that as knowledge of *In Memoriam 2014* continues to grow it will reinforce the message that war memorial theft is not only totally unacceptable, but also that war memorials are no longer a soft target for thieves.

One aspect of the project that has been widely reported is the use of SmartWater forensic marking to increase the traceability of war memorials. The technology works by assigning bronze, copper and other metals with a chemically coded solution that can only be seen under UV light and is virtually impossible to remove. SmartWater allows the Police to prove if an item is stolen, therefore representing a heightened risk of prosecution to thieves and unscrupulous scrap dealers.

Thousands of caring custodians already spend considerable effort maintaining monuments throughout the UK and *In Memoriam 2014* is repeating its call for more volunteers to come forward, unite under its banner, and join the effort to protect those memorials which risk being forgotten.

War Memorials Trust's Director, Frances Moreton, said: "It has been encouraging to see increased public awareness of war memorials over the last 12 months, which has resulted in more visitors to War Memorials Trust's website and an increase in our case load. The peak in reported war memorial thefts in autumn 2011 has thankfully fallen during 2012 and the Trust hopes this continues.



“More and more people are realising that war memorials are not just relevant on 11th November but all year round. This is why In Memoriam 2014 is so important; it is an opportunity for communities to take action to protect their war memorials today and for the years ahead to ensure future generations can continue to pay their respects to the fallen.”

Phil Cleary, Director of the SmartWater Foundation, said: “We are hugely proud to be involved in the In Memoriam 2014 project and very pleased with these latest figures, demonstrating heightened interest and awareness. War memorials are focal points for commemoration and we will continue to do all we can to protect these important symbols of our heritage.”

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For more information about In Memoriam 2014 and war memorials, please visit www.warmemorials.org/im2014-press or contact **Frances Moreton**, Director, War Memorials Trust on 020 7834 0200, 07586 920 153 or email frances@warmemorials.org

For more information about SmartWater, please contact **Dave Reynolds**, Communications Manager, SmartWater Foundation on 01952 204 100 or email davereynolds@smartwater.com

NOTES TO EDITORS

- [In Memoriam 2014](#) is seeking to offer greater protection to war memorials across the UK. It aims to prevent any more communities witnessing the desecration of their memorials.
- To support claims that awareness of war memorials is on the rise, the following figures demonstrate the increased number of war memorials that War Memorials Trusts has been directly contacted about by members of the general public:
2010: 200 war memorials a month on average
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2012: 350 war memorials a month on average (Jan-Sep 2012)
- Further details related to war memorial theft can be found in a statement from War Memorials Trust at www.warmemorials.org/news.
- The SmartWater Foundation is donating a unique SmartWater forensic solution for the exclusive use of the ‘In Memoriam 2014’ project at no cost and is also funding the cost of creating a database.
- Metal theft is currently estimated to be costing the UK economy in excess of £700million every year.
- SmartWater solution has been used to convict many criminals for crimes ranging from armed robbery to metal theft throughout the UK (for more information, visit www.smartwater.com).



About War Memorials Trust

War Memorials Trust works for the protection and conservation of war memorials in the UK. They provide advice and information to anyone with a war memorial enquiry as well as running grant schemes for the repair and conservation of war memorials. It is a registered charity with relies entirely on voluntary contributions to undertake its work. For further information visit www.warmemorials.org or telephone 0300 123 0764.

About The SmartWater Foundation

The SmartWater Foundation Ltd is a not for profit company established and funded solely by SmartWater Technology Ltd. The Foundation provides charitable donations of equipment and services to the UK law enforcement agencies in support of local crime reduction initiatives within hard-pressed communities.

