

News statement

War Memorials Trust reports on cases of theft and vandalism to war memorials



Date: Tuesday 24th October 2017
Status: Immediate release

Starts

War Memorials Trust 2017 update reports that the theft and vandalism of war memorials has fallen to its lowest level since the Trust started reporting on known cases in 2010.

Between January and October 2017 War Memorials Trust received only 2 reports of theft from war memorials in the UK, significantly lower than the worst year, 2011, when 40 cases were identified. In both cases this year, Bunbury war memorial in Cheshire and Nottingham war memorial, War Memorials Trust is providing support with advice or grants after the incidents.

In addition, this year has seen a drop in vandalism cases with just 5 known to the charity compared to 15 in 2016. These include the memorial in Darnhall Village Hall, Cheshire, which was broken in to and covered in paint as well as Tilbury-Juxta-Claire memorial, Essex, which was smashed by vandals. War Memorials Trust has been in contact with the custodians of both war memorials to offer its help. All these events are distressing for local communities and the Trust provides advice and grants to ensure any damage is appropriately repaired.

The reasons for the fall in theft cases is likely to include fluctuating global prices for metal, greater community awareness of the threats which war memorials face, improved legislation to prevent metal theft and In Memoriam 2014, the Trust's partnership with the SmartWater Foundation. Through In Memoriam 2014 war memorial custodians can apply for free SmartWater to help protect their war memorials and deter theft.

War Memorials Trust's Director, Frances Moreton, said: "War Memorials Trust is delighted that both theft and vandalism cases have fallen but we should not be complacent. Any incident is distressing for communities and we all need to remain vigilant to ensure our war memorials are protected and conserved."

"War Memorials Trust would call upon any war memorial custodians who have not yet applied for free SmartWater to contact In Memoriam 2014 to help deter theft. In addition, it is important that everyone maintains their awareness of the war memorials in their community – a tidy, cherished site suggests attention which can discourage those who might consider damage or theft."

The statistics quoted above cover the period January to October for 2017. They have been extracted from War Memorials Trust's Casework Programme which records cases of vandalism and theft when they are reported to, or are picked up through media reports by, the charity. The cases detailed in the appendix therefore provide a snapshot of vandalism and theft activity against war memorials across the UK over a period of ten months. Any cases that War Memorials Trust becomes aware of during November and December 2017 will be added to the statistics

Ends

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Notes to editors

1. For details of specific cases of theft and vandalism in 2017 please see the associated appendix which will be updated with any new cases until the end of the year. Details of specific cases released in October 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015 are also available on the Trust's website www.warmemorials.org/news. The numbers are provided below for recent years.

| Year | Theft or attempted theft | Vandalism |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------|
| 2010 | 14 | 7 |
| 2011 | 40 | 20 |
| 2012 | 16 | 9 |
| 2013 | 8 | 21 |
| 2014 | 4 | 12 |
| 2015 | 3 | 5 |
| 2016 | 4 | 15 |
| 2017 (Jan – October) | 2 | 5 |

2. War Memorials Online is seeking to create a greater understanding of the condition of war memorials. Identifying war memorials in 'Poor' or 'Very bad' condition will help target resources at those memorials that need help. The public can also raise concerns through the website which are passed to War Memorials Trust to follow up. The map search on the website can be searched to show war memorial condition in your local area, www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/memorials.
3. In Memoriam 2014 is a partnership between SmartWater and War Memorials Trust. In Memoriam 2014 will protect 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, will not only make 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. For further information on this please visit www.inmemoriam2014.org. For further information on the In Memoriam 2014 project please visit www.warmemorials.org/im2014-press.
4. Numbers of reported thefts and vandalism are based on those cases 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 theft and vandalism to War Memorials Trust and as such there may be other cases of which we are unaware.
5. War Memorials Trust and Historic England have guidance to prevent theft which is available on the English Heritage website www.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/war-memorial-theft-prevention-solutions.

6. 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.
7. 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.