

News statement

War Memorials Trust reports on cases of theft and vandalism to war memorials during 2018



Date: 3rd November 2018

Status: Immediate release

Starts

As the nation approaches the centenary of the 1918 Armistice it is sad to report an increase this year in vandalism and graffiti incidents around war memorials. The Trust is aware of 19 incidents since January 2018 compared with 5 during 2017. Tragically, these attacks are often mindless with no recognition of the hurt caused to communities. However, with 100,000 war memorials across the UK it is worth noting that only a tiny fraction have been attacked demonstrating the overwhelming respect for our war memorial heritage.

14 of the vandalism attacks have involved graffiti. Often attempts to remove this are undertaken quickly and can be done inappropriately causing even greater damage to the memorial than the graffiti itself. Advice on appropriate approaches to minimise risk can be provided by War Memorials Trust and other conservation bodies.

The charity is only aware of 3 cases of theft or attempted theft this year which sees no change on last year. Any incidence of theft or attempted theft is one too many as the disrespect is hugely upsetting to communities and replacement or repair can be costly. However, when compared with the high levels of theft recorded a few years ago the decline is very welcome. When such incidents take place the charity can offer help, advice and sometimes grants to ensure any damage is appropriately repaired in-line with best conservation practice.

Custodians can be proactive in deterring theft by ensuring their war memorial is protected with SmartWater available free of charge through In Memoriam 2014. Since 2011, In Memoriam 2014 has enabled communities to apply for their free SmartWater online at www.inmemoriam2014.org. It is posted out for them to mark directly the metal elements of their war memorials whether that be single plaques, sculptures, fixtures or fittings and even the lead lettering. Initially running through the centenary of World War I the SmartWater Foundation and War Memorials Trust recently confirmed the project will continue beyond the anniversary enabling communities yet to act to get involved.

War Memorials Trust's Director, Frances Moreton, said: "At the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month this year we will all be marking the centenary of the Armistice. It is sad that some communities have had to deal in this important year with the consequences of theft, vandalism or graffiti but with 100,000 war memorials across the UK we should recognise that such instances are small in number. However, any such should be condemned as they disrespect those commemorated by our war memorials.

War Memorials Trust is delighted that In Memoriam 2014 will be continuing in the years ahead as it is an important way for communities to protect their war memorials. Alongside this we encourage everyone to make sure there is a record of their local memorials, with pictures and condition information, on War Memorials Online, www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk. This will ensure that should the worst happen there are details of the memorial which can help identify any stolen items if found or assist with repair that becomes necessary."

Ends

Contact

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Notes to editors

1. For details of specific cases of theft and vandalism in each year please see the associated appendix for the relevant News releases or statements. The numbers are provided below for the periods recorded:

Year	Theft or attempted theft	Vandalism (inc. Graffiti until 2018-19)	Graffiti	Total incidents
2010	14	7		21
2011	40	20		60
2012	16	9		25
2013	8	21		29
2014	4	12		16
2015	3	5		8
2016	4	15		19
2017	2	5		7
Jan – Oct 2018	3	5	14	22

Numbers of reported thefts and vandalism are based on those cases reported directly to War Memorials Trust or that it picks up from various media. 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 the charity is unaware.

2. In Memoriam 2014 is a partnership between the SmartWater Foundation and War Memorials Trust. In Memoriam 2014 offers protection for war memorials at risk of theft or damage by enabling communities to mark them with a forensic liquid called SmartWater. The traceable liquid has a unique chemical composition and forensic code that can be applied so if memorials/features are stolen they can be returned to the scene of the crime. It is being made available **free of charge** to war memorial custodians.

SmartWater is well known to criminals, who acknowledge that it represents a genuine threat to them as the product has had a 100% conviction rate in hundreds of cases.

For further information please visit www.inmemoriam2014.org or www.warmemorials.org/im2014-press.

3. 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.

4. Relevant advice

- a. War Memorials Trust has a range of guidance on issues related to war memorials which run alongside those issued by national heritage bodies
 - i. www.warmemorials.org/helpsheets
 - ii. www.warmemorials.org/faqs
 - b. Historic England:
 - i. [The Conservation, Repair and Management of War Memorials](#)
 - ii. [Graffiti on Historic Buildings and Monuments. Methods of removal and preservation](#)
 - iii. [Metal Theft from Historic Buildings: prevention, response and recovery](#)
 - c. Historic Environment Scotland:
 - i. [Repair and Maintenance of War Memorials](#)
 - ii. [Graffiti Removal](#)
 - d. Cadw
 - i. [Caring for War Memorials in Wales](#)
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.
7. 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.