

News statement

War Memorials Trust reports on cases of theft and vandalism associated with war memorials during 2018-19



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Status: Immediate release

Starts

Whilst the national commemorative events to mark the centenary of World War I ended in 2018 many communities are now looking to remember the events that lead to the creation of their local war memorials. Sadly, some are also having to deal with the consequences of theft and vandalism.

2018-19 has seen an increase in theft, vandalism and graffiti cases although it was worth noting this is a 15-month period rather than 12 months for previous statistics. One of the reasons for an increase in recorded incidents may actually be the heightened interest in our war memorial heritage due to the centenary events when people are more aware and therefore likelier to notice problems. As War Memorials Trust is only alerted to these events if someone tells us this is not a definitive list.

Overall, 29 incidents of theft, vandalism and graffiti were recorded by the charity. 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. However, any attack is one too many and those perpetrating these should be identified and held accountable.

War Memorials Trust can provide advice, guidance and potentially grant funding, to those effected by such incidents. Dealing with the results of such attacks inappropriately can cause further damage so it is always advisable to get professional advice.

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: "Theft, vandalism or graffiti attacks to our war memorials disrespect the sacrifices of those remembered and cause great upset to communities. Fortunately, such events are rare but each one has an impact far beyond the immediate damage caused. War Memorials Trust offers its assistance to any community dealing with such events and encourages vigilance to identify problems quickly. The charity also encourages you to make sure there is a record of your 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 if 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 2018 – Mar 2019 | 5 | 10 | 14 | 29 |

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 educational resources aimed at helping young people in schools and youth groups to learn about war memorials visit, 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.