News statement

War Memorials Trust reports on cases of theft and vandalism associated with war memorials during 2019-20

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Status: Immediate release

Starts

2019-20 saw levels of theft, vandalism and others form of anti-social behaviour directed at war memorials remain static. During the year the charity was made aware of 27 incidents of which 11 related to graffiti, 9 to vandalism, 4 to anti-social behaviour and just 3 to theft. This compares to a total of 29 between January 2018 and March 2019. There are likely to be more cases of which the charity is unaware so it has been unable to offer advice on repair and conservation.

With an estimated 100,000 war memorials across the UK we should recognise that such events are very rare. But it is still vital that we continue to educate people about the importance of respecting our war memorials and ensure we protect this part of our heritage.

Some of the 2019-20 incidents appear to have been associated with specific commemorations. Over a quarter occurred in June 2019 around the 75th anniversary of D-Day. Sadly, anniversaries which should raise awareness of war memorials as sites at which to pay our respects can also make them targets. However, the Trust is also aware that when interest in remembrance is high greater attention is paid to cases of theft and vandalism with additional reporting of them.

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 the Trust highlights the importance of obtaining 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 have continued the project enabling communities yet to act to get involved.

War Memorials Trust's Director, Frances Moreton, said: "Every time a war memorial is damaged it is not just the memorial itself which is attacked but also the sacrifice of those commemorated by it as well as the wider community for whom our war memorials remain focal points of remembrance. It is important to recognise that war memorials remember those from all our communities and should be respected by all.

To help communities deal with incidents of theft and vandalism it is vital there is a record of our war memorials. The charity is seeking help from the public to record the UK's war 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 which can help identify any stolen items or assist with repairs."

Ends

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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	Anti-social behaviour	Graffiti	Theft or attempted theft	Vandalism (inc. Graffiti to 2017)	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		14	5	10	29
Apr 2019 – Mar-2020	4	11	3	9	27

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. 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. 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.