

News statement



War Memorials Trust reports a fall in theft but an increase in vandalism of war memorials

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Status: Immediate release

Starts

War Memorials Trust (WMT) today announces a dramatic fall in the number of war memorials in the UK which have been targets of theft in 2013.

Levels of theft affecting war memorials gained national attention in 2011 when 40 incidents were reported. In 2012, WMT was pleased to announce the number of theft or attempted theft cases had reduced to 14 which was a return to the level seen in 2010 before the large increase in 2011. In 2013, eight cases of theft or attempted theft from war memorials have been recorded; a decrease of nearly 50% compared to the same point in 2012.

Although not definitive statistics, as WMT's records are based on reports by members of the public and the media, the decrease is indicative of a national trend. A separate appendix contains details of those cases reported so far in 2013. Following the peak in metal theft seen across the UK in 2011 many organisations have been working to combat the problem and the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013 came into force in October 2013. In addition, In Memoriam 2014, a partnership between WMT and the SmartWater Foundation has allowed custodians of war memorials to obtain SmartWater for free to apply to memorials containing metal to help deter theft.

However, there is a worrying trend that with the reduction in theft compared to 2012, there has been an increase in vandalism attacks from six in 2012 to 18 in 2013. The majority of these cases relate to graffiti which can not only be disfiguring but also very difficult to remove. This means that some communities, if not advised on appropriate methods of removal, may resort to methods to remove the graffiti which are damaging to the memorial in the long term. There is guidance on the appropriate removal of graffiti published by English Heritage www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/graffiti-on-historic-buildings-and-monuments/graffiti-historic-buildings-and-monuments.pdf and Historic Scotland www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/informguide-graffiti.pdf.

War Memorials Trust's Director, Frances Moreton commented "It is very encouraging to see that the number of theft or attempted theft cases to war memorials has decreased further and by such a significant number. It is however concerning that vandalism still seems to be a problem. Although affecting a relatively small number of memorials, each case causes distress and upset to the affected community and potential long-term damage to the memorial. The best way to combat vandalism and anti-social behaviour is to use and engage with memorials. We encourage communities to regularly check their war memorials and share details of their condition on War Memorials Online."

Ends

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Notes to editors

1. For details of specific cases of theft and vandalism in 2013 please see the associated appendix. Details of specific cases released in October 2012 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 (Jan-October)	14	6
2013 (Jan-October)	8	18

2. For further information on the In Memoriam 2014 project please visit www.warmemorials.org/im2014-press/.
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 or email enquiry@inmemoriam2014.org.
4. 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.
5. 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 thefts to WMT and as such there may be other cases of which we are unaware.
6. War Memorials Trust has a helpsheet with advice to prevent theft which is available from our website at www.warmemorials.org/uploads/publications/189.pdf.

7. 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.
8. 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.