News statement

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

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Status: Immediate release

Starts

War Memorials Trust today reports a slight rise in the number of war memorials subject to theft and vandalism.

When 40 war memorials were the target of attempted or actual theft in 2011 there was an outcry with solutions sought. During 2016 the number of such cases has fallen to just 4; involving theft of metal or stone elements (2015: 3). There are a number of likely reasons for the decline since 2011 including community awareness of their war memorials and the threats they face. There are still efforts to be made to protect our memorials but the ongoing low levels of theft cases is very welcome.

Unfortunately, whilst theft has remained very low vandalism cases have risen. Graffiti or deliberate damage has occurred at 14 war memorials in 2016 compared with 5 in 2015 and 12 in the same period of 2014. Such cases are deeply distressing to communities but funding and support is available to ensure appropriate removal or repair without causing any additional long-term damage.

The statistics quoted above cover the period January to October for 2016. They have been extracted from the 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 2016 will be added to the statistics

War Memorials Trust's Director, Frances Moreton, said: "Whilst the ongoing low incidents of theft cases is welcome the increase this year of vandalism incidents is saddening. Whilst we are aware these figures are very low when you consider we have 100,000 war memorials in this country any case like this is one too many."

"War Memorials Trust calls on communities to ensure they are aware of their war memorials and monitor their condition. Advice is available about appropriate protective measures if there is concern but vigilance and education about the importance of war memorials and what they represent is key."

"Custodians of war memorial can obtain free SmartWater through In Memoriam 2014 to apply to memorials with metal elements to help protect them from theft. We urge anyone who has not yet applied for their free SmartWater to do so and help protect their irreplaceable local war memorial heritage."

Ends

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Notes to editors

1. For details of specific cases of theft and vandalism in 2016 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 (Jan-October)	4	14

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 WMT 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.