

News statement

War Memorials Trust reports on cases of theft and vandalism associated with war memorials through 2020-21



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Status: Immediate release

Starts

Levels of theft, vandalism and other forms of anti-social behaviour directed at war memorials remain static.

During 2020-21 the number of incidents the charity was aware of was very similar to previous years with just 30 amongst the UK's 100,000 war memorials. So far in 2021-22 numbers appear lower, at 5, although as people are not required to report these to the charity there may be more not yet recorded. However, in recent years evidence has suggested that war memorial damage is triggered by awareness of other such incidents. Coverage of such activities often coincides with Remembrance Day or military anniversaries and reporting of one incident will either lead to others being identified, or more sadly copycat events taking place which are then featured.

It is important we recognise that theft, vandalism and other forms of anti-social behaviour associated with our war memorials is very rare. Each case is upsetting but overall, UK war memorials are well-cared for and it is the rarity of such incidents which leads to attention – people are appalled because they reflect unusual and offensive behaviour.

	Total incidents	Number and % involving the following issues (some include more than one)				
		Anti-social behaviour	Graffiti	Attempted Theft	Theft	Vandalism
2018-19	29	0	14 (48%)	0	5 (17%)	10 (34%)
2019-20	31	7 (22%)	11 (34%)	1 (3%)	3 (9%)	10 (31%)
2020-21	30	6 (20%)	12 (40%)	0	2 (7%)	13 (43%)
2021-22	5	1 (20%)	4 (80%)	0	0	0

War Memorials Trust can provide advice, guidance and potentially grant funding, to those impacted 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.

War Memorials Trust's Director, Frances Moreton, said: "Any incident of theft, vandalism or anti-social behaviour around our war memorials is disrespectful. It is an affront both to those commemorated and our communities who continue to pay their respects to all those impacted by war.

If you are concerned about a war memorial, or see a problem, contact War Memorials Trust for advice. You can also get involved in conserving this unique aspect of the UK's heritage by submitting pictures and condition information, to War Memorials Online, www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk. This will help build a greater understanding of the condition of our war memorials and make sure they are recorded so should the worst happen there is information to help identify stolen items or assist with repairs."

Ends

Contact

Frances Moreton, Director War Memorials Trust

Telephone: 020 7834 0200 / 07586 920 153

Email: frances@warmemorials.org

Website: www.warmemorials.org / www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk

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](#). 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.