

News statement

2021-22 war memorial theft, vandalism and anti-social behaviour cases



Date: 9th May 2022
Status: Immediate release

Starts

War Memorials Trust is pleased to report that levels of theft, vandalism and other forms of anti-social behaviour directed at war memorials remain very low. Just 0.04% of war memorials in the UK are believed to have been subject to such problems.

In 2021-22, incidents of theft and vandalism fell, with just 10 reported compared to 16 in 2020-21. However, reports of anti-social behaviour and graffiti increased from 21 to 31.

Each of these cases has caused upset for individuals and communities. We should all work hard to avoid such events. However, it is important to recognise that they are few and far between reflecting how the estimated 100,000 war memorials across the UK are wonderfully well-cared for by the communities who remain responsible for them.

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. In 2021-22, the Grants for War Memorials Scheme, supported by Historic England and administered by War Memorials Trust, provided £1,340 to assist a project to reinstate a plaque stolen from [Griff Colliery](#) war memorial 16 years ago.

	Total incidents	Number and % involving the following issues (some include more than one)				
		Anti-social behaviour	Graffiti	Attempted Theft	Theft	Vandalism
2019-20*	34	9 (25%)	12 (33%)	1 (3%)	3 (8%)	11 (31%)
2020-21*	38	10 (26%)	18 (47%)	0	4 (11%)	16 (42%)
2021-22*	39	18 (46%)	13 (33%)	0	2 (5%)	8 (21%)
2022-23**	2	1 (50%)	0	0	0	1 (50%)

*Updated May 2022

**At 9th May 2022

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: "War Memorials Trust abhors all acts of damage or disrespect aimed at war memorials. They disrespect those commemorated by our war memorials, the custodians who care for them today and the wider community for whom the war memorial has a central role as a focus for remembrance.

If you are concerned about a war memorial, or spot a problem, please contact War Memorials Trust for advice, providing pictures if you can. 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 cases reported directly to War Memorials Trust or those 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 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 used 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](#)
 - c. Historic Environment Scotland:
 - i. [Repair and Maintenance of War Memorials](#)
 - ii. [Graffiti Removal](#)
 - d. Cadw
 - i. [Caring for War Memorials in Wales](#)
 - ii. [Caring for War Memorials in Wales – Technical Guidance](#)
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.