

Current issues involving war memorials



War Memorials Trust

On this sheet you will learn:

- Things that cause problems for war memorials.
- What can be done about them.

Age of war memorials

Many war memorials were created after the First World War (1914-1918). These memorials are now nearly **100** years old and some need work to make sure that they can still be used and are a good record of **sacrifices** made in wars. Some need cleaning to make sure the **writing** on them can be read. Other memorials need **repairs** if they have been damaged or if materials have weathered over time.

A problem is working out who is **responsible** for doing this. War memorials were created by communities – a group of people from the same place who designed and raised money for a memorial. Now, those people are no longer here and it can be hard to work out whose job it is to look after the memorial, especially if no-one has a link with the memorial like having a relative named on it.

Also, work to a memorial cannot just be done by anyone – you need to get a **professional** to clean and repair it. Finding money to do this can be difficult.

Theft and vandalism

Sometimes war memorials are **stolen** or have parts of them stolen. A big reason for stealing memorials is **metal**. Lots of memorials have metal parts, like a statue or a plaque, and these are stolen so the metal can be **sold**. The money made selling metal like this is a small amount, but it costs much more to replace the part of the memorial that has been stolen.

Often the metal parts of a memorial show the **names** of those who are remembered and losing them means that the personal

link between the memorial and local people is gone.



Carshalton war memorial after metal plaques listing names were stolen. © War Memorials Trust, 2011.

Another problem is people using war memorials in the **wrong** way. Some memorials are in areas where people ride **bikes or skateboards**, or people might even ride on the memorial itself if it is large and has steps or a flat area. This causes **damage** to the memorial.



Kirkby war memorial, Merseyside, after vandalism. © Kings Regt. Association Knowsley, 2005.

Seeing war memorials stolen or vandalised, or neglected and not cared for, makes many people **angry** because they think it shows a lack of **respect** for the war memorial and the people that the memorial commemorates. Sometimes relatives of the people named on the memorial still live nearby and seeing the memorial harmed can be very **upsetting**.

What can be done?

There are ways to solve these problems and lots of people who want to help prevent them:

- **In Memoriam 2014** is a project to stop metal theft from war memorials. It uses **SmartWater**, a liquid that is put on items to make them easier to **find** if they are stolen. The project gives SmartWater to the person responsible for a war memorial and it is painted onto metal parts. If a war memorial with SmartWater on it is stolen it is easier to find. Also, thieves are less likely to steal it if they think it has SmartWater on it because they are more likely to be **caught**.



SmartWater that is put onto metal parts of war memorials to help make them easier to find if they are stolen. © SmartWater Technology Ltd, 2011.

- **War Memorials Online** allows people to add information about war memorials to a website so we build up a **complete record** of them. The idea is that if everyone adds information about their **local** war memorial we will get accurate information because people know their local area well. This will help War Memorials Trust because we will get a good idea of memorials that need our **help**. It also means that better records of war memorials exist, so that if anything happens to them we have more information to be able to help.
- **Find out more:** some of these problems happen because people do not know about war memorials or realise how **important** they are, rather than because of deliberate damage. War Memorials Trust tries to help people to **understand** war memorials better and encourages

people to find out more about them and tell other people what they know. With a better understanding of war memorials and why they are important people are more likely to work to **look after** them. Lots of people are becoming more interested in war memorials because the **centenary** of the First World War is coming up and this is making lots of people think about it.

- **Look after your local memorial:** War Memorials Trust also helps communities to look after their war memorial so it is in good condition and a fitting tribute to the people affected by war. We do this by providing advice about the best way to carry out work and money to fund it.

What can you do?

Young people like you can **get involved** in these projects. You can check the War Memorials Online website to make sure your local memorial is recorded, research your local memorial and tell people about it, or help your local memorial by making sure the area around it is kept tidy.

There is more information about what you can do in the Projects section of our website, www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org/youth-groups/projects. You can also contact our Learning Officer on learning@warmemorials.org if you need help. You **must check** anything you want to do with your group leader first.

Summary

- Because many war memorials were built nearly **100** years ago they sometimes need work to make sure they are in good condition and inscriptions can be read.
- Sometimes war memorials are **stolen** or **damaged** by people wanting to sell metal or who do not understand how important the memorial is.
- There are lots of things that you can do to help your local memorial. Have a look at our website to find out more and to get involved!