



Your Heritage and Culture needs you

We have spoken of metal theft before, seeing it in many forms i.e. the theft of catalytic convertors from the exhaust system on cars and vans, lead from roofs old and modern rural and urban, cabling for utilities such as telecommunications and many other examples from around us where there are valuable metals. This time we are focusing on our heritage and culture under threat, and again seeking those extra pairs of eyes to report anything that you believe is suspicious.

The country and our county are full of a wealth of heritage and culture each telling a story of our past, some listed others not, some attractive and others perhaps not so attractive but each with a story. Our heritage and culture have been there for past and present generations to discover, enquire, learn from and enjoy and we need to protect it for future generations; it's like a piece of a jigsaw if a piece is missing the picture is not complete. A heritage asset cannot be replaced, when it's gone it's gone, when its damaged it may not be possible to repair that damage satisfactorily and future generations are deprived of it.

Heritage crime comes in many forms, these are but a few:

- The theft of lead from a roof and its resultant water damage causing catastrophic damage to a church or other heritage building potentially also causing the cancellation of a wedding or other function.
- Our heritage buildings, grounds and structures also suffer from the theft of paving stones, bricks, and other architectural masonry.
- Monuments and memorials suffer from damage, and theft, often of metal plaques bearing the names of events of those recognised.
- Royal mail post boxes many unique and recognised from a specific period in time are stolen.
- Burglaries from historic venues and museums like that recently from Arundel Castle that stolen including the Gold Rosary Beads carried by Mary Queen of Scots at her execution in 1587, many visitors would have looked in awe of it and its history within its showcase.
- 'Nighthawking' the theft of archaeological material by unlawful metal detecting on scheduled monuments.
- Graffiti to heritage structures.

All these crimes will not only have a detrimental impact on their custodians but also on the local community, families, and those from further afield. Some locations will be isolated and others may not, some may have neighbours, visitors, passer-by's, dog walkers, horse riders, hikers and more; see something suspicious report it to staff where appropriate, or the police using 999 if you believe a crime is in progress or 101, online or chat if not an emergency. Don't know where you are use the "What Three Words" App <https://what3words.com/products/what3words-app/> police and other emergency services use it.

So, what can be done? We can make it more difficult to steal and we can make it more difficult to dispose of.

Making it more difficult to steal or dispose of:

- **Report any suspicious activity:** i.e. the car or other vehicle parked up in a suspicious manner or seemingly out of place going down that lonely lane to an isolated church, unusual activity around a church, heritage or other building when it's not normal especially on a roof, unmarked vehicle with people removing a mailbox, unusual activity on a known scheduled monument or late evening/night metal detecting. NB – If you have planned building work let your neighbours, parishioners, employees know including who they are, what hours they will be there and provide an emergency contact number.
- **Make it harder to steal:** i.e. reduce access make them walk further and into public view especially when protecting buildings and their roofs, remove aids to the thief i.e. tools to do the job and climbing aids or something to carry their ill-gotten gains away, consider an alarm, with lead from roofs especially try and make access difficult subject to certain conditions you could use a spiky topping around downpipes fencing and roofs. Consider electronic security and CCTV.
- **Making it harder to dispose of:** to start off with if its less attractive its less likely to be stolen so appropriate property marking and signage may deter. Property marking makes it harder to dispose of, and there is something for almost everything from historic artefacts on the seabed to catalytic convertor to roofing material to your day to day property. NB seek advice and the relevant authorities before marking heritage items. An unmarked piece of property can be anonymous when stolen, in most cases we don't know where it came from and therefore any prosecution is that much more difficult. A thief will know this and therefore anything that ties it back to the owner presents a risk not only to the thief but also to the handler, if the handler will not take it or it causes difficult questions at a boot fair or other then it's not worth stealing it in the first place.
- **If you are buying** a piece of history, heritage stone, architectural masonry etc. question its provenance, where it came from, legitimacy of the seller, if in doubt report it to Trading Standards or the Police.

Essex is one of a growing number of counties in the network of Heritage Watches, talking to each other, with members helping to protect our heritage for this and future generations. Protect your neighbourhood by setting up a Neighbourhood Watch, Heritage Watch or Business Watch if you have not got one, the signage deters, and many eyes are better than one pair

For further advice on heritage crime and crime prevention see: www.essex.police.uk/cp/crime-prevention/ or <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/caring-for-heritage/heritage-crime/>

For further information on Heritage Watch email: essex.watch.liaison.officers@essex.police.uk

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