



St Mark's: Heritage-listed St John's Wood church destroyed in devastating fire

Vicar of St Mark's church says she is 'absolutely heartbroken' by the blaze



**Churches:
Our national
heritage**

**Blaze
engulfs
church**

**Churches &
Fire Safety**

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Contents

Page 1	Contents page
Page 2	Message from the Directors
Page 3-4	Churches & Fire Safety
Page 5	Churches and Heritage in the UK
Page 6	E-Bound Scaffold Alarm
Page 7	New Modems / Benefact Trust Grants
Page 8	Staff Profile - Jade

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orth of treasure

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destroyed
by blaze

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BT

Rising Threat to Ecclesiastical Buildings: A Surge in Church Robberies Shakes Communities

Thieves Evolve Tactics, Employing Explosives and Sophistication to Target Churches

As we reach middle of May, an alarming trend has emerged across the country. Ecclesiastical buildings, once considered sanctuaries, have become the target of audacious thefts and break-ins. Not only are lead thefts from church roofs rising again, criminals have now escalated their approach by employing explosives to gain access to valuables locked away in church safes. These cowardly acts of criminality not only result in material losses but also inflict emotional distress on members of the local community. In this article, we delve into the growing threat and explore recent incidents that highlight the need for heightened security measures.

Sophisticated Techniques: Recent reports have shed light on the increasing level of sophistication employed by these disrespectful thieves. To avoid detection, they interrupt the church's electrical system to disable CCTV cameras, demonstrating an awareness of surveillance technology. Once inside undetected, the criminals meticulously break into every locked room inside the church, searching for valuables. St. Mary's Church in Wareham, Dorset, experienced such an intrusion, with thieves resorting to an angle grinder to force open a lock in the vestry. The contempt shown by these criminals is matched only by the impact of their crimes.

Also during May 2023, however, we witnessed a breakthrough in the battle against metal theft from church roofs, as a trio of criminals responsible for a string of robberies between April and November 2016 faced justice. These thieves targeted numerous churches across the country, leaving a trail of destruction and financial losses totalling a staggering seven-figure sum. After a thorough investigation by the police, dubbed Operation Dastardly, two of the gang members received custodial sentences, while the third was ordered to pay costs and complete a community service order as punishment for their involvement in the lead thefts. This outcome serves as a reminder that authorities are working diligently to bring these criminals to justice.

The impact of these crimes extends beyond mere financial losses, creating distress and disruption within communities that rely on these sacred spaces. The recent sentencing following the success of Operation Dastardly is a step in the right direction.

"Not only does it result in the loss of the metal and the subsequent cost of replacement, but also causes upset and disruption to members of the community at their place of worship."

Det Chief Supt Neil Taylor head of Opal, the National Intelligence unit for Organised Acquisitive Crime

As the year progresses, the rise in lead thefts from church roofs and seemingly indiscriminate break-ins at ecclesiastical buildings continues to cause alarm and upset. The recent surge in criminals resorting to extraordinary methods and their increasing sophistication demand immediate attention.

It is essential that communities, authorities, and religious organisations work together to implement robust security measures and protect these cherished places of worship from the attentions of those intent on profiting from their destruction. Contact us today to see how we can help safeguard your church.



Angus Brown

Managing Director, E-Bound AVX Ltd

FIRE SAFETY

by Colin McFadyzean

Churches are an integral part of our cultural heritage and it is crucial that we take steps to safeguard these historic buildings from the devastating effects of fire.

As we enter the halfway point of the year, we want to highlight fire prevention for churches and what can be done to reduce the risk of a costly fire. It is estimated that at least 20 churches of historical importance are destroyed or seriously damaged by fire every year across the globe.

Churches pose a unique set of challenges when it comes to fire safety due to their age, size and construction materials. Additionally, the contents of a church, such as priceless artefacts, artwork and historical documents are often irreplaceable. Therefore, it is essential to have a comprehensive fire safety plan in place to preserve both the building and its contents.

Since February 2022 there have been eight significant fires at churches in the UK. One of the most recent and devastating fires was at St Mark's Church in St John's Wood, London. On the night of January 26th this year, the 177-year-old Grade II listed building described as a 'historical treasure' was devastated by a fire which caused the roof to collapse and left the church a smouldering shell. Shocking statistics show that every year, there are over 2,000 fires in churches and chapels in England alone, costing many millions of pounds in repairs and an incalculable cost in lost heritage.

The damage may not only be measured in the loss of the fabric of the building and the loss of historical items, as there were 275 fire-related fatalities in the UK last year alone.

Most fires are thankfully discovered early and put out before they develop further. Some, however, are serious and destructive; a few are catastrophic, such as the Church of the Ascension in Salford in February 2017 and the Bethel Community Church in Newport in June 2018.

The consequences of a fire can be overwhelming in terms of damage to property, injury and even potential loss of life. It can also mean months or years of closure while repairs are carried out.

Services will have to be held in other buildings while outside user groups will be forced to find alternative premises, or will close down due to lack of facilities. St John the Baptist Church in Royston, Hertfordshire suffered a fire in December 2018 and only reopened its doors four years later on 21st November 2022. St John's Church in Blackburn had to undergo £3.75million worth of restoration works starting in February 2022 which are still ongoing following a fire there in 2019.

Not all fires are accidental in 2019 four churches in close proximity to each other in the Stratford area of London were deliberately targeted and had their front doors set alight and symbols carved into them in what was dubbed by the newspapers as a 'Satanic Arson' attack.

Early detection is one of the most critical aspects of fire safety in churches. Churches should be equipped with a fire detection system that can detect smoke, heat and flames at the earliest possible stage. This allows for immediate response from the fire services, which can help to minimise damage.

“The consequences of a fire can be overwhelming in terms of damage to property, injury and even potential loss of life.”



St Mark's Church, St John's Wood, London on Jan 26th, 2023

E-Bound Wireless Smoke Detectors and Fire Beams are linked to your roof alarm panel, meaning the same technology that we use to alert in the event of a roof intrusion is used to transmit a fire alarm warning to our NSI Gold Monitoring Centre. If your alarm is triggered by accident or arson you are alerted within seconds and can summon the emergency services as required. It is essential that the detection system is regularly maintained and tested to ensure that it is functioning correctly.

In addition to detection systems, it is crucial to have an evacuation plan in place. A clear and concise evacuation plan is crucial for ensuring that people can leave the building quickly and safely in the event of a fire. Church staff and volunteers should be trained in how to implement the evacuation plan and regular fire drills should be conducted to ensure that everyone knows what to do in an emergency.

Finally, it is important to note that the responsibility for fire safety in churches falls on the church itself. It is the church's responsibility to ensure that adequate fire safety measures are in place and that they are regularly maintained and tested. Regular inspections of fire safety equipment, checking fire exits are clear and keeping emergency lighting working are essential steps that churches can take to ensure the safety of their congregation. In conclusion, fire safety is a critical issue that should not be overlooked when it comes to churches. As a company that specialises in security equipment installation, we urge all churches to take fire safety seriously and to take steps to safeguard their congregations, their buildings and their precious contents. By taking these precautions, churches can help to ensure that they continue to provide a place of worship



Above: E-Bound wooden-look smoke detector



Below: E-Bound Fire Beam



E-Bound has produced a handy 'Church Emergency Strategy' document that can be used to self assess your church and highlight any areas that need attention or preparation. The form can be downloaded from our webpage here: www.e-bound.co.uk

CHURCH EMERGENCY STRATEGY		
CHURCH EMERGENCY STRATEGY		
NAME OF PERSONS & NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON	DATE:	
EMERGENCY BY POST	DATE:	
PROVISION	ASSESSMENT	RECOMMENDATIONS
PHYSICAL FEATURES OF BUILDINGS		
ESCAPE ROUTES		
FIRE BEAMS		
FIRE TRIGGER ACCESS		
FLOOD & OTHER RISKS		

CHURCH EMERGENCY STRATEGY		
EXAMPLE FORM		
NAME OF PERSONS & NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON	DATE:	
EMERGENCY BY POST	DATE:	
PROVISION	ASSESSMENT	RECOMMENDATIONS
PHYSICAL FEATURES OF BUILDINGS		
ESCAPE ROUTES		
FIRE BEAMS		
FIRE TRIGGER ACCESS		
FLOOD & OTHER RISKS		

The document also has an example form attached to aid you in filling out your own strategy for your church

Top Fire Tips:

- 1. Good housekeeping** - it is important that everything has its place and is preferably locked away
- 2. Rubbish Management** – it is important that the management of rubbish is adhered to. All waste must be cleared at the end of the day and kept well away from the building.
- 3. Complete a fire self-risk assessment of your church, to try and minimise the fire risks.** A blank emergency strategy document is available from our web page, with an example form attached. Available [here](#)
- 4. Have a fire evacuation plan in place and ensure that everybody knows how it works.**
- 5. Make sure nothing is blocking exit doors or any escape routes for the evacuation of the building.**
- 6. Have E-Bound wooden-look smoke detectors and Fire Beams fitted as part of a fire detection system that integrates with your roof alarm.**

Churches and Heritage in the UK: Preserving the Past for the Future

by Angus Brown

The UK is home to some of the world's finest churches and they are a testament to the country's rich cultural heritage.

These churches are more than places of worship, being significant landmarks that have played a crucial role in shaping our history.

From the towering spires of Westminster Abbey to the ancient ruins of Glastonbury Abbey, the UK's churches are a treasure trove of history, art and architecture.

Moreover, these buildings are more than just relics of the past and are still actively used by communities today.

Preserving these churches is crucial not only to maintain their historical significance but also to ensure that they remain accessible to future generations. Churches are often the heart of the community, providing a gathering place for worship, events and celebrations.

In recent years, there has been a growing concern about the sustainability of churches and their preservation. Many churches face financial difficulties due to declining attendance, leading to a lack of funding. As a result, there has been a call for greater community involvement in the preservation of these buildings.

“Preserving these churches is crucial not only to maintain their historical significance but also to ensure that they remain accessible to future generations.”



All Saint's Church, Bakewell, Derbyshire

Several initiatives have been launched to help preserve churches in the UK. The Heritage Lottery Fund has been instrumental in funding restoration and preservation projects for churches, while other organisations, such as the Churches Conservation Trust, are dedicated to preserving at-risk churches.

The National Churches Trust, created in 2007 to carry on the work of the Historic Churches Preservation Trust, which was set up in 1953, is another organisation that plays a vital role in the preservation of churches.

The Trust provides support and funding for churches of all denominations and works to ensure that these buildings remain accessible and in good condition for years to come.

In addition to preserving churches, many communities are finding new ways to use these buildings, such as hosting community events and concerts. This not only helps to maintain the building's viability but also fosters a sense of community and belonging.

Churches are an essential part of the UK's cultural heritage and should be cherished and preserved for future generations. Whatever your religious beliefs, these buildings hold a special place in our collective history and should be celebrated as such. By doing so, we can help ensure that these stunning buildings continue to be a part of our cultural landscape for years to come.



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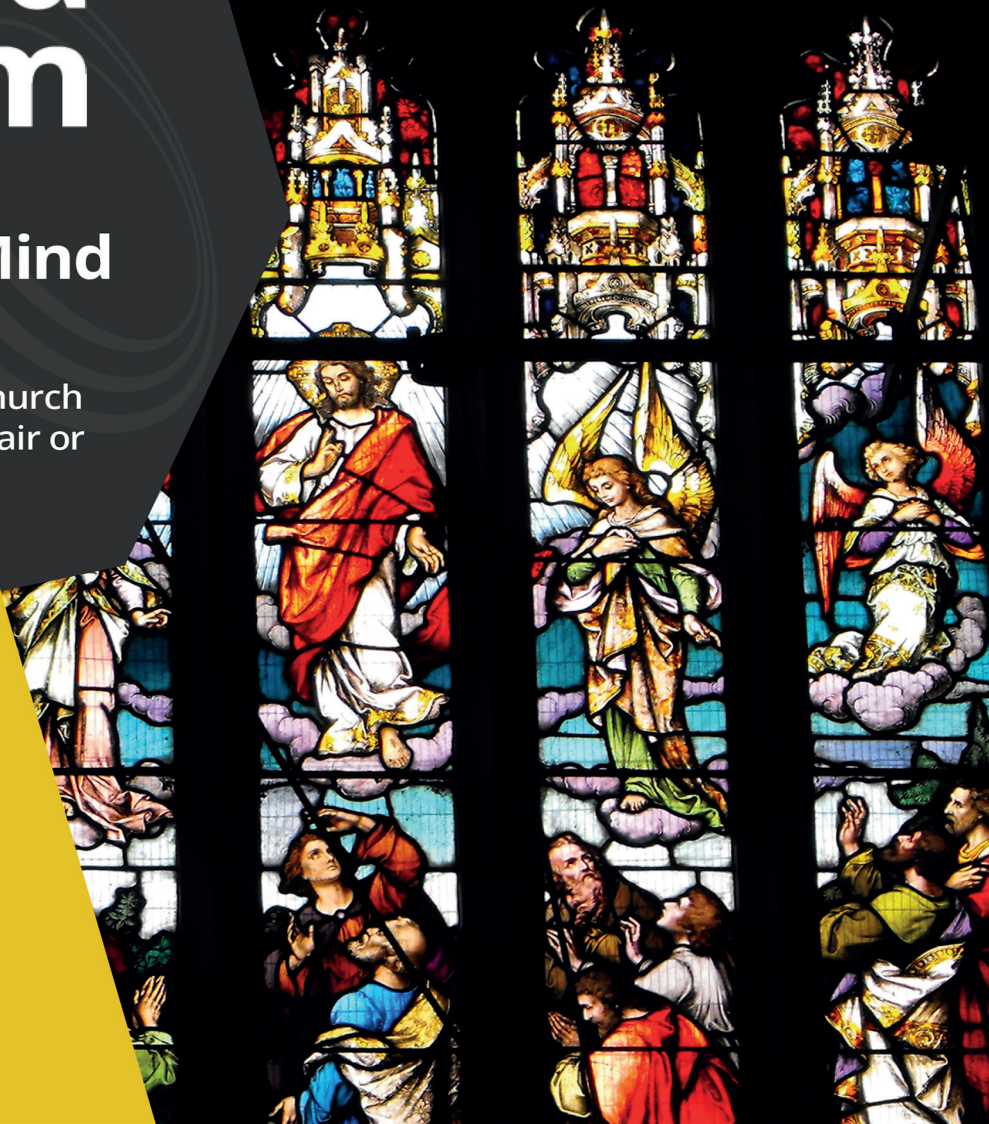
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E-Bound AVX Ltd

Essential Product Upgrade Due To Telephone Network Changes

As you may already be aware, the Government has backed plans to retire all 3G networks by 2024, with some networks committing to switching off their 3G provision by the end of this year.

We have individually emailed our customers that are due an upgrade.

Unsure if you need the upgraded modem? Give us a call today:
01733 843341



Benefact Trust Grants

Benefact Trust's Roof Protection Scheme provides grants to help churches install roof alarms in response to the issue of metal theft, which continues to be a very challenging issue across the UK. They have recently extended this scheme until the end of 2023 and increased the amount of funding available, with grants now funding up to 50% of the cost of the alarm, up to a maximum of £2,500. Grants under Benefact Trust's Roof Protection Scheme are made direct to individual churches. We advise that churches apply through one of these group schemes where possible, as some local trusts and dioceses have

other funds available to add to the Benefact Trust grant. Please note that you can only apply for a roof alarm grant from a group scheme OR apply directly for a roof alarm grant to Benefact Trust. You cannot apply to both. This list will be updated as new schemes are added. Please note that the proposed alarm system must be from a supplier that is approved by the church's insurer, whoever that may be, and the church must commit to maintaining the alarm for a minimum of five years. Further details can be found at benefacttrust.co.uk



BENEFACT TRUST



Staff Profile: Jade

- **Name?** Jade
- **Age?** 33
- **Home Town?** Peterborough
- **Role at E-Bound?** Finance Assistant
- **How long have you been with the company?**
Since August 2021
- **Has your role evolved over time?**
Yes, since starting with E-Bound I have been given lots of new tasks to complete in my day to day role such as ensuring accounts are up to date and managing monthly statements as well as completing online Sage courses.
- **Do you have an office nickname?** Not that I am aware of lol
- **Do you recall any embarrassing moments at work?** when the blind in the toilet fell down on me.
- **What was the most unusual or interesting job you've had besides E-Bound?**
Working at a local horse racing yard
- **What are 3 words to describe E-Bound?** Flexible, Rewarding & Supportive
- **What do you like the most about E-Bound?** That we are all one big family
- **How would you describe the company culture?**
That we are all treated as an individual and not a number
- **One thing about you people might not know or surprise them?**
My dream is to live on a farm and own pigmy goats
- **What piece of advice would you give to your younger self?**
Dont worry or stress about the little things in life
- **Any random facts you could share with us?**
Farm pigs can't easily look up, as their necks are too fat
- **What is the first concert you attended?** Steps
- **Favorite book/song or poem?** Non-Fiction books and Country music
- **Do you have any phobias?** I don't really like heights
- **What would you take on a desert island?**
Food drink, pillow & blanket

