

# Sussex Heritage Community

## **HERITAGE CRIME DATA – SUSSEX**

**MARCH 2021 - FEBRUARY 2022**

### **ANALYSIS**

Threats

Harm and Risks

Heritage Crime

12 months statistics

Published by Sea Road Arts



Published in Great Britain

Published in February 2022 by Sea Road Arts

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# Sussex Heritage Community

## Sussex - Threats, Harm and Risks

### Heritage Crime Statistics for the last 12 months

#### Introduction

It is with a degree of trepidation that we look to interpret the annual open-source heritage crime data for Sussex. We qualify our findings with an enhanced independent working knowledge of the subject and with accurate open-source data.

The data received is from credible sources - and the primary aggrieved victims themselves. Contact is made with all victims, to offer support from the Heritage Community and our partners. This support also allows for the sharing of information and raising awareness through the mediums of social media, using timely placed posts and alerts, encouraging witnesses to report to the authorities. We reach out to the public and heritage sector, to encourage close working relationships. Prevention, education, and engagement are key strands of the work of Sussex Heritage Community. We work together to recognise and respond to the threats, harm and risks posed to our shared heritage.

#### The Data

We record all open-source Heritage Crimes in Sussex. This data is interpreted as follows:

The chart below shows 78 reports in the last twelve months. These comprise: theft, criminal damage, arson, and illicit metal detecting – these average out to 1.5 reports a week. When researching historic statistics, the data on average would be 1 - 2 reports a week. The global pandemic Covid-19 has impacted on current findings. This aspect will be discussed later in the document.

#### The Data Analysis reveals that:

51% of overall heritage crime has an element of anti-social behaviour as a factor – details below.

23% of all reports are of scheduled ancient monuments being the victim.

12% of all reports are of Illicit Metal Detecting.

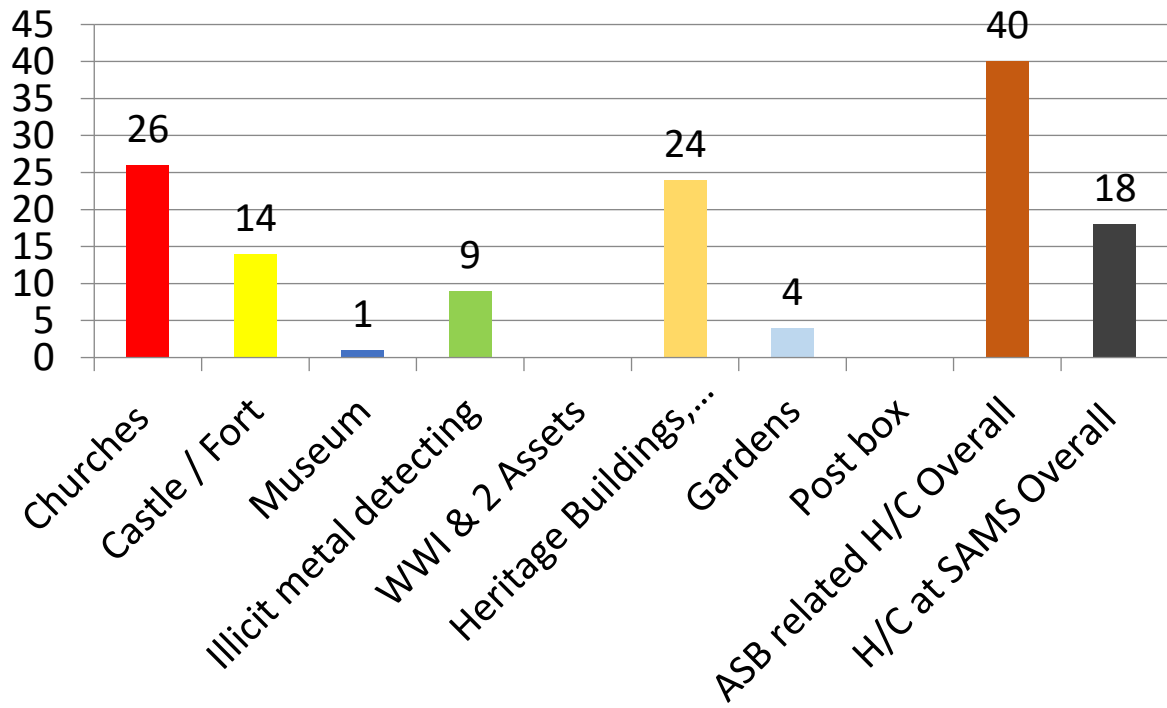
18% of all reports are of crimes to Castles and Forts.

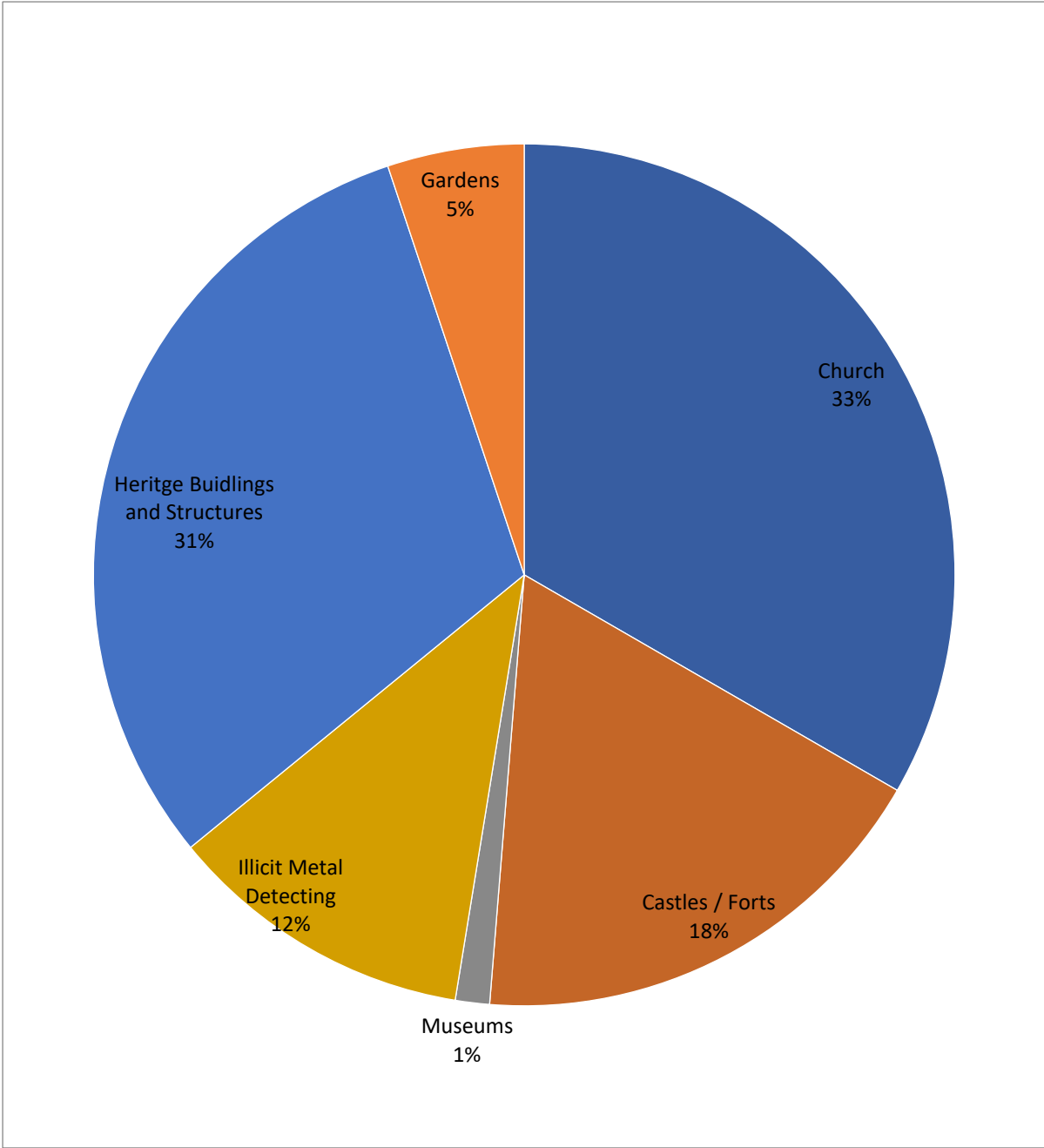
31% of all reports are of crimes to heritage buildings, structures, and sites.

33% of all reports are of Churches being the victim, of which:

41% are smashed windows, 23% criminal damage in general, 7% Lead theft or attempted Lead theft and 23% theft - other.

## Number of reported Heritage Crimes 01/03/2021 to date, open source





## **Heritage Crime Overview**

When considering the peaks, troughs, and trends throughout the last twelve months, we can view the available data below. Of course there are some special factors to take into consideration:

First of all - the pandemic, with more people staying locally and yet still 'adventuring'.

Then, it is no surprise that anti-social behaviour goes hand in hand with warmer weather and lighter evenings, resulting in an increase of the number of reports of criminal damage.

Surprisingly, Fly tipping does not factor in the last twelve months.

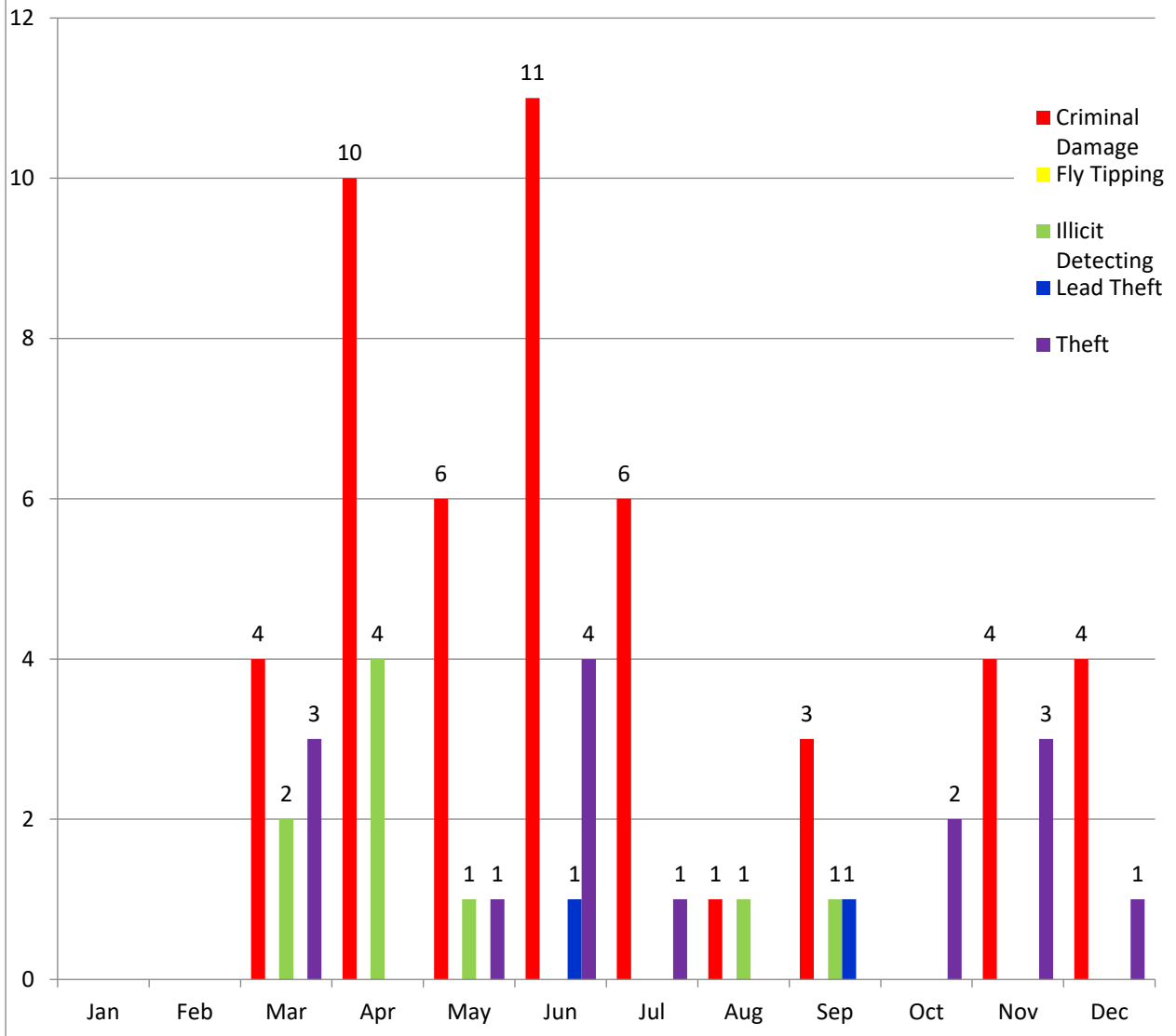
The crime of Illicit metal detecting features mainly in the early part of the year. This may be due to farmland fields not yet being worked, drilled, or planted by farmers and also the ground being softer in the wetter periods. This also may be down to 'new to the hobby' detectorists obtaining a detector for Christmas and then unknowingly detecting in designated or protected areas. Illicit detectorists may be taking advantage of less footfall and darker evenings for their activities, to go unnoticed.

Fortunately, Lead theft has been quiet - on the whole this has decreased, however there have been two attempted thefts in the summer months. It is likely these attempted thefts were targeted and organised: one church in East Sussex and one heritage building in Brighton are the examples whereby a large quantity of Lead could have been stolen. The market financial value of Lead has been stable, which has resulted in a reduction in reports - however there is still a value to Lead.

### **Theft in general**

This includes Church offertory box donations, statues, paving slabs, pottery and metal railway and castle signs. The most high-profile theft that took place was at Arundel Castle, where artefacts with an estimated value of £1 Million were stolen.

## Reported Heritage Crime open source 2021



## Reported Heritage Crime, open source 2022





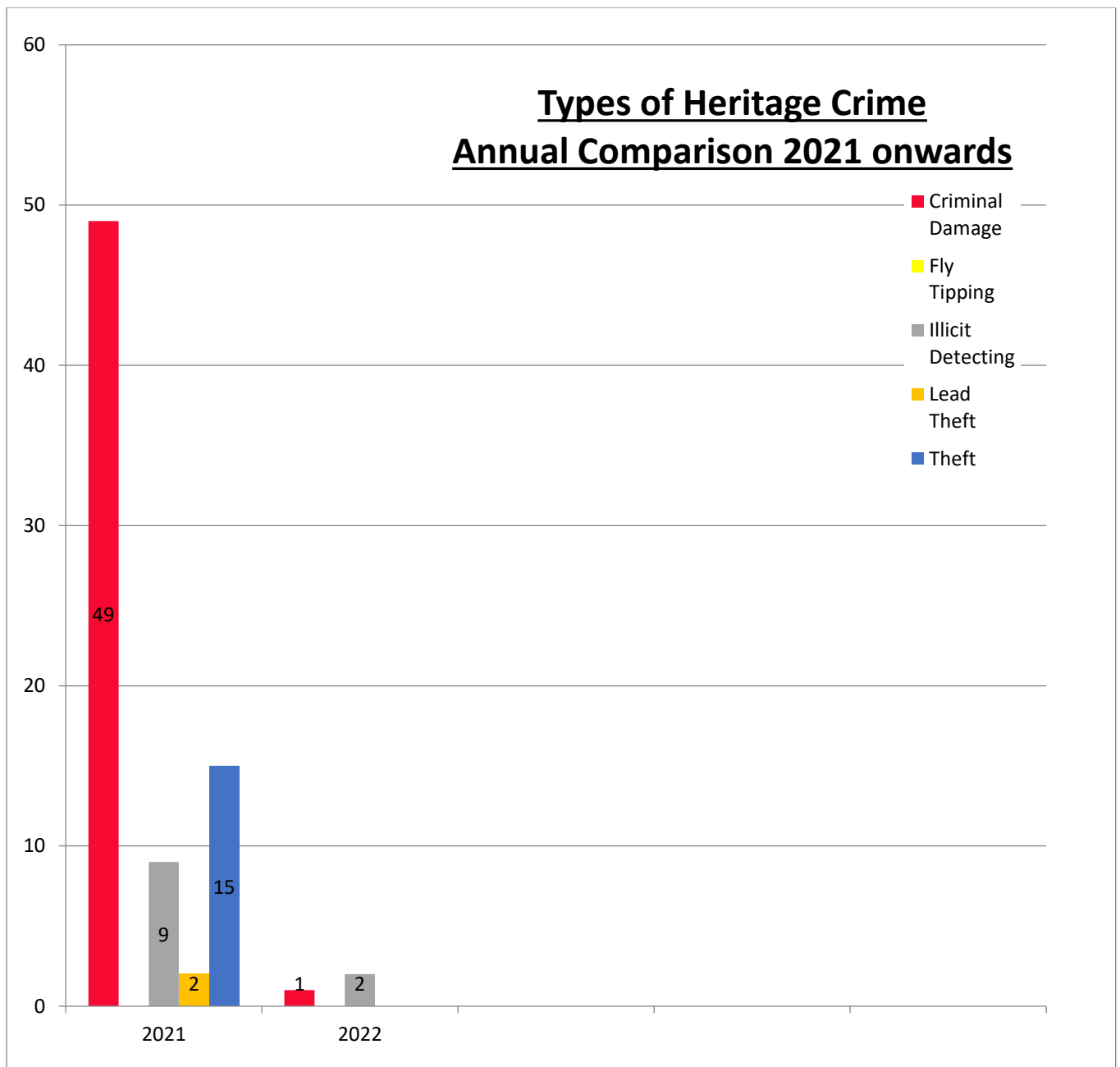
Looking at the chart below we can very quickly recognise that :

**Criminal damage** makes up 62% of all recorded heritage crimes.

**Illicit metal detecting** makes up 11% of all recorded heritage crime.

**Lead theft** makes up 2% of all recorded heritage crime.

**Theft** makes up 19% of all recorded heritage crime.



### **So what is all this telling us? Is this deeply concerning ? What can we do? Can we do more?**

Well, firstly, as the popular phrase goes - what we don't know, we don't know! Heritage Crime is a very niche subject. Fortunately, close working partnerships have allowed us to collect open-source data about heritage crimes. We are only working with the data provided, and there is only so much that data can tell us. However, we believe we are seeing only a small representation of the true figure. If we were to extrapolate this current data by even double or triple this would reveal projected data of crimes that are incredibly harmful to our heritage.

The problem is - the more we shout about it, the more we highlight it to those who might have nefarious aims. We believe there really is more unreported heritage crime, but people don't necessarily recognise the need to highlight this, and often don't identify or connect these crimes directly with our heritage. There's also an element of apathy: 'It's not my property'; 'It doesn't affect me'; 'It's not my problem!' The simple answer to this has to be 'more shouting', yes, raising awareness is crucial here.

### **Did the pandemic skew the data? Is this the new normal? Will we see more people in the historic environment?**

In short, yes, we think so. During the lockdowns there was little movement. This meant less footfall which encouraged two things: Firstly, it left sites unvisited/patrolled - and delayed any response to illicit activity as the criminal element took advantage of the Covid lockdown situation. Secondly, during the easing of restrictions our heritage met with a new challenge - an upsurge in 'adventurers' with little understanding and knowledge of the historic environment. Sadly, events such as BBQ's and parties on or near scheduled monuments were increased. However, churches locked their door, so security was increased there. Fortunately, we are now on the way out of Covid-19 restrictions, and we have all learnt a great deal. Hopefully, more people have discovered history on their doorstep and will look to continue enjoying our heritage responsibly.

### **Is the Data concerning?**

Yes. The reason for this is that the data is showing a peak of 61% criminal damage of which anti-social behaviour makes up 51% of that figure. Some of our most precious heritage, for example listed buildings, churches, scheduled monuments, museums, gardens, railways, castles, and forts have been subject to this type of crime in the last year.

Anti-social behaviour often results in criminal damage. It can be intentional and mindless, sometimes with no thought of the consequences to heritage and local community. If there is a disconnect between young people and the historic environment, we will have further generational problems. For this reason alone we are concentrating on education and engagement with young people. We believe the greatest threat to our heritage is currently anti-social behaviour.

### **What can we do?**

The most important message is to increase communication. This in turn will help with raising awareness, education, prevention, and collaborative working.

## Can we do more?

Certainly! Please be aware of the fragile nature of our heritage and please continue to look out for it.

***Historic buildings, churches, houses, castles, forts, earthworks, battlefields, wreck sites and other historic sites are simply sources of illicit gain, damage, or diversion. These heritage assets are often exploited with no regard to what they may represent to the communities in which they are located. Those who for instance are knowingly buying stolen scrap metal or stolen relics from heritage assets are creating a market. Some of these buildings have been around for hundreds of years, surviving world wars and the elements of time and nature but are now being spoiled by us.***

***We have a choice to defend our heritage of the past, present and future. Some take our past heritage for granted; some forget it is amongst our present. We walk on it, drive through it, and fly over it.***

***To many I have met, it brings belief, understanding, feeling, depth, culture, and emotion. A sense of community, ownership, tradition and belonging. It is tangible, it has mystery, it is constant and priceless.***

***When it falls victim to abuse it is all our moral responsibility to protect our past.***

***It is our future generations that should have opportunity to rediscover experience and interpret the old and the new. We are but custodians of a rich heritage that tells of our journey.***

***“Together” describes the action needed to preserve and protect our past. “Together” bonds us as a community, a group, or a family. Communities are what hold us together, they watch over our heritage.***

***Thank you for caring***

***Sussex Heritage Community***

Let's all enjoy, learn from, and protect our history.

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- Facebook and YouTube: Sussex Heritage Community
- Twitter: @Sussex\_Heritage #SussexHeritageCommunity
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