



YMGYRCH
TREFTADAETH
CYMRU
OPERATION
HERITAGE
CYMRU



BI-ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

2025 | WINTER EDITION



INTRODUCTION.....	3
HERITAGE CRIME AWARENESS WEEK (30 JUNE – 6 JULY)	4
BANNAU BRYCHEINIOG NATIONAL PARK – HERITAGE WATCH	6
PROTECTING WALES’S PAST – THE FIGHT AGAINST NIGHTHAWKING	7
CRIMEWATCH LIVE – SPOTLIGHT ON NIGHTHAWKING	8
DAMAGE TO HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND HERITAGE SITES ACROSS WALES, HIGHLIGHTED BY CADW	9
NIGHTHAWKING ENFORCEMENT – HAROLD’S HOUSE.....	10
PARTNERSHIP WORKING CASE STUDY - GORS FAWR BRONZE AGE STONE CIRCLE REPAIR WORK.....	11
WELSH CHURCHES TARGETED BY CRIMINALS.....	14
SOUTH WALES POLICE – HERITAGE CRIME TRAINING	15
NORTH WALES POLICE – NEW METHOD FOR TRACKING HERITAGE CRIME	15
HERITAGE CRIME VOLUNTEER ROLE EXPANDING	16
MUSEUM THEFTS – CRIME PREVENTION ADVICE	16
HERITAGE CRIME ENFORCEMENT – POSITIVE OUTCOME	17



YMGYRCH
TREFTADAETH
CYMRU
OPERATION
HERITAGE
CYMRU



Cadw



INTRODUCTION

A Warm Welcome to the Second Edition of the Op Heritage Cymru Newsletter

2025 marks another significant step forward in tackling heritage crime in Wales, with its inclusion as a core priority in the *Wales' Wildlife and Rural Crime Strategy 2025–2028*.

This is an incredibly positive development for everyone involved in Op Heritage Cymru and a testament to the dedication of police and partner agencies working to protect our historic environment.

As highlighted in the strategy:

“As a new core priority, the group will work to address heritage crime in Wales, focusing on preventing damage to heritage sites through collaboration between the police, partner agencies, and Cadw. Increasing officer knowledge is key, as well as educating the public on protecting our heritage.”

(Source: *Wales' Wildlife and Rural Crime Strategy 2025–2028*)

You can access the full strategy here:

https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2025-09/wildlife-and-rural-crime-strategy-2025-28_0.pdf



YMGYRCH
TREFTADAETH
CYMRU
OPERATION
HERITAGE
CYMRU



Cadw



HERITAGE CRIME AWARENESS WEEK (30 JUNE – 6 JULY)

In July, police and partners across Wales came together for **Heritage Crime Awareness Week**, marking the second year of this important national initiative.

The week provides a fantastic opportunity to shine a light on heritage crime, with a range of activities focused on raising awareness and encouraging public engagement.

Across Wales, officers organised several pop-up events.

For example, in the Gwent Police area, the Rural Crime Team were kindly hosted by **Cadw** at historic sites including **Caerleon Roman Amphitheatre** and its **Roman Fortress Baths**.

The team also attended the **Monmouthshire Medieval Festival**, immersing themselves in its fascinating living history camp, which vividly portrayed life in the 12th century.



Image shows a “Pop up” Heritage Crime event at Monmouthshire Medieval Festival, Summer 2025



YMGYRCH
TREFTADAETH
CYMRU
OPERATION
HERITAGE
CYMRU



Cadw





A display of local Historic artefacts and various advice leaflets were available to visitors at events. Officers were able to answer any heritage crime queries and give advice on how to report issues.



The week also resulted in some great opportunities for Police to engage with various re-enactment groups and those with a passion for history.



YMGYRCH
TREFTADAETH
CYMRU
OPERATION
HERITAGE
CYMRU



Cadw



BANNAU BRYCHEINIOG NATIONAL PARK – HERITAGE WATCH

Visitors to **Bannau Brycheiniog National Park** may have noticed the introduction of **Heritage Watch** signs at key locations this summer.

These signs have been placed near otherwise unmarked historic assets to help visitors recognise their cultural and historical significance.

The initiative aims to:

- Increase respect and understanding of the landscape
- Reduce damaging behaviours
- Encourage reporting of potential heritage crime incidents



New Heritage Watch sign (above), on patrol at the isolated Twyn Y Gaer Hillfort (below)



YMGYRCH
TREFTADAETH
CYMRU
OPERATION
HERITAGE
CYMRU



Cadw



PROTECTING WALES'S PAST – THE FIGHT AGAINST NIGHTHAWKING

Raising awareness around heritage crime remains a key objective of the **Op Heritage Cymru** initiative.

In August, a **BBC Wales special news feature** highlighted the growing issue of **Nighthawking** in Wales. This coverage provided an excellent opportunity to raise public awareness, with three of our partner agencies – **Cadw**, **National Museum Wales**, and **Gwent Police** – all contributing to the piece.

The report offered a real insight into the harm caused to historical sites and the challenges faced in tackling this crime. It also showcased a **Heritage Watch patrol** and some of the latest technology being used by Rural Crime Teams across Wales.

You can read the full article here: [Treasure hunters stealing from Wales' historical sites - BBC News](#)



BBC news team filming at Llanmelin Wood Hillfort, during an evening patrol with Gwent Rural Crime Team officers.



YMGYRCH
TREFTADAETH
CYMRU
OPERATION
HERITAGE
CYMRU



Cadw



CRIMEWATCH LIVE – SPOTLIGHT ON NIGHTHAWKING

In October, **Crimewatch Live** turned its attention to the issue of **Nighthawking**, following an approach to Gwent Police by the show's producers.

This long-standing programme, broadcast to a national audience, provided an exceptional platform to raise awareness of this crime. The feature aimed to encourage wider recognition of Nighthawking incidents, their potential impact, and the importance of reporting them.

From the Crimewatch studio sofa, presenters **Rav Wilding** and **Steph McGovern** spoke live with **PC Dan Counsell**, Gwent Police's Heritage Crime Liaison Officer, about the issue and some of the specialist equipment being used by police units to tackle it.

To bring the discussion to life, a collection of typical historic artefacts encountered during metal detecting – including coins, axe heads, spent munitions, buttons, buckles, and other metallic curiosities – was kindly assembled for the show by Heritage Crime Police Service Volunteer and Archaeologist **Kate Churchill**.



On set in the BBC CrimeWatch studio, preparing to go on air.



YMGYRCH
TREFTADAETH
CYMRU
OPERATION
HERITAGE
CYMRU



Cadw



DAMAGE TO HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND HERITAGE SITES ACROSS WALES, HIGHLIGHTED BY CADW

In September, BBC News reported after a worrying rise in damage to listed buildings and heritage sites, was identified by Cadw.

In the news article, Dr Jonathan Berry and Dr Ffion Reynolds from Cadw, along with archaeologist Rhys Mwyn and Rob Taylor - Wales Rural and Wildlife Crime Co-ordinator explained how several incidents of note had occurred.

Examples across all Welsh Police force areas were given in the article. -

South Wales Police area - A recent spate of incidents of criminal damage at historic Neath Abbey. With incidents of new signage being damaged, grass torn up with areas of the site used as a bike track, windows smashed and an exhibition vandalised.

Gwent Police area - Blaenavon historic Iron Works cast house, part of the Blaenavon UNESCO World Heritage Site, experienced incidents including theft of lead from a roof and damage to an exhibition display, which resulted in the sites temporary closure to the public.

Dyfed-Powys Police area – Graffiti painted on the medieval masonry of the undercroft at St Davids Bishops Palace.

North Wales Police area - Bryn Celli Ddu passage tomb on Anglesey, one of the best known neolithic sites in Wales, dating back 5,000 years, recently suffered graffiti and damage to the internal chamber stones. More than 40 marks were painted inside the passage and tomb, including fingerprints, handprints, diamond shapes, circles, and large symbols on the internal lintels.

The BBC article is available to read here:

[Criminal damage to historic buildings in Wales on the rise - BBC News](#)



YMGYRCH
TREFTADAETH
CYMRU
OPERATION
HERITAGE
CYMRU



Cadw



NIGHTHAWKING ENFORCEMENT – HAROLD’S HOUSE

In August, for the **first time in the UK**, police exercised new powers under **Section 60 of the Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2023** when two offenders were caught nighthawking at **Harold’s House Scheduled Monument (MM029)** in Portskewett.

The incident began when a local resident contacted **Gwent Police** to report individuals metal detecting at the historic site. Thanks to recent internal awareness campaigns and processes introduced under **Op Heritage Cymru**, the call handler quickly identified this as a potential heritage crime.

Officers from the **Gwent Police Rural Crime Team** were dispatched and caught the offenders **red-handed**, still detecting and—crucially—before any finds could be removed. Using the **Cof-Cymru online database** provided by **Cadw**, officers confirmed the activity was taking place within the legally protected scheduled monument boundary.

The offenders were subsequently dealt with at a police station by means of a **formal out-of-court disposal**.



Image shows metal detecting equipment offenders were caught using to search for artefacts on a protected Scheduled Monument



YMGYRCH
TREFTADAETH
CYMRU
OPERATION
HERITAGE
CYMRU



Cadw



PARTNERSHIP WORKING CASE STUDY - GORS FAWR BRONZE AGE STONE CIRCLE REPAIR WORK

In June 2025, the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority discovered the nationally important scheduled monument, Gors Fawr Stone Circle had been victim to ground disturbance. Turf and soil around 13 of the stones had been disturbed and more ground disturbance had also occurred within the central area of the monument.



Image on left shows where turf and soil had been removed from one of the standing stones. Image on the right shows Dyfed-Powys Police and Cadw Field Monument Warden assessing the damage.

A meeting was held between Op Heritage Cymru partners: the National Park Authority, Cadw and Dyfed-Powys Police to discuss the incident. The National Park Authority agreed to undertake ground repair work at the monument, while increased targeted patrols and deterrent signage were promptly implemented to deter further incidents.

In September 2025, under scheduled monument consent from Cadw, the National Park Authority community archaeologist, area ranger and volunteers carried out the repair work. Gorse in the surrounding landscape was also selectively cleared, making the site more visible from the roadside to also deter further damage. The site is now closely monitored through Heritage Watch by National Park Authority staff, volunteers and Dyfed-Powys Police.



YMGYRCH
TREFNADAETH
CYMRU
OPERATION
HERITAGE
CYMRU



Cadw





Images of standing stone prior to repair work (left) and after infilling has taken place (right).



Images of turf and soil being cut in the wider landscape to be used to infill the disturbed ground (left) and volunteers clearing gorse in the surrounding landscape (right).

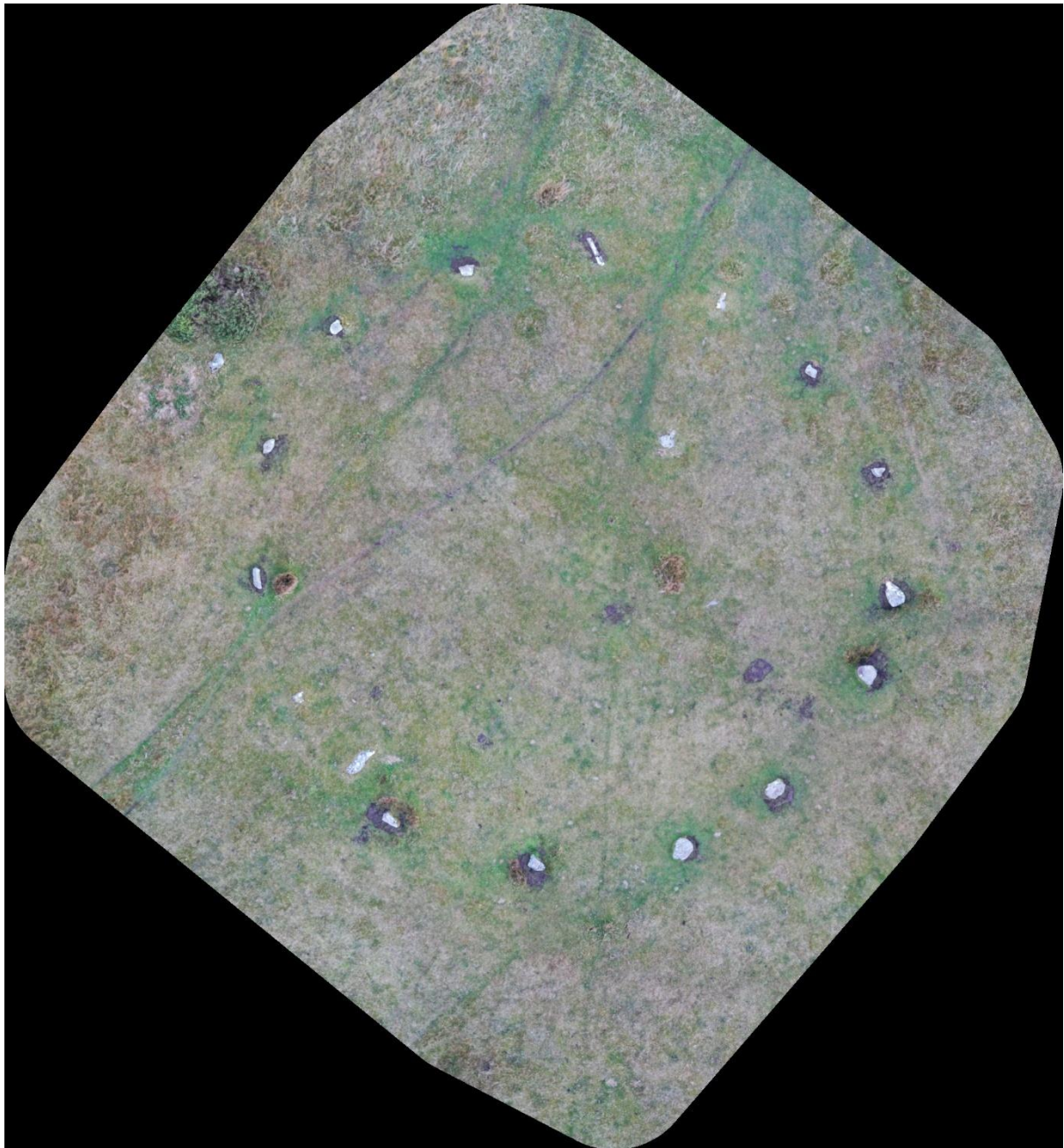


YMGYRCH
TREFTADAETH
CYMRU
OPERATION
HERITAGE
CYMRU



Cadw





A Drone captures aerial image of the stone circle following repair work. Ground infilling work is indicated by the darker colour surrounding the standing stones and the area within the stone circle.



YMGYRCH
TREFTADAETH
CYMRU
OPERATION
HERITAGE
CYMRU



Cadw



WELSH CHURCHES TARGETED BY CRIMINALS

At the **Autumn Op Heritage Cymru stakeholder meeting**, concerns were raised over a series of incidents involving churches being targeted throughout 2025.

Dyfed-Powys Police Heritage Crime Liaison Officer Gary Gwilt highlighted several particularly troubling cases:

- **February/March** – Three church burglaries in the **Llandrindod Wells** area (one church targeted twice), with items such as Bibles, vases, cloths, and wooden crosses stolen.
- **October/November** – One church burglary and two thefts from a church, including the theft of communion sets.
- **Ongoing** – Masonry in church grounds targeted, with wall capping stones removed. In one case, a tomb was damaged when its corner pillars were taken. Fortunately, **Dyfed-Powys Police Rural Crime Team** recovered the pillars after finding them concealed nearby.

These incidents serve as a stark reminder of the importance of protecting our historic places of worship.



20 new churches have been welcomed to the Heritage Watch scheme in Gwent alone this summer, giving them access to FREE deterrent signage and Smartwater forensic property marking kits.



YMGYRCH
TREFTADAETH
CYMRU
OPERATION
HERITAGE
CYMRU



Cadw



SOUTH WALES POLICE – HERITAGE CRIME TRAINING

In November, **Sergeant Louise Tew** delivered a **Heritage Crime Awareness** session to a group of neighbourhood officers during their **Compulsory Professional Development (CPD)** day.

The session provided valuable insight into heritage crime, exploring the types of incidents and their potential impacts. Officers also reviewed case studies of two separate incidents involving **Unauthorised Works and Damage**, both of which resulted in successful prosecutions—highlighting the importance of early detection and enforcement.

NORTH WALES POLICE – NEW METHOD FOR TRACKING HERITAGE CRIME

The **North Wales Police Rural Crime Team** has begun trialling a new approach to tracking heritage crime within their force data systems. When heritage crimes are identified, they are now flagged specifically as such within their systems.

This improvement aims to make searching and collating heritage crime data easier in the future, supporting better analysis and targeted prevention strategies.



Windows smashed on a historic listed building – Recorded as Criminal Damage but recognised as a Heritage Crime



YMGYRCH
TREFTADAETH
CYMRU
OPERATION
HERITAGE
CYMRU



Cadw



Working alongside specialist **Rural Crime Team** officers, a Heritage Crime PSV plays a vital role in delivering the objectives within each force's heritage crime portfolio.

This innovative role provides a fantastic opportunity for police to deepen their understanding of the heritage sector by drawing on the skills, knowledge, and experience of a heritage professional—strengthening collaboration and protection of Wales’ historic environment.

MUSEUM THEFTS – CRIME PREVENTION ADVICE

Considering recent high-value thefts from museums across Europe, the **National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC)** has developed **museum-specific crime prevention guidance**.

This advice is available as a **digital poster or leaflet** and provides practical steps to help museums strengthen their security and protect valuable collections.

To request a copy, please email: ruralcrimeteam@gwent.police.uk



Antiquities display at Caerleon Roman Legion Museum

HERITAGE CRIME ENFORCEMENT – POSITIVE OUTCOME

A positive enforcement outcome has been achieved following an incident of **unauthorised works** affecting a scheduled monument in the **Powys area**.

The works involved the **unauthorised use of a mechanical excavator** on a protected Roman site. Thanks to swift action, **Cadw issued a stop notice**, preventing any further damage to this important monument.

Following a joint investigation by **Cadw** and **Dyfed-Powys Police**, a **restorative approach** was taken.

The responsible party was dealt with by means of a **Community Resolution**, which formally requires them to undertake an agreed course of **reparation works** at their own expense, under Cadw's supervision and approval.

This outcome demonstrates the value of collaboration and proactive enforcement in protecting Wales' historic environment.



YMGYRCH
TREFTADAETH
CYMRU
OPERATION
HERITAGE
CYMRU



Cadw

