

# Tiles looted from church

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[By Emma Brennan](#)



St Peters Church in Monks Eleigh has had quarry tiles ripped from it's porch floor.; Church wardens Pat Braithwaite, Ann Currie and Angela Banks looking at the damage.

PARISHIONERS in a west Suffolk village fear valuable quarry tiles taken from a church porch could have been “stolen to order”.

Patricia Braithwaite, a churchwarden at St Peters Church in Monks Eleigh, said thieves left the porch in a “terrible mess” that would cost hundreds of pounds to fix.

Babergh District Council Crime reduction officer Verity Line said churches were often targeted because they tended to be in secluded, dark areas, away from homes. There had been two cases of stolen quarry tiles and several of lead ripped from church roofs in recent months.

Often the stolen goods turned up at scrap yards or on eBay. Mrs Braithwaite said a parishioner had a “big shock” when she discovered the stone slabs missing early Tuesday morning as the church gates were still padlocked.

She said: “All of the tiles were cemented in, so I don’t know how they got them out without someone hearing.

“It was a very windy night on Monday and we had a fair bit of rain so no one heard any banging and crashing.

“I think it must have been someone stealing to order rather than just vandalism. We have all been left reeling because we have spent an awful amount of money trying to keep the church looking nice and this is just soul-destroying.”

Ms Line said because churches did not have high-tech security systems, this enabled criminals to work undetected. Police encouraged the use of forensic property marking solutions to help trace stolen lead.

They worked with scrap dealers and carried out spot checks on suspicious vehicles carrying scrap in a bid to fight the lead thieves. Many churches were also opting to replace stolen lead with cheaper, “less desirable” materials.

She said: “With the tiles, it could be someone stealing them for themselves or to sell on. Sadly, what an offender might get for the scrap is not a quarter of what it costs to replace.” Police are carrying out house to house inquiries relating to the Monks Eleigh theft and want the community to keep a lookout for anything suspicious.