

# Thieves try to steal Sigmund Freud's ashes in London (Update)

January 15 2014, by Alice Ritchie

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Thieves tried to steal the ashes of the founder of psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud and his wife from a crematorium in London, severely damaging a 2,400-year-old urn that housed their remains, police said Wednesday.

Detectives urged the public to help catch the "callous" people responsible following the attempted theft of the 4th century BC Greek urn sometime around New Year's Eve.

"This was a despicable act by a callous thief," said Detective Constable Daniel Chandler of the Metropolitan Police.

"Even leaving aside the financial value of the irreplaceable urn and the historical significance to whom it related, the fact that someone set out to take an object knowing it contained the last remains of a person defies belief."

Freud died in September 1939 and his ashes were placed in the urn in Golders Green Crematorium near his home. Martha Freud's ashes were added after her death in 1951.

Freud was given the urn—which depicts Dionysus, the Greek god of wine and ecstasy—by his close friend and fellow psychoanalyst Princess Marie Bonaparte.

A relation of Napoleon and the wife of the Prince of Greece and

Denmark, the princess helped Freud, his wife and daughter Anna flee Vienna when Adolf Hitler annexed Austria in 1938.

The Freud family arrived in London that summer, taking a house in Hampstead, a leafy suburb in the north of the city.

"Between December 31 and January 1, burglars attempted to steal an urn containing the remains of Sigmund Freud and his wife Martha," the Metropolitan police said in a statement.

The urn, which was displayed on a plinth, was "severely damaged" in the process, police said.

It had been on public view but has now been moved to a secure area while an investigation into security at the crematorium is carried out, according to the local Ham & High newspaper.

Officials at the crematorium, one of the oldest in Britain, were not immediately available for comment.

The urn was chosen to hold Freud's ashes from his collection of more than 2,000 largely Egyptian, Greek and Roman objects, which are on display at his home, now the Freud Museum.

Dawn Kemp, acting director of the museum, said the objects informed his work in developing a new way of understanding the human personality—psychoanalysis.

"He reflected on the stories of antiquity and fables and mythologies, using those as universal stories that depict human responses and conditions," Kemp told AFP.

She declined to speculate on how much the urn was worth, saying it was

a family matter.

The museum was set up following the death of Freud's daughter Anna in 1982 and includes his famous psychoanalytic couch.

Police had earlier erroneously said the urn was from the 3rd century BC and was stolen from Hoop Lane Cemetery, a Jewish cemetery opposite the Golders Green Crematorium.

The crematorium opened in 1901 and contains the remains of many famous figures including Bram Stoker, the author of "Dracula", and soul singer Amy Winehouse.

Earlier this month it was also the location for the funeral of Ronnie Biggs, the most famous member of the gang who carried out the Great Train Robbery in 1963.

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