

St Ethelbert's church warden sleeps in to stop theft



Brian Jones sleeps on a camp bed at St Ethelbert's Church in Hessett

A 67-year-old man is sleeping in his Suffolk church at night to try to prevent thieves stealing lead.

Brian Jones, who is a church warden, has set up a camp bed in St Ethelbert's, Hessett.

Scaffolding will be up at the church until December while workers tackle a rising damp problem.

Mr Jones is concerned the church will become a target for criminals. "I sleep very well here - I feel cold at times, but I don't feel scared," he said.

He started sleeping in the church three weeks ago after two other churches in the benefice, at Rushbrooke and Beyton, had lead thefts.

Mr Jones said: "I'm locked in the church and if I did hear anything I would turn the lights on to try and frighten any criminals away."

Police advice

"My plan is to phone the police on my mobile, but if there's no signal then I would try and ring the church bells which would attract the attention of houses across the road and they could use their land lines."

Georgi Hawkes, Suffolk Police crime reduction officer, said: "We've got very specific advice on what to do if you confront a criminal and it wouldn't be to try and scare them off."

"We would hope that he would summon our assistance as soon as possible, but there are other tips we can offer him on his own personal safety and we'll get in touch with him."

"But I applaud him and he is right to take extra steps to look out for his church while the scaffolding is there."

Mr Jones intends to spend every night at the church until the scaffolding comes down, but is hoping other volunteers will share the duties.