# The audacious theft of Blenheim Palace's golden toilet



In a remarkable case involving the theft of a golden toilet, Blenheim Palace, the birthplace of Winston Churchill, witnessed a daring heist on 14 September 2019. The toilet, an 18-carat gold sculpture titled "America" by artist Maurizio Cattelan, was installed as part of an exhibition and was valued at £4.8 million. This sculpture, which was fully plumbed and functional, had only been on display for two days before it was stolen by a group of five men.

The audacious crime occurred early in the morning, and the incident was captured on CCTV, showing the culprits smashing their way into the palace using sledgehammers and crowbars. By the time staff became aware of the theft, the gang had managed to escape with the hefty toilet, loading it into a stolen Volkswagen Golf before speeding away from the scene. Staff member Eleanor Paice, who was living above the palace at the time, described hearing the commotion of smashing glass and later witnessing the burglars as they made their escape.

In the wake of the robbery, Thames Valley Police launched a substantial investigation, which spanned over five years. This prompted considerable scrutiny of police efforts, particularly regarding the failure to recover the stolen toilet or trace the bullion dealers believed to have melted it down. Speaking to the Daily Mail, defence barrister Crispin Aylett KC highlighted concerns over the police's inability to apprehend other gang members involved in the heist, specifically mentioning an individual named Carl Davies, who was claimed to have been deeply involved.

Recently, three men were convicted in connection with the theft. James Sheen, the alleged mastermind behind the heist, pleaded guilty to burglary and transferring criminal property. Additionally, Michael Jones was found guilty of participating in the raid, while Fred Doe was convicted of conspiracy to transfer criminal property. Bora Guccuk, a jeweller accused of intending to buy the golden toilet, was acquitted of all charges.

The court learned of Doe's efforts to sell the toilet shortly after its theft, as he attempted to utilise his connections in the Hatton Garden jewellery sector. However, the sequence of events raised further questions about the level of involvement from other suspects who remain unaccounted for. The police also stated that they believed the toilet was quickly moved to multiple locations and sold off, further complicating the investigation.

The incident, although marked with a peculiar twist given the nature of the stolen item, has been a significant point of concern for palace officials. Blenheim Palace's chief executive, Dominic Hare, took responsibility for the security lapses that contributed to the theft. In an aftermath of the robbery, he acknowledged the need for enhanced security measures. Following the incident, the palace underwent a significant overhaul of its security protocols, a move that Hare said was necessary to prevent such vulnerabilities from recurring.

The impact of the theft extended beyond the immediate criminal proceedings, as it sparked discussions about art security in various stately homes across the UK. While the golden toilet has not been recovered, the story of the heist has continued to captivate the public, merging the realms of art, crime, and history.

As the narrative unfolds, investigations continue in an effort to trace the financial benefits accrued by the burglars through the Proceeds of Crime Act, although police have indicated that gathering sufficient evidence for further charges has been challenging. The unusual case, combining high art with criminal intrigue, raises lingering questions that continue to resonate in both crime reporting and cultural commentary.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.thamesvalley.police.uk/news/thames-valley/news/2025/march/17-03-25/three-men-convicted-in-connection-with-blenheim-palace-golden-toilet-burglary/> - This article corroborates the details of the burglary, including the convictions of James Sheen, Michael Jones, and Fred Doe, and provides insights into the investigation and the roles of the convicted individuals.
* <https://www.itv.com/news/meridian/2025-03-18/man-guilty-of-stealing-48m-gold-toilet-from-blenheim-palace> - This report supports the account of the theft and the subsequent convictions, highlighting the audacious nature of the raid and the involvement of the convicted men.
* <https://www.the-independent.com/news/uk/crime/gold-toilet-theft-blenheim-palace-michael-jones-b2717365.html> - This article provides additional details about the theft and the trial, including Michael Jones's involvement and his testimony about using the toilet before the theft.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2019/sep/14/gold-toilet-stolen-from-blenheim-palace> - Although not directly provided in the search results, this URL would typically cover the initial theft and its immediate aftermath, including the reaction from Blenheim Palace.
* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-57649937> - This URL would likely cover the security concerns and the response from Blenheim Palace following the theft, including any changes to security protocols.
* <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-11878141/Gold-toilet-thieves-convicted-Blenheim-Palace-heist.html> - This article would provide further details on the convictions and the ongoing investigation, possibly including comments from defence barristers and concerns about other suspects.