# Burglars face prison sentences for audacious golden toilet theft



In a case that has captivated the public imagination, two of the burglars involved in the audacious theft of a golden toilet from Blenheim Palace are now facing lengthy prison sentences. Fred Doe, 36, and Michael Jones, 39, were recently convicted for their roles in the heist, which took place in the early hours of 14 September 2019. The sculpture, entitled 'America' and created by Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan, was worth £4.8 million and had only been on display for two days when it was stolen.

The incident occurred just two days after the toilet was plumbed in for guests attending an exhibition at the 18th-century stately home, the birthplace of Winston Churchill. Within minutes, a gang of five men broke in, smashed their way through a window, and fled with the solid gold toilet in a stolen vehicle. Eyewitness narratives describe chaotic scenes, with Blenheim staff witnessing the thieves hastily loading the valuable sculpture into their car. Eleanor Paice, a guest services supervisor at the palace, recalled hearing the commotion and seeing a car "speed straight off." The entire incident unfolded in under five minutes, with CCTV footage capturing the dramatic raid as the gang made their getaway.

Despite an extensive investigation by Thames Valley Police that has lasted over five years, the golden toilet remains missing, and the police have faced criticism for not recovering it or identifying the bullion merchants believed to have melted down the artwork. Defence barrister Crispin Aylett KC expressed dissatisfaction over the situation, pointing out that three other alleged gang members remain untracked and have evaded justice.

The ringleader, James Sheen, 40, admitted his involvement in the crime and has been incarcerated since 2022 for various high-value thefts across the Home Counties. Initially, Sheen bragged to Doe about earning £520,000 from selling his share of the stolen gold.

During the trial, Doe attempted to present a respectable image to the jury, claiming to be a caring family man and coach of young boxers. However, he faced scrutiny over his connections to criminal elements, as the jury was not informed that his father, Fred Doe Senior, is associated with the infamous Kinahan cartel, a notorious crime syndicate. The elder Doe suggested that his son's conviction may have been influenced by their family's history, stating that his son had been "victimised".

The dramatic theft not only shocked the art world but also raised questions about security measures at Blenheim Palace. Palace chief executive Dominic Hare took full responsibility for the inadequate security that allowed the heist to occur. No security personnel were patrolling the area at the time of the theft, and the toilet had no surveillance monitoring directly over it, which Hare admitted could have been a significant oversight.

In the aftermath of the burglary, the palace did not initially realise the severity of the situation until staff discovered the golden toilet was the item taken amid the chaos. Following a thorough assessment of the incident, Blenheim Palace has since undergone substantial upgrades to its security measures to prevent similar occurrences in the future, affirming that "we are not vulnerable anymore".

The case adds an unusual chapter to the history of Blenheim Palace, a site with deep-rooted historical significance. While the stolen gold toilet has never been recovered, it serves as a curious and unsettling footnote in the legacy of a beloved national landmark. Now, with convictions secured against some of those involved in the theft, the saga may continue to unfold as further investigations pursue the remaining accused individuals.

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 involvement of James Sheen, Michael Jones, and Fred Doe, and the extensive investigation by Thames Valley Police.
* <https://www.itv.com/news/meridian/2025-03-18/man-guilty-of-stealing-48m-gold-toilet-from-blenheim-palace> - It supports the conviction of Michael Jones and the audacious nature of the raid, highlighting the use of sledgehammers and stolen vehicles.
* <https://www.the-independent.com/news/uk/crime/gold-toilet-theft-blenheim-palace-michael-jones-b2717365.html> - This article provides additional details about Michael Jones's involvement and his reconnaissance trips to Blenheim Palace before the theft.
* <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/> - It further explains the roles of James Sheen and Fred Doe in the crime, including Sheen's admission of selling stolen gold.
* <https://www.itv.com/news/meridian/2025-03-18/man-guilty-of-stealing-48m-gold-toilet-from-blenheim-palace> - This source also discusses the lack of recovery of the stolen toilet and the belief that it was broken up and sold.
* <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/> - It highlights the complexity of the investigation and the use of forensic evidence, CCTV footage, and phone data to identify the perpetrators.