

Police say gates may have gone for scrap

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By JANE WYNYARD

EXPENSIVE bronze gates stolen from a sacred burial tomb in New Plymouth at the weekend may be destined for the scrap-metal market, say police.

The \$10,000 gates were ripped from the mosque-like tomb which contains the body of Indian herbalist Abraham Walley Mohamed Salaman.

"There has been a lot of metal stolen lately that has ended up on the scrap-metal market," said Sergeant John Thorne, of the New Plymouth police.

"They've been taking the stuff from schools, construction sites and other properties."

The 50-year-old tomb, which dominates the large Te Henui cemetery, is an important part of New Plymouth's history.

Built with special council permission by Mr Salaman before his death in 1941, the concrete structure has also been the target for vandalism in the past.



TOMB TARGETED: Police believe the bronze gates stolen from this tomb in New Plymouth's Te Henui Cemetery may end up in the hands of scrap dealers.

Cemetery superintendent Andrew O'Grady said although vandalism had occurred at the tomb for many years, especially with people trying to break in, there had never been anything as serious as this.

"There are myths about there being valuables inside the tomb," he said.

"They just aren't true. Those

gates were irreplaceable."

The gates were so heavy that several people would have been required to lift them, said Mr Thorne. They would also have had to use a truck to cart them away.

He said it appeared the same thieves also took thousands of dollars' worth of power tools from a shed on cemetery land.