



# Heritage Crime Research: The Size of the Problem

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## HERITAGE CRIME: THE SIZE OF THE PROBLEM

The following statistics give an overview of the scale of the threat to England's historic buildings and sites from all types of crime. They come from survey research commissioned by English Heritage and conducted by Newcastle University, Loughborough University and the Council for British Archaeology in October/November 2011. The full research paper published in March 2012 contains much more data and is available on the English Heritage website. Unauthorised development by owners can also be a crime threat. This will be the subject of future research. All figures are estimates based on the survey sample.

### Damage to listed buildings

- 18.7% of all listed buildings were physically affected by crime last year. That is over 70,000 listed buildings.
- For about 8% of listed buildings the impact from crime last year was substantial.
- Our most precious buildings are the worst affected. 22.7% of grade I and II\* buildings were subject to heritage crime, compared with 18.3% of grade II buildings.
- The biggest single threat was metal theft with 6.7% and 5.2% of grade I/II\* and grade II buildings respectively affected by this current problem.
- Listed churches and other religious buildings are by far the most at risk, with about 3 in 8 (37.5%) being damaged by crime last year. Metal theft from religious buildings is a particular problem with 14.3% affected.

- Whilst only around 1% of listed buildings were affected by arson, the effects can easily be devastating. Listed farm and public buildings are a particular arson risk. Evidence suggests the average material cost of arson may be around £500k.

### Damage to other designated historic sites

- Scheduled monuments are affected in different ways to listed buildings. Metal theft is understandably less of a problem at 3.5% per year affected.
- Criminal damage to scheduled monuments is also less at 7.1% compared with around 15% for listed buildings.
- Scheduled monuments are, though, subject to a greater threat from activities associated with open land, such as unlicensed metal detecting and unauthorised access by off-road motorbikes and cars.
- The survey compiled insufficient data for robust estimates of the impact on registered parks and gardens, but what was obtained suggested, perhaps unsurprisingly, that they may be the worst affected of all heritage assets.

### Damage to conservation areas

- Heritage crime generally is still a significant threat in conservation areas with an incidence rate of 14.9% last year, but is lower than for listed buildings.
- Metal theft is a considerably lower threat than for listed buildings: 1.1% last year compared with 6.7% for grade I and II\* listed buildings and 5.2% for grade II.

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## Anti-social behaviour around historic buildings and sites

- This is important as it deters enjoyment and investment in heritage assets.
- Incidents of antisocial behaviour around heritage assets are commonplace with 12.3% of heritage assets affected last year.
- Grade I and II\* listed buildings appear worst hit with 20% affected last year, compared with only 9.9% of grade II listed buildings and 15.3% of scheduled monuments.
- Antisocial behaviour is the single most common heritage crime concern for scheduled monuments.

## Regions, deprivation and historic building and site density

- There is not a great deal of regional variation. Compared with the average annual heritage crime rate of 17.9%, London has the lowest rate at 14.1%, the Midlands is at 16.3%, the rest of the South is at 19.8% and the North 20.3%.
- From railway metal theft statistics it is apparent that metal theft does not follow regional trends for crime generally.

- Metal theft from heritage assets is greatest in the North where the annual rate is 7.8%, compared with around 3% average elsewhere.
- Areas with high deprivation<sup>1</sup> have a significantly higher rate of heritage crime per asset.
- In high deprivation areas 26.2% of heritage assets suffered damage through crime last year, compared with 13.3% in low deprivation areas.
- Heritage crime is considerably more frequent in areas with fewer historic buildings and sites.
- In areas with a low prevalence of historic buildings and sites 24.6% of heritage assets suffered damage through crime last year, compared with 14.6% in areas of high prevalence.
- Generally, areas of high deprivation have fewer listed buildings.

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<sup>1</sup> Using the Index of Multiple Deprivation

The survey suggests that there are around 75,000 crimes affecting designated historic buildings and sites annually – around 200 a day. This seems high, but is not far removed from the victimisation rate for the general population reported in the British Crime Surveys.

Heritage assets are not necessarily being targeted over other places, save perhaps for their valuable materials and artefacts, but they are suffering a substantial rate of attrition from crime nonetheless. They are susceptible to irreversible harm. Their obvious high value to society and particular vulnerability warrants every effort to ensure they are still around for future generations to enjoy just as much as we enjoy them now.

**For more information on how to help see**  
[www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/advice/advice-by-topic/heritage-crime/](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/advice/advice-by-topic/heritage-crime/)

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