Heritage Crime Research: 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.

**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.

**Damage to other designated historic sites**
- Scheduled monuments are affected in different ways to listed buildings. Metal theft us 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.
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/
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