

Abercrombie, later Sir Patrick and the creator of the Greater London Plan in 1943, seeing what was happening and recognising its potential for large scale damage to our green and pleasant land, was able, in 1927, to form a small committee which called itself the Council for the Preservation of Rural England. Its first task was to urge the government of the day to consider creating national parks and equally to consider extending the protection afforded to cities by planning controls to the countryside, which had none. It saw the need to map out country ways and initiated a country code so that townspeople could enjoy the countryside yet know how to respect it. From then on the Council forged ahead, protesting at over-abstraction of water from Ullswater and plans to plant forests over traditional fells. The devastation of war-time bombing prompted it to seek a recording of all our historic buildings in order to preserve them from the quick 'pull-down'.

In 1947 the Town and Country Planning Act embodied many of the requirements CPRE had first raised in 1927. In the fifties it warned against the decentralisation of London and objected to the exemption of farm and forestry buildings from planning control. It fought to prevent the use of farmland for house building when so much land awaited reclamation. Since then from motorways to mining, from water to wilderness, from trains to tunnel and from London to Brussels, CPRE brings its expertise to bear, no longer for the *preservation* of our countryside which had dodo-esque connotations, but for its *protection*. That the County of Kent appreciates the work of CPRE is reflected in its membership, which is the largest in the country.

ARE YOU THINKING OF OWNING A LISTED BUILDING? ——— JEAN PHILPOTT

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THERE ARE OVER 2,800 listed buildings within the District of Dover. The prospect of owning and living in a listed residence attracts a certain glamour especially for anyone who is keen to take on and restore an old property. But such a step should be approached with extreme care on the part of the purchaser. At the same time, perhaps those responsible for conferring listed status on buildings should take a longer term view of what steps are, or should be, taken in preserving buildings of historical interest.

Adequate information is available from local authorities on the procedures to be followed for obtaining grants for repairs to the fabric of such properties. However, the full cost of such work must first be paid by the property owner before an approved grant is received.

When obtaining estimates from contractors, it is essential to ascertain that they have experience in listed building requirements since if the work falls short in any way, the dispute will be between the contractor and the house owner with the possibility of the grant being withheld.



ATHOL TERRACE 1900

There are risks, therefore, unless everyone and everything is checked out beforehand with, for example, the professional or trade associations who can be expected to protect the customers of their members. Because the regulations stipulate what can and cannot be done and what materials must be used, it is quite different from buying an unlisted house and "doing it up" in one's own time and way.

Athol Terrace is a good example of residential houses which have listed building status (Grade II) and their appearance has an immediate impact on visitors to Dover. They form part of the Dover East Cliff Town Scheme and are eligible for grants of up to 50% for work to repair or replace the fabric of the buildings. Although this scheme has been in force for at least ten years there has been little improvement in the appearance of these would-be attractive houses; it could be said some of them have deteriorated through lack of maintenance or decoration. This highlights a problem for anyone who might buy such a property and, in good faith, restore it to its rightful glory only to find that the adjacent houses remain neglected. There are similar Dover Town Schemes which include High Street and London Road, and Castle Street. Castle Street is a shining example of how successful such a scheme can be.

It is stated that in extreme cases, where a building's preservation is threatened by neglect, then the Authority can take formal legal action against the owner to ensure that urgent repairs, essential to retaining the property, are carried out. This could mean that compulsory purchase might be the only answer – an expensive and lengthy procedure that no authority would undertake lightly. This brings into question the long term view when listed status, with its statutory regulations, is conferred on a building.

If one walks through some parts of Dover, whether it be the High Street, Norman Street or even Victoria Crescent, there is not an immediate impression of being in the presence of listed buildings as there is, for example, in parts of Sandwich or, to be extreme, the Nash Terraces in Regents Park!

Since property owners cannot be compelled to accept a grant and spend the additional money required to improve listed properties, the Dover Town Schemes, with the exception of Castle Street, appear, so far, to have had little obvious success. But there are complex problems such as multiple occupation and absentee landlords and, of course, owners who do not care enough at least to maintain exterior decorations.

Perhaps, however, the arrival of IMPACT, with the combined knowledge and resources of the Kent County Council and the Dover District Council, will hasten an improvement since many listed buildings come within the areas for which they have plans. They have shown a genuine desire to obtain views, opinions and, most important, positive suggestions from Dover residents and in return we should make sure we are heard.