

MR STEPHEN BONIFACE:

Thank you, Andrew. I'll send you the bill later for picking my brain.

Heritage works or does it? That's what I want to examine in the next 20 minutes. So, conservation in the UK starts with the identification of a building or a place or some sort of structure. It starts with looking at buildings that may have national or local importance. St Pauls, I'm sure you'll recognise, the one on the right I'm sure you won't recognise. The little cottage in the West country of England. It's that sort of building that in the community may be regarded as important. But then we recognise places as well, sometimes whole terraces such as there, or whole towns including the bay, the harbour and the landscape around it. So we recognise places but sometimes we recognise structures as well, telephone boxes for example, windmills and so on and so forth.

I haven't got a picture of it, but I do know that in England we do have a protected dog kennel. So we recognise structures as well.

We do have various criteria about how do we recognise a building as important enough to protect? A lot of the pictures I'll be showing you today will be of old buildings. We do actually protect modern buildings as well, although in the UK there are about 20 buildings that were built post 1950 that are protected by statute. It's actually nothing to do with the age of the building, and I would often say in talks like this that conservation is nothing to do with historic buildings, it's all to do with your attitude of mind and the way you approach a building. The age is totally irrelevant.

In the UK, we have legislation and it aims to provide a framework to protect the buildings. It gives rights to the owners of the building to undertake certain works that are regarded as appropriate, but it also contains sanctions to those who choose to abuse the system and fail to obtain the appropriate consents. In fact, the

sanction could be jail in the UK. It's very rarely used unless you choose to go and blow up a listed building or something.

But of course these protections do limit what you can do to a building and that can be a problem because not all buildings can be museums. And not all buildings can be romantic ruins, as we care to call them.

So when we're looking at buildings in the UK, we've often said that for a historic building to survive into the future, a viable use has to be found and that, if it's not its present use, it has to find an alternative use.

So here we have a square in London designed by the famous Georgian architect, Robert Adam, it's Fitzroy Square in London and that, designed as houses, occupied as houses for many years, is now a hospital.

Then we have buildings such as that, again originally designed as a very large town house. It's now an embassy. Offices.

And that at the bottom, originally designed as houses is now a hotel.

So all of those buildings started life as houses, are all in very different uses now.

The important thing to remember here is if a building is allowed to remain empty and redundant, it is no use to anyone. We often say that historic buildings have to earn their living.

Over the last few years, English Heritage, which happens to be the national body in the UK that looks after historical buildings have undertaken an annual review of the state of our historic environment, they call it "Heritage Counts". It contains various statistics that I won't bore you with, but one of the important and interesting ones here is that around 7 out of 10 adults visited a historic building in 2005.

That's a significant number. It shows a significant interest. But more importantly -- bear in mind we come from a fairly multicultural background in the UK -- at one time English heritage believed that those from different cultural backgrounds didn't care about English heritage, but they do, because when we look at this, 48 per cent of adults from black and minority ethnic backgrounds visited a historical environment site, 58 per cent of adults with limited disability or illness. So heritage isn't just for those white English people with lots of money. It's for everyone.

So heritage counts.

In England, interest in involvement in the heritage is growing year-on-year. Heritage is considered to be vital to our society and an important element in our economy, primarily through tourism. Let's face it: how many of you would visit England because of the weather?

Heritage in the built environment around us provides a context for society, a reference point of where we have been and an anchor as we move forward into the future. Heritage often provides us with things of beauty and awe. They with provide us with inspiration and can be uplifting. In the UK it is often found that villages and town centres retaining quality historic buildings suffer fewer social problems and lower crime rates. The problem areas tend to be primarily where there are few historic buildings.

And heritage provides a focal point for a community and can bring communities together. It provides a social benefit.

Last year I worked on a steering group looking at the value of heritage, particularly in terms of regeneration. The one thing that came out of that is there's absolutely no question that heritage in the form of specific and historic buildings often provide a trigger for regeneration and I think that's an extremely important element in regeneration in the UK.

I want to examine some of these things through two case studies now. The first one, let's have a look at that. I have to give thanks to Google Earth for some of these images. There's the UK and we're going to focus in on the city of London. Here we have the Thames going through London, we have Westminster there, the City, the docks. It's important to note that the docks are here and the City is here, okay, right next to it. That's the City and we're going to focus on an area here. Down here you may see we have the Tower of London, Tower Bridge, the St Pauls, but this is the area I'm interested in. It's an area called Spitalfields. This is the outline roughly of the old Roman city. The wall goes up here and along there. It's an area that's been occupied for over 2 thousand years. This area has a lot of history and it's this that I want to talk about because it's an area that's gone through many ups and downs. In fact, because of the docklands, it suffered or benefited from the fact that we have a lot of immigration coming through the docks into the area and then moving on. That's this area.

Let's look at the sort of buildings we're talking about here. There's the area in closer detail for you.

This is Spitalfields itself, it's a covered market, and these roads all around it have developed over several hundred years but most of them were developed about 2 hundred, 3 hundred years ago. These are the sort of buildings you typically see there, Georgian houses down those streets, often with shops on the ground floor and you can see up here some attics and that's where the weavers used to go. Straight off the docks, they come into the east end of London, come into this area and they're shoved up into the attics to do their weaving and so on and so forth up there. That's a typical street scene from Spitalfields. There you are again on the left. Many of these houses are not protected in their own right, but they're protected as a whole within conservation areas. Some of them are protected individually. In the 1960s, this area was a slum. It was totally run down and a total slum. But one or two individuals bought one or two of these house and did them up and

looked after them and this area is now one of the most expensive parts of London to live in. It's an area famous for Jack the Ripper. You may have heard of Jack the Ripper from the Victorian period who went around killing a few people. This is one of the alleys he is thought to have wandered down. That's in Spitalfields again.

And here we have a typical example of the changes over the centuries. Started life as a synagogue for the Jewish population. They moved out the. The Methodists came in, it became a Methodist chapel. They've moved out and in the last twenty years it's become a mosque.

There we have Spitalfields itself, the market. That's an early 20th century facade, but on the right we have a church, a focal point in Spitalfields, it's called Christ Church and it was designed by the architect Hawksmoor, a very famous architect from the UK. So that's what we're looking at. There we're looking at the Spitalfields market towards the church and those are the streets of houses that I showed you.

It was thought that this area needed a bit of boosting, so they decided to do some redevelopment and this is an example of where new and old can mix. What they decided was that there are parts of the market that they thought were important, so they wanted to preserve those, but they wanted to redevelop the site. So here they are redeveloping the site and they took half the market away as part of this redevelopment, not the full market, part of it away. In the course, they found some medieval ruins that they recorded and preserved, they found Roman coins and some pots all of which were recorded. It shows the history of the site as they developed it. That's what they put on it, you may like it or you may not but that's what's on it now and obviously there's the church you can see through the glass roof.

There we have an example of mixing and merging the new with the old.

What has it done for the area? This is the market today. You can see a vibrant place with restaurants and market stalls well used

by the population. Brick Lane, one of the roads in Spitalfields is very famous for its Indian restaurants and it's famous for the various different industries that go on in the various shops.

But all of these buildings started life as houses. All of them. And look at them now. Look at this multitude of different uses. It's a vibrant multicultural place.

There we have another part of this area. It's called Petticoat Lane market and that's held once a week on a Sunday and it brings all these people in.

But look at the variety of buildings. We often say when we're walking around buildings, don't you find yourself looking at shop level? I suggest you start looking up, because quite often that's the more interesting bit because quite often it's the shops that change regularly, but when you start looking up, you see all these fascinating different building types above and around you.

Anyway, that is Spitalfields, a part of London I know well and is an interesting study of an area.

Now I want to move on to a study of a house. Here we are in east London. We were just over here, this is the Thames. We're now going to go here, Ilford. Ilford is the place of my birth. I know some of you, many of you perhaps, cannot go back to where you were born, went to school, were brought up. Until I was 16, I lived there. I went to school there, I played in that park there. I then went to school just up here, my parents moved there. When my wife and I got married, we got married just up here, didn't we dear? Somewhere like that. We first lived in a flat there. We then moved to a house there, then we moved to a house there. And I worked, after leaving school, there. That was only taken a few years ago. I can still go back. In fact, before coming here, last week I was in Ilford and I drove back and went to see the house I was born and brought up in here. I can still go back to all those places. I still have my history. I haven't lost any of it.

But I want to focus on this area here. It's called Valentine's Park. We lived just here and there is a mansion there. We moved in there in 1996. Within months, there was a major outcry and I got roped in. Here is a view through the park. There's the estate on the left of housing and you can just see the mansion there. And there it is closer there. Okay. That's Valentine's Mansion. It's grade 2 star listed. We have about half a million protected buildings in the country. This is in the top 20,000. That's how important it is. The council owned it. There is the building. There's a floor plan of it. It's a three-storey building. It was built in about 1688 as a family house, it was developed over several centuries as a house. And then what happened is the council, the local government, formed a park in 1899 in this bit. They then acquired some more land from the estate here and more land here and finally in 1912 bought the mansion. Actually it was given by the lady who died and bequeathed it. The mansion is there and the rest of it. So this now became Valentine's Park and the mansion in the park. This estate where we used to live was built at the same time in 1912 when that was purchased.

About that time, the council bought the building and from that time to 1960, it became the local clinic where you went for your inoculations or your checks if you were a child, et cetera. From 1960 to 1994, it was the headquarters of the local authority Buildings Department. In 1994 they moved out and it became redundant. This was the state of it at the time, typical municipal works in the building, leaking roofs, garden roofs here. Unintentional garden roofs, but still garden roofs. Cracks in the building, some lovely cement pointing -- it looks awful, ribbon pointing we call it, that's atrocious -- and of course some raking shores because they thought it was falling over.

So that was the state of the building.

But it did have some lovely features. And we had the history of the building, the full history of the building, we even had engravings from 1771, photographs from 1905. Sorry about the quality, but that's the best I could do.

When they opened up, they found some writing, 1809. That was the decorator calculating his requirements for decorating in that room. They are all over here. And there's his signature and date there. We had those sort of features, fascinating building.

It had this very unusual porte cochere, the carriages used to come in here, drop people off and sweep out again -- that's what it was. The council wanted to get rid of, they decided to sell it to the highest bidder who happened to be the local pub. They said, "We'll look after it, we're going to look after it forever more." It so happens that that chain of pubs is now no longer. So "forever more" in their version meant a few years.

But anyway, they decided they wanted to buy it. They were going to rip out the ground floor and many of the upper parts and some of the bits of interest that I have shown you.

I was called upon by the local residents because they were up in arms and I attended a meeting here and it so happened that my old headmaster from school lived around the corner so the two of us stood up the front there and said, "Hang on, calm down, we don't want you to go and lynch the local council officers. It's not necessarily their fault. Let's think about this." And we formed a campaigning group. Within six months we raised 10,000 pounds from the local community to fight a legal battle. We threaten the council with legal action. We took them to the government and said they'd acted illegally. The council backed down and eventually started to talk to us.

There the story really began, because the council initially said, "We're prepared to put 150,000 pounds into this project" and we said, "Okay", knowing full well it was going to cost a lot more. We said, "Okay, let's see commitment from you. You spend the 150,000." They did up the outside. That's it now. Very well, actually they did a very good job on the outside, but it left a lot to be done.

So the residents raised some money and inside there was this lovely range, an old Victorian range. They paid for it to be restored out of their own money, the local residents. That's it now and there is the room now in use on an open day, using it for what it was meant to be, i.e. a kitchen. The residents started to use the building. They had history groups dressing up and opening it for school children to come and visit it.

We have an Asian lady, girl, taking part. What's interesting is this is quite a heavy Asian community near, they have got fully behind this scheme, they love the idea of this old house in the park and they're fully behind it.

There we have concerts, we have the residents go in for the chess venues. We have music and so on and so forth and we have exhibitions. This is before it's even been done up. This is just the people saying, "This is our building, we want to save it, we're going to use it regardless of its condition."

As of last month, the council started the work on the interior. It's going to cost them 2 million pounds and the government in the form of a grant are going to give another 2 million pounds. It is going to be used as a wedding and registration office because it's often used for wedding photographs because it has such lovely grounds. It's going to be used for that and then in the upper floors there are going to be meeting rooms and on the top floor there's going to be an arts centre. We've worked it out, this within ten years is going to be paying for itself, within a ten-year period. In Hong Kong that may be too long, but in the UK that's acceptable because this building has been there for 300 years. Ten years is nothing, absolutely nothing.

So does heritage work? Yes. It inspires and brings quality to life. It provides us with a context for society and an anchor from which to move on. It brings people together. It helps regeneration. It adds value to the economy and it brings value to communities.

Thank you.