



Men from the Ministry: How Britain Saved Its Heritage

Simon Thurley

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Between 1900 and 1950 the British state amassed a huge collection of over 800 historic buildings, monuments, and sites and opened them to the public. This engaging book explains why the extraordinary collecting frenzy took place, locating it in the fragile and nostalgic atmosphere of the interwar years, dominated by neo-romanticism and cultural protectionism. The government's activities were mirrored by the establishment of dozens of voluntary bodies, including the Council for the Protection of Rural England, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, and the National Trust. *Men from the Ministry* sets all this activity, for the first time, in its political, economic and cultural contexts, painting a picture of a country traumatized by war, fearful of losing what was left of its history, and a government that actively set out to protect them. It dissects a government program that established a modern state on deep historical and rural roots.

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