

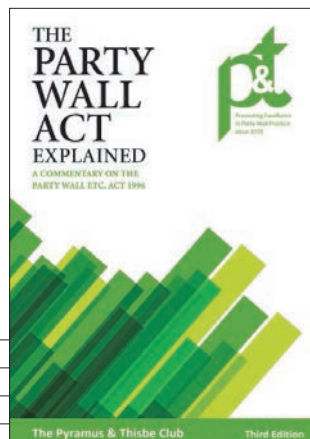
Review



The new edition of this guide to The Party Wall etc. Act will be useful both as a fund of general knowledge and as a basis for professional practice as a party wall surveyor, with the guidance on 'special foundations' alone making it worth the cover price, concludes **J.S. Johnston**.

The Party Wall Act Explained (3rd ed.)

Author: The Pyramus & Thisbe Club
Publisher: The Pyramus & Thisbe Club
Price: £26.75 (P&T members); £36.75 (non-members)
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The 'Green Book', the original commentary on The Party Wall etc. Act 1996, published by the Pyramus & Thisbe Club in 1996 following the introduction of the national legislation in England and Wales, has been relaunched in a third edition.

Created and edited by a team of experienced party wall practitioners, including eminent Institution Fellow, Lawrence Hurst, the new edition is substantially revised and updated.

The format has been changed: there is now 'comment' only in place of 'interpretation and comment'. The typeface and layout have been modernised and the diagrams redrawn, all for improved clarity and ease of understanding.

The previous 'specimen documents' have been usefully extended to a suite of 'model letters and notices' – a section that I suspect will be much referenced by those making an initial foray into the (sometimes seemingly arcane) world of party wall procedures.

There is brief, but clear guidance to The Party Wall etc. Act 1996 (Electronic Communications) Order 2016, which permits the serving of notices by email, provided that the recipient has agreed to this.

For most readers, who are seeking

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straightforward and practical guidance on this relevant and – for most urban projects – essential subject, this third edition provides the base legislation and authoritative interpretation. The 'comments' are the distilled opinion of experienced party wall surveyors and lawyers, often backed by legal precedents, and so following the *Green Book* gives those with less experience the confidence that they are acting correctly and in line with current thinking. Hence, the publication is of value both as a fund of general knowledge and as a basis for professional practice as a party wall surveyor.

But there are no 'tablets of stone' here. A growing band of lawyers, funded by wealthy clients, are prepared to challenge these interpretations and established procedures in high-profile legal cases where property

values and 'quiet enjoyment' are considered to be at risk. Many of these cases relate to domestic basements. The Act still has grey areas that are open to debate.

And, as before, the book offers little help if 'building owners' or 'adjoining owners' attempt to avoid or circumvent the legislation. The Act is intended to facilitate rather than obstruct construction. There are some who would have it otherwise.

One of the traditional, but often unnecessary debates between engineers and party wall surveyors has been the interpretation of 'special foundations' in Section 20 of the Act; i.e., 'foundations in which an assemblage of beams or rods is employed for the purpose of distributing any load...'

Many readers may turn first to page 131 where definitive guidance is set out. The key words are 'distributing any load'. So, a reinforced concrete retaining wall is not a 'special foundation'. Dowels, or light mesh, or steel fixing bolts, or similar do not create a 'special foundation'.

For the explicit guidance on this subject alone, the new third edition is worth the £36.75 cover price.



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