

Three giants: Iorwerth Peate, Cyril Fox and Peter Smith, and the study of vernacular architecture in Wales

by

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*Vernacular architecture was not studied in Wales as early as it was in England, but three individuals, Iorwerth C. Peate, Sir Cyril Fox and Peter Smith made seminal contributions between the 1930s and the 1980s, with their work influential not merely in Wales but further afield. This paper considers the relationships and tensions between them and attempts to assess their respective contributions and influence. Peate's main contribution lay not in his writings on the subject but in the creation of the first national open-air museum in Britain at St Fagans, while Smith showed that there were distinct regional building cultures within Wales, where he influenced all subsequent work as well as providing a basis for conserving historic buildings. Fox, however, was the more influential of the three, both theoretically in developing the idea of highland/lowland zones in *The Personality of Britain*, and practically through the innovative, in-depth study of the houses of Monmouthshire which he carried out with Lord Raglan, which also served to provide an analytical model to which amateurs as well as professionals could aspire.*

INTRODUCTION

The term 'vernacular architecture' has been used to describe the smaller traditional buildings of the British Isles since 1839, but it was not until the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries that significant studies were carried out, and not until the early 1950s that a focus for the emerging discipline was created in the form of the Vernacular Architecture Group. Although most of the early studies were carried out in England,¹ three individuals – Sir Cyril Fox, Dr Iorwerth C. Peate and Peter Smith – and two Welsh institutions – the National Museum of Wales and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales – subsequently played a pre-eminent role in the development of vernacular architecture as a subject worthy of study and academic respect.

Dr (later Sir) Cyril Fox (1882–1967) was appointed Keeper of Archaeology at the National Museum in 1926 and Director some eighteen months later, succeeding

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R. E. Mortimer Wheeler in both posts (Fig. 1).² An Englishman who came late to formal education and who did not turn to archaeology until the age of thirty-six, Fox was to become one of the best-known British archaeologists of his time, a polymath who published groundbreaking studies on subjects as diverse as Bronze Age barrows, Iron Age art, Offa's Dyke and vernacular architecture.³ His 1932 work, *The Personality of Britain: its influence on inhabitant and invader in prehistoric and early historic times*, introduced contemporary geographical and geological concepts to the archaeological world and gave Fox an international reputation. In particular, his suggestion that Britain could be divided into Highland and Lowland zones, with profoundly different effects on many aspects of human settlement, greatly influenced the study of traditional buildings.⁴

Fox's promotion to Director created a vacancy in the Department of Archaeology, and Iorwerth Cyfeiliog Peate (1901–82) was appointed in 1927 with a brief to develop the collections of 'byegones' (the study of which he later re-christened 'folk life' and which later became known as 'social history'). By 1933 he had been promoted to Assistant Keeper in charge of his own sub-department of Folk Life and Industries, and he was made Keeper when it was accorded full departmental status in 1936. On the opening of the branch Welsh Folk Museum at St Fagans near Cardiff in 1948, Peate was appointed its Keeper-in-Charge and Curator ('Director' in today's terminology) in 1953, in which post he remained until his retirement in 1970.⁵

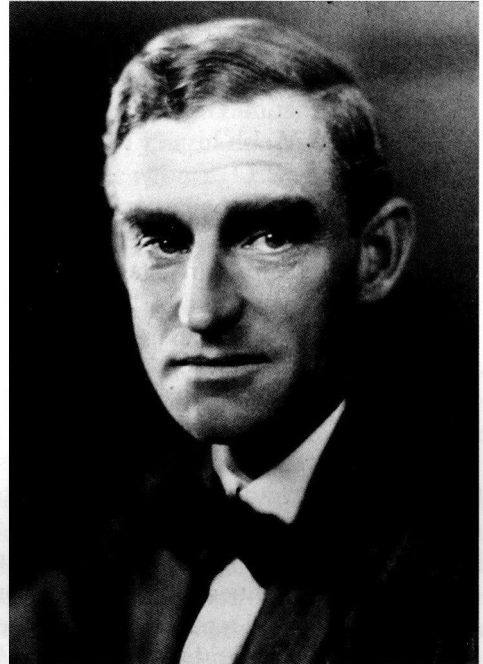


Fig. 1

Sir Cyril Fox, PhD, D. Litt, FBA, FMA, FSA.

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THE 1930s

These two men were to make significant contributions to the development of vernacular architecture as a subject, but in other respects they were very different, and the relationship between them was complex.⁶ Peate is remembered in Wales as a poet, man of letters and above all as the founder of the Welsh Folk Museum.⁷ He was also a complex character, well characterised by his successor as Curator, Trefor M. Owen, as 'a cluster of paradoxes – a conservative poet but a political and religious radical; a geographer who did not believe in using maps; a militant pacifist; unwaveringly argumentative, and a harsh and unrelenting critic, who would write to console others who had been so treated; a defender of logic but of whom you could not be sure that his own response would be logical [etc., etc.]'⁸.

In 1931 Peate published *Cymru a'i Phobl* ('Wales and its People'), a study of the influence of geography on the people of Wales. This was a conscious attempt to write

the kind of 'new' human geography developed by H.J. Fleure (1877–1969), Gregynog Professor of Geography and Anthropology at Aberystwyth, under whom Peate had studied for his MA. Fleure sought to illuminate human life and the ways in which it was influenced (sometimes to the point of determinism) by inheritance and environment. For Peate, likewise, Welsh history was about the ways in which people had sought to master their environment.

Probably the best chapter in Peate's book was the short one on houses in which he started to identify regional differences on the basis of building materials and constructional styles. Here the importance he accorded to geography shines through:

Despite the builder's preferences and the fashion of the age in which he lives, building construction is influenced to a far greater extent by the requirements of his home area, and none would think to build a house Eskimo-fashion in the tropics or the grand structures of Rome on the top of Snowdon. The influence of geography can be more obviously seen in the nature and use of our buildings than in almost any other sphere.⁹

Between 1934 and 1938 he devoted some of his summer holidays, and some official time, to visiting traditional buildings across Wales. He noted his activities in the interim updates he published annually: in 1934, for example, he paid special attention to south Cardiganshire and parts of Carmarthenshire, and reported that 'an interesting type examined and planned is that of the long farmhouse, with the living-room and cow-house adjoining and separated only by the *penllawr* or *bing* ("feeding-walk").'¹⁰ In 1936, his eleven-page article entitled 'Some Welsh houses' appeared in *Antiquity* where, for the first time, he proposed the term 'long-house', invented by him as a direct translation of '*ty hir*', the Welsh-language term he had heard in the field. Here also he outlined his ambition:

To adopt Dr Campbell's words: by studying all old houses which are still in existence in Wales, by segregating and distinguishing the types and their distribution and by relating them to those described in Welsh literature it may be possible to solve that interesting problem – the evolution of the Welsh house.¹¹

But the shadow of a second European war was spreading, and having a direct effect on some of the buildings in which Peate and Fox were by now both interested. As part of its rearmament programme, the government had decided to build new airfields and training schools for the RAF, and the other armed services were equally active. The first of these developments to have a direct effect was the creation of a bombing school on the Llŷn peninsula in Caernarfonshire. Even though protests against the construction of some airfields in England had partly succeeded, and there was considerable local and national opposition in Wales, the small gentry house of Penyberth, in Llanbedrog parish, was demolished in 1936 in order to build a new RAF station.¹²

National Museum officers were aware of the threat to the house – Peate had reported in the Welsh-language press on the Council for the Preservation of Rural Wales's attempts to ensure that the area was not harmed by the development – but it was only after the handsome late 16th-century house was demolished that the Museum showed any real interest. Peate only drew Fox's attention to the matter in September, months after its demolition, when he wrote, 'I note that the Air Ministry have demolished Pen-y-berth near Penrhos to make room for their new bombing range ... Would it be possible to ascertain whether the fittings, panelling etc. are available for our collections?'

The consequence of this exchange was that Fox visited the site in November 1936, where he examined the piled-up timbers removed from the house. He carefully quizzed the clerk of works and measured what he could, and then attempted to re-create the plan from his measurements and Mr Dawson's rather vague recollections. Fox thought the house was 'late Gothic' in style and date, and of about 1500 – about a century earlier than it probably was in reality. At the end of the month, he wrote to O. R. Williams, a local farmer, to thank him for donating pieces of the fabric that he had saved to the National Museum. These items included a section of oak panelling and a window-head; other fragments were kept locally.¹³

A similar issue now arose in Pembrokeshire. In 1937 the Royal Navy bought a substantial proportion of the Trecŵn estate in Llanychaer, five miles south-east of Fishguard, including Trecŵn House, its land, and several smallholdings. The smallholdings were almost all vacant, and their cottages mostly uninhabited or in ruins. The Navy gave permission for the National Museum to record any site it thought of interest before work began on RNAD Trecwn in 1938.¹⁴

It was Fox rather than Peate who saw significance in the ruins of the scattered community. He and his wife, Lady Aileen, spent some time recording eighteen cottages in the company of William Morse, a former resident. They measured the cottages in detail and Fox tabulated the results and sought to place them into a chronological sequence based on their architectural and constructional details. Fox published his findings in an article well-illustrated with photographs and plans in *Antiquity* in 1937. This was the first detailed study of traditional cottages in Britain, and the first to treat them as subjects worthy of scientific observation and analysis equivalent to 'proper' archaeological material. From subtle constructional differences Fox divided the cottages into four groups, which he felt had cultural – and probably chronological – significance, with the later examples no older than 1800. He identified the juxtaposition of hearth and dairy as a cultural trait

ancient and fundamental, linked to customary procedure in the basic activities of human life. Differences in these relationships represent, in this view, very early cultural divergence ... It is urgently necessary, as a basis for the scientific study of the social anthropology of Britain, that the two-roomed cottage should be measured, planned and described in all its variations, and that the range of these variations should be plotted.¹⁵

In eastern Wales, the Vale of Glamorgan was also being affected. A new military airfield was built at St Athans in 1938, with satellite fields at Llandow and Rhoose (now Cardiff–Wales Airport). Old farmhouses and dwellings were demolished to create these aerodromes, and a well-known Nonconformist Chapel, Bethesda'r Fro, established by the hymn-writer Dafydd Wiliam in 1807, became isolated, as it remains to this day.

In Peate's mind, the Vale of Glamorgan had remained that of the 18th-century mason-poet and antiquary, Iolo Morganwg, and the 19th-century radical preacher, Edward Matthews: a place that had escaped the great changes that the Industrial Revolution had brought to the valleys further north, where Welsh-speaking agricultural communities were swamped by mines, mills and furnaces, not to mention endless rows of terraced housing with their increasingly Anglicised inhabitants. By contrast, many of the older inhabitants here were still Welsh-speakers and Peate's own deputy, Ffransis Payne, had once worked on a farm where oxen still pulled the plough. To an unwavering

nationalist, and militant pacifist to boot, war preparations fell on the area like a dark shadow, and their effects were among the great recurring themes of Peate's poetry.¹⁶

Fox and Lady Aileen excavated a number of burial mounds on the land bought by the Air Ministry for RAF Llandow in advance of their destruction.¹⁷ Fox also made a close study of the fine old farmhouse called Six Wells before its demolition and persuaded Ministry of Works officials to create detailed plans.¹⁸ When Peate visited the house, built by Illtyd Deere or his son Harry in the last quarter of the 16th century in a style that reflected the classical ideals of the early Renaissance, he simply noted that the museum would be interested in obtaining the freestone frames of the main door and two windows for its collections.

The difference in approach is pointed up by Peate's dealings with the creation of the Epynt firing ranges. In February 1940 the Government confirmed that the Army was to take over by compulsory purchase 60,000 acres on Epynt Mountain in Breconshire, including seventy-nine farms. Epynt was an almost entirely Welsh-speaking community and the issue quickly became an emotive one. In the last week of June, a week before the inhabitants were evicted, Peate went 'to visit all the houses that had been emptied – and to measure and photograph them (where needed). In this way there would be a record of one aspect of a lost culture'. He wrote an emotive essay on his visit, noting the heart-rending comments of an old lady who was about to be thrown out of her ancestors' home and who told him 'it is the end of the world here'.¹⁹ He photographed some of the farms, but this essay is the only written record of his visit.

It is interesting to speculate what might have been the consequence if it had been Fox rather than Peate who visited Epynt. Fox might have lacked Peate's cultural sensitivity to what was taking place,²⁰ but looking at what Fox did with the cottager community on the Trecwŷn estate in north Pembrokeshire, it is very likely that his visit to Epynt would have led to a detailed and innovative study of farmhouses and farmsteads in the area, the first time a complete rural community in Britain had been looked at in this way. But that did not happen, and the National Museum's official record of this community consists of a handful of photographs and a literary essay, and a door-fitting made by a local blacksmith, which Peate had written to the authorities to ask for after his visit.²¹

The different approaches adopted by Fox and Peate came to the fore openly in 1939. To set the context for that we must move back in time. The first volume of the archaeological journal *Antiquity* (1927) had included a review that would become notorious in the annals of British archaeology. Its author – 'O.E.' – is widely believed to be Mortimer Wheeler, until that year Director of the National Museum of Wales and the man who had transformed the study of archaeology in Wales and would do likewise on a much wider canvas. His subject was the Inventory volume on Pembrokeshire published three years previously by the Welsh Royal Commission. The Commission, like its sister bodies in England and Scotland, was established in 1908. Its remit was

to make an inventory of the Ancient and Historical Monuments and Constructions connected with or illustrative of the contemporary culture, civilisation and conditions of life of the people in Wales and Monmouthshire from the earliest times, and to specify those which seem most worthy of preservation.

For the first forty years of its existence the few staff were based in London, and

the early county Inventories were largely based on desk-based research.²² The review excoriated this antiquarian approach, its dependency on published sources and the total absence of fieldwork. It described the Pembrokeshire volume's treatment of architecture as totally inadequate.²³

The author of the review was not alone in his feelings. Cyril Fox had been appointed a Royal Commissioner in 1926, and in December of that year he proposed a series of guidelines for future Inventories, most of which were adopted. They included the proposal that all pre-1714 structures should be included and that special attention should be directed to including any domestic structure, however simple, that could reasonably be held to have been erected prior to that date. These guidelines, together with the appointment in 1928 of a new Secretary – W.J. Hemp (previously the Inspector of Ancient Monuments for Wales) – revolutionised the work of the Welsh Commission and brought it more into line with its English and Scottish counterparts.²⁴

The Welsh Commission moved its focus to Anglesey in 1930, and when the resulting Inventory was published in 1937, Fox praised it within the Commission as 'not only [having] set a fresh standard for work in Wales, but dealt more completely with the archaeology and history of the district concerned than did the publications of fellow Commissions for England and Scotland'.²⁵ Not everyone agreed. Peate was invited to review the volume for the county society's *Transactions* (Fig. 2). In a fair but characteristically hard-hitting four-page review, he noted that whilst the English Commission was *obliged* to deal with structures up to 1714 and their Scottish counterparts up to 1707, no such date-limit was imposed by its Charter on the Welsh Commission. According to the Chairman's preface to the volume, the Commission had *chosen* to 'deal with the more important or typical buildings up to the end of the eighteenth century and by exception with a few outstanding examples of the early nineteenth century erected before the general decay of architectural and artistic tradition'. Peate noted that in reality *every* parish church had been recorded, whatever its date and merit, but not a single nonconformist chapel.

His comments on domestic architecture are worth quoting in full:

The architecture recorded in this volume is that of church and mansion not of chapel and cottage. It is true that there are four photographs of cottages, a page of house-plans and bare references to the existence of cottages scattered throughout the volume. But most of the house-plans are of *plasau* [gentry houses] while those of the cottages are so small and inadequate as to be valueless. We are told that the character of Anglesey architecture 'is ultimately dependent upon English influences ... at no stage is there evidence of the growth of a native style'.

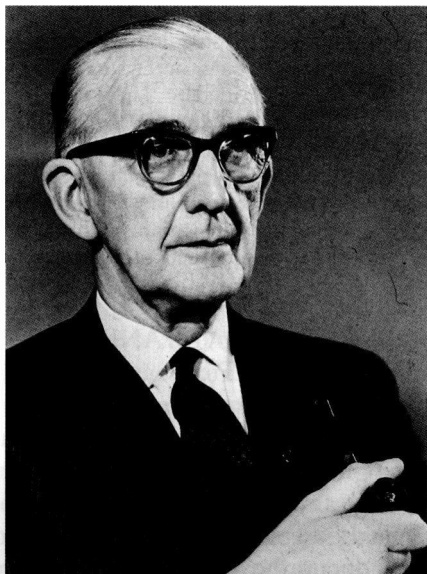


Fig. 2

Iorwerth Cyfeiliog Peate, MA, D.Sc, D.Litt (Celt.), D. Litt, FSA.

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Furthermore, we learn that much of the 'earlier local work is characterised by an obvious lack of understanding ... due in part to the isolation which Anglesey shared with the rest of N. Wales'. Later in the same chapter mention is made of 'buildings characterised ... by a native individuality'. I have pondered over these statements and have come to the conclusion that they must mean Wales has a distinctive architecture only to the degree in which it has absorbed English influences. But throughout Anglesey are to be found examples of a cottage type which, while it is found sporadically in England, is characteristic of the whole of the Welsh plateau and has greater affinities with Irish architecture than it has with English. A Pembrokeshire variant of this type has been dealt with by Sir Cyril Fox in *Antiquity*, but in this Inventory such a treatment is notable by its absence.²⁶

IORWERTH PEATE AND *THE WELSH HOUSE*

In March 1940, Peate completed *The Welsh House*.²⁷ The book is a well-illustrated 200-page volume based, according to the author, on 'a field survey and the facts so collected ... supplemented by material from various written sources'. Tellingly – particularly so for a geographer – the second paragraph of his preface explained that he had chosen not to include any distribution maps, for not only were these useless, they were also misleading since they would record only 20th-century survivals, and what was the value of that? The Introduction was more considered in tone:

There is much to be said – if we wish to assess the extent of the survival in modern times of old types – for a careful survey of the distribution of every type of house in Wales, and the preparation of detailed distribution maps of all such types, with measured plans and descriptions of each variation. [But] It became obvious to me that such a survey was beyond the ability of a museum official working on his own ... Such detailed surveying, parish by parish, is essential and will be carried out, if circumstances permit, over many years.²⁸

Included in his introduction was an iteration of those factors that Peate believed were key to creating Wales's architectural character: wet uplands were not places where architectural forms based on the rich cultures of the sunlit Mediterranean would have developed. A cityless peasant community had no need for splendid public buildings, whilst a nation without sovereignty could not foster the fine arts except through indirect and largely innocuous means. In such a country, incorporated since 1536 in a powerful neighbouring state, native architecture was non-professional in nature and expressed only in the homes of the peasantry.

Here Peate nailed his colours to the mast: the architectures of native and incomer were fundamentally different and had their roots in different traditions. The former had remained essentially unchanged until the coming of industrialisation and its associated urbanisation, which saw a 'great rebuilding' of the Welsh countryside. Nevertheless, he recognised that there were differences within peasant architecture, depending not only on climate and geography but also '*according to the social condition of its occupant or builder and his economic status*' (Peate's italics).²⁹

His identification of that native culture as essentially timeless and with homes reflecting principles dictated by custom, environment and place suggests that although he classed himself as a radical in the great Welsh 19th-century tradition of his native Montgomeryshire, intellectually he owed as much to William Morris and the romantic socialists of the Arts and Crafts movement.³⁰ Finally, he noted that his work was only

preliminary, until such time as those who had given so much attention to potsherds and earthworms would devote the same to this subject. In the meantime, 'I resolutely refuse to theorise on insufficient data' (although this is what he did all his life, in reality).

The first chapter, on building materials, was in reality solely about stone and clay as walling materials. This was followed by a chapter on the round houses of prehistory and the immediate post-Roman period, with Peate seeing the circular stone pigsties, which then survived in Wales in some numbers, as their lineal descendants. The next chapter, the first substantive one on surviving house-forms, was on the long-house. Peate quoted documentary evidence (rather thin and ambiguous) to support his supposition that the type was once to be found all over Wales. But here he linked the long-house to the central-chimney house identified by Åke Campbell as one of two overarching plan-forms common in Ireland, a typology based on the location of the main fireplace, either at the gable or in the middle of the structure: 'The central-chimney type is to be found widespread in Wales in another form – in the houses where both men and cattle are found under the same roof, a type which we shall call the 'long-house'.³¹ Although he knew of a few instances with a gable fireplace, the usual location of the main fireplace was against the internal wall which separated the dwelling from the cow-house.³² He also felt that a commonly encountered farm layout, with house, cow-house and stable in line but with no internal intercommunication, was probably a derivative of the long-house.

Peate classified Welsh cottages largely on the basis of what he and Fox had published, mostly the 19th-century examples found in the west, since he had seen only 'a handful' of central-chimney cottages.³³ Indeed, this chapter took much of its content and five of the ten text illustrations from Fox's 1937 paper.³⁴ 'The simplest type of rectangular cottage found in Wales is the single-roomed gable-chimneyed structure, where the occupants live and sleep in the same room',³⁵ while 'the next development ... was the cottage partitioned into two "rooms"', either by furniture or partitioning.³⁶ A further development saw the setting aside of part of the sleeping-end for a dairy or a pantry.³⁷

The next typological stage was the creation of a loft above the sleeping-end. Peate had recorded Ty'n-rhosgadfa, Rhosfadfan, Caernarfonshire with two box-beds placed in the sleeping-end with boards placed across them to form a loft, and suggested that this could have been one way in which the *crogloff* could have evolved. Early examples could have had the loft open, and with a removable ladder; later examples had their fronts boarded and a ladder fixed in position. Peate chose the term he was familiar with – *crogloff* (literally 'hanging loft'),³⁸ cognate with the English 'cock-loft' – to describe this feature; other dialect terms also exist in Welsh.³⁹

In his group of Pembrokeshire cottages Fox had observed that the dairy was usually placed next to the hearth, and thought this relationship ancient;⁴⁰ Peate chose to interpret Fox's reasoning to mean that the *crogloff* form was ancient, and disagreed, seeing it as 'a post-mediaeval development influenced (possibly but not necessarily) by the introduction into the Welsh rural economy of houses of more than one storey. In type and date, I believe the *crogloff* development to be comparatively recent'.⁴¹

If Fox had indeed concluded that the *crogloff* was ancient, he would now have been proven the more correct of the two. It has long been accepted that there could be a typological link between the *crogloff* cottage and the classic open mediaeval hall, which

often had a two-storey upper end. Richard Suggett has now identified farmhouses of 16th- and 17th-century date in Snowdonia that were originally built with a *croglofft*.⁴² But Fox had suggested that the distribution of the *croglofft* cottage was 'coastal, and west coastal at that'; Peate showed that it was wider. While he agreed that the type had survived in greater numbers in some coastal counties than in inland ones, he argued that 'no distribution significance should ... be attached to this fact since it happens that those areas in which it has so survived have been less affected by rural rebuilding than most other parts of the country'.⁴³ As for the fully two-storeyed cottage, Peate felt that this had developed earlier in those parts more open to English influence, such as Monmouthshire and the Vale of Glamorgan, whilst the single-storey cottage developed horizontally rather than vertically in parts of mid-Wales.⁴⁴

Only five pages of the book were devoted to timber-framed houses, but Peate claimed this was not his fault, because 'a detailed survey parish by parish is necessary to discover the present distribution of such houses and it is to be regretted that in the past the Royal Commission on Ancient Monuments in Wales neglected this aspect of their work. The Inventories relating to Denbighshire, Montgomeryshire and Radnorshire do not illustrate any such houses'.⁴⁵

By contrast, the last chapter, on building construction, is in many ways the best. Reminding readers that his subjects were the creations of people to serve their own needs, he brought to the fore the work of the rural craftsmen so close to his heart – the thatcher, the moss-man, the carpenter and the plasterer. But even this chapter contained great lacunae, with the cruck truss essentially the only roof-form discussed in any detail.

The fundamental problem with the whole book was essentially one of timing: this, his 'introduction' to the subject, should really have been the concluding volume of a series of detailed regional surveys. As a consequence, this synoptic Wales-wide overview suffered from an insufficient evidence base. Even so, reviews were largely favourable or very favourable. John Summerson (then still relatively unknown) noted that 'Mr Peate's book is important – one of the few really firm contributions to the study of folk-building in these islands ... A first class contribution to our knowledge not only of Welsh, but of English and European folk-building'; Summerson further deplored the reluctance of scholars to tackle the English regional vernaculars in a similar spirit.⁴⁶ The Directors of the Manx Museum and the Irish Folk Commission were similarly positive, as were representatives of the architectural profession.⁴⁷

The archaeological view was different. C. A. Raleigh Radford (1900–98) – Inspector of Ancient Monuments for Wales (1929–36), Welsh Commissioner (1935–48) and later an interim Secretary of the Commission (1946–48) – penned a three-page review for *Archaeologia Cambrensis* in which he expressed his disappointment that this was not the work that the subject deserved: 'the text shows little real appreciation of the problems involved. In describing the buildings it too often ignores or dismisses evidence which does not fit the author's theories or predilections'. Radford took at face value Peate's words about peasant architecture being the only true architecture, and regretted that he had drawn too hard a line, for surely cottage shaded into farmhouse and the larger farmhouse into the house of the poorer squire.⁴⁸

Peate responded immediately. Anthropologists, historians and architects alike had all praised the book: it was only archaeologists who felt otherwise, and that was because they misunderstood the nature of folk culture and persisted in treating it as merely an adjunct to their own discipline and using their own methodologies. Worse, they thought that the subject dealt only with the social class known in English as 'peasants'.⁴⁹

And what of that other archaeologist, Peate's immediate superior at the National Museum? Fox reviewed *The Welsh House* for *Antiquity*. First, he placed the work in context:

This lavishly illustrated book has been awaited by an increasing body of persons interested in the peasant cultures of Britain and their expression in building construction. The record of our farm layouts and farmhouses, of our cottages and crofts ... is woefully inadequate. In this respect we lag far behind continental countries ... The lack of applied scholarship and University interest in these matters is deadening.⁵⁰

There follow some minor disagreements, and Fox noted that he was now disposed to revise his ideas on the character of the roofs described in the Welsh laws codified in the late 12th century – crucks rather than central posts seem to have been the supports. Peate's appraisal of the cruck as a Highland Zone technique, widespread in Wales from an early date, felt convincing; and the other important achievement of the book was to draw attention to the significance of the long-house. However, Fox was not impressed by the fact that none of the fourteen plans of long-houses had a drawn scale, they did not differentiate between original and later work, and there were no drawings illustrating their construction.⁵¹

The fundamental problem with the work, Fox felt, however, was that its layout was topsy-turvy: 'Mr Peate's cart is in front of his horse', since his chapter on building construction was the last in the book. Moreover, that subject was treated perfunctorily: 'There are many roof types, but the one dealt with is the cruck; and its evolution is, Mr Peate says, "a story with which we are not concerned"'. But those who are interested in the "Welsh House" cannot help being concerned with such details. They are overwhelmingly important in a peasant country where simplicity and absence of ornament make the dating of buildings difficult'. His criticisms were not meant to be carping, for Peate's task was urgent and important, and he was the pioneer in the study, on a fully national scale, of folk culture as expressed in Welsh houses. But construction, Fox felt, represented the grammar of the new language that Peate was teaching – 'the tongue in which the folk buildings tell their story', and those fundamental issues had first to be understood.

The review encapsulated the essential difference in approach between Fox and Peate. Peate regarded development and temporal change as relatively unimportant and unlikely to have influenced fundamentally the almost unchanging life of the folk of Wales, with physical geography a far more dominant influence. Fox, on the other hand, felt that a people's story could not be told without assessing how they changed and adapted to new and often initially-foreign factors. How was it possible to write 'A study in folk culture' – *The Welsh House's* sub-title – by effectively ignoring changes to people's lives?

Peate addressed many of Fox's criticisms in his preface to the second edition of 1944, though without naming him: 'To suggest that Folk Culture is concerned only with the bondsman's dwelling and the labourer's cottage is to misunderstand completely the meaning and scope of the subject'. He also offered an apologia for the lack of drawn

scales, but with a characteristic side-snipe: 'All the plans in this work (except where otherwise stated) are my own work.'⁵² A full scale was prepared for each plan. Most of the blocks however (e.g. of long-house plans) were made for other publications and, in the interest of economy, re-used here. For reasons beyond my control, the blocks were made, in the first instance, without incorporating the scales prepared. To rectify this omission, the total length has been indicated on each caption: this will be found adequate except, possibly, for the fastidious critic to whom a *drawn* scale is still a fetish'.⁵³ Finally, he noted that 'with the best teachers, grammar comes last if indeed it is ever taught as such'.⁵⁴

But there were wider repercussions to *The Welsh House* for Peate. His introduction to the volume, after complaining about the general lack of interest in vernacular buildings and their unthinking destruction, noted further that

in areas such as Llanychaer, in the Vale of Glamorgan, in Llŷn, in Monmouthshire, and in Cardiganshire, the destructive 'march of time' has been hastened by the actions of the British Defence Ministries which have occupied so many areas of rural Wales. The wanton and unintelligent destruction by the Air Ministry of Penyberth in Llŷn, a house with fifteenth-century features, and with strong historical associations, is well-known. The timbering was hacked down and sold for firewood ... The Ministries have now come to an arrangement with the Museum whereby the Museum authorities examine the sites before they are 'developed', with a view to the preservation of antiquities. This is however little solace to a nation whose rural amenities and traditional culture are ruthlessly assailed by such 'developments'.⁵⁵

An anonymous letter was published in the south Wales newspaper *The Western Mail* attacking Peate for condemning the Air Ministry in this way. As a consequence, some members of the National Museum committee that oversaw his department's activities wanted to reprimand him officially, but others, including Lord Raglan, felt that actually it was the Air Ministry that needed reprimanding; that view prevailed and, rather than being rebuked, Peate was formally congratulated for writing the book.⁵⁶

CYRIL FOX AND MONMOUTHSHIRE HOUSES

Lord Raglan not only supported Peate's comments; he saw potential in this new field of study – and at the local level, which Peate saw as the necessary next step which he himself had so far been unable to undertake. Indeed, Raglan was so inspired that he invited an expert in the field to join him in investigating thoroughly his home county of Monmouthshire.⁵⁷ But the expert he chose was Fox, not Peate.

Fitzroy (Roy) Somerset, Lord Raglan (1885–1964), knew both men well from his long association with the National Museum, where he had served as Chairman of the Archaeology and Art Committee and was subsequently to be its President (1957–62). He was the great-grandson of the Commander-in-Chief of the British forces in the Crimean War and lived at Cefntilla Court, Usk, the house bought for his ancestor by public subscription.⁵⁸ He was deeply interested in archaeology, was author of many papers and several contentious volumes on anthropology and was sufficiently well-regarded in the field to be made President of Section H (Anthropology) of the British Association and President of the Royal Anthropological Institute.

Where his writings impinged on architectural history, Raglan was an evolutionist and a social diffusionist. He believed that design and constructional forms were generated at the highest social levels and passed down the social scale through aspiration and imitation; for example, he saw the cruck as a simpler version of the Gothic arch using inferior materials.⁵⁹ These beliefs were totally contradictory to Peate's 'bottom-up' views of architectural evolution, and may be one reason why Raglan chose not to involve him in his project.

Between 1941 and 1948 Fox and Raglan studied and recorded nearly 500 farmhouses in their spare time. Fox's papers tell some of the story of the research process. Their *modus operandi* was for Raglan to discover houses of potential interest and obtain permission for Fox to carry out the survey. Raglan was exactly 6' tall and was therefore additionally useful as a measuring pole, frequently appearing in Fox's photographs (a fishing line cast from an upstairs window was another method of measuring height) (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3

The 'six-foot measuring pole': Lord Raglan in front of a farm building dated 1647 at Trevela, Llangwm, Monmouthshire. Note the dove-holes.

© Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales

In July 1942 Raglan was encouraging Fox to apply for a gallon a month of rationed petrol towards the work, since he was not eligible to do so himself, whilst at the same time noting 'It is very good of you to offer to couple my name with yours on the title page, but I do not feel that I have done anything like half the work'.⁶⁰

The results of Fox and Raglan's endeavours were published by the National Museum between 1951 and 1954 in three sumptuous volumes as *Monmouthshire Houses: a study of building techniques and smaller house-plans in the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries*, illustrated by Fox's precise drawings and photographs. It is interesting to speculate why the National Museum chose to publish Fox and Raglan's regional work but did not do so for Peate's national survey, but it cannot be denied that Fox's standing as an academic vastly outweighed Peate's. The result was an unquestioned masterpiece (particularly when compared to what had previously been done in Britain), drawing measured conclusions from a large data-set gathered from a smallish area, outlining the changes to building styles and methods and people's way of life over three centuries.

Peter Smith, the later master of the subject (to whom we shall come below), considered the authors fortunate in their choice of study area, for Monmouthshire was richer than almost any other county in Wales in the variety of its building materials, styles and periods. After examining and interpreting some 470 houses in a lowland area of some 20 miles by 12, the authors divided their houses into three main periods, devoting a volume to each period. Part I examined the cruck-framed, half-timbered and largely single-storey hall, which they felt was the earliest surviving type of peasant house in the county and which they dated between the end of Owain Glyndŵr's revolt in 1415, because of all the destruction recorded during that time, and the accession of Elizabeth I – a remarkably close estimate given what we now know from further research and dendrochronology.

In the period c.1550–1600 (discussed in Part II) these early hall-houses were replaced by a two-storeyed stone-walled house, of which many examples had an external cross-passage. The authors equated the sudden appearance of a discrete regional style with the documented sharp rise in cereal prices, and they used the start of this rise to date the introduction of the new style. Part III traced the coming of Renaissance ideas in the period c.1590–1714, which saw the introduction of the glazed window and by the end of the period the replacement of the earlier plan centred on the staircase. After 1714, the authors believed that local characteristics declined rapidly to be replaced by an 'international' style and plan. They only found two structures which they felt were contemporary cottages.

Peter Smith was asked to write an introduction when *Monmouthshire Houses* was reprinted in 1994. Before considering *Monmouthshire Houses*, though, Smith felt that he first had to write of Fox's *Personality of Britain*, noting that he felt it had had almost as much influence on the study of vernacular architecture as Fox's later book: 'the analysis of historic building on the basis of its having a "highland" or "lowland" character has proved one of the most effective weapons in the armoury of the student'.⁶¹ As for *Monmouthshire Houses*, it was

by far the most ambitious study of farmhouse architecture that had up till then been published in Britain ... Here revealed for the first time in its totality is the wealth of architectural detail that can be found in an unassuming farmhouse: that is the great

contribution Fox and Raglan made to the advancement of science; that is the justification for republishing this landmark in the history of scholarship, a landmark, in its own field, as significant as Darwin's *Origin of Species*.⁶²

J. T. Smith, a heavyweight in vernacular studies in England, was of a similar mind; in his contribution to Fox's *festschrift* he called it 'the most important book on vernacular building that has yet appeared in English [and] a work which has revolutionised the outlook towards such studies'.⁶³ Elsewhere, Smith noted that the process of affording privacy through the use of two or three storeys, instead of the open hall, was for smaller houses described here for the first time. Further, 'an archaeological technique applied to the study ... caused them to notice details taken for granted by architectural historians. Thus they illustrate a dozen sorts of chamfer-stop – a feature scarcely noticed in print before'.⁶⁴

Peate appears not to have reviewed *Monmouthshire Houses*, so we have no direct evidence of his views. Later in life, he was to claim that it was his work that inspired Fox and Raglan's. Peate was far more complimentary of Jones and Smith's work in Breconshire, for they implicitly vindicated some of his own theories, particularly regarding the prevalence of the long-house.⁶⁵ He was to clash with Peter Smith (below) on this subject, Smith seeing the form as a product of accretion rather than the Celtic cultural constant that Peate favoured (Fig. 4).⁶⁶ Peate also disagreed fiercely with Raglan's thesis that crucks were a product of social diffusion.⁶⁷

The Welsh House and *Monmouthshire Houses* were both seminal to the formation of the Vernacular Architecture Group in the early 1950s, but Peate refused to have anything to do with it, even though it was partly inspired by his work.⁶⁸ Fox, on the other hand not only had a close interest in the formation of the new society, he also seems to have been the first for some fifty years to use the term 'vernacular' in this context. It had been applied to buildings by Sir George Gilbert Scott in 1857, and was used throughout that century and the early years of the twentieth century by some architectural critics, but had never reached common usage.⁶⁹ In his final address as President of the Society of Antiquaries in 1949, Fox urged Fellows to take part in a 'national survey, archaeological and architectural, of our local building techniques and house planning, treating each region separately and determining, insofar as surviving examples permit, its origin and evolution'. This address is the first recorded occasion on which he refers to the subject as 'vernacular', but he used it again in the same year in his Rhind Lectures for the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, referring to regional house styles.

Fox first used the term in print in his paper on round-chimneyed houses in 1951.⁷⁰ The second in-print reference of 1951 is more widely known: in his Preface to the first volume of *Monmouthshire Houses*, Dr. D. Dilwyn John, Fox's successor as Director of the National Museum of Wales, wrote 'in recent years there has been a growing sense of the importance of the mass of "vernacular" or traditional buildings in the country, for the most part consisting of small or very small houses'.⁷¹ John, however, was a zoologist and although he put his name to this introduction, its content was clearly drafted by Fox himself.

Fox had also agreed to attend the first meeting in 1952 of a new body initially calling itself the Domestic Architecture Group, although he was prevented by an accident and illness. Sir Robert de Zouche Hall has shown that it was Fox who suggested during the

course of agreeing the minutes of this meeting that the title would better be 'The V.A.G.'. He had already agreed to be the group's first President – under pressure – and remained in that role until 1953.⁷²

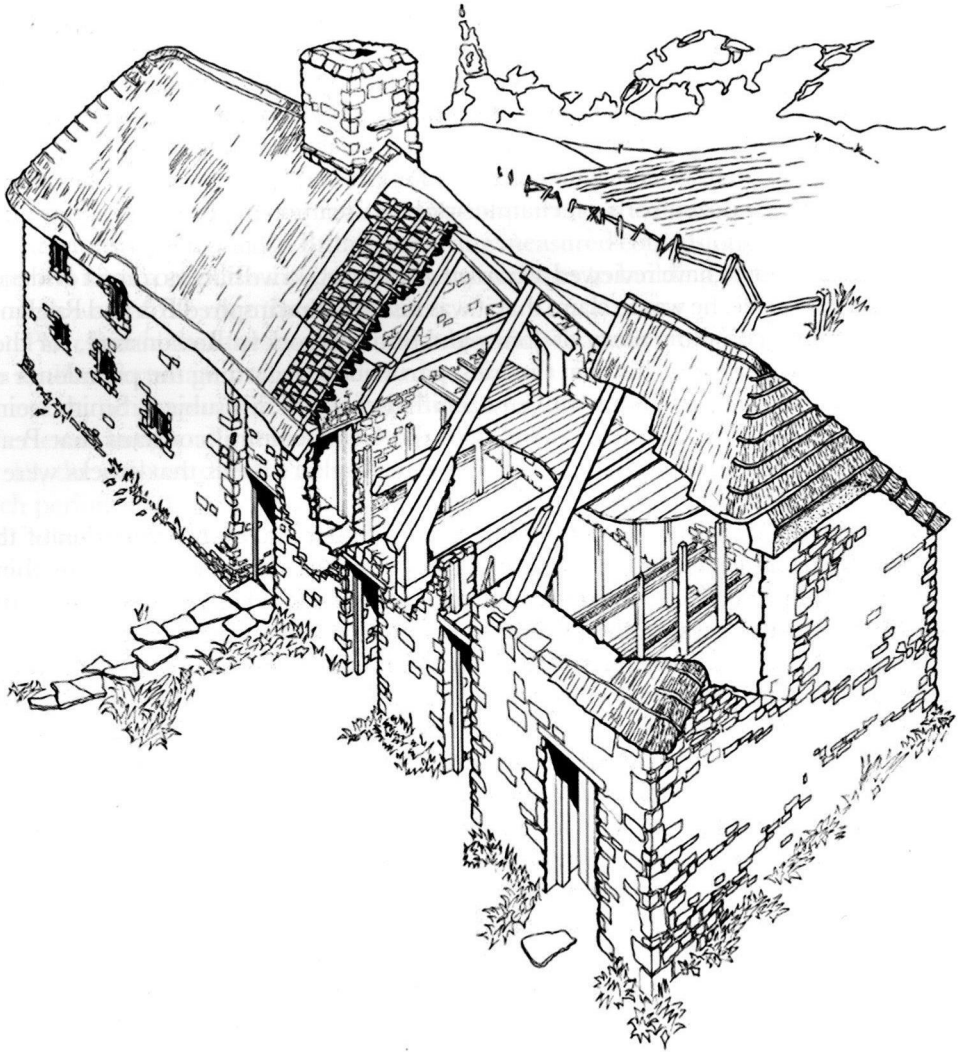


Fig. 4

The argument between Iorwerth Peate and Peter Smith over long-houses centred on whether these structures were of one build or with the cowhouse an addition to an otherwise-normal regional-plan house. Peate favoured the first view (ignoring the significance of the straight joint frequently found between the two sections) but Smith felt otherwise, as was clearly demonstrated in this example, *Tŷ-ŷr Celyn*, Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire, shown here in one of the cutaway drawings which became such a feature of Welsh Royal Commission publications.

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PETER SMITH AND *HOUSES OF THE WELSH COUNTRYSIDE*

Today all writing on the typology of traditional Welsh dwellings has as its starting point Peter Smith's magisterial contribution to European Architectural Heritage Year 1975, *Houses of the Welsh Countryside*. Peter Smith (1927–2013), easily mistaken for a Yorkshire farmer in both appearance and speech, was an educated middle-class man from the north-east of England (his mother was from Yorkshire, hence the accent), who, in later life, having learned the language, always corresponded in Welsh with Welsh-speakers (Fig. 5).⁷³ Interviewed for the post of Junior Investigator with the Welsh Royal Commission, he was asked prophetically by Fox, chairman of the appointments panel, if he could become interested in surveying farmhouses. Within a week of starting work, he was helping an experienced investigator, C. E. Johns, on the architectural survey of the upland parish of Penmachno for the Caernarfonshire inventory. Here the farmhouses were of stone, with internal partitions

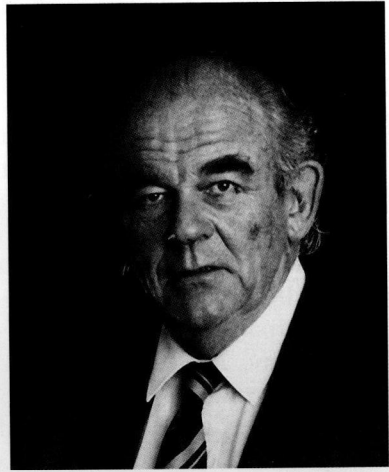


Fig. 5
Peter Smith, MA, D.Litt, FSA.
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of timber and fireplaces at one or both gables; some of them preserved evidence of their medieval predecessors in the form of complete or cut-off cruck trusses.

Once fieldwork and writing for the Caernarfonshire volumes was finished, the Commission turned its attention to Glamorgan, an architecturally very different area. In Glamorgan Smith noticed very few medieval houses, and houses of the plan-type he was used to in Snowdonia were absent. Instead there were numerous post-medieval houses of different type, many with dressed-stone doorways and window mullions. Soon Smith was able to explore such contrasts on a wider scale, for in 1963 he was asked to take over the recording of threatened buildings all over Wales, and since domestic buildings were deemed most at risk he concentrated on them. By then he was already aware that Wales was more complex than simply a part of the Highland Zone that Fox had deemed it to be – there appeared, *pace* Peate, to be no long-houses in Caernarfonshire or Anglesey, and there were few crucks – then deemed to be a 'highland' manifestation – in Anglesey, Glamorgan or Pembrokeshire. The domestic architecture of the Marches was clearly immeasurably richer than that of the western counties, and he was struck by differences in building materials, such as the fact that clay-walled buildings were absent in Merioneth but still numerous in contiguous Cardiganshire. The card index of building features that he had started revealed when mapped that there were also clear differences in plan forms across the country.

His thoughts on the implications of his discoveries were first made public in a long chapter on 'Rural housing in Wales, 1500–1640' in Volume 4 of *The Agrarian History of England and Wales* (1967), where his distinctive cutaway drawings first appeared.⁷⁴ Here he outlined his emerging theory of the development of domestic architecture in Wales, from the tower houses and halls of the Middle Ages and the early 16th century, through to the Renaissance-influenced houses of the 17th and subsequent centuries.

In 1973, Smith became Secretary of the Commission, and he focused a large part of the organisation's staff on vernacular architecture, making it possible to record hundreds of houses. The time to lay out all his ideas and make a major contribution came with the proclamation of 1975 as Architectural Heritage Year, and the Welsh Commission's decision to mark it with the publication of a major book. Smith later explained how the addition of gazetteers to the volume's distribution maps enabled it to be defined as an Inventory and therefore publishable in the Commission's name.⁷⁵

Smith's approach was diffusionist and localist, tracing the development of regionally distinct types, an approach very different from Eric Mercer's equally significant contribution for England to Architectural Heritage Year.⁷⁶ Smith's approach was made possible by the state of knowledge (for which he was very largely responsible himself) across a much smaller area, enabling geographical plotting that identified types as regional for the first time. Mercer adopted an evolutionary approach, broadly arguing that domestic architecture passed through various stages of development irrespective of location. This approach was in part influenced by his life-long Marxist beliefs, for it was clear that regional distributions could actually be identified in England (below). Mercer's volume perhaps surpassed Smith's in the quality of its penetrative analysis but the sheer bulk of material and the quality of presentation together set *Houses of the Welsh Countryside* in a class of its own.

Smith's map-based approach had been influenced by Fox's *Personality of Britain*, but whereas Fox had claimed that the whole of Wales belonged archaeologically to his 'Highland Zone Britain', Smith now showed that the architectural personality of Wales was far from uniform, with complex regional distributions of different features. Smith concluded that architectural innovation in Wales generally spread from east to west, that there was a cultural division between north-east and south-west Wales in the Middle Ages and a divide in the use of building materials between timber in the north-east and stone in the south-west. He also demonstrated that medieval hall houses had an essentially uniform plan across the country but that they were succeeded by a diversity of regional farmhouse types (Fig. 6).

Smith classified some 1,700 houses by plan type, based on the position of the main fireplace, identifying 26 permutations, which he brigaded into five main groups; these were identified by an initial letter (A-H) and each could be of one or more rooms (or 'units') in length.⁷⁷ The single-unit version of Type B, for example, was entered by the gable, past the side of the chimney; the two-unit or larger versions had a cross-passage outside the internal chimney-breast. The outer room, to the far side of the passage, could be a buttery/pantry or kitchen. In the south-east, however, and with a scatter elsewhere, this outer room could be a cowhouse, so creating a house-and-byre structure or 'long-house' and thus demonstrating that it was effectively impossible for long-houses to exist elsewhere in Wales.

Smith's systematic work was seminal, and greatly influenced all later work on vernacular architecture in Wales. In addition to its influence on academic studies, Smith's book significantly informed the government's listing decisions. Directly, too, Smith's decades of survey work led to the preservation and restoration of important late-medieval houses such as Tŷ-draw, Llanarmon Mynydd Mawr, Denbighshire, Tŷ-Mawr, Castell



Fig. 6

Peter Smith (left) in action, with Cecil Vaughan-Owen: measuring the derelict aisle-trussed Tŷ Mawr, Castell Caereinion, Powys, c. 1971, after Smith spotted it from a distance and noticed 'the proportions of a Hampshire aisled corn-barn'.

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Caereinion, Montgomeryshire, and through re-erection at St Fagans, a typical Snowdonia regional house, Y Garreg Fawr from Waunfawr, Caernarfonshire (Fig. 7).

On the other hand, Smith has recently been accused by David Austin of viewing Wales and its traditional architecture through the prism of British regionalism and of not going far enough in exploring regionalism within Wales.⁷⁸ Austin noted further:

Smith's basic position is rationalist and evolutionary, exploring the evidence in an empirical manner in the tradition, and with the rhetoric, of Raglan himself. He essentially holds fast to his position in terms of both culture and process. He does this by ignoring almost all archaeological evidence, especially for the humbler peasant house ... [for] the houses of the rural poor and the lesser tenantry, nor [is there] any acknowledgement that [the] middle and lesser gentry class represents itself in truly Welsh ways ... In other words, I would argue, Smith's buildings are de-contextualised from the totality of their societies as they are from the landscapes they once inhabited.⁷⁹

Austin's assertion that Smith showed little interest in seeking archaeological precedents for surviving buildings is correct, and it was not until his chapter in the *Cardiganshire County History* in 1998 that he paid a little more attention to the surviving homes of the poorest, the cottages and their like.⁸⁰ In Smith's defence, he approached his field from his own



Fig. 7

Glory regained: Tŷ Mawr, Castell Caereinion, Powys, after its restoration in 1998, showing the inserted fireplace and chimney of 1631 within the house of 1461. The restoration defeated Tate Modern to win the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors' Building of the Year in 2000.

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background as an architect and architectural historian (whereas Austin is an archaeologist) and the thesis of *Houses of the Welsh Countryside* was to show how Wales in the years of peace after the end of the Glyndŵr revolt in 1415 was a land where the gentry and peasantry alike lived in timber halls of basically similar plan, and how the Great Rebuilding for the first time produced storeyed houses of different types that could be shown to have largely regional distributions. These continued to be built until the mid-18th century, but evidence for the homes of the poor is missing during this period.

Austin is only correct about Smith not examining the 'Welshness' or otherwise of the middle classes as far as *Houses of the Welsh Countryside* is concerned: he was later to put forward the proposition that it was not the translation of the Bible in the late 16th century that was the key to the survival of the Welsh language (as commonly accepted), but rather the existence of an educated Welsh-speaking yeoman class, the people who commissioned the regional houses he had identified.⁸¹ He also drew attention to the similar distributions of date-inscriptions in north-east Wales and the nexus of contemporary learning within the country.

Austin's other criticism of Smith's work was that he did not pursue his argument of regional distributions to its logical conclusion. He noted that Smith's 'regions' were simply

distributions of house plans dating from the early 15th to the mid-18th century identified by stylistic typology, which had fluid, overlapping borders and, crucially, no correlation with any other culturally meaningful patterns. Austin could only interpret Smith's failure to explore further the true meaning of his distributions because he accepted the notions of Welsh cultural dependency on environmental factors and on England, as the source of ideas and styles.⁸²

Much of Smith's later interest lay in investigating distributions across the rest of the British Isles, and in tracing some of the forebears of individual plans and technical details to mainland Europe. An ever-widening perspective can be seen in his later contributions in which the houses of Wales were placed against a British and, increasingly, a European backdrop. With broad brush-strokes he tried to project eastwards the distributions he had identified in detail in Wales.⁸³ In 1984 he examined the contrast between the undefended open halls of lowland Britain and the defensible chateaux and towers of the continent and of Ireland and Scotland. He saw the ornate open roof as just as alien to continental architecture as were the Perpendicular style and the four-centred arch. He believed that domestic architecture assumed a significance above and beyond brick and stone. His assessment of the value of the subject is worth quoting, even though he caveated it with the disclaimer that it had been 'a difficult problem for a man with a one-track mind who has already published most of what he has to say':

The traditional architecture of these islands is a most valuable historical document and provides a vivid commentary on their economic, social and political history. It reveals regions of ancient wealth and poverty; it illustrates differing rates of economic and social development more vividly than do the documents alone. It poses questions which the documents do not ask. It completes answers which the documents leave unfinished. Above all, it contributes to the explanation of the central event of British history; the rise in the seventeenth century of the crowned republic, the great imperial and maritime power which, from a tiny land base, came to dominate so much of the world.⁸⁴

Here Smith was making a clear claim that vernacular architecture should take its place as a discipline capable of making unique contributions to the wider study of history in all its aspects.

The last major Commission project in this field during Smith's term as Secretary was the Inventory of Glamorgan. Two large volumes of this Inventory dealt with vernacular architecture, *The Greater Houses of Glamorgan* in 1981 and *Farmhouses and Cottages* in 1988, together comprising parts I and II of Volume IV, *Domestic Architecture from the Reformation to the Industrial Revolution*. Although not written, or even edited, by Smith, his influence is apparent, and a significant change from previous inventories is marked by the historical surveys that place the surviving buildings into their socio-economic context. Clear differences enabled the recognition of seven separate sub-regions within the county, with clear dichotomies shown by the age and nature of the houses illuminated by sources such as Hearth Tax returns and property inventories. These volumes are as much about the inhabitants as about their homes, finally bridging the gap between stone and timber on the one hand and people on the other. Vernacular architecture is now firmly a sub-discipline of history.

CONCLUSION

The reputation of each of the three leading figures in Welsh vernacular architecture (Peate, Fox and Smith) largely rests on a single work, supported by lesser contributions. Peate's *The Welsh House* was the first book in Britain to look at all aspects of vernacular architecture in a way that aspired to be academic. It treated traditional buildings as part of the wider study of mankind – indeed as machines for living (to use Le Corbusier's memorable phrase of 1923) – but its lack of chronological and spatial awareness and dismissal of typology, coupled with its lack of rigour and balance, made it less influential in the longer term than it could have been.⁸⁵

It also dealt with Wales without reference to England or the British Isles as a whole; and although Peate made much of the point that 'folk culture' encompassed the homes of the wealthy as well as of the poor, in reality he limited himself rigidly to farmhouses and cottages, and said little about social diffusion except to refute it as a concept. No doubt it was linked too closely in his mind with the idea that all innovation came from England. But we should also credit Peate with a lasting service: for his academic and quasi-academic works in Welsh he had to revive or create anew technical terms such as *nenfforch*, for cruck, and *nembren*, for ridge-piece, most of which have stood the test of time; and (as we have already seen) he introduced Welsh-language terms – such as *tŷ hir* for long-house and *crogloff* for a half-loft or cockloft – to the wider academic community.

From the 1940s Peate was deeply engaged with the setting up and development of The Welsh Folk Museum at St Fagans. The creation of an open-air museum had been National Museum of Wales policy even before Peate's appointment and Fox had been the major driving force in getting it established, but the unique form of the result was very much Peate's brainchild. Established on Scandinavian principles, St Fagans was to differ from its continental forebears and contemporaries in being three institutions in one – an open-air museum of re-erected and appropriately furnished historic buildings, a traditional museum gallery exhibiting ethnological material in typological displays, and a research institute dedicated to the field recording of the Welsh language and its dialects, folk song, folk tales, customs and traditions. Peate's contribution to the study of vernacular architecture can thus best be seen in the role he played in fostering the open-air museum movement in Britain, including the impact its re-erected buildings had on the building preservation movement, and in placing the studies of buildings within a wider ethnological context.

Peter Smith's career and publications represents a single, logically developed progression of thought. *Houses of the Welsh Countryside* and its successor works have been immensely influential in Wales but perhaps less so in the rest of Britain. Smith's geographical approach to plan-types has not been emulated across Offa's Dyke, much to the frustration of Welsh students who see an abrupt end to distributions they know must continue across the border. In this sense it is not possible to fully comprehend their meaning.

But England as a single study area is much larger and more disparate, and similar work done there has encountered problems. English Commission staff members were experimenting with classifications based on plan-forms even as Smith was writing *Houses of the Welsh Countryside*. Peter Eden's work on West Cambridgeshire (published in 1968)

influenced surveys in Dorset (published 1970 and 1972) but was later abandoned as irrelevant to the different circumstances found in Yorkshire, Lancashire, Northamptonshire and Hertfordshire; indeed for the latter county J. T. Smith found it difficult to ascribe structures to particular types, and concluded that a typology of change might have been more relevant there.⁸⁶

Of the three, it is the work of Cyril Fox that has had the greatest long-term influence, not only in the British Isles but, by extension, internationally. Fox made two major contributions: one theoretical and one more practical. Although successive editions of *The Personality of Britain* made no mention of traditional buildings (for it dealt almost exclusively with prehistory), its proposal that Britain should be divided into separate Highland and Lowland zones with very different influences and histories of development influenced the students of vernacular architecture as much as it did archaeologists.

Monmouthshire Houses, on the other hand, did not propose any new theoretical leaps in the same way as Hoskins's contemporaneous concept of a Great Rebuilding did.⁸⁷ Later ideas such as J. T. Smith's alternate rebuilding,⁸⁸ Brunskill's Vernacular Zone,⁸⁹ Currie's attrition modelling,⁹⁰ or more technical work such as the plotting of cruck and other distributions⁹¹ and the development of dendrochronology as an accurate dating tool, moved the subject forward further. Professor R. A. Cordingley at Manchester University had started a regional recording programme in 1946, although of the resulting studies of domestic architecture only Raymond Wood-Jones's of the Banbury region (fieldwork undertaken 1952-61) was published in book form.⁹² While not proposing any theoretical leaps to compare with the Highland / Lowland paradigm, *Monmouthshire Houses* nevertheless moved the subject forward significantly and demonstrated the virtues of a regional approach. Whilst affirming the academic value of studying vernacular architecture and demonstrating a link between the material remains of the past and written history, it also showed how truss forms and moulding details could be used to create dateable typologies and made the study of vernacular architecture one to which amateurs could aspire to contribute. It was the first serious, detailed study in the field, and it is hard to see where the subject would have gone without it.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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NOTES

1. Pioneering works include in particular S. O. Addy, *The evolution of the English house* (London, 1898), and C. F. Innocent's *The Development of English Building Construction* (Cambridge, 1916) which despite its title also included Welsh material, and several regional studies; for such early works, see R. de Zouche Hall ed., *A Bibliography on Vernacular Architecture* (Newton Abbot, 1972) and subsequent additions published by the Vernacular Architecture Group. Very little of substance was published on Welsh traditional

- buildings until the 1930s: some dozen articles, mostly of little academic merit, on individual houses; a series of articles in the 1880s on the timber-framed houses of Montgomeryshire; three important papers between 1877 and 1902 on Pembrokeshire farmhouses; notes, plans and illustrations on Carmarthenshire longhouses commissioned for the *Report of the Royal Commission on Land in Wales and Monmouthshire* in 1896 by the Commission's Secretary, D. Lleufer Thomas, and one small volume which still retains its charm, *The Old Cottages of Snowdonia* (Bangor, 1908) by H. Hughes and H. L. North. All these were the work of non-affiliated individuals; even Lleufer Thomas's work was on his own initiative (for more on Lleufer Thomas, see *Welsh Biography Online*: <http://wbo.llgc.org.uk/en/s-THOM-LLE-1863.html> (Accessed 6.11.14).
2. For Fox's biography, see E. M. Jope, 'Fox, Sir Cyril Fred (1882-1967)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* online edition, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33230> (Accessed 5.9.13).
 3. Such is international recognition of his name that he was featured in Charles Schultz's *Peanuts* cartoon strip: C. Scott-Fox, *Cyril Fox: archaeologist extraordinary* (Oxford, 2002), fig 51, 123.
 4. The use of the word 'personality' was common in contemporary geographical circles, being used by Vidal de la Blache (1845-1918) in France and Sir Harford Mackinder (1861-1947) in Britain, but there is no evidence that Fox had any direct knowledge of the work of either; rather, he seems to have absorbed both term and concept from their general use in geography: C. Scott-Fox, *Cyril Fox. Archaeologist Extraordinary* (Oxford, 2002), 124-5. Peate, however, thought that Fox had seized upon (and misunderstood) Mackinder's thesis, but had not acknowledged his source: I. C. Peate, *Rhwng Dau Fyd* ['Between Two Worlds'] (Dinbych, 1976), 104.
 5. For Peate's biography, see M. Stephens, 'Peate, Iorwerth Cyfeiliog (1901-1982)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004), and online edition, Oct 2006, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/55462> (Accessed 5. 9.13). The Welsh Folk Museum was later named The Museum of Welsh Life, and is currently titled St Fagans: National History Museum. For brevity it is here called St Fagans.
 6. Sadly, only one side of their interaction has been recounted in any detail, by Peate in his Welsh-language autobiography, *Rhwng Dau Fyd*. Fox did not pen a similar work, and had to wait until 2002 before a biography was published, written by his son, Charles Scott-Fox.
 7. He was a pioneer of the study of folk life in Britain and of the development of open-air museums, but more of the credit for the foundation of St Fagans should perhaps go to Fox than it does. Peate is still remembered widely in Wales, Fox only by archaeologists and academics, a situation reflected by the fact that there is a blue plaque on the house that Peate lived in at this time in Rhiwbeina Garden Village in Cardiff, but none on Fox's house one street away.
 8. T. M. Owen, 'Iorwerth Peate a Diwylliant Gwerin', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* 1998, (1999), 62 (my translation).
 9. I. C. Peate, *Cymru a'i Phobl* (Caerdydd, 1931), 111 (my translation).
 10. I. C. Peate, 'Survey of Welsh House-Types', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* vii, (1934), 341.
 11. I. C. Peate, 'Some Welsh Houses', *Antiquity* x, (1936), 448-59; Å. Campbell, 'Irish Fields and Houses: a study of rural culture', *Bealoideas* v, (1935), 74. Åke Campbell (1891-1957) was a pioneering Swedish ethnologist who carried out the first scientific study of Irish houses and their contents, and who greatly influenced both Fox and Peate during his visit to Cardiff in 1934.
 12. D. Jenkins, *Tân yn Llŷn. Hanes brwydr gorsaf awyr Penyberth* (Aberystwyth, 1937), 185-8; RCAHMW, *An Inventory of the Ancient Monuments in Caernarvonshire Vol. iii: West* (London, 1964), 36-7.
 13. Cardiff, St Fagans, Accession Correspondence 36.691.
 14. The site had its own dedicated railway line and fifty-eight storage chambers each 200' long, laid out in a herring-bone pattern and quarried into the hillsides on either side of the valley. It remained in use until 1992: www.subbrit.org.uk/site/34/trecwn-royal-naval-armaments-depot (Accessed 8. 6.15).
 15. C. Fox, 'Peasant Crofts in North Pembrokeshire', *Antiquity* xi, (1937), 439.
 16. C. Stevens, *Iorwerth C. Peate (Writers of Wales)* (Cardiff, 1986), 37-8.
 17. Sir Cyril Fox, *Life and Death in the Bronze Age. An archaeologist's fieldwork* (London, 1959).
 18. The results were published in a 28-page booklet by the Museum, *A Country House of the Elizabethan period in Wales, Six Wells, Llantwit Major, Glamorgan* (Cardiff, 1940).
 19. I. C. Peate, *Ym Mhob Pen...Ysgrifau* (Llandysul, 1948), 11-17 (my translations).

20. Fox had no time for the Welsh language, according to Peate: Peate, *Rhwng Dau Fyd...*, (1976), 101, 103.
21. Cardiff, St Fagans, Accession Correspondence 40.318.
22. Fieldwork did not become normal practice for the Commission until the 1930s, and it was only in the 1970s that the methodology changed from a parish-by-parish multi-period survey to typological recording across a county: P. Wakelin and R. A. Griffiths ed., *Hidden Histories. Discovering the Heritage of Wales* (Aberystwyth, 2008), 19-29.
23. O.E., 'Review', *Antiquity* i (1927), 245-7.
24. D. M. Browne, 'From antiquarianism to archaeology: the genesis and achievement of the Royal Commission's Anglesey volume', *Archaeologia Cambrensis* 156 (2007), 33-49. Peate notes in *Rhwng Dau Fyd*, 92, that the eminent historian of Monmouthshire, Sir Joseph Bradney, a Commissioner, was anxious to put Peate's name forward for consideration as Secretary on the grounds that the holder of the post should be a Welsh-speaker, but Peate persuaded him to desist, whereupon Bradney tried to put forward Peate's name as Hemp's successor as Inspector of Ancient Monuments for Wales, only to be rebuffed again.
25. D. M. Browne, 'From antiquarianism to archaeology: the genesis and achievement of the Royal Commission's Anglesey volume', *Archaeologia Cambrensis* 156 (2007), 44.
26. I. C. Peate, 'Some observations on the Anglesey Inventory of Ancient Monuments', *Transactions of the Anglesey Society*, (1939), 105-8.
27. The first edition of Peate's book was published in 1940 as a volume of *Y Cymmrodor*.
28. I. C. Peate, *The Welsh House. A study in Folk Culture*, 3rd edn (Liverpool, 1946), 7.
29. Peate, *The Welsh House*, 4.
30. I. C. Peate, 'Traddodiad Llanbryn-mair', *Syniadau* (Llandysul, 1969), 57-65; T. M. Owen, 'Iorwerth Cyfeiliog Peate', *Welsh Biography Online*, <http://yba.llgc.org.uk/en/s6-PEAT-CYF-1901.html> (Accessed 5. 9.13).
31. Peate, *The Welsh House*, 52.
32. Peate, *The Welsh House*, 57.
33. Peate, *The Welsh House*, 110.
34. C. Fox, 'Peasant Crofts in North Pembrokeshire', *Antiquity* xi, (1937), 439.
35. Peate, *The Welsh House*, 88.
36. Peate, *The Welsh House*, 91.
37. Peate, *The Welsh House*, 92.
38. Peate, *The Welsh House*, 93.
39. eg. *Tŷ tafnod* (cognate with E. 'tallet') in Llŷn.
40. Fox, 'Peasant Crofts', 438-9.
41. Peate, *The Welsh House*, 97-8.
42. R. Suggett and M. Dunn, *Darganfod Tai Hanesyddol Eryri/Discovering the Historic Houses of Snowdonia* (Aberystwyth, 2014), 136-58.
43. Peate, *The Welsh House*, 98.
44. Peate, *The Welsh House*, 108.
45. Peate, *The Welsh House*, 159.
46. J. Summerson (writing as John Coolmore), *The Architectural Review* lxxxviii (1940), 122-4.
47. Peate, *The Welsh House*, dust jacket.
48. C. A. Raleigh Radford in *Archaeologia Cambrensis* xcvi (1941), 100-3.
49. I. C. Peate, 'Mr. Raleigh Radford and *The Welsh House*', *Archaeologia Cambrensis* xcvi (1941), 219-22.
50. C. Fox, review of *The Welsh House*, *Antiquity* xiv (1940), 495-8.
51. In marked contrast to Fox's own detailed study of Pant-y-betws, Llanfihangel rhos-y-corn, Carmarthenshire, published in the same volume as the review: C. Fox, 'A Croft in the Upper Nedd Valley', *Antiquity* xiv (1940), 363-76.
52. They were indeed drawn by him, but, in reality, all his plans of Carmarthenshire long-houses were based on those commissioned by Lleufer Thomas in 1896.
53. Peate, 'Preface to the Second Edition', *The Welsh House*, xi.
54. Peate, *The Welsh House*, xi.
55. Peate, *The Welsh House*, 6-7.

56. Contrary to Fox's wishes, according to Peate himself, who claimed that Fox had also sought not to mention the commendation in the minutes of the meeting, but reinstated the item when challenged by Peate. There is no evidence that this episode influenced the later decision to debar Peate from his post for action regarding his stand as a conscientious objector contrary to the Museum's formal procedure. It was only after complaints by a number of influential supporters that he was reinstated in post many months later. Peate's story is told in Peate, *Rhwng Dau Fyd* ..., 115-6.
57. Peate claimed credit for inspiring the work in *Rhwng Dau Fyd*..., 90.
58. R. T. Jenkins, E. D. Jones and B. F. Roberts ed., *The Dictionary of Welsh Biography 1941-70* (London 2001), 246-7; D. A. Miller, 'Somerset, FitzRoy Richard, fourth Baron Raglan (1885-1964)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) and online edition <http://www.oxforddnb.co/view/article/75510> (Accessed 6. 9.13).
59. Lord Raglan, 'The Origin of Vernacular Architecture' in I. Ll. Foster and L. Alcock ed, *Culture and Environment. Essays in Honour of Sir Cyril Fox* (London, 1963), 373-88.
60. Cardiff, St Fagans, MS 1491/196 (xxxvii).
61. P. Smith, 'Introduction', *Monmouthshire Houses. Part I*, 2nd edn (Cardiff, 1994), iv.
62. Smith, *Monmouthshire Houses*, xi.
63. J. T. Smith, 'The Long-House in Monmouthshire. A Re-appraisal', in I. Ll. Foster and L. Alcock ed., *Culture and Environment. Essays in Honour of Sir Cyril Fox* (London, 1963), 389.
64. J. T. Smith, review, *Archaeological Journal* cx (1953), 221.
65. I. C. Peate, *Rhwng Dau Fyd*..., 90; S. R. Jones and J. T. Smith, 'The houses of Breconshire', *Brycheiniog* ix (1963), 1-77; x (1964), 69-183; xi (1965), 1-150; xii (1966-7), 1-91; and xiii (1968-9), 1-86.
66. Iorwerth C. Peate, 'The Welsh Long-house: a Brief Re-appraisal', in Foster and Alcock ed., 442-44.
67. In 1949 he had a technical disagreement with Raglan on how crucks were produced from a tree, sparked by the re-erection of the Stryd Lydan barn from Penley, Flintshire, at St. Fagans. Fox and Raglan included in *Monmouthshire Houses I*, 38, a new assessment of how a cruck might be produced, namely with the long blade being derived from the trunk and the shorter upright being from a branch. Peate and his staff disagreed, and in this particular instance were probably correct: Eurwyn Wiliam, *Welsh Cruck Barns. Stryd Lydan and Hendre-wen* (Cardiff, 1994), 19-21.
68. T. M. Owen, 'Iorwerth Cyfeiliog Peate', Welsh Biography Online, <http://yba.llgc.org.uk/en/s6-PEAT-CYF-1901.html> (Accessed 5. 9. 13).
69. S. Unwin, 'Notions of "Vernacular" in Architectural Writing in Britain Since 1839', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Wales, 1988.
70. Scott - Fox, *Cyril Fox*, 184.
71. Sir Cyril Fox and Lord Raglan, *Monmouthshire Houses. Part I* (Cardiff, 1951), preface.
72. R. de Zouche Hall, 'The Origins of the Vernacular Architecture Group', *Vernacular Architecture* 5 (1974), 5.
73. For a summary of Smith's career, see the various obituaries such as Peter Wakelin's, *The Guardian*, 7 April 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com.artanddesign/2013/apr/07/peter-smith-obituary> (Accessed 10. 11. 14).
74. His drawings were inspired by Stanley Jones's cutaway drawing of a cruck house in S. R. Jones and J. T. Smith, 'The Houses of Breconshire', *Brycheiniog* ix (1963), 4: ex inf. J. T. Smith 25/11/2015, as told to him by Peter Smith.
75. P. Smith 'The R.C.A.H.M. Wales in my Time 1949-89', *Transactions of the Ancient Monuments Society* 34 (1990), 29-83.
76. E. Mercer, *English Vernacular Houses. A Study of Traditional Farmhouses and Cottages* (London, 1975).
77. Smith, *Houses of the Welsh Countryside*, figs 101-14, 194-207. Smith originally identified four groupings, which he termed A-D. H was added at a slightly later date, presumably to allow for three other groups, more cognate to the original four, to be discovered.
78. D. Austin, 'The Future: Discourse, objectives and directions' in Katherine Roberts ed., *Lost Farmsteads. Deserted Rural Settlements in Wales* (York, 2006), 193-205.
79. Austin, 'The Future', 201.
80. P. Smith, 'The Domestic Architecture of Cardiganshire. I. The Rural Domestic Architecture: Ffermddy, Plas a Bwthyn', in G. H. Jenkins and I. G. Jones ed., *Cardiganshire County History, 3, Cardiganshire in Modern*

- Times* (Cardiff, 1998), 244-6, 252-3 and 283-8.
81. P. Smith, 'Houses and Building Styles', in D. H. Owen ed., *Settlement and Society in Wales* (Cardiff, 1989), 95-150.
 82. Austin, 'The Future', 203-4. In this critique, Austin was the first to address directly the question which Peate and Smith skirted around, probably because each felt he knew the answer but did not feel it necessary to say so: 'It comes down to this: the Welsh house, is it the house *in* Wales or the house *of* Wales? The unexpressed consensus is probably that it is a bit of both: stylistically a period house *in* Wales and materially and socially a house *of* Wales and the Welsh land. It is thus, culturally, a hybrid'.
 83. R. W. Brunskill is the only other authority who has attempted to broadly map distributions across England and Wales: R. W. Brunskill, *Houses* (London, 1982), 26-106.
 84. P. Smith, 'The Architectural Personality of the British Isles', *Archaeologia Cambrensis* cxxix (1980), 4.
 85. Peate's name has only been cited three times in the journal *Vernacular Architecture* since its first publication in 1970, all in articles about Welsh buildings.
 86. J. T. Smith, *English Houses 1200-1800: The Hertfordshire Evidence* (London, 1992), 97.
 87. W. G. Hoskins, 'The rebuilding of rural England, 1570-1640', *Past and Present* 4 (1953), 44-89.
 88. S. Jones and J. T. Smith, 'The Houses of Breconshire. Part I', *Brycheiniog* ix (1963), 1-78.
 89. R. W. Brunskill, *An Illustrated Handbook of Vernacular Architecture* (London, 1971), 25-9.
 90. C. R. J. Currie, 'Time and chance: modelling the attrition of old houses', *Vernacular Architecture* 19 (1988), 1-9.
 91. N. W. Alcock, *Cruck Construction: An Introduction and Catalogue*, CBA Research Report 42 (London, 1981); J. T. Smith, 'Mediaeval roofs; a classification', *Archaeological Journal* 115 (1958), 111-49.
 92. R. B. Wood-Jones, *Traditional Domestic Architecture in the Banbury Region* (Manchester, 1963).