

took part in an excursion to the Isle of Wight, visiting Carisbrooke Castle and Museum, Newtown, Chessel Down and the site of the medieval lighthouse on Chale Down.

About one hundred people participated in the conference and great credit is due to Mr. R. Douch, who acted as local secretary.

D. M. WILSON

THE VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE GROUP CONFERENCE AT CAERLEON

The fifth annual conference of the Vernacular Architecture Group was held at Caerleon, Monmouthshire, at Easter, 1959. This centre was chosen in order to see some of the houses described in *Monmouthshire Houses*, and to honour the authors, Sir Cyril Fox and Lord Raglan. Two and a half days were spent in the field, and they provided impressive examples of the rich and massive carpentry and joinery found in such features as door-heads, framed staircases and moulded beams, well known from illustrations in *Monmouthshire Houses*.

The papers all dealt with one aspect or another of cruck construction. J. T. Smith, in a paper which it is hoped will soon appear in print, made the case, on distributional grounds, for a prehistoric origin of the cruck method of building, associating it tentatively with the Celtic peoples. V. R. Webster described Leicestershire cruck houses, which are of cruder construction than those further west. He maintained that they appear to be of medieval or sixteenth-century date rather than later. J. G. Dunbar gave a paper on Scottish crucks, in which he pointed out that in Scotland, as in England, they have a westerly distribution and are not found, for example, in the Lothians, an area of intensive Anglian settlement. Scottish crucks are of extremely primitive construction but, since they are found in the houses of lairds, they are certainly carpenters' work.

A paper by T. L. Marsden illustrated the contrast between the eastern method of box-frame and trussed-rafter construction and the western cruck method, and also produced examples from midland counties where elements of both are found in the same building. L. F. J. Walrond discussed the jointed cruck which is common in Dorset, Somerset and Devon, and which he related to the arched-brace construction of the collar-beam roof.

Now that the distribution of this method of building has been clearly plotted,¹⁷ the principal directions in which further research should proceed are becoming apparent. One of them is the publication of documentary references to cruck building, about which E. A. Gee spoke at the conference. The earliest relates to the building of a bakehouse at Harlech Castle in 1278.¹⁸ The Guildhall at Leicester may well be dated 1347-50, and the barn at Church Enstone, Oxon., 1382. The variations in cruck construction, e.g. the straight and curved blades, and upper cruck construction, must be isolated and their relations defined. It is not yet clear whether storied construction is an original feature of any cruck house. The principal need is to separate the instances of crucks of architectural quality from those of inferior technique. Only further investigations on such lines will solve the problems which have been pinpointed by the work of the past twenty years.

M. W. BARLEY

THE COUNCIL FOR BRITISH ARCHAEOLOGY CONFERENCE AT TRURO

Following the successful conference held at Norwich in April, 1958, for the study of Anglo-Saxon pottery (pp. 1 ff., *supra*), a meeting was arranged to discuss the wares of the Celtic west. This conference, organized by the Migration Period and Early Medieval Research Committee of the Council for British Archaeology, met from 25-27 September,

¹⁷ See J. T. Smith in *Archaeol. J.*, cxv (1958), 139.

¹⁸ L. F. Salzman, *Building in England, down to 1540* (1952), p. 195.

1959, in the County Museum, Truro, by invitation of the Royal Institution of Cornwall. About thirty people attended.

On 28 September visits were made to the early medieval sites at Tintagel and Castle Dore and to see the early Christian inscriptions at Lewannick and Menabilly. The successful organization of the conference was carried out by the curator of the County Museum, Mr. H. L. Douch, in conjunction with officers and staff of the Council for British Archaeology. A representative exhibition of the pottery to be studied was arranged by Mr. Douch, Mr. Charles Thomas and Mr. B. Wailes, with the cooperation of many museum directors.

Proceedings opened on the evening of 25 September, when Mr. Raleigh Radford introduced the subject with a historical survey of the Celtic west, emphasizing the conditions of the lands and the foreign influences to which they were open in the period A.D. 400-1100.

The first contribution on 26 September was by Mr. Charles Thomas, who described the imported wares dating between 400 and 800. The various styles were listed and analysed and their distribution mapped (*Proc. West Cornwall Field Club*, II, 2, 59-72; *Dark-age Britain* (ed. D. B. Harden, 1956), pp. 59-70). Mr. Thomas discussed the dating of these wares and their relations to the continental material, suggesting that both A i and A ii were of east Mediterranean origin, while E could be safely tied down to east France. Mr. Wailes followed with an account of the pottery current in western France in the sub-Roman period, based on his recent tour of the museums of that area. He showed that A ii and B were neither made in Visigothic Gaul, nor current in that region, though both were found in Catalonia. The native Visigothic wares reached Nantes, but not further north. E occurred sporadically in Brittany, but not south of the Loire; it was common in Frankish cemeteries and must originate east of Paris. Dr. F. Tischler in discussion agreed with this finding; E was similar to some Frankish pottery in the Rhineland, but the fabric was not identical.

Mr. Michael Gough, who was to have contributed an account of the contemporary Byzantine wares, was unfortunately detained abroad. The early part of the afternoon of 26 September was therefore devoted to an examination of the pottery and a discussion of the earlier papers. After this Mr. J. V. S. Megaw gave a well illustrated account of the recent excavations at Iona.

On 27 September Mr. Thomas described the stratigraphical sequence at Gwithian with special reference to the grass-marked and Gwithian styles. Gwithian in west Cornwall is so far the only site to have yielded a complete sequence of the pottery current between 400 and 1100. The Gwithian style, as defined by Mr. Thomas, is a devolved form of the local Romano-British pottery; it also occurs at Tintagel and on other Cornish sites. It is found in association with imported A and B; like theirs its currency lies in the fifth and sixth centuries. Grass-marked pottery characterizes the middle period at Gwithian (c. 550-800). It begins in the sixth century and is found associated with the later imported wares, including E. Its connexions must be sought with the grass-marked and souterrain wares of Northern Ireland. The bar-lug pottery of the final stage at Gwithian begins on that site in the ninth century. This pottery was the subject of a further paper by Mr. R. L. S. Bruce-Mitford, who illustrated its range and connexions by reference to his excavations at Mawgan Porth (*Recent Archaeological Excavations in Britain* (ed. Bruce-Mitford, 1956, pp. 167-96). The position of the single coin of c. 1000, found on that site, was unfortunately ambiguous; an initial date of either 850 or 950 was possible on the present reading of the evidence. The connexions of this ware were with Frisia and its occurrence at Haithabu suggested a central date about 1000.

The two final papers were contributed by Professor M. J. O'Kelly of Cork and Mr. Leslie Alcock of Cardiff, who dealt respectively with the contemporary pottery found in Ireland and Wales.

C. A. RALEGH RADFORD