

Kirkwall and the County Convenor for Orkney. On Thursday the Conference attended lectures by Dr. C. A. Raleigh Radford on 'Norse colonial houses with special reference to Birsay' and by Mr. S. Dahl on 'The Viking settlement of the Faroe Islands', and was shown a series of BBC films on Orkney and Shetland archaeology. In the afternoon Brogar, Skara Brae and Maeshowe were visited. On Friday, 11 April, the Conference visited Orphir, Bu, Marwick, Birsay and Gurness. On Saturday, 12 April, Mr. S. H. Cruden gave a lecture on 'St. Magnus Cathedral', which was followed by a visit to the cathedral. In the afternoon the Conference visited Skail and the Broch of Deerness. On Sunday, 13 April, the excursion by boat to Wyre and Egilsay had to be cancelled owing to weather conditions and in its place Mr. D. M. Wilson gave a lecture entitled 'The St. Ninian's Isle treasure'. On Monday, 14 April, the Conference visited the bishop's palace and the earl's palace at Kirkwall, and flew thence to Shetland and visited Jarlshof. This was followed by an informal reception in Lerwick. On Tuesday, 15 April, the Conference visited Scalloway, Tingwall and a number of prehistoric sites, and was received by the Provost of Lerwick for tea. The Conference dispersed on 16 April after a visit to Fort Charlotte and Clickhimmin. The Society must record its gratitude to Mr. Macgillivray who acted as local secretary for the Conference.

DAVID M. WILSON

THE VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE GROUP CONFERENCE, 1969

The Vernacular Architecture Group visited Cornwall with Newquay as its base from 15-19 April, 1969. The local organizers, Mr. and Mrs. F. J. Chesher, gave two evening talks on the houses of the region and on their social and economic background. Three excursions were made to study the domestic architecture of different areas: between Bodmin Moor and the N. Cornish coast on 16 April; St. Austell and mid Cornwall on 17 April; and the south-west including the Lizard peninsula on 18 April.

It is, perhaps, difficult to realize that Cornwall was never really remote, because of sea communications, and that her industries produced waves of prosperity. On the other hand partible inheritance and yeomen holding leases for a limited period could curtail building activity. The houses themselves are of surprisingly high quality but prove that dating should never be based on one criterion alone; mouldings of middle 14th-century character could be found with other features that had to be of c. 1500, and shouldered-headed doorways, usually of late 13th- or early 14th-century date elsewhere, could be found at Trethin with other features of 17th-century date. While Tintagel Post Office is interesting because of its differing roof lines and varied masonry textures, it gives little evidence of date, unlike some of the other houses, which often have high architectural quality. Wallings vary from thin granite in the north to block granite in the south and even include cob on high rubble walls, as at Angrouse. Doorways and mullioned windows are formed in large pieces of granite, which weathers very little, and roofs are usually of stone slates, surviving thatch being rare. There are excellent fireplaces with great granite lintels and little evidence for open fires; stone newel staircases are so common that a late 17th-century wooden staircase, with turned balusters and square newels, as at Mudgeon, or a simple plank balustered staircase of the same date at Angrouse are relatively rare. On the other hand, because timber is scarce, woodwork is not impressive and scantlings are slight. Houses which, among many equally interesting, left an impression were Truthall, the most definitely medieval house (late 15th-century), with a great hall with arch-braced roof and square-set purlins, windows with two cinquefoiled lights, perhaps glazed at the top but rebated for shutters, and a range added in 1642; Colquite, ruined and of c. 1500 with its Devon-type relieving arches, doorways of differing types but probably contemporary and with unexpected wooden lintels to the openings internally; the sophisticated courtyard house at Roscarrock with fine masonry and very good early 16th-century roofs upstairs and reused moulded ceiling beams; Redevalen, of the late 16th century, but with added projections of which

the openings have labels, unlike those in the main house; and the interesting situation at Mudgeon, where a range with stone and cob walling could be early because of its primitive appearance, but if compared with other buildings of the same construction may be later than the stone range adjoining. A final discussion concentrated chiefly on plan types, which together with the problems of chronology had been very ably presented by Frank and Veronica Chesher.

E. A. GEE