

information is coming to light. It is the thorough investigation of such buildings as this cottage which is bringing forth the best results and contributing most to the store of knowledge on this most important subject.

TRADITIONAL FYLDE HOUSES

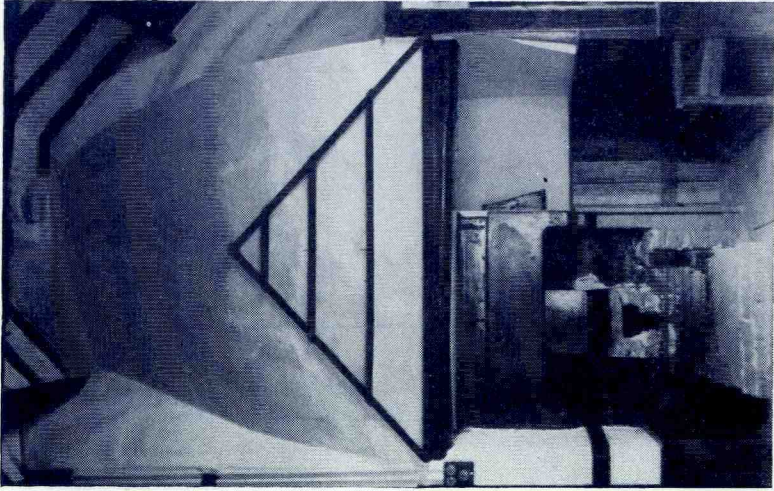
BY R. C. WATSON

Read before the Fylde Historical Society 6 March 1957

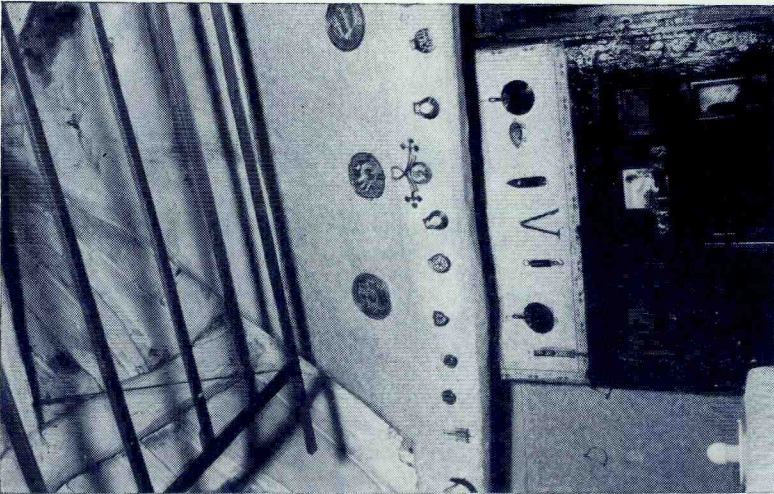
The best place to begin examining the traditional architecture of the Fylde is at Saltcotes on the eastern fringe of Lytham. There, we find two dwellings which were originally one house, and though undated must be of the first decade of the seventeenth century at the very latest. Saltcotes Cottages embody the development-plan of many local houses, starting out as a pure clay house supported on a cruck-truss frame, and having new walls put in as they became necessary in such materials as were to hand. Being on the coast much of Saltcotes was repaired with cobble-stones, not the big round ones so popular in the nineteenth-century revival, but carefully selected flat stones which were laid in neat rows not unlike bricks. It is interesting to note that no quoins of any different materials were used.

A straw thatch is still the roof-covering at Saltcotes and the eaves are barely six feet from the ground. As with most local houses, the gable ends are built above the level of the thatch, no doubt to keep the wind from getting under it—a wise precaution on this gale-swept peninsula.

We enter Saltcotes directly into the hall or housepart immediately opposite the fire, which is guarded from the draught and prying eyes by a screen known as the jamb, which was usually made of wattle and daub but has been replaced here by brick. From this speer or jamb runs a roughly-squared beam which still shows signs of being forked where it joins the back wall. This beam supports what is probably one of the few surviving fire hoods in the country. It is now unused, for a brick flue has been built through it. The parlour has also had a hood at some period but this has disappeared, although plenty of signs of its existence remain. Over the parlour is a loft, which is supported on a beamed and raftered ceiling, the woodwork of which has been roughly shaped with an adze. This ceiling is



Photograph by E. A. Kay
 Plate 9. FIREHOOD AT IVY COTTAGE
 BISPHAM



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 Plate 8. FIREHOOD AT SALTICOTES

slightly lighter in construction than the rest of the buildings' woodwork, and most probably was inserted some years after the building was completed. The wall which divides the parlour and an adjoining outbuilding is still clay and will be the earliest wall in the building.

The housepart, open to the roof, has two eighteenth-century two-panelled doors leading to the kitchen and buttery. These twin doors occur in most of the local three-bay houses, one exception being at nearby Wrea Green, where a most interesting cruck house called Pudding Pie Nook stands. There is only one door here and the buttery originally opened out of the kitchen. The partition and ceiling were taken out of this house some years ago. A rather remarkable thing about Pudding Pie Nook is that on three sides of the house the clay does not appear to have been whitewashed at all. It is generally accepted that the length of a cruck bay is 16 feet, but at Pudding Pie Nook and Saltcotes the housepart is 12 feet 6 inches in length. This measurement occurs elsewhere locally.

Ivy Cottage at Bispham, despite considerable alteration last century, still has the remains of a fire-hood. This house is of cruck construction and bears the date of 1686 in a painted wall decoration of which part remains. It is possible that Ivy Cottage is as late as the date because the beam which supports the hood has a rounded moulding which was very popular at the end of the seventeenth century. There survives in the housepart of both Ivy Cottage and Saltcotes a beam between the purlins which has large wooden pegs driven into it on which fitches were stored.

The cruck trusses at Pudding Pie Nook and Ivy Cottage make an interesting comparison in the development of this type of roof support. At Pudding Pie Nook, the earlier house, probably fifteenth century, there are two bays at least in which the curved principals have a tie beam extending to the width of the base which carries the wall plates. The two purlins rest directly on the principals and are therefore rather close to the ridge pole. In two bays of the house there are wind braces giving extra support to the structure, and these curved pieces join the purlin to the principal and project into the rooms. The tops of the principals only touch at the corners, and are held by a small collar which leaves a triangular depression in which the ridge tree rests. At Ivy Cottage, however, the cruck principals are longer and some means had to be devised for a better distribution of the purlins on either side. With this in mind the carpenter fixed a curved piece of timber from the extended beam so that its tapered end was pegged high on the principal.

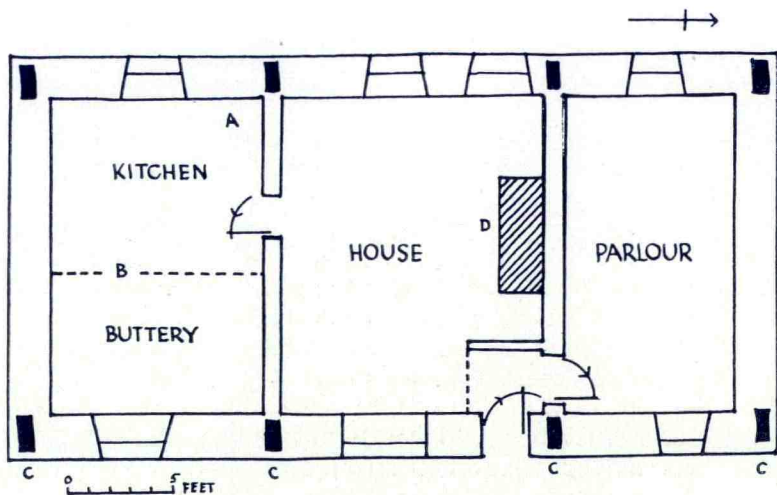


Fig. 24. PUDDING PIE NOOK, WREA GREEN

A—Site of Stairway
B—Site of Division

C—Cruck Trusses
D—New Chimney

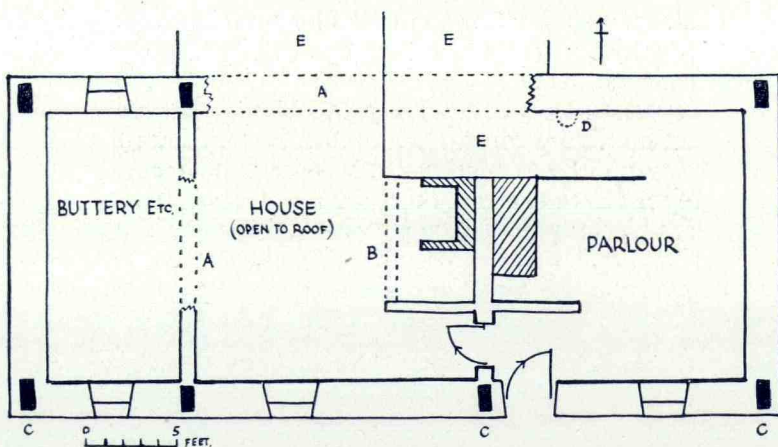


Fig. 25. IVY COTTAGE, BISPHAM

A—Lower Part of Wall Removed
B—Fire Hood

C—Cruck Trusses
D—Corbel for Disappeared Beam
E—Nineteenth Century Alterations and Additions



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Plate 10. HODGKINSON HOUSE BARN, ELSWICK

This photograph taken in 1956 shows the cruck principles with the curved pieces of timber on either side.

This addition carried the purlin (see photograph of Hodgkinson House Barn), and where necessary any wind braces ran to this. Since the principals were longer than in earlier buildings, it was in most cases deemed essential to have a half tie beam between the main tie beam and the ridge pole.

Most of the windows in this district were replaced in the eighteenth century by "Yorkshire lights", but at Saltcotes there are the remains of two wooden mullioned windows, one in the buttery and one in the housepart. These windows, originally of four lights each, are now partly blocked out, and it is impossible to photograph them because they are obscured by heavy furniture. It is possible to see, however, that the mullions are rectangular and unadorned by mouldings, and there does not seem to be any groove to take glass. Two of Saltcotes front windows still have their original eighteenth-century leaded panes, each transom of which has an iron bar behind it.

It was necessary in houses of the type being examined to have two staircases, because the open hall prevented access from one upper room to the other. The existing staircases are rarely as old as the building itself and in all probability were put in to replace ladders. These ladders were formed from a stout plank, which was fastened to the wall, and had semi-circular holes cut in for the feet. Until about thirty years ago one such ladder was the only access to the servants' quarters at a house called Byreworth, near Garstang.

The Fylde abounds in traditional three-bay cruck houses, although most of these are condemned and will not survive much longer. Until recently at Hodgkinson House near Elswick, the entire twelve bays of the farmstead were supported on cruck trusses. The "T" shaped house here is built on crucks and when some repairs were being carried out some years ago a silver coin of the first Elizabeth's reign was found embedded in the clay. This farm passed by descent for over three hundred years, which seems to point to the survival of this farm's buildings, to a recent date. Unfortunately the buildings were destroyed in a severe gale a few years ago.

There is much work to be done, not only in the Fylde, but in all areas, recording this vernacular architecture before Subtopia sweeps away all evidence of local styles and methods.