

GROUP FOR REGIONAL STUDIES IN MUSEUMS

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## EDITORIAL

The Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries is currently conducting an enquiry into practical ways of implementing some of the more important recommendations of the Wright Report, principally the establishment of Regional Centres. The collection of written evidence has been completed and the Commission are now gathering oral information and continuing visits to selected centres. The Group for Regional Studies should have an important contribution to make to this discussion as it pertains to our particular subject, although we have not yet taken the opportunity offered. The present Newsletter carries a short article by David Sekers (p.7) urging the Group to make its views felt and suggesting the formation of a working party to draw up a report on the position of regional culture studies within museums and the future requirements of the subject. A rational and cogent plan is desperately needed if our subject is ever properly to realise its full potential within museums. Such a plan, too, must be based firmly on the real needs of the subject and not as appears to be the present approach of the Commission, on a handful of arbitrarily chosen centres.

In the report on the activities of the Scottish Branch, a similar call is made for a more organised approach in Scotland, with the suggestion that the country be divided into its various cultural provinces, each of these to be served by a museum concerned solely with the cultural life of that particular area (p.6). The suggestion has great merit, not merely for Scotland but for the whole of the U.K. as well, and is worthy of detailed consideration. It would not be without major practical difficulties, particularly in the need to ignore local authority boundaries, although Beanish Museum has shown that it is possible to work jointly with several local authorities. In England, too, at present insufficient research has been carried out to allow us to draw up cultural provinces with any great precision. The Commission, however, appear to be defining the "regional" centres on entirely different premises. They would appear to be looking to the large collections, in the big, established provincial museums as their "regional" centres and while this approach is probably satisfactory for the fine and decorative arts, or for collections of non-British archaeology or ethnology, it is hardly appropriate for indigenous regional cultural collections. It is important we make a very careful distinction in the use of terms between "regional" centres which provide a museum service for a rather vague and administratively conceived region and regional museums whose role is to document and interpret the way of life of distinct and individual cultural provinces. We should emphasise this crucial distinction and seek to ensure that any national plan for the future of provincial museums allows for the proper development of our subject, ideally through the establishment of a country-wide network of museums whose concern is with their own distinct cultural province. Certainly as David Sekers comments (p.7) we should not give our support to any scheme which all too simply bases itself on currently well-established museums whose collections are of doubtful regional significance and whose locations are both geographically and culturally remote from the areas which they are being set up to serve.

### Report on the Week-end Meeting, Sticklepath, Devon, 21st - 23rd May, 1976.

This was again a most successful weekend though attended by only nine people. The small number made it possible to insert an informal discussion period into the programme, as well as allowing for a better exchange of ideas than is always possible in a large group. Accommodation was in a local guest house, but the evening meetings were held in the dining room of the local inn as there were too few of us to warrant opening up the village hall.

The Friday evening session consisted of an illustrated lecture by Mr. Barry Hughes, Chairman of the Steering Committee of the North Devon Museum Project, on the problems of recording the fast vanishing industrial history in North Devon in the absence of any professional museum staff and of any adequate museum presence on which to base a proper service.

The following morning was occupied in visiting the Finch Brothers' Foundry in Sticklepath, which is an outstanding example of what can be achieved by local enthusiasm and, comparatively, very little money. Now owned by a Trust, the forge has all its waterwheels fully restored, so that all the cutting, forging and grinding machinery can be seen working. Plenty of information, in the shape of old catalogues and actual examples, show the wide variety of edge tools which were produced there. A small gallery shows the local geology and physical geography which produces the requisite water-power, and also explains very clearly the principles of hydraulics.

The afternoon was also spent at a site based on the use of water, this time for transport. In the 1880's and 1890's Morwellham was a flourishing river port, connecting the rich ore mines of Dartmoor with the coast at Plymouth. The hamlet - never more than that - flourished, creating vast wealth through the transshipment of lead, tin, manganese and arsenic. Today, financed principally by the Dartington Trust, it is advertised as a place of great interest particularly from the industrial history point of view. It is therefore unfortunate that the quays, partly used for car parking, are overgrown, <sup>and</sup> the large dock silted right up; the waterwheel erected on the site of the one which formerly powered a manganese crushing plant is acknowledged to be incorrect. There are, however, two trails with good leaflets, an excellent slide-tape introduction to the area, an equally excellent tea shop in the former pub, and a large gift-shop selling good quality but inappropriate merchandise, pots of French pate being a particular example!

Following this visit, an informal discussion was arranged to consider what had been seen so far, and how it fitted into regional studies. Talk was wide-ranging, covering definition of aims and objectives, and problems associated with attempting to formulate and adhere to these within a local government framework. The inappropriateness of applying the usual ethnological methods of study to urban environments, and the especial problems associated with planning site museums in those circumstances were also well aired.

In the evening, Mr. A. A. Cumming, in his role as Director of the S.W. Area Service, outlined their principal criteria and methods of allocating funds. Much of this was complementary to Mr. Hughes' talk of the night before in that the Service tries to provide help for appropriate local museum ventures, as that at Sticklepath, wherever it can, and especially where there is no likelihood of the foundation of local authority museums.

Sunday morning was spent in agricultural pursuits. An early start and fairly rapid visit at Furze Park Farm allowed an extra visit, to Mr. Philip Jenkinson, to be fitted in. Furze Park Farm houses a steam engine and threshing drum, a small selection of domestic pets, a large collection of implements which are not specifically local, a few in-calf heifers of uncommon breeds, and ewes of twenty-two different breeds. While the heifers are in-calf to their own breed, all the ewes had been put to the Jacob ram, which was slightly puzzling, even if the lambs were due to go to the butcher this summer, and shows the difference between stock kept for profit and those kept for historical importance. Refreshment facilities, an adventure playground, gift shop and car parking are provided, and a tape/slide show should be available in the very near future. When some of the rare breeds can be shown in that way it is hoped to reduce the variety somewhat to release more land for demonstrating equipment used in arable farming, again without any local bias. Mr. Jenkinson's collection is kept on his own farm, and is additional to his use of the farm to provide a living. It is not of specifically local material, and is not apparently either adequately cared for or documented. Mr. Jenkinson would like to see it form the nucleus of a North Devon Agricultural Museum, for which there is certainly a great need, but there is considerable doubt that the material is worth the money and effort this would involve.

The weekend as a whole showed a variety of approaches to the problems faced in creating site museums. The over-riding conclusion was the need to define aims first, and the order in which their achievement is to be tackled. If this is not adhered to then, particularly in private establishments, it is all too easy to provide the visitor facilities first, to provide an income, and to find that the true aims may be submerged beyond recovery. This lesson is equally applicable to local authority museums, which may be as pressingly beset by the need to increase visitor numbers or reach other easily measurable targets that may have nothing at all to do with the collections.

A. DIVER.

Report on the One Day Meeting, Staffordshire County Museum, Shugborough -  
10th June, 1976.

This meeting was on the theme of farming museums and looked in detail at three current projects, the Shugborough Park Farm, Cogges Manor Farm, Oxfordshire and the developments at the North of England Open Air Museum, Beamish. The day's programme was opened with an examination of the Shugborough Park Farm project with talks from Pamela Murray, John Rhodes and Alan Cheese on various aspects of the scheme. Shugborough Park Farm is one of the farms on the Shugborough Estate and was built in 1809. The farmstead is currently being restored by the Museum staff and sections are now open with displays on the history of the farm and estate and the development of Staffordshire agriculture. When completed the farmstead will house the Museum's agricultural displays with detailed consideration being given to farming on the estate, the history of which is well documented and more generally from this an examination of the history and development of agriculture within the County. Side by side with this the County Museum is also building up a livestock section of now rare breeds once common within the county and already has the foundation stock for its herds of Longhorn Cattle, Tamworth Pigs and Shropshire Sheep. In addition to allowing visitors the opportunity to see these now rare animals, the Museum will also be able to make an important contribution to their survival. The livestock will graze in the extensive park and be housed in the appropriate buildings in the farmstead. This part of the project is being financed through a Friends' Society and partly through revenue raised from the animals themselves, sale, breeding etc. Since the meeting one of the Museum Longhorns took second prize in its class at the Royal Show. The care and management of livestock demands an expertise beyond the normal skills of Museum Curators and Shugborough are members of the relevant rare breed societies and have amongst their Friends many with the necessary expertise.

The afternoon session was opened with talks by Richard Foster, John Rhodes and Christine Bloxham on the Oxfordshire County Museum scheme for Cogges Manor Farm. The farm was chosen by the Museum after a detailed search of the county as the site for their agricultural museum, and in addition to the farmhouse and out buildings, there are some ten acres of land. The site has a long history. The earliest parts of the farm house date to the mid 13th century, and it was enlarged in the 16th century with the main wing added in the 17th century. The farm buildings date from the 17th to 19th centuries. The surviving hamlet of Cogges was once part of a larger Medieval village, the house platforms of which, including the original moated Manor house, survive as earthworks in the land taken over by the museum, as does ridge and furrow associated with the village. The history of the farm and the village is being researched in detail by the museum and as part of this work, tape recordings have been made with people who knew or worked in the house and on the farm.

The museum use of the site is envisaged on a number of levels. There will be an interpretation of the various earthwork features with an explanation of the development of the historical landscape. The natural history of the area, soil, geology, flora and fauna will be covered and particularly its influence on the agriculture. The development of building styles and the various building materials to be seen in the house and farm buildings will also be

covered. It is envisaged that the house and farm buildings can be set out to show a typical Oxfordshire farm of the area for the period c.1900/05 with wider displays on Oxfordshire agriculture for the same period and the history and development of farming within the county. It is also planned to keep a small number of livestock and to use part of the land for farming demonstrations, using volunteers. Again with volunteers, it is hoped that the house can be used also for demonstrations, carrying out activities appropriate to its use.

John Gall from the North of England Open Air Museum, Beamish closed the afternoon session with a survey of the work and future programme for agricultural displays there. The Home Farm of the Beamish Estate is being restored and much of it is already open to visitors, other sections being opened as completed. The upper floor of the complex will be used for fairly formal museum displays on the history and development of agriculture in North East England and the buildings on the ground will be used for the purposes for which they were originally built. Thus the pig sties will house pigs, carts will be found in the cart shed and the gin-gang for farm machinery has already been restored to working order. It is planned, too, to have livestock, cattle, poultry etc. around the farmstead. The farm house will be appropriately furnished and used for demonstrations. A second farm, together with some land, on the museum site will be brought into use as a working farm, although visitor access will be restricted to special open days. They will, however, as they walk around the site be able to observe work being carried out on the land.

The meeting was brought to a close with a useful discussion. It was emphasised that in moving away from the more conventional types of museum agricultural museums towards working farms, the keeping of livestock and regular demonstrations, we were moving into an experimental field. Unlike, for example, America there is no background of experience and expertise in this type of venture to help British Museums, and the problems which arise are not those which can be solved through conventional curatorial skills. Establishing working farms was seen as a particularly problematical area. John Gall, in relation to the proposals at Beamish, stressed that free and unhindered visitor access on a working farm was impractical, partly for the safety of visitors, but also to safeguard those working the farm. Answering visitors questions day-in and day-out through the year, repeating jobs on request, it was felt would impose an unbearable strain on the work force. Historical authenticity, also, would need to be compromised to meet the requirements of the current Health and Safety at Work Acts, Union requirements and the greater contemporary expectations of comfortable working conditions. The time-table of farming activities would not coincide with the public visiting times. Milking, for example, is carried on on normal farms in the early morning and the evening, too early or too late for most visitors. Many important tasks on the land, ploughing, sowing, harrowing etc. are done over the winter months when visitor figures are low. There must also be a decision as to whether to use original specimens or replicas for work processes. Further there is the need for a work force experienced in practical farming and more particularly familiar with the working methods of the area in which the museum is established.

The keeping of livestock, too, needs careful consideration. The museum must observe all the requirements of the Ministry of Agriculture. It must be aware of its responsibilities whenever such diseases as Foot and Mouth or Swine Vesicular are prevalent. The animals must be protected from the public and skilled supervision is necessary. Nor should the rising costs of animal foodstuff be ignored, which can represent a large annual budget.

Demonstrations, held appropriate to the seasons of the farming year, offer perhaps a useful compromise to a full working farm. They can be arranged to suit visitor periods as far as possible and they do not place such a strain on the demonstrators as would be full-time, round the year working. It might be

useful, too, for organised parties under supervision to try many of the work processes themselves. This would be an even more satisfactory way of appreciating what was involved than merely through observing.

John Gall, again, stressed the need for detailed research into the area for which an agricultural museum was planned and illustrated his point with an outline of a research project being carried out at Beamish. An analysis of farm tools and equipment was being made for the last century using the very detailed inventories which appear on farm sale notices and this was producing a picture of farming in the area different from the common assumptions.

The consensus of opinion was that the current developments in farming museums away from the more static, gallery displays were to be welcomed, but that very considerable consideration must be given to the aims of any particular project and people must be aware of the real practical difficulties that existed. An inter-change of experience was necessary between museums involved in such projects.

Report on the Weekend Meeting, Gladstone Pottery Museum, Stoke - 12th and 13th November, 1976.

The weekend began with an introduction by David Sekers into the history and growth of the six towns of the Potteries and the rise of the ceramic industry based on local coal and clay. This led to the erection of a haphazard and dramatic urban landscape, dominated by bottle-ovens and smoke, with mines and slag heaps, marl pits, large expanses of derelict land and low quality housing. Radical changes have been made since the war through land reclamation, the levelling of slag heaps, the replacement of the bottle ovens by funnel kilns using clean fuels, silt clearance and rehousing. The old historical landscape is now being swept away, only a handful of bottle ovens survive, including those at Gladstone, and there is a strong desire within the present community to forget the past and to create a modern, acceptable living environment. Gladstone museum was established as a centre for the recording, conservation and interpretation of the pottery industry before the great proportion of its heritage was destroyed. For a description of the museum, its objectives and development policy see the article by David Sekers in the Museums Journal, 75, No. 4 1976, pages 149 - 152.

Following the introduction, the morning and afternoon were spent on an exploration of the area which vividly demonstrated the problems of museum work in an urban, industrial area, like Stoke. We were given a short tour of the Spode Factory by T. R. Copeland. This is a modern, highly automated works, but still has the need for a number of traditional hand processes, principally moulding and transfer printing which we were able to see. The factory also has a small museum. Following this, we visited a number of the principle industrial sites, including parts of the canal network, the site of Wedgwood's Etruria works, demolished 20 years ago, and a large flint mill complex, now derelict and ear-marked as an industrial museum. It was distressing, too, to see that much of the housing built by Wedgwood's for their workers had also been demolished. In the evening a selection of films of old Stoke was shown which contrasted markedly with the town as we had seen it.

On Saturday we visited Whately's tileries, a most interesting and thriving works. It is not heavily automated, much work is done by hand and there is still a great reliance placed on the accumulated skills and experience of the workforce, for example in stacking and firing the kilns. As a complete contrast, the tileries were followed by a tour of Fordgreen Hall, a late 16th century timber-framed house, improbably framed by a large slag-heap. Over lunch, Pamela Murray gave a talk on the History of Staffordshire oakcakes. Originally in rural North Staffordshire these were a food of necessity, baked in most households; during the 19th century commercial baking began rapidly to take

over and oatcakes spread into the urban areas. Today there are still a number of bakers working in Stoke, although oatcakes are now eaten as a treat rather than out of necessity. Lunch was followed by a visit to a nearby baker. We then proceeded to Cheddleton Flint Mill, several miles out of Stoke into the country. This was another private trust venture and they had saved the mill when derelict and have now restored it to working order. Originally it had been a corn-mill, but with the growth of the ceramic industry, it had changed to grinding flint. The mill was a good indication of how far the influence of the potteries extended.

The various sites which we visited, Gladstone, Spode, Wheatlys, Cheddleton and the oatcake baker all form part of the continuing story of the development of the Potteries, no one of these can easily be isolated from the others in interpreting the history of the region. Indeed many other links need to be added to the chain before the story can be made in any way complete. The only disappointment was Fordgreen Hall, a branch of the Stoke Museum, which has excellent potential as a setting for illustrating life in the region before the large-scale urbanization with the growth of the pottery industry. However, this potential does not seem to have been realised and the Hall stands as a rather curious anomaly within more recent development.

A discussion was held during the course of the weekend which centred around the difficult problems of a museum in an area like Stoke and how it should tackle the documentation and interpretation of the complex social and industrial history of such an area. Such problems have yet not been given satisfactory and adequate consideration by the museum profession. The urgent need for detailed fieldwork of both the physical remains and the oral recollections of members of the community was recognized. How far a museum should go, though, in encouraging the preservation of the historical landscape or in taking the initiative in matters of preservation was seen to be more problematical, especially in Stoke where the local community would like to forget the past and create a modern and healthy city. The physical record in Stoke is such a dramatic mirror to the area's history that it would be a great historical loss if it were to be obliterated. Ideally it would be desirable to preserve as much as possible to illustrate the industrial heritage, but at the same time the wishes of the local community cannot be wholly ignored. There will be a limit to the number of sites which could be supported as museums and a difficulty in finding practical, working uses for others recommended for preservation. Any movement at all which seeks to preserve aspects of the historical landscape must have the involvement of the local community or at least its sympathy. A museum, in this situation, could perhaps act as a catalyst and initiate local debate into the problem. Gladstone is anxious to become a centre for the community and as part of its work would be ideally placed to stimulate local interest into how best to preserve a record of the town's past. In concluding the discussion, it was felt that a useful meeting could be arranged at a future date to consider the role and approaches of museum within heavily urbanised and industrial areas like Stoke.

#### CI.M in Scotland - the story so far .....

Scottish delegates were noticeably rather thin on the ground at the Inaugural Conference of GRSM at Leeds in October 1974. While weekend seminars since then have usually had a fair proportion of Scots in attendance, there grew up a demand for a meeting to be organised in Scotland, with a distinctively Scottish theme.

This was duly held in Stirling on 28th May, 1976. The high attendance was most encouraging - some 35 people came from all over the country, from as far

apart as Elgin and Dumfries. Also very gratifying was the wide spread of museums represented - both the nationals, all the major provincials, a good range of local authority ones, and a number of private museums as well.

The main item of the day was a talk on the very broad subject of 'Folk Life and Museums', delivered by John Baldwin, Adviser on Museums and Galleries with Lothian Region Education Department, and formerly of the National Museum of Antiquities. He started by making a number of telling points about the subject in general which can never be repeated often enough, before moving on to the real meat of his paper - a 'national plan' for folk-life museums in Scotland. By projecting a map of the 'new' Scotland (showing regions, districts, and Island authorities), and then superimposing onto it his own set of boundaries, the speaker demonstrated how the country might be divided into thirteen cultural regions, each of which, he argued, should have its own regional folk museum. The talk was not without its moments of controversy, and was it gasps of horror or of anticipation which were heard when he suggested a redistribution of certain collections in order to achieve a more logical pattern to fit in with the new set-up?!

The afternoon session kicked off with a talk from Graeme Cruickshank (Huntly House Museum, Edinburgh), with the somewhat whimsical title (thankfully not set to music!) of "Where Have All the Objects Gone"? The main gist was that until fairly recently, few museums showed any interest in the "folk-life" category of object. Suddenly, there was a dramatic change in public attitude with the equation "folksy = trendy", and museums seemed uncertain of how to respond. Meanwhile, the objects on which folk-life museums depend, once given away or even thrown away by their owners, were increasingly finding their way into antique shops. A number of items were produced from a bag to prove the point. This was amply backed up in the following discussion, which included some lurid references to rip-off merchants in the guise of antique dealers who try to keep one step ahead of museums in certain parts of the country.

The final session was an open forum on future plans and activities for the Group in Scotland, led in by Graeme Farnell (Inverness Museum) and Elspeth King (People's Palace Museum, Glasgow). Several useful points arose from this discussion, one being a desire to establish 'sub-sub-regional' groups composed of only a few people (no more than a dozen) so that certain specific topics could be discussed in depth).

The North of Scotland group (local secretary Graeme Farnell) was quickly off the mark with a meeting in Aberdeen on 17th June, the main item on the programme being a fuller discussion of the draft of John Baldwin's Stirling talk. This was also the case with the South-East Scotland group (local secretary Graeme Cruickshank) which met in Edinburgh on 2nd July.

The North had a further meeting in Perth on 7th September, where discussion centred round the article by Sandy Fenton, in *Ethnologia Europaea* - "Historical Ethnology in Scotland". Further meetings are planned for the South-East group in December and the North group in January, and several members have initiated worthwhile study projects. Thus after a slow start, GRSM Scotland can now claim to be leading the field.

G. D. R. Cruickshank.

#### Towards a Real National Plan for Museums

Now that the Standing Commission on museums and galleries is conducting an enquiry into the future of the provincial museums and is calling for evidence from all and sundry, this is a chance for the Group to make its presence felt.



It seems to me that there is one specific area where a radical, important and highly specialised operation can be planned and carried out with the kind of expertise that should be at the finger-tips of the Group.

The Standing Commission on museums and galleries enquiry has rather strict terms of reference which may well reflect a degree of political experience, not to say expediency. The object of the exercise is to ensure the implementation of major recommendations of the Wright Report, and accordingly the concentration hitherto has been on identifying provincial centres and evaluating which of those have the richest collections and thus the most scope, for ensuring that the staff are well trained and that the surrounding area is well served. Attached to this exercise, however, there is a certain amount of thought going into a national plan for museums. It would seem to be a difficult exercise to fit the provincial museums into a national framework. These museums have evolved over many years and acquired, either deliberately or by bequests, collections of great wealth and variety but often dubious regional relevance. So, while there is every case for helping with central government finance museums in the provinces which have collections of outstanding merit, there is still a case for fresh thinking when considering a national plan for museums, a plan which need not be based simply on collections which have been bequeathed.

If we are going to think of museums in the regions and what they might be in thirty to fifty years' time, it would be of value to think constructively and positively and with as much realism as possible. The one area where a positive impact can be made is in providing a network of regional museums that really say something about the distinctiveness of British regional cultures.

In this country material has only with rarity and relatively recently been collected with this specific purpose in mind. Surely there is a case for a national plan of this kind to be put forward and considered.

Where does the Group for Regional Studies come in? Surely in setting out the objectives of such a large scheme, identifying the rich and poor areas, detailing the major areas of original work and the costs, proposing a method and timetable of work.

I would imagine that an enormous number of objections will be raised to such a scheme, principally by those who would feel that any government money that goes towards the regions should be spent on existing institutions which have enough problems looking after what they've got without having to be saddled with fresh problems. It would be essential, if one were to overcome objections of this kind, to prepare a scheme that would capitalise on the collections that existed, and ensured that funds for such schemes would be provided by central government in addition to any funds needed for the care and welfare of existing collections.

Expert evidence such as could only be provided by the Group for Regional Studies could then be put to the Standing Commission and I would hope that a full scale working party could be occupied with detailed planning for several years to come.

It is an opportunity too good for the Group to miss: it would be a worthwhile initiative to take. It would be the one imaginative element in the National Plan.

David Sekers.

## Regional Ethnology, Proposals for a Summer School

The need for a comprehensive, teaching course in regional ethnology for Museum Staff has been long recognized. Unlike the other disciplines practised in Museums, Regional Ethnology has no firm academic base with the British Universities. Not only does this mean that few people entering the profession in the discipline have the basic academic training, but it also deprives the subject of the vital dynamic which a firm university base provides. At present there are only three universities with departments devoted to its study; Leeds, Edinburgh and Sheffield. Stirling is at present setting up a department and it is hoped to carry details of this scheme in a later Newsletter. The qualifying part of the diploma, too, relies on self-help and offers no form of formal teaching. Under the lead of Richard Harrison and Vicky Airey, a number of Museum Staff working in the discipline have been looking at ways in which some form of course or teaching programme could be established. Much detail and particularly financing has yet to be worked out, but it is hoped that an experimental summer school might be run in Summer 1977.

Discussion has been taking place with a number of Swedish scholars and it is proposed that the Summer School would be based on the Swedish University syllabus for the subject with two visiting lecturers from Sweden. The proposed school would last two weeks and deal with the essential methodology of the subject, fieldwork and archive techniques and comparative studies with other European cultures. There would also be an opportunity for the exchange of experiences between ourselves and our Swedish colleagues. It is hoped, too, to include material on urban as well as rural studies.

The GRS has been asked whether it might be prepared to sponsor any initiative along these lines, and it is hoped to give time at the AGM in March for a fuller outline of the proposals and discussion of a programme for their implementation. The establishment of an annual summer school would be a worthwhile achievement and could possibly in future years draw on wider European experience, bringing in scholars from other countries as well as Sweden and particularly making use of our own expertise.

## Survey of Implements Used on North East Farms, 1850 - 1914 (A Job Creation Project at Beanish Museum).

The history of agriculture in England was until recently founded on the assumption that it could be discussed in national terms as a unified whole. Regional studies have proved that assumption to be false; the farming of the various regions was different one to another and so the prosperity of each area also differed widely. Our survey aims to provide information whereby the museum's agricultural collection will properly represent farming as it was practiced in the North East.

There are very few documentary records that tell us what machinery farmers used, and what there are, are bound to mislead because any farmer who kept records at all, was ahead of his time and does not represent the average farmer. Most historians accept this, but little work has been done to overcome it. We turned to newspaper advertisements of farm stock sales which usually include a list of the machinery to be auctioned off, at least in part. We are collecting these adverts from various local papers at decennial periods from 1850 - 1914 and collection will continue until we have covered Northumberland, Durham and North North Yorkshire as evenly as possible; both geographically and temporally. We have about 900 adverts so far.

Unfortunately many adverts are incomplete or vague as <sup>to</sup> the numbers of implements involved and in detailed descriptions of them. Thus one advert will show "2 metal rollers" while another is content with "rollers". In addition it was the policy of some auctioneers to give no details so their areas are thinly covered. The terminology of the adverts is affected by local usage and so needs careful analysis. Farming encyclopaedias define a scuffler as a light cultivator, but up here it was used to clean between turnip ridges - except in the Tees valley where it was a scruffler. Also the numbler of north Northumberland turned out to be the same as the scrubber of the rest of the area. Harrows were very confusingly described.

Moreover, the individual adverts are of little use since we lack acreage figures or information as how each farm was run to put them into context and so they can only be used in more general surveys. To aid in this the data is put on to feature cards and then plotted on to distribution maps, which should enable us to show:

1. The rate of technological innovation in the region and how far it was affected by the different types of agriculture that went on within the region. Older implements supposedly driven out by superior modern equivalents often lingered longer than is thought - the wooden and stone rollers, for instance, were useful enough to survive alongside metal rollers throughout the period.
2. Regional divergencies from the accepted standard form of English agriculture, for instance until this century the region's farmers broadcast seed on to fields ribbed with a light double mouldboard plough instead of drilling it, though they drilled their turnips throughout.
3. By taking groups of two or three parishes on similar land we can study the "average" farm for that area in the context of the type of farming of the area, and how it changed over the years.

In addition, the implement makers are sometimes given especially in connection with harvesting machinery, and we can see if one firm dominated a market or if it was split up among many (which it was) and we can compare national firms' performances with those of local firms - for instance Kearsley's of Ripon were the largest makers of mowers listed in Durhan and North Yorkshire.

Conclusions can sometimes be checked against documentary material, especially the reminiscences contained in old autobiographies or books based on material collected from old men before 1914. We are trying to extend the agricultural engineering side by contacting local firms for records and, if possible, the names of men who knew the firm a long time ago, but few firms have survived so how far we will get is in the hands of fate.

If all this is successful we will probably go on to 1950 and then oral material collected from old farmers and farmworkers will be of paramount importance.

S. Caunce.

Annual General Meeting - Dyffryn House, St. Nicholas, Cardiff, 18th - 20th March, 1977.

The first Annual General Meeting of the Group is being arranged for the 18th - 20th March, 1977. It will be at Dyffryn House, a very comfortable residential education centre a few miles to the west of Cardiff. The accommodation cost with full board will be £12 for the weekend, and registration will be at 6.0 - 6.30 p.m. on the Friday evening, with the conference closing after lunch on the Sunday. A programme is being prepared and will be circulated to members in the near future.

Directory of Craftsmen

Ken Howarth of Bury Museum has sent details of two craftsmen to be included in the directory:

1. Wheelwright: Mr. T. Tweddle, 82 Stand Lane, Radcliffe. Mr. Tweddle specialises in vehicle reconstruction.
2. Blacksmith: Mr. R. Percival, 27 Bradshaw Road, Four Lane Ends, Tottington.

Corrigenda

A number of errors were made in the Books and Publications section of the last Newsletter (May 1976, p.5) which were occasioned by the Editor's carelessness.

1. S. Minwell Tibbett: Welsh Fare, A Selection of Traditional Recipes, National Museum of Wales, 1976, pp.84, £2. 25p should read:

S. Minwell Tibbett: Welsh Fare, A Selection of Traditional Recipes, Welsh Folk Museum, 1976, pp.84, £3. 25p.

This is an English version of the 1974 Welsh Edition and not a translation as stated.

2. J. G. Jenkins: Welsh Crafts and Craftsmen is published by Gener Press, Llandysul, Dyfed and not as stated by Welsh Folk Museum.
3. E. Scourfield: Welsh Farming Scene, should read "Welsh Farm Scene" This was not produced specifically to accompany the Agricultural Gallery at St. Fagans as was stated.
4. J. G. Jenkins and A. Davies, The Wood-Turner's Craft was published in 1973.
5. Gwyndal Broese should read Gwyndaf Broese.

The Editor apologises for these errors.

GROUP FOR REGIONAL STUDIES IN MUSEUMS

Annual General Meeting and Week-End Conference

18th - 20th March, 1977

Dyffryn House, St. Nicholas, Cardiff

The first Annual General Meeting of the Group following its inauguration will be held at Dyffryn House, St. Nicholas near Cardiff on the week-end of 18th - 20th March. Dyffryn House is a Residential Education Centre administered by the South and Mid Glamorgan County Council. Accommodation is provided in a new hostel block with single study bedrooms. The centre also has a television lounge and bar.

For those coming by car, Dyffryn is situated just off the A.48 a few miles west of Cardiff. The turning to the house is in the village of St. Nicholas. Car Parking is provided in the official car park at the main entrance to Dyffryn Gardens.

For those coming by train, there is a bus service to St. Nicholas village from the Cardiff bus station, immediately outside the railway station. Buses run at quarter to the hour, five minutes and thirty minutes past the hour. From St. Nicholas there is a mile walk to the house. It may be possible to arrange transport for this distance, if those coming by train could send details of their time of arrival in Cardiff.

We hope you will be able to attend the Annual General Meeting. The total fee for the week-end will be £15 and for anyone wishing to attend for the Saturday and Sunday sessions, £9. Application forms should be returned not later than the 15th February, together with the registration fee of £3. It would be appreciated if the balance could be included with the application forms and if not this should be paid by the 1st March. It would be helpful if you could send your application as soon as possible.

GROUP FOR REGIONAL STUDIES IN MUSEUMS

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18th - 20th March, 1977

REGISTRATION FORM

Name (Mr./Miss/Mrs.) .....

Full Address .....

.....

Telephone Number .....

		<u>The sum enclosed</u>	
		£	p
1.	Registration Fee	£3	
2.	Full Accommodation, Friday 18th March - Sunday 20th March (All meals from dinner Friday until lunch Sunday)	£12	
3.	Part Accommodation, Lunch Saturday, 19th March - Lunch Sunday 20th March.	£6	
		TOTAL	

- A. I should like to register and book accommodation for the A.G.M. Yes/No
- B. I should like to register for the Conference, but would like to make my own arrangements for meals and accommodation Yes/No

I enclose £..... (all cheques and P.Os should be made payable to the Group for Regional Studies).

Signature: .....

Date: .....

This form should be returned not later than the 15th February, 1977 to:

Mrs. P. Murray,  
GRSM. AGM. 1977,  
Staffordshire County Museum,  
Shugborough,  
Staffs.  
Telephone: Little Haywood 388

GROUP FOR REGIONAL STUDIES IN MUSEUMS  
Annual General Meeting and Week-End Conference

18th - 20th March, 1977

Dyffryn House, Residential Centre

PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME

Friday, 18th March.

Registration: 6.15 - 6.45 p.m.

Dinner: 7.0 p.m.

Talk: 8.0 - 9.0 p.m.

Trefach, a Museum of the Welsh Woollen Industry;  
an Interpretation of Welsh Textile History,  
J. G. Jenkins, Welsh Folk Museum.

Committee Meeting: 9.15 p.m.

Saturday, 19th March.

Breakfast: 8.30 a.m.

Morning 9.30 a.m. - 12.30 p.m.

session: (Coffee 10.30 - 11.0 a.m.)

The morning session will concentrate on the problems  
facing our subject in museums in urban areas and  
the speakers will be:

1. David Sekers, Gladstone Pottery Museum on Stoke.
2. Stephen Price, Birmingham Museum on The  
Birmingham Suburbs.
3. Valerie Bott, Neasden Museum, on The London  
Boroughs.

Lunch: 1.0 p.m.

Afternoon Talk: 2.0 - 3.0 p.m.

session: Documentation methods in the Welsh Folk  
Museum, W. Linnard, Welsh Folk Museum.

Bus to St. Fagans, 3.0 p.m. for a continuation of  
the documentation session with members of the  
Museum Staff.

Dinner: 7.0 p.m.

Evening: It is hoped to show a selection of films  
from the Welsh Folk Museum collections following  
dinner.

Sunday, 20th March.

A.G.M. 9.30 - 10.45 a.m.

Open Forum: 11.15 a.m. - 12.30 p.m.

It is intended to discuss a number of current issues  
during the open forum, including proposals to  
establish an annual summer school for regional  
ethnology; proposals to set up a working party to  
prepare a report on the future development of the  
subject within Museums. Anyone who wishes to raise  
a matter during the open forum which they feel is  
worthy of discussion should contact R. Langhorne,  
the Lancashire Museum so that it can be fitted into  
the programme.

Lunch: 1.0 p.m.

The Conference closes following lunch.

## Group for Regional Studies in Museums

Minutes of the Inaugural General Meeting held at the Yorkshire Archaeological Society's Headquarters, Clarendon Road, Leeds at 10.30 a.m. on Sunday, 27th October 1974.

### Formation of the Group

Speaking from the chair, Mr. Brears drew the attention of the meeting to the aims and purpose of the proposed group, as set out in the previously circulated information sheet. Following a period of discussion Mr. Vernon Radcliffe, seconded by Mr. Richard Foster proposed the formation of the Group for Regional Studies in Museums, this proposal being carried unanimously.

### The Constitution

Copies of the draft constitution were circulated, each paragraph being discussed in turn and amended where necessary to the satisfaction of the meeting. It was then proposed by Mr. Geraint Jenkins, seconded by Mr. Vernon Radcliffe, that the constitution be accepted as amended, this being carried unanimously.

### Election of Officers and Committee

The following officers and ordinary members of committee were elected:

Chairman:	Mr. J. G. Jenkins
Secretary:	Mr. P. C. D. Brears
Treasurer:	Mrs. P. Murray
Editor:	Mr. R. Langhorne
Committee Members:	(2 year term) - Mr. R. Foster, Mr. B. Turner, Miss B. Yates
	(1 year term) - Mr. J. Gall, Mr. D. Janes, Mr. G. Cruickshank

### Bank Account

It was resolved that an account for the G.R.S.M. be opened with the Midland Bank Limited, at their Stafford Branch and that the bank be and is hereby empowered to honour cheques, orders for payment, bills of exchange and promissory notes drawn, signed, accepted or made by the said G.R.S.M. by P. Brears and P. Murray; and to act on any instructions given by persons authorised with regard to any accounts whether in credit, or overdrawn, or any transactions of the said G.R.S.M.

J. G. Jenkins (Chairman)

P. C. D. Brears (Secretary)

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### Election of Committee Members

The Officers of the Group still remain in office for at least one more year, but nominations are invited for three ordinary members of the Committee (to replace Messrs. Gall, Cruickshank and Janes), nominations being received by the Secretary, C/o The Castle Museum, York YO1 2RY by Monday, 7th February, 1977.