VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE AND LANDSCAPE HISTORY: THE LEGACY OF 'THE REBUILDING OF RURAL ENGLAND' AND 'THE MAKING OF THE ENGLISH LANDSCAPE'

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W. G. Hoskins, writing in the 1950s, developed the new subject of landscape history, and regarded buildings as an essential part of the historic landscape. Since then there has been some separation between architectural and landscape studies. This article advocates their reconnection, and in particular urges those studying buildings to set their work in a landscape context. A framework is proposed, in which houses could be located in plots, settlements, territories and regions.

W.G. Hoskins changed the way that we see buildings and landscape in an article that appeared in 1953 and a book of 1955.⁽¹⁾ These publications have had a profound and long-lasting impact, but the main purpose of this article is to show that Hoskins's legacy still has much to contribute to the study of buildings. Having reviewed W.G. Hoskins and his writings, changes in landscape history will be outlined, and it will be argued that the 'landscape approach' can benefit the study of buildings.

W.G. HOSKINS AND HIS WORK

W.G. Hoskins was born and educated in Devon, and went to Leicester in the 1931 as a university lecturer in the social sciences. He researched local history in his spare time, and gave adult education classes at Vaughan College. After living and working in London during the war, he returned to Leicester and founded the Department of English Local History in 1948. From 1951 until 1965 he was reader in economic history in Oxford, and then returned to Leicester for three years before retiring to Devon. He died in 1992.⁽²⁾

He was clearly a charismatic teacher. A former student recalls his adult education lectures at Vaughan College in Leicester in 1938 and 1939, on 'Village Church Architecture' and 'The English Countryside'. The lectures and especially the excursions were clearly enthralling: 'It was a wonderful experience'; 'I never lost my interest in village churches'.⁽³⁾ His books could have a similarly exciting impact. Almost forty years later a young student, Fiona Reynolds, read *The Making of the English Landscape*, and was hooked. She became the Director General of the National Trust, and when she appeared as a castaway on 'Desert Island Discs', she chose *The Making* as the book that she would take with her. ⁽⁴⁾

We take landscape history for granted, but we should appreciate the impact that the *The Making of the English Landscape* had in the 1950s. Hoskins was devising a new way of looking at the past, and was telling his readers that history was everywhere: the familiar world around us – roads, hedges, trees – had an historical significance. He opened the eyes of many people, and wrote very well for a wide readership. He reached a more extended audience in the 1970s with two series of television programmes about the history of the landscape. *The Making* enjoyed continuing sales as a Penguin paper back, and a hardback version was published in 1988 in which Christopher Taylor's comments were printed alongside the original, in a form resembling medieval commentaries on the bible.⁽⁵⁾ The book inspired a series of county volumes, edited by Hoskins but written by a variety of authors, which has now unhappily been discontinued before all of the counties have been covered.

Hoskins's main impact on agrarian and economic history came from his pioneering work on farming and the peasantry.⁽⁶⁾ He was among the first historians who saw that parish registers and probate inventories could shed light on the social and agricultural history of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. His book on Wigston Magna, called *The Midland Peasant* showed how a specific example could contribute to our understanding of general economic and social change.⁽⁷⁾ He was also an important figure in the revival of urban history in the early modern period. ⁽⁸⁾

The article in *Past and Present* on 'The rebuilding of rural England' emerged out of Hoskins's research and thinking in the late 1940s. He had always been interested in buildings, and had explored them since childhood. He knew that the chronology of buildings was historically significant, and made much of them in his *Heritage of Leicestershire*. But in that book, published in 1946, he makes no great fuss about the phase of building in 1570-1640, and says a good deal about the houses of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.(9)

The idea for 'The rebuilding of rural England' developed around 1948. In a letter to Hope Bagenal of that year he said :
'One notices very much, for example, the remarkable rebuilding all over England in the closing years of the sixteenth century, reaching a temporary climax in the years 1620-40, and that can be very well related to the economic and social history of the time' (10)

Hope Bagenal had written about vernacular buildings in Yorkshire in 1938, and he visited Devon with Hoskins to look at old houses. Neither he nor Hoskins had much to do with the Vernacular Architecture Group, which was formed in 1952. Hoskins was too much of an individual to join groups, but he encouraged the study of vernacular architecture at Leicester, and the Department of English Local History was almost unique among university history departments in employing a lecturer in the subject.

The initial 'rebuilding' idea took some time to develop, but he eventually wrote it up as an article for the new journal *Past and Present*, founded by members of the Communist Party Historians' Group.(11) A non-Marxist historian like Hoskins saw an opportunity in the new journal to publish an interdisciplinary and rather speculative article on a subject outside the mainstream of historical enquiry. Perhaps the radical Hoskins was intrigued by the young firebrands and their innovative journal. The founders of *Past and Present* were pleased to be offered a piece which used an unusual type of evidence, and focused on the lives of ordinary people. They would also have been anxious to demonstrate that they published articles by historians

who were not Marxists. Hoskins distanced himself from them by criticising in an unnecessary aside those who assumed that relations between lords and tenants were usually antagonistic.

The article was called 'The rebuilding of rural England, 1570-1640', but he used the phrase 'Great Rebuilding' throughout, and one wonders if that was the original title. Certainly that is the phrase that has lodged in the minds of readers. He used the evidence of the buildings themselves, reporting from all over the country on the basis of his own observations, comments from local experts such as Francis Steer and Norman Scarfe, and information gleaned from the *Victoria County History* and the publications of the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments. The evidence is rather unspecific, and few numbers are offered. We have to take the methods of dating the houses on trust, though there are mentions of date stones. The building evidence is supported with literary sources, for example Carew's *Cornwall* and Harrison's *Description of England*, and from records such as the accounts of the seventeenth-century farmer Robert Loder.

Three types of building activity are identified : completely new substantial houses, like the stone houses of Northamptonshire yeomen; modification of older houses, with the insertion of ceilings, staircases and chimneys; and the proliferation of cottages on new sites on wastes. The houses acquired new fittings, such as glass windows and fireplaces.

He interpreted the wave of housing improvement as a reflection of the wealth gained by husbandmen and yeomen who were paying fixed rents for their land while the prices of grain and other agricultural products were rising. The better-off villagers were imitating the gentry in their desire for greater comfort and privacy. Some of the building activity was needed to house a growing population, and that growth was helped because infants had a better chance of survival in two-storey, well-constructed houses.

Hoskins therefore connected the history of housing with tendencies in agricultural, social, economic and demographic history. The article was imaginative

and convincing, and deserved to be well-known and much quoted. It must be said, however, that modern journal editors and the referees who advise them, if they were presented with such an article today, would be dissatisfied by the article's reliance on anecdotal rather than statistical evidence. It was also not as sensitive as we might expect to regional difference – he knew about different styles of building, but he was anxious to show that the rebuilding could be observed throughout the country.

Hoskins returned to the theme of the 'great rebuilding' in *The Making of the English Landscape* published two years later. He dwelt on the poor and primitive state of housing in c. 1550, so that the phase of building that began in the late sixteenth century seemed especially significant.⁽¹²⁾ In a modification of the 1953 article, however, he represented it as continuing into the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He discussed the use of local building materials, which helped to link buildings and their environment. He made a rather whimsical point about the planting of trees around dwellings. His main contribution, however, was to integrate houses into a new approach to the past, so that buildings were not seen as examples of architecture, nor as space in which people lived, but as elements in the landscape. The point of the book was to show that the historic landscape was a human creation, made from a complex combination of roads, hedges, boundaries, woods, meadows, parks, slag heaps, railway lines and airfields. Buildings, which included castles, churches, country houses, farms, cottages, mills and bridges, contributed to the whole picture of a constantly evolving countryside.

Hoskins explained developments in the landscape mainly in economic terms. The countryside was changed by new techniques and by rising and falling wealth. He applied the same interpretation to buildings. He saw farms as centres of agriculture production, which were originally located in villages when they worked the open fields, and were then sometimes moved in the eighteenth century to new sites when the land was enclosed. New and better houses reflected growing prosperity, as in the case of the late sixteenth-century yeomen. Country houses of the eighteenth century and their landscape parks were symptoms of high levels of

consumption, and even 'conspicuous waste'. The process of building, which stimulated demand for timber and stone, also had implications for the landscape as trees were felled and quarries opened.

NEW TRENDS IN LANDSCAPE HISTORY

Hoskins wrote about the history of the landscape, but 'Landscape History' as a distinct subject took some time to develop. It gathered momentum during the 1970s, and one of the landmarks was the inaugural conference for the Society for Landscape Studies, which was held in the spring of 1979, in Leeds. The papers on that occasion lay within the Hoskins framework, covering such subjects as boundaries, territories, woodland and settlement. There was an emphasis on multidisciplinary methods, with scholars combining historical documents, field archaeology and place names.

Buildings were not much discussed.(13)

The most recent large conference on landscape history was held at Leicester in 2005, to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of *The Making of the English Landscape*. It showed a number of changes in the subject. Archaeologists took an especially prominent role. The speakers, almost without exception, found an opportunity to recall Hoskins's work and to praise him. His memorable phrases were constantly quoted, like his aphorism that landscape was 'the richest historical record'. But when they expounded their own work, it became apparent that to modern researchers the landscape has become an independent source of information about the past in a way that went beyond any use of it by Hoskins. It is not merely a physical demonstration of developments found primarily in documents.(14) To take the obvious example in which Hoskins has been shown to have been comprehensively mistaken, he believed that the settlement pattern and landscape had to be made from scratch by Anglo-Saxon settlers after 400. Now we take for granted a degree of continuity between prehistoric, Roman and medieval landscapes, and we can recognise not just that the line of some modern roads was surveyed in the first century

AD, but that some existing hedges and fences owe their alignment to field systems in use in the Roman and even pre-Roman periods.(15)

The conference was also celebrating technical advances which enabled landscapes to be analysed more systematically and comprehensively than anyone could have imagined in 1955. Aerial photography was then already in use, but now the information from aerial survey is being plotted and analysed with ever greater precision over wider areas. Earthwork survey and fieldwalking are being carried out with methodological sophistication and embrace hundreds of hectares. Geographical Information Systems allow us to plot and analyse masses of data. The streets and boundaries of towns and villages are being anatomised thanks to new methods of plan analysis.(16) The dating of building depended in the 1950s on art historical evidence and fallible typologies, but now we have the precision of dendrochronology.

The advance of cultural approaches to landscape was one of the most striking features of the 2005 conference. This was to be expected in the sections dedicated to 'spiritual' dimensions of landscape, and 'perceptions' of landscape. It was least evident in the papers on rural settlement, but was particularly prominent in the contributions on buildings. The old train of thought, which gave pride of place to the functions of buildings and their role in the economy, is being replaced by an emphasis on perceptions of buildings, the mentality which produced them, and the ideas that they represent.

Castle studies in particular have been revolutionised by this approach. Half a century ago castles were regarded primarily as military structures, and their walls and towers were assessed in relation to their ability to resist attack. Their siting was explained in terms of strategic routes (such as their command of river crossings), and their ability to control the local population. From the 1960s there was more consideration of their function as administrative centres and as residences. Now they are seen as being sited rather sensitively in relation to an existing settlement pattern, rather than being imposed by outsiders.(17) They were not just symbols of status and social segregation, but were surrounded by pleasure grounds, with gardens, water

features and parks, and their inhabitants had easy access to forests and chases for hunting expeditions.(18) We should seek to perceive them as they would have been viewed by visitors and observers at the time. It was once believed that a few later ornamental structures, like Bodiam, Herstmonceux and Nunney, could be described as 'fairy tale' castles, but now these are not regarded as exceptional. Medieval kings and aristocrats from the earliest days of stone castles expected the buildings and its surroundings to provide a setting for the pursuit of a life style based on courtly love, hospitality and hunting. They modelled their 'real lives' on chivalric literature. (19)

This approach can also be applied to vernacular buildings. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries tenants' houses were removed from parks to improve the view from the windows of a country house, and model villages and model farms were established by estate owners creating an image of improvement. Ideas also influenced the earlier development of buildings and settlements, though no-one stated it in writing at the time. The deliberately regular plans of villages of the twelfth century or earlier may have had a function in reflecting the equal shares of land held by the tenants, and it was convenient to group houses in one place at the centre of the common fields. But the neatness, order and discipline of rows of houses was surely a cultural preference.(20) Churches, once seen as a completely separate category of buildings, are now recognised as integral to the fabric of the settlement, and we appreciate that the naves, towers and porches were largely built and furnished by the efforts of the parishioners. Churches express the ideas of their builders about religion and demonstrate an awareness of theological fashion. They also reflect community solidarity.(21)

A final point about cultural approaches leads us to think more rigorously about building materials. It is usually said that vernacular buildings were constructed from the materials that were immediately available. This made economic sense, as transport costs were reduced to a minimum. In consequence houses could be represented by modern commentators as being in harmony with their surroundings. The reality was more complex, as is shown by peasant houses on the Cotswold hills,

which in spite of the abundance of high quality building stone, were only provided with low foundation walls in that material as late as c.1200, and timber-framing remained an important element in the building tradition for another three centuries, before stone walls were generally built as high as the eaves.(22) The timber sometimes had to be transported over a considerable distance. In another region with plenty of stone, north Wales, timber framing persisted into the sixteenth century. It has even been suggested that timber framing was an expression of native Welshness. (23) Throughout England the widespread use of brick, which was a well-known material in the east of the country by c.1500, was delayed for centuries. No doubt economics played a role in these choices, as stone and brick building required a good deal of skilled labour, but a preference for timber and resistance to change are likely to have played their part.

THE LANDSCAPE OF BUILDINGS

Hoskins brought vernacular buildings into the foreground, and he gave them a key position in his version of landscape history. That prominence can be regained, and architectural studies enhanced by paying more attention to landscape. (24)

Some criticisms need to be made of recent and current practice, though they are offered in a constructive spirit. Buildings can have a rather low profile in recent writings on landscape history: for example, a very useful handbook on landscape characterisation has only three brief references to vernacular architecture, and a volume celebrating progress on landscape history in the twenty years between 1979 and 1999 contains thirteen contributions, but only one gives much attention to standing buildings.(25) Many detailed landscape surveys consider a wide range of sources, both documentary and archaeological, but take little account of buildings.

Those who study buildings are not always fully conscious of their location. Contributions to *Vernacular Architecture* often show plans of houses without any indication of their context or surroundings. Even when maps are published to accompany the house plans, these often show distribution patterns in counties or even the whole country, but do not depict the village or town in which the building stands.

The traditional VAG approach takes some trouble to identify the social position of the owners or builders of a house, and is much concerned with dating. Some studies are worth singling out because they give proper attention to place and space. Alcock's *People at Home* introduces the detailed surveys of Stoneleigh houses with a chapter on the estate in which they stood. A more recent example of good practice is the monograph on New Buckenham in Norfolk, which is conscious of the urban character of the settlement, and includes maps which show clearly the location of the older buildings in the town. As a bonus it depicts regional variety of housing types in Norfolk in relation to different landscapes. (26)

I propose here that houses should be assessed as part of their landscape in relation to spaces or territories, in expanding order of size : firstly, the plot, toft or messuage in which the houses were built; secondly the settlement ; thirdly, the parish, township or manor to which the settlement belongs; and finally the *pays* or region.

1. Plots: tofts, closes, curtilages and messuages.

Documents (manorial records and deeds) relating to rural settlements use the word messuage, which encompasses both the plot of land, and the structures occupying it, not just the house but also a barn, housing for animals, often a building for preparing food and drink (a kitchen, bakehouse or brewhouse), a workshop, a yard, garden, fowl pen, setting for beehives and other features, which would vary with the locality and the status and occupations of the inhabitants. Part of the space might have been sublet, or a room or cottage temporarily occupied by a relative or retired tenant. The term messuage was also used in towns, though burgage is also found. Urban plots could be filled with structures, and even with rows of cottages running back from the street frontage.

The plot and the messuage influenced buildings and rebuildings. The house was hemmed in by other structures, and few tenants or householders could afford to renew the barn and outbuildings at the same time as the house. They therefore tended to reuse the same imprint when they built anew, and the limitations of the site provided a further incentive (in addition to cost) to modify and modernise an existing

house. Knowledge of the constraints of space encourages us to think of incremental changes in the foundations, timber frame and room layout, and to put less emphasis on a definable 'vernacular threshold'.

Houses usually stood in plots with defined boundaries, which were often fixed at an early date, before 1300. In older towns such as Winchester or Lincoln the town plan can be traced back to the ninth or tenth centuries, and in smaller towns the burgage plots can sometimes be dated quite precisely to the year of foundation, which often lay between 1180 and 1280. In villages the dating of plot boundaries is more uncertain, but again in some cases could go back before the Norman Conquest, and were usually fixed before 1300. Once established, lines defining the edges of plots, because they defined property boundaries, tended to survive for a long time. Plots could be subdivided lengthwise, especially in towns, as the demand for land grew and previously separate plots were amalgamated in both urban and rural settlements, when holdings were in low demand, or when an acquisitive minority swallowed their neighbours' tenements. In town centres plots were most likely to be split, while a tenant would hold a group of plots on the outskirts. The shape of the plots tended to be neatly rectangular in planned towns and villages, while irregularity is most commonly found on the edge of settlements or in areas of dispersed settlement. The size of the plot varied greatly, but East Anglian rural houses might be provided with plots as large as a half-acre, while a quarter of an acre or less is more commonly encountered in midland nucleated villages.⁽²⁷⁾ The boundaries were commonly defined by ditches and banks, and reinforced by hedges, fences or walls.

The buildings can obviously reflect the constraints of space, so that in a town like Ludlow in the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries three-storey houses are found in the main streets such as King Street and the Bull Ring, while those of two storeys were located in the side streets and outside the walls. ⁽²⁸⁾ In the countryside if brand-new houses were built in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries they commonly reoccupied plots which had been abandoned when the population shrank in the period 1350-1520. The plots in their empty state would have been called

‘tofts’ in the documents. The builders here were less inhibited by other structures, but the shape of the plot still influenced the orientation of the houses, and for wealthier occupants two-storey structures were encouraged, as the limited space might not allow buildings of five or six bays.

These practical observations on the importance of the plot for the understanding of the house are very much in line with Hoskins’s functional and economic approach to buildings in the landscape. The precision of the plot boundary, and the strength of the barriers with which it was defended, with deep, frequently cleaned ditches, reminds us that people had a strong sense of the division between their own space and that of their neighbours, and between private space and the streets and greens beyond to which the public had access. They were fearful of theft, and distrusted outsiders. Villagers and townspeople participated in communal activities, from the management of common fields and the organisation of religious life, but they still separated the public arena from their own household’s sphere. The physical arrangements inside the plot had a social and institutional significance. The messuage was both a living and a working space, where a household of people, both servants and family members, slept, prepared and ate food, grew and processed agricultural produce, practised crafts, and retailed food and especially drink. An ale house, for example, was often an ordinary house temporarily converted for the purpose. The messuage, like the Gascon *casal* or the Castilian *solar*, was a unit of authority and civic responsibility, ruled by the head of the household, and charged with obligations to pay rents and taxes.⁽²⁹⁾ Those external responsibilities undoubtedly affected the way that the household worked internally, as the head expected to wield authority over his subordinates.

2. Settlements: farmsteads, hamlets, villages, towns.

Plots and curtilages usually had neighbours, and the whole settlement is relevant to a full appreciation of the houses within it. Our assessment of the building and its inhabitants may be influenced by the knowledge that a house stood in a hamlet, village or town, or indeed if it stood in isolation. Of course this is only one factor -

we need to know ideally about occupations, farming methods, wealth, tenures and social structure and a host of other circumstances - but sometimes these are connected with settlement forms.

We have known the distribution of nucleated and dispersed settlements for many decades, but mapping has now been refined and we are becoming used to describing the 'village belt' or the area of 'midland field systems' as the 'central province'. (30) This is based on nineteenth-century evidence, but broadly reflects older patterns of settlement. Early estate maps show that nucleated villages were well established by the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the same regions that they occupy now, and archaeology assures us that the frontiers between nucleated and dispersed settlement were established by the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. We have already seen that the plot shapes and sizes will vary between different settlement forms, with greater irregularity (and often larger plots) in the areas of hamlets and farmsteads. Plots in nucleated villages are more likely to show signs of planning, with a regularity in the length of frontages. Houses may be disposed in relation to the village street in orderly fashion, sometimes at right angles, and sometimes parallel to the street.

Is there a relationship between types of rural settlement and architecture ? Sometimes no correlation is readily apparent. Crucks, for example, are found in both nucleated and dispersed settlements, and the eastern frontier of cruck building cuts through the 'central province'. (31) Wealden houses, on the other hand, are mainly found in the south-eastern counties where dispersed settlement prevailed. The wealdens in the midlands are found mainly in urban settlements. (32) Aisled halls have a similar concentration among the dispersed settlements of the south-east, and a few of the outliers in the central province are associated with castles or other aristocratic dwellings. (33) These distributions may be pure coincidence, or more likely both settlement patterns and building types are products of a regional society and culture.

There may also be differences in survival of timber-framed buildings. With the exception of the 'cruck villages' with a number of buildings of that type, nucleated settlements tend to lack surviving buildings datable before 1550, while they are thick on the ground in the dispersed settlements of the south-east, and in Herefordshire, Shropshire, or the Welsh border counties.(34) One can think of a range of influences that may lie behind this observation, including something as straightforward as the effects of village fires, which were more devastating in closely nucleated settlements. (35) More careful counting may reveal this to be a false impression, but it is a dimension of the study of vernacular architecture that deserves more attention.

Abundant timber buildings are found in small towns throughout the country, from Nayland in the east to Weobley in the west, and researchers are generally conscious of the architecture appropriate to urban settlements. There are problems of definition, and places can occupy some ambiguous zone between the urban and the rural, but in most cases the town can be readily identified by documentary evidence for a diversity of non-agricultural occupations, and by the distinctive plan with its market place, and closely packed houses along the streets. Urban houses, with their two or three storeys, jetties, undercrofts, shops at the front and irregularities of plan stand out from those in the countryside. (36)

Settlement form was not determined just by economics. Nucleation probably had agrarian roots, in a period well before the earliest standing buildings, but those who planned villages were also propelled by ideas about the shape and appearance of an orderly settlement, with plots of equal size. The tenants built their own houses, but one suspects, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, that houses exhibited a degree of uniformity, as households shared similar needs and resources, depended on a limited number of local carpenters, and shared the same tastes and ideas. In contrast in dispersed settlements a more individualist and non-conformist mentality would have prevailed. Just as they differed from their neighbours in their source of income (for example, some might be involved in crafts or trades), so their

houses would have been more varied. The outlook of the hamlet and farmstead dwellers may have been better suited to a Wealden house with its greater emphasis on private space.

3. Territories: parishes, vills, townships and manors.

In the third extension of the horizons beyond the village or hamlet the context of a building includes the territorial unit or units in which it is situated. The boundary around the parish or vill (township) would often be defining the land from which the households made a living. Their most frequent social contacts – in church, in parish meetings, guild feasts, manor courts and ale houses - would be with those settled within that area. The inhabitants developed a sense of common purpose, and of belonging to a particular vill or parish.

We need to take territories into account because they changed over space and time, that that would have had an impact on styles and phases of building. In champion country, in the 'central province' of nucleated villages, sheep and corn husbandry was practised in great open fields, and houses were built from timber brought, and often purchased, from distant woodlands. Village houses in the generations after the Black Death of 1348-9 were financed by the adaptation of farming to new circumstances, with more pasture accommodated in the open fields, mainly by converting strips of former arable to temporary leys. Some villagers tended to accumulate more land as their neighbouring households died out or migrated, and had the capacity to spend more on buildings.⁽³⁷⁾ The 'great rebuilding' after 1570, as Hoskins observed, reflected the continued accumulation of land in the hands of husbandmen and yeomen, who gained larger profits from the rising price of corn and other produce.

In the woodlands and uplands the changes in landholding and agriculture were not dissimilar, except that it was easier in a territory with a bias towards pastoralism, and greater flexibility in the use of land, to increase the numbers of animals. One notes in both uplands and woodlands a tendency for houses to be sited

on the edge of extensive pastures, whether they were moorlands or greens, indicating the importance of that resource to the inhabitants.(38)

We should emphasise parishes and vills, rather than the manor.

Householders paid their rent to a manor and attended their lord's court, but in many territories two or three lords held manors, and even when there was a single lord he could be a remote figure with little active interest in his tenants. The vill or parish decided practical farming matters, provided the focus for interactions between peasants, and attracted local loyalties. Lords had an influence. For example, their courts regulated inheritance and the land market for customary tenants, and they might in the fifteenth century order repairs to houses, and even provide help in the form of timber or rent relief. Lords did not usually set out to build their tenants' houses in major programmes of improvement until the eighteenth century. (39)

4. Regions : *pays* and hinterlands.

The character of farming regions and *pays* have been discussed already, and such terms as champion and woodland have been used. These are just types of countryside, and like the 'central province' they are based on applying a broad brush which categorises many hundreds of square miles – the central province or champion country included a third of England, and the term 'woodland' can be applied to a similarly large area. *Pays* are more subtly drawn, on a smaller scale, so that within the champion country of south and east Leicestershire for example, one can distinguish the wolds of the east of the county from the Wreake valley, and again from the Soar valley, each with different relief, types of settlement and agrarian economies.

Although some vernacular studies are based on whole counties, which cover a variety of *pays* (such as Hampshire, Hertfordshire, Shropshire and Somerset), there is a well-established tradition of studying the buildings of the 'Banbury region', the Vale of White Horse, the Yorkshire Wolds, and recently this has been extended to the different parts of Norfolk.(40)

As this regional dimension of vernacular buildings is well known, I will here explore the hinterlands of towns, and focus in particular on the 'Bromsgrove house'

from Worcestershire, which was the first house to be moved to the Avoncroft Museum of Buildings in 1967.⁽⁴¹⁾ It belonged to a fairly standard urban house type, with an open hall parallel to the street, with a two-bay, two-storey, jettied cross wing, and is likely to belong to the mid fifteenth century. It stood in a large plot about 12m (40ft) wide on the eastern side of the High Street. The plot is likely to have been defined soon after the town was founded in about 1260, as it lay quite near to the central market place, where the main west-east route met the High Street. Buildings stood at the rear, which are shown on nineteenth-century maps. We can even guess at their use as there is a good chance (unfortunately not proved) that the house in 1558 belonged to a dyer, and it is very likely that the house was built for such a superior artisan. The builder was anxious to make his mark among his neighbours and passers by, as the jettied cross wing facing the street makes lavish use of timber.

An artisan such as a dyer operated within a region as well as a parish. Many better-off townspeople held parcels of land in nearby fields, and grazed animals on local common pastures, but their main source of income came from long-distance contacts. A dyer would no doubt be employed in finishing the cloth of the weavers who lived in the town of Bromsgrove. There were six of these in 1393; and the trade is likely to have continued on a similar scale in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. If there was a limited number of weavers, their cloth alone would not have been sufficient in quantity to have filled the dyer's vats throughout the year, and no doubt he took in the cloth woven by country weavers in rural settlements in the vicinity such as Stoke Prior, Redditch and Chaddesley Corbett. These lay within the town's hinterland, from which country people came regularly to sell produce and buy manufactures and specialised foodstuffs such as fish.. The relative scarcity of dyers could have put them in contact with clothmakers even beyond the boundaries of the town's regular hinterland, that is from a distance outside the usual radius of about 7 miles. The dyestuffs, such as woad, and the alum which fixed the colour, were imported from overseas, and the most likely source of supply would have been the

merchants in the large towns of Worcester and Coventry. If a dyer of Bromsgrove was working for a clothier, or whether he traded independently, the finished cloths could have been traded through Worcester, where they were carried by cart to London. (42)

Even in a small town the horizons and connections of the inhabitants extended a long way, and crossed conventional landscape boundaries.

CONCLUSION

Hoskins gave the history of buildings significance by showing that they informed our general picture of social and economic change, and by placing them in his vision of landscape history. Landscape history has grown, so that it now embraces more dimensions of the past. Historians of buildings, and especially of vernacular buildings, make a contribution to that wider picture, and we can enrich our study of the structures by observing and explaining their landscape settings.

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FOOTNOTES

1. W.G. Hoskins, 'The rebuilding of rural England, 1570-1640', *Past and Present* 4 (1953), 44-59, reprinted in W.G. Hoskins, *Provincial England. Essays in Social and Economic History* (London : Macmillan, 1965), 131-48; W.G. Hoskins, *The Making of the English Landscape* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1955).
2. C. Phythian-Adams, 'Hoskins's England: a local historian of genius and the realisation of his theme', *Trans. Leics. Archaeol. and Hist. Soc.* 66(1992), 143-59.

3. A letter to Dr John Sheail, which he was kind enough to show me.
4. Ms Reynolds gave an account of her enthusiasm for Hoskins in her talk on the first day of the conference entitled 'W.G. Hoskins and the Making of the British Landscape' held at Leicester, on 7 July, 2005.
5. The 1955 book was reprinted in 1977 with a new introduction; the Penguin paperback appeared in 1970; the 1988 version with commentary by C.C. Taylor, was published by Hodder and Stoughton; a new edition, with an introduction by Keith Thomas, was published by the Folio Society in 2005, based on the 1977 edition.
6. E.g. W.G. Hoskins, 'The Leicestershire farmer in the seventeenth century', *Agricultural Hist.* 25 (1951), 9-20.
7. W.G. Hoskins, *The Midland Peasant. The Economic and Social History of a Leicestershire Village* (London: Macmillan, 1957).
8. E.g. W.G. Hoskins, 'English provincial towns in the early sixteenth century', *Trans. Royal Hist. Soc.*, 5th ser., 6 (1956), 1-19.
9. W.G. Hoskins, *The Heritage of Leicestershire* (Leicester: Edgar Backus, 1946), 71-84.
10. I am grateful for Dr Robert Peberdy for telling me about this letter.
11. C. Hill, R.H. Hilton and E.J. Hobsbawm, 'Past and Present : origins and early years', *Past and Present* 100 (1983), 3-14.
12. The discussion of the great rebuilding is on pages 122-30 of the 1977 reprint.
13. Most of the papers appeared in *Landscape Hist.* 1(1979).
14. M. Bowden (ed.), *Unravelling the Landscape. An Inquisitive Approach to Archaeology* (Stroud: Tempus, 1999)
15. S. Rippon, 'Landscapes in transition: the later Roman and early medieval periods', in D. Hooke (ed.), *Landscape. The Richest Historical Record*, Society for Landscape Studies supplementary series, 1 (2000), 47-61.
16. T. Slater, 'Understanding the landscape of towns', in Hooke (ed.), *Landscape*, 97-108.
17. O. Creighton, *Castles and Landscapes* (London: Continuum, 2002).

18. P. Everson, G. Brown and D. Stocker, 'The castle earthworks and landscape context', in P. Ellis (ed.), *Ludgershall Castle Wiltshire*, Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society, Monograph Series, 2 (2000), 97-115.
19. M. Johnson, *Behind the Castle Gate: from Medieval to Renaissance* (London: Routledge, 2002); O.H. Creighton and R.A. Higham, 'Castle studies and the "landscape" agenda', *Landscape Hist.* 26 (2004), 1-18;. R. Liddiard, *Castles in Context* (Macclesfield: Windgather, 2005).
20. C. Lewis, P. Mitchell-Fox and C. Dyer, *Village, Hamlet and Field*. (Macclesfield: Windgather, 2001), 193-6.
21. R. Morris, *Churches in the Landscape* (new ed., London: Phoenix Century, 1997)
22. C. Dyer, 'Villages and non-villages in the medieval Cotswolds', *Trans. Bristol and Gloucs. Arch. Soc.* 120 (2002), 29.
23. R. Suggett, 'The interpretation of late medieval houses in Wales', in R.R. Davies and G.H. Jenkins (eds), *From Medieval to Modern Wales. Historical Essays in Honour of Kenneth O. Morgan and Ralph A. Griffiths* (Cardiff : University of Wales Press, 2004), 81-103; R. Suggett, *Houses and History in the March of Wales. Radnorshire 1400-1800*, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, (2005), 17-26.
24. The relationship between landscape and architectural history is explored in S. Pearson, 'Vernacular buildings in the landscape', in P. Everson and C. Taylor (eds), *The Archaeology of Landscape. Studies presented to Christopher Taylor* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 166-82.
25. S. Rippon, *Historic Landscape Analysis: Deciphering the Countryside*, Council for British Archaeology Practical Handbooks in Archaeology, 16 (2004); Hooke (ed.), *Landscape*.
26. N. Alcock, *People at Home. Living in a Warwickshire Village, 1500-1800* (Chichester: Phillimore, 1993), 7-11; A. Longcroft (ed.), *The Historic Buildings of New Buckenham* (J. of the Norfolk Historic Buildings Group 2, 2005)

27. C. Dyer, 'Gardens and orchards in medieval England', in *idem*, *Everyday Life in Medieval England* (London: Hambledon and London, 2000), 116-18.
28. M. Moran, *Vernacular Buildings of Shropshire* (Logaston Press : Little Logaston, 2003), 135-202.
29. B. Cursente, *Des Maisons et des Hommes. La Gascogne Medievale (XIe-XVe siecle)* (Toulouse : Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 1998), 23-162.
- 30.. B.K. Roberts and S. Wrathmell, *An Atlas of Rural Settlement in England* (London: English Heritage, 2000)
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36. J. Grenville, *Medieval Housing* (London: Leicester University Press, 1997); S. Pearson, 'Rural and urban houses 1100-1500: "urban adaptation" reconsidered', in K. Giles and C. Dyer (eds), *Town and Country in the Middle Ages. Contrasts, Contacts and Interconnections*, Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph, 22 (2005), 43-63.
37. The tendencies of the period are documented in E. Miller (ed.), *Agrarian History of England and Wales*, vol. 3, *1348-1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), for example 8-14, 30-3.
38. E.g. Suggett, 'Late medieval houses', 82-6; A Winchester, *The Harvest of the Hills. Rural Life in Northern England and the Scottish Borders, 1400-1700* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 64.

39. C. Dyer, *An Age of Transition ? Economy and Society in England in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 119, 151-4; Barley, *Houses and History*, 260-2.
40. Longcroft (ed.), *New Buckenham*.
41. F.W.B. Charles, *The Bromsgrove House* (Bromsgrove: Avoncroft Museum of Buildings, 1967); F.W.B. and M. Charles, *Conservation of Timber Buildings* (London: Hutchinson, 1984), 81-3, 91-2, 99, 223-4; C. Dyer, *Bromsgrove. A Small Town in Worcestershire in the Middle Ages*, Worcestershire Historical Society Occasional Paper, 9 (2000), 39-40.
42. A. Dyer, *The City of Worcester in the Sixteenth Century* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1973), 105 -18. This argues that the city of Worcester made broadcloths for export, and the smaller towns produced narrow cloths, presumably for a more local market.

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