Says Thatched Roofs Are Best Of All

'No method of covering roofs has yet been invented which can equal thatch in being both weatherproof and resistant to extremes of temperature.' declares William Martin, a thatcher for fifty years, who emphasizes that 'there must be no attempt to cheapen the work at the expense of the craftsman.'

During the thousands of years of progress since men first built ouses, it is really rather remarkable that no method of covering roofs has yet been invented which can equalthat in being both weatherproof and resistant to extremes of temperature. Not only does the thickness of the thatch makes the house warmer in winter and cooler and summer, but the reeds have an effect like a cavity-wall, with similar insulating properties.

As a thatcher of some fifty years' standing, I have always found the job very interesting. I actually started work with my father and grandfather when a boy of about ten years of age. It is a highly skilled job, if properly done, requiring a good eye and plenty of patience, but it is work of which anyone can be proud.

Now what about the materials? This is where the farmer comes in, for he can produce for thatching practically everything needed on the farm. The timber can be freshly cut from the woods—ash, hazel, fir-poles ,and so on. The rods and spars can also be got from the underwood—the hazel and withy. The straw of straw-reed, too, is grown on almost every farm.

In the south-western counties of England, the wheat straw reed is very popular. This is wheat put through a special attachment called a reed-comber, which is fitted to an ordinary threshing machine. It comes through the machine cleaned of all corn, and flag and weed and the butts are all one way and unbruised. This straw-reed is sold usually at about twice the price of ordinary straw.

To thatch an average-size roof of fifteen squares with wheaten straw-reed—a square is 100 square feet—would cost $500 to $600. This is the cost of an entirely new roof —if put on to an existing thatched roof it would cost aout $350. If, however, all materials are supplied by the farmer, the cost would not be likely to exceed $150.

And how long, you may ask, would such a roof last? I should say that, with straw-reed, from thirty-five to fifty years, with the exception of the ridge, which requires renewing about every ten to twelve years. Norfolk reeds will last much longer, but the cost is very much higher.

Very often, when I am working on a roof, people stop and ask me questions about thatching. They admire the neatness of the thatched roofs, and many ask what is being done to preserve this craft, and why more young men do not take up such satisfying work.

It is perfectly true that, during recent years, there has been a steady decline in thatching. The cause of this, in my opinion, has been the low rate of pay the thatcher received for his work, as a result of which the thatchers' sons refused to take up the craft. At last, however, the thatchers are getting an adequate reward for the service they render to the community, and if thatching is to survive there must be no attempt to cheapen the work at the expense of the craftsman.

There are at present 778 full-time thatchers in this country, but 600 of these are over forty years of age. These are far too few in number to cope with the work needed, but the Rural Industries Bureau is doing all it can to encourage young men to take up the craft. I am pleased to say we are meeting with a certain amount of success, as there are now about forty trainees learning the work, but more are still required. Thatchers' associations, too, are being formed to maintain and improve standards of work, and this is a step in the right direction.

I am often asked if thatching is a dying craft, and my reply is 'definitely no.' In the south-western countries of England, I find many people are buying old cottages and having them reconditioned with a coat of thatch put on the old roofs. In many cases, unsightly galvanized iron and asbestos sheeting is being removed and entirely replaced by thatched roofs.

How long, you may ask, does it take to learn to make a good thatcher? This is not an easy question to answer. As I have already told you, I have been thatching myself for nearly fifty years, with all kinds of material, and I am not too old even now to learn a point or two.

Leaders In Great British Election Struggle

Clement Attlee

Winston Churchill

Sketch from photo by Karsh, Ottawa.

Held By Czechs — Aldon Johnson is one of two Mormon missionaries seized by Czechoslovakian officials in Moravia Jan. 27. The Czech foreign office said Johnson and Stanley E. Abbott are being held for trying to enter a prohibited area. American officials in Prague expressed "grave concern" over the case.

Grandma, Grandpa, Need Milk Too

Milk is no longer just for the children. Scientists are finding out new reasons why all the members of the family need it. Mother needs it, especially if she's nervous. Dad needs if if he doesn't want to get old before his time.

And Grandpa and Grandma need it. Then they aren't so apt to get laid up with a broken hip.

We know that milk furnishes a digestible protein—that's why it's such a perfect food for babies. It also furnishes minerals. Calcium is the mineral that your body needs in largest quantity.

And it's the one that your diet is most apt to be short of. It's what makes up the lime part of the bones. Milk is one of the best sources of digestible calcium.

Why is it old people's bones break so easily? Experiments point to a lack of calcium in their diets. You can't maintain strong bones on simply tea and toast.

It's hard to think of such things as your bones dissolving away. But tests have shown that calcium is leaving the body all the time. And since 99 per cent of the body's calcium is in the bones it has to come from them.

You've heard about the "tagged" atoms (radioactive isotopes) that let one trace these particles of mineral as they move through the body. Such bone-building mineral was fed to some white rats. The scientists found that at first it located in the bones. But later it was excreted and had to be replaced with a new supply.

For obtaining this required calcium milk is a good food to tie to. For example you'd have to eat seven pounds of carrots or cabbage or 27 pounds of potatoes, to get as much calcium as from drinking just one quart of milk.

One quart (four glasses) of milk a day will furnish all the calcium needed for the average child. The amount of calcium needed by adults is practically as much.

In adolescence, children need one and a half times this amount. The pregnant woman needs as much or more than the adolescent.

If one is out of the habit of drinking this much milk, there are other ways of working it into the diet.

Some liquid milk with the meal is always recommended. Out it can be used liberally in the cooking, too. Bread made with dried milk furnishes the calcium.

Calcium does other things to you besides making harder bones. It's necessary for the clotting of blood in wounds. It helps regulate the beat of the heart. And it helps keep your nerves stable.

Vitamins of the B complex have something to do with nerves, too. One of these — sometimes called Vitamin B-2, at other times called Vitamin G (to stand for growth)—you now generally hear by its particular name, riboflavin.

All adults should want to get plenty of riboflavin. For it is called the vitamin that "helps extend the best years of life." That is it helps you keep the qualities of youth—to postpone the signs of age.

Sounds like the "fountain of youth" idea, doesn't it? But here's a part of the explanation science gives: Your body cells need riboflavin in order to use the oxygen brought by the blood. This better use of oxygen is like taking deep breaths. You get a sense of well-being, which is one of the characteristics of youth.

So, if you feel nervous and rundown, get plenty of riboflavin. Then blue Mondays (we hope) won't seem quite so blue.

The Tale, Not The Tail, Of A Kilt

Esther Butler is a Scot, a fervent Scot, and she maintains her Scottishness while she is in the South of England by stitching at kilts for dear life. "In thirty-seven years, stated Esther in an air interview, ::I've sewn enough tartan to stretch round the world." She was a girl of fifteen, making coats for a Glasgow firm, when the famous Variety artist Sir Henry Lauder came in and ordered a kilt. She was not experienced enough then to make it for him but later in life she became a kilt maker. She came South fifteen years ago and now sits comfortably and snugly in a country caravan listening to the birds singing outside as she works. By keeping hard at it from early morning till late at night, Esther Butler manages to make six kilts a week. There are eight yards of tartan in each, every stitch is sewn by hand with silk and matching the pleated back and plain front of a kilt is the tricky job, for the check has to look the same all the way round. She has to know more than four hundred different tartans —for each Highland clan has its own tartan, and there are dress and hunting tartans, modern and ancient ones. Nine out of ten of Mrs. Butler's kilts are exported to America. She can recognize her own work anywhere and one day when she was in a London Hotel talking to a friend and they sat near two obviously aristocratic Scots, the girl wearing a kilt that Mrs. Butler insisted was her work. Her disbelieving friend, bet her a pound that it was not. Mrs. Butler went up to the lady and asked her name. "When she told me I nearly fell through the floor because of my impudence," she said, "but it was my kilt."

"Butter" From Mud"

In the latter part of the year 1869 someone applied to the owner of a wharf on the Thames for space on which to erect a butter factory. The extravagant rent offered induced the owner to investigate. He discovered that the tenant really intended to make something that would pass for butter, and this from the Thames mud. After some chemical treatment, a pure, white fat could be obtained from the mud. The product sold well.

Quiz Question

A motorist was 100 yards from an open railway crossing tearing along at 60 miles an hour. A train, coming down the track at the same speed, was an equal distance from the intersection.

Problem: Did the motorist get across?

Answer: Yes—a beautiful marble cross purchased by his widow from his insurance money.

Here's An Idea For Busy Mothers

Little Bobby Seaman has been playing Indian for nearly six months—ever since he was three months old.

Today, like any good little papoose, he enjoys nothing better than being toted around Boston's Back Bay, strapped securely to his cradle board.

This papoose-style perambulating started when two active Boston mothers sought to be freed from baby sitting—or pushing.

Mr. and Mrs. James McDonough enjoyed hiking and mountain climbing, but when little Jean arrived, they quickly realized they couldn't push her carriage up over the trails.

So they scouted around and hunted up pictures and read an article about Indian cradles or carrying boards.

Improvising a bit, but following specifications closely, they built one for Jean, using an old army rucksack carrier and webbed army belting. Discarding the Indian squaw's forehead strap, they substituted the belting, attaching it so that it slipped over Mrs. McDonough's shoulders.

Shortly after Mrs. Richard Seaman met her neighbor carrying Jean — papoose style. She, too, liked the idea immensely, since she and her husband enjoyed outdoor sports and also were seeking some method by which Bobby might be included.

So they copied the cradle, laced Bobby inside his blanket, strapped the whole contraption over Mrs. Seaman's shoulders—and off they went.

Lo, the happy little Indian!

AULD SCOTIA

(From A Reader Who Enjoyed "What Heather Means To The Scots!)

Ye tak' me back tae my Heilan' Hame,
Tae a wee Clachan in th' Glen;
Tae a Heather thack'd Hoose, wi' it's wa's sae white,
Like the Sna'-tapp'd mountains that I ken.
Whaur th' Heather blooms an' Brackan' grows,
An' tumblin' burns roll t'wards th' Sea;
Whaur Skylards sing their sangs in Spring,
That's whaur I lang tae be.

Whaun day was done at set o' sun,
We'd sit 'roun' th' auld stane hearth;
Write, read or sew, by fire-licht glow,
Th' happiest folks on Earth.
A thing now rare, we'd say a prayer,
Thank God for His mercies shown;
'Ere rest oor head on a Heather bed,
That t'would a treasure be to own.

It's noo lang syne, but wi' tochts sae fine,
Ye've brought tae me o' Hame;
I've seen this Worl' frae end tae end,
But there's naething quite th' same,
Like oor heather'd hills an' bonnie Glens,
Oor rugged coasts an' raging sea;
Unconquered still auld Scotia stands,
By God's will, she'll aye be free.

'Copter For Cold-Weather Rescues—This is an artist's conception of the first Air Force helicopter designed especially for use in Arctic rescue operations, the Piasecki H-21. Big as an airliner, the craft will be able to land on snow, ice, water, tundra or marshlands. A hydraulic swivel hoist enables it to haul in litter cases and make other pickups at spots where landing is impossible. For emergency purposes, the H-2 can carry 27 passengers and two crewmen.

Up And Atom—Sumner Pike (left), who will take over as acting chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, confers with retiring chairman David Lilienthal. Pike, who had been vice-chairman, will serve as head of the AEC until President Truman appoints a permanent chairman.

JITTER — By Arthur Pointer