

"BYGONES"

At the Cambridge Folk Museum

ALTHOUGH folk museums of widely varying types have existed in country towns for many years, they are not as well known as their merits deserve. Visitors pass the unpretentious doors of "folk" museums which often contain extraordinarily interesting examples of old local arts and crafts, with obsolete, specialised tools or implements, especially those used in agriculture. Many of the home-made household appliances used in the farm and cottage kitchens were most ingenious and showed a high degree of artistic finish. The long bones of farm animals were shaped into potato and apple peelers, trenchers were decorated with carvings, and the local smiths were adepts at

hammering iron into all sorts of pleasing and useful designs. Folk museums, if well-arranged, afford vivid and intimate glimpses of the past life of the countryside, but their educational value depends very much on the choice of a curator. The museum may specialise in material culture or in archaeology or in natural history, and each department has its own teaching value. But the

THE MUSEUM is housed in an old coaching inn—the White Horse—and the quaint rooms afford an ideal setting for the collection. The building will be required for a town improvement scheme, and the museum committee will have to find new (and, it is hoped, permanent) quarters in the near future.



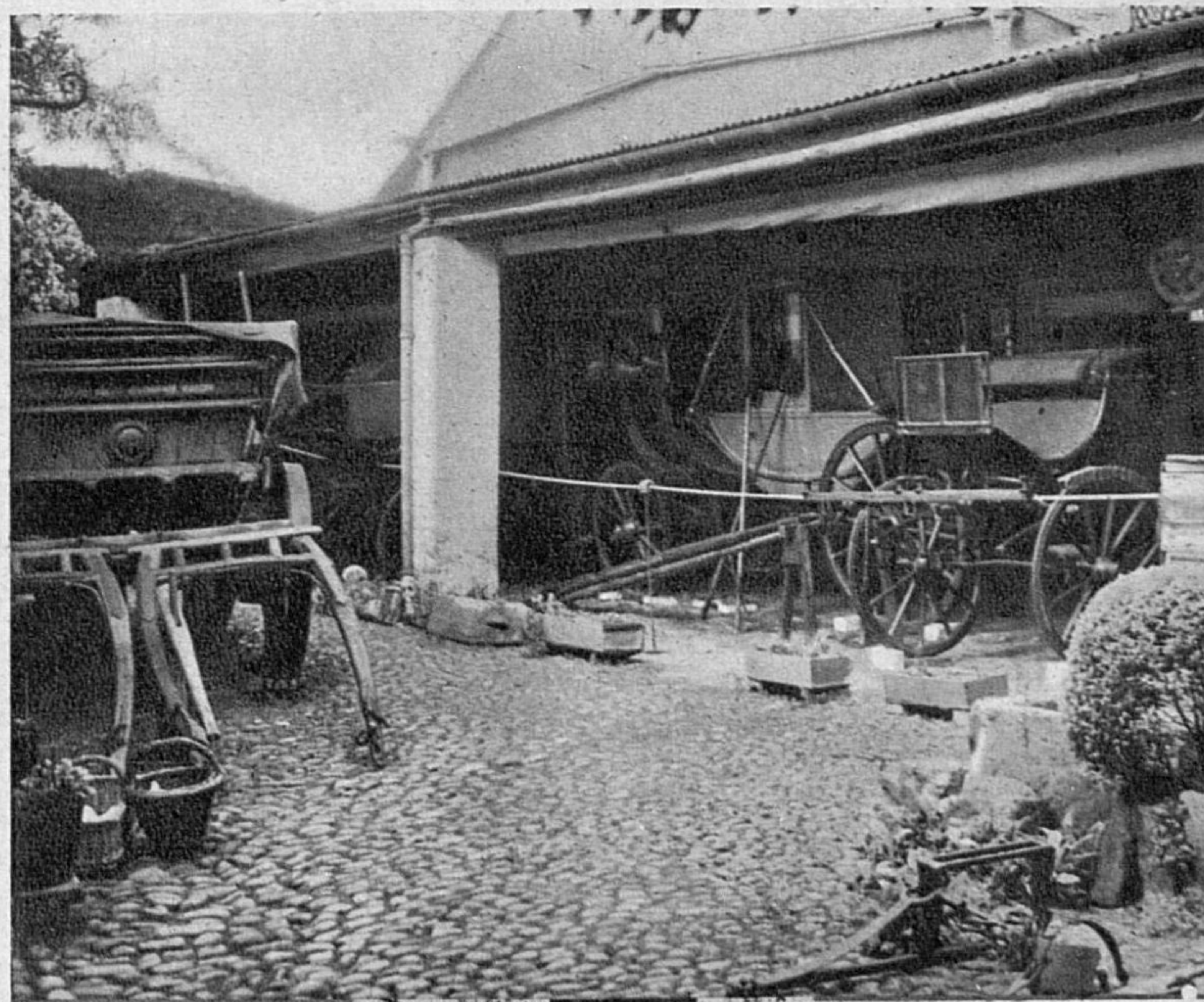
THE OLD DINING-ROOM, where the "farmers' ordinary," or market-day dinner, was held. The original table occupies the centre of the room, which contains a number of civic relics. On the back wall is a diagram of a very early flying-machine invented by a Cambridgeshire resident. On the table are the standard market measures for grain and other commodities.



THE BAR PARLOUR, with an open hearth, is used to exhibit old-time cooking utensils, including the hakes, or hooks, which supported the iron cooking-pots. There are roasting-spits, plate-holders and the clockwork jacks from which joints were suspended. The walls are covered with old agricultural tools and implements once used on local farms.



AN OLD SHOP-FRONT rescued from a town-planning clearance. The front is curved, with small glass panes. The last occupier was a butcher, but the front was moved to the museum and is used as a show-case for obsolete articles once sold in the small country shops. They include valentines, toys and household requirements.



PART OF THE INN YARD, which is used for the larger exhibits. In the shed is the old sheriff's coach, with two of the weapons carried by the javelin men who attended the judge at Assizes. Over it is a fire-hook used to pull the roofs off burning houses to check fire-spread. It is the property of S. Peter's parish, in which the museum is situated.



THE PARLOUR, with spinet, spinning-wheel and musical boxes. In the corner is a powdering closet with wigs and the irons used for curling them. By the fireplace is a pointed copper vessel used for mulling ale. It was pushed down between the burning logs on the hearth and the contents were protected from smoke.



THE SMOKE-ROOM: On the centre table are a mould for making clay pipes and an iron pipe-rack constructed of horseshoes welded together. At the back of them is a rack in which pipes were cleaned by placing them in the fire. The display cases are filled with men's clothing, snuff boxes, weapons, and many articles of masculine use.

curator must be able to distinguish between what is really a "bygone" and what is an old survival still used for special jobs in certain districts. He must also have a keen eye for a tool or implement which has been carried out of its natural home, where it is still in everyday use, and been adapted for other purposes. Agricultural tools are of great interest, and all curators should have a wide and practical knowledge of the specialised crops for which implements, supposed to be obsolete, are still best for the purpose they were originally designed to fulfil.

The Cambridge Folk Museum was founded about ten years ago by a number of County, Town and University residents interested in the old local arts and crafts and the obsolete



SKITTLES: The four heavy wooden skittle-pins were found in a garden where they had been buried for many years. In front are piled the "cheeses" which were thrown at the pins.

tools and household fittings sometimes known as "bygones." The Cambridge Town Council had one of the old coaching inns—the White Horse—at their disposal. It was almost unaltered from its original state, and the authorities leased it to the museum committee at a low rental, but the site will be required for a town improvement scheme, and the tenancy may be determined at any time. The Town Council also lent a number of exhibits of municipal regalia, some of them of very great interest. The committee of management issued an appeal for funds, both donations for the capital expenditure and promises of regular subscriptions for current requirements. As soon as funds permitted, the committee established the Cambridge and County Folk Museum Association, and the first president was Mr. E. S. Peck, a well-known Cambridge resident. The onerous post of hon. curator was accepted by Miss Parsons, who is the owner of a private folk museum at Rackheath, and the present arrangement of the museum is largely due to her good taste and experience. The general scheme was to utilise each room for a group of appropriate exhibits. The old bar with its open fireplace provided an effective setting for culinary bygones—hakes, jacks, iron cooking-pots, locally-made crockery and household utensils. The old dining-room retained its appearance and housed prints and pictures of local interest. The children's room was fitted up with nursery and schoolroom items, and the smoke-room provided a suitable setting for men's things. The kitchen contains a large and valuable series of exhibits connected

with food—trenchers, cutlery and many obsolete implements for getting up linen and household napery. Countrywomen were adepts at this branch of household management and a large number of exhibits were presented or loaned to the museum. The University School of Archæology lent some objects of local interest to fill up gaps in some of the series shown in the museum.

The demand for more space soon became acute, and many interesting exhibits are stored away in readiness for the time when their display is possible. The museum is restricted to exhibits from the county of Cambridgeshire and has a fine series illustrating the material culture and folk-lore of the county as well as the old arts and crafts—



A BASKET in which the yard-long rolls of butter were brought to Cambridge market. The window at the back is used to display dairy utensils. The upright churn was once universally used on farms in the county. On the right of the picture a lead "head" for collecting roof water can be seen. It was rescued from a builder's rubbish-heap.



A KITCHEN DRESSER with old household utensils. Wooden trenchers, egg cups and bowls were the usual table utensils for meals. All the exhibits, including the meat choppers, goffering-irons, hair curlers, and many other kitchen fittings, come from Cambridgeshire. The drawers contain a series of old county cutlery, snuffers, etc.



A BEDROOM: The patchwork counterpane is a fine example of local needlework. With it are shown examples of women's clothing—crinolines, bustles, hats, costumes, etc. Lace was made in Cambridgeshire, and the museum possesses several lacemakers' cushions, complete with the different coloured bobbins used to indicate the order of use in making a pattern.

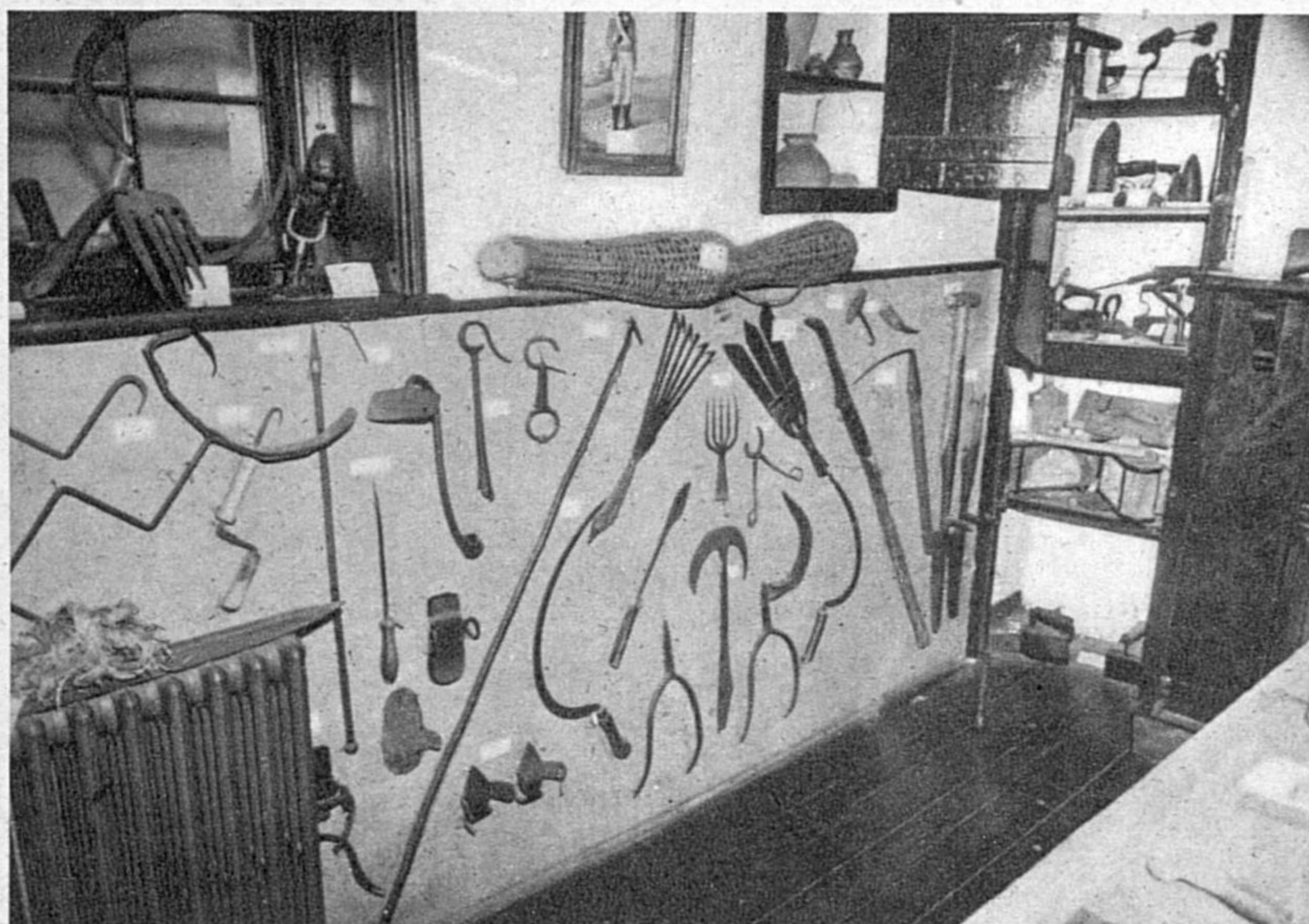


THE CHILDREN'S ROOM, which contains a very fine collection of nursery and schoolroom equipment. Examples of dolls' houses, samplers, zoetropes, etc., are displayed. In the centre is a "walking frame," with two backboards. The latter were placed behind the shoulders and under the elbows to induce an upright carriage.



lace-making, hat-making, smith and carpenter's work—and also old weights and measures. The present curator, Mr. Lambeth, is an energetic collector with a wide knowledge of his subject, and many of the exhibits have been rescued by him from county store-rooms, farm buildings and waste heaps. But the museum is in urgent need of funds and of permanent quarters to enable it to carry on its valuable educational work. Many schools make regular visits to the White Horse as part of the teaching work in local history, and extra rooms for display, lectures and research are urgently required. The present building contains seven rooms, and there is an open yard and shed for the larger outdoor exhibits. At the back the original inn stable houses the old brewery and dining utensils, but there is no room for the curator and the secretary's needs or for research and photography. But these essentials may be met in the future when the value of the folk museum is more fully recognised and adequate funds allow.

THE CURATOR, Mr. R. Lambeth, who has secured many of the exhibits for the museum. His office is the old bar, with its ancient bottles, pewter pots and mugs of local earthenware.



OLD AGRICULTURAL TOOLS are well represented, and this wall display shows a representative series. Many of them were made by local smiths—eel spears, trenching tools, sickles, straw-rope twisters, bills and peat-cutters (peat is still used in the Fen districts as fuel). In the centre is a wicker trap for catching eels.



DAIRY UTENSILS used on Cambridgeshire farms. Most of them are of wood, and the dairymaid spent much of her time in cleaning and scrubbing. The outfit includes a milk pan, cheese press, butter table, scales, cream bowls, and "hands" used to work up the freshly-churned butter.



THE BREWERY: In the past many farmers brewed their own beer, but the practice has died out owing to the difficulties of maintaining supplies. Pitchers and jugs (known as "gotches" in East Anglia) were used to transfer the wort into the vats and, later, the beer into casks.