

## Appendix A

## COVENTRY'S FIRST SYNAGOGUE

ANCIENT BUILDING  
IN BUTCHER ROWDemolition Reveals  
Interesting FeaturesHOUSES BUILT WITH CLAY  
AND STRAW

**D**EMOLITION of the Butcher Row property is revealing some interesting contrasts in building styles of bygone centuries.

In the pulling down of some of the fascinating fifteenth century houses, work upon which has only just begun, the old-time methods of constructing walls of clay and straw or hay, before bricks were the fashion, are coming to light. Some of the most absorbing discoveries have been made in the house which was used as the first Jewish synagogue in Coventry.

This place, a wonderful half-timbered structure that in late years had become sadly dilapidated, was formerly the dwelling of Mr. Isaac Cohen, who lived to be 107 years of age, and his wife, who died at the age of 102. They died early in the seventeenth century. Mr. Cohen, who was a Polish Jew, was noted in Coventry as a maker of trunks.

By the removal of large expanses of old oak panelling, it was found that the walls behind had been constructed of oak beams and "wattle." The latter is a mixture of clay, straw or hay, and reeds, and if no other evidence were available as to the age of the buildings in this vicinity, these finds would be sufficient, for it is known that the first bricks in building were not used until early in the sixteenth century. Old records show that clay for building purposes could be taken from the side of the highways.

In some cases in the Butcher Row property, wattle and dab, or daub, was plastered on to laths arranged between the wooden beams. In others the mixture had apparently been forced between the beams and held in position through an early form of "keying"

that consisted of cutting slots in the woodwork.

The house where Isaac Cohen lived finished its days as a furniture dealer's premises. This and adjoining premises have been found to be rich in their possession of handsome carved panel-

ling typical of sixteenth and seventeenth century workmanship. The most interesting of the relics are, as already stated, to be preserved by Coventry Corporation. A beautifully carved wooden door head of the fifteenth century is among the "finds."



Picture gives some idea of the composition of the walls of an old house now being demolished in Butcher Row. Walls being brought to light through the removal of panelling show that the spaces between the beams were filled in with clay and straw.

Illustration 1 - Midland Daily Telegraph January 1936