

National Ethnographic Park of Transylvania 'Romulus Vuia' Cluj-Napoca

11 September

This open-air park founded in 1929 and largely destroyed in WWII, re-emerged after 1956 on two themes: one consisting of technical peasant installations and workshops for processing grain, oil, wood, wool, metal, clay and lime usually combined with a dwelling; the second of types of farmsteads, wooden churches and wayside crosses, which were features of the Romanian countryside.

The impact this timber culture made was overwhelming. Familiarity with wood modelled by modern tools can lead to an under-rating of the delightful rougher finishes of axe and adze. Consummate skill is required to manhandle, split, use and re-use large sections of timber with minimum intervention. Axe and adze work wonders in building construction and in the construction of processing machinery. Log cabins, churches and fences are spliced together; gouged logs become rain gutters below shingle roofs. Particularly admired were thatched wattle fences.

In farms, steep roofs shed water and snow. Thatched for the many and shingled for the socially superior, local red clay became tile and brick to add further status. Hand-wrought metal fittings abound. The 1773 door of the church from Cizer had wooden handles and hinges; the 18th century church from Chirales had a wooden multi-throw lock, its key like a porridge spurtle with a screw end to turn it - ingenuity personified.

In dwellings, living rooms are usually arranged with a stove, bed, table and cupboard corner, the bed chest a particular feature - adults on top, children in the pull-out drawer below. Benches are set round the walls or placed in front of the bed chest during the day for eating. Stools aplenty, chairs simple. Natural timber was used; knees or bends of timber in a pair of bench ends; curved supports holding a dug-out wooden baking trough on a trestle; a pot rack; branches as legs for wool winders, and ceiling hooks.

Many thanks go to Flavia Stoica, the museum curator, for ably introducing the group to the cultural diversity of Transylvania.

Crissie White



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

Exhibits at the Ethnographic Park, Cluj

Fig. 1 Farm gate and thatched wattle fence

Fig. 2 Painted bench and table



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

Fig. 3 Trestle with natural bend to support the bread kneading trough

Fig. 4 Porch bench with ends of natural knees, and chest



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

Fig. 5 Pot rack with natural bent wood

Fig. 6 18th century stone cutter's house, Alba County



Fig. 7



Fig. 8

Fig. 7 Smithy from Vasari, of recycled timber

Fig. 8 A corner of the smithy showing its dug-out gutter