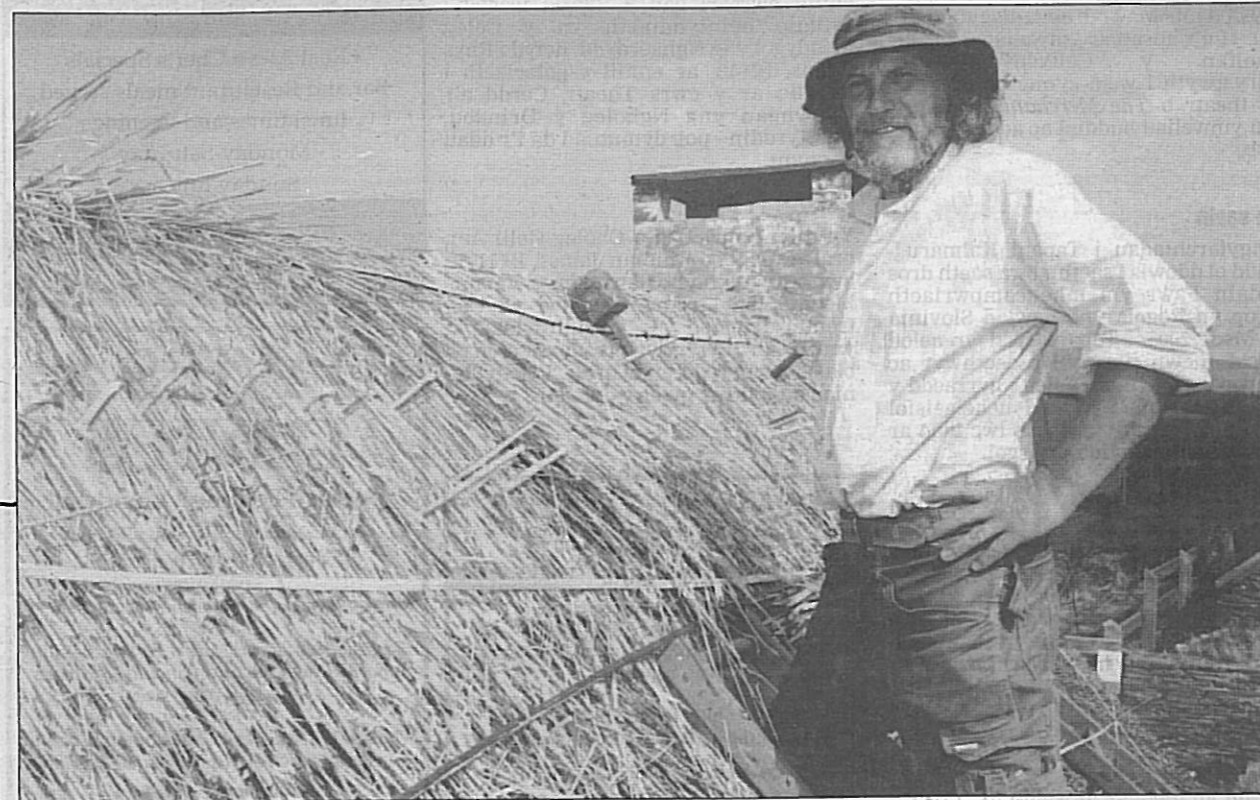


Aliens invade traditional thatch

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Thatcher Alan Jones

ALIEN thatching styles are invading traditional roofs, as the ancient skill makes a comeback to west Wales.

Master thatcher Alan Jones is concerned that people are opting for ornate styles which are not authentic to the area. He fears that the simple Welsh style may be phased out if guidelines are not put in place.

"We may miss a golden opportunity here if people are allowed to get it wrong. Years have been spent researching, using photographs and well preserved roofs. Rural workers' cottages would have had simple styles, using materials found nearby. We shouldn't risk losing the charm of the

old styles and should do our best to re-establish them."

Alan, who is based in Newport, is a specialist in historical thatching and has worked on a variety of projects in the UK and Europe for 23 years. He feels strongly that care should be taken to be sympathetic to the history of the building. "If you needed stone work done on your house, you wouldn't put stones from Surrey in a Pembrokeshire stone wall, so why do it with thatching?"

"We need to get a handle on this, and be proud of the Welsh style, but I don't know if anyone takes responsibility, who's going to stand up and

question non-traditional styles and materials? The block patterned, ornate style was a status symbol of Victorian times and is completely inappropriate."

"Ceredigion was once the most thatched county in Britain, 150 years ago most roofs would have been thatched as straw was free and slates were expensive and hard to transport. It nearly died out, but is now making a comeback and we need to keep our regional styles alive."

Alan provides information on technical details and traditional styles on his website: www.thatchingwales.co.uk.