

SUDBURY HOME FARM IN THE PARISH OF DOVERIDGE, DERBYSHIRE

By BARBARA HUTTON

INTRODUCTION

Sudbury Home Farm is a large, sprawling house on a hillside overlooking the valley of a small stream flowing into the river Dove. The house faces east; it is largely timber framed with some brick and has tiled roofs. It is believed to have been the manor house of the lost vill of West Broughton, in whose territory it lies, and investigation of the building discloses a complex history from an early origin with many later alterations and additions.

DOCUMENTATION

West Broughton was part of an estate in the manor of Doveridge that at Domesday was held by the Prior of Tutbury of Henry de Ferrers. Soon after 1100 it had become the property of the Prior.¹ Up to 1407 it was held of the Prior by the family of Denstone.² Either this family or the Prior himself could have been responsible for building the medieval aisled hall that lies at the core of the house, which would have been an appropriate structure for a capital message of substance. By 1414 Rober Shaw junior of Culland was at West Broughton manor;³ his son Thomas had a son Robert who sold Culland and retired to West Broughton 'an idiot'. His heiresses were his three sisters and it seems likely that one of these may have married into the Blount family, since by 1500 it had passed to John Blount of Nether Hall and Caldwell.⁴ From 1507 the manor belonged to the Palmer family⁵ from whom it descended, probably by marriage, to the family of Stubbing.⁶ Both Palmers and Stubbings are described as yeomen, and it was during the earliest part of the Stubbing era that the house was substantially modernised. In the 1664 Hearth Tax the house cannot be distinguished with certainty but it must be one of two houses, one with four hearths or one with six, belonging to members of the Stubbing family. Thomas Stubbing, gentleman, received a grant of arms and was chosen High Sheriff in 1711.⁷ His heiress was his sister who after 1713 brought the manor to George Buxton of Bradbourne, and he sold it to the Vernons of Sudbury who still own it.

The tenants of the house in the late 18th and early 19th centuries are believed to have been members of the Bakewell family, but in the 1830s Dr John Williams lived in the house⁸ whose rent was offset against the sums due to him for his care of the estate tenants.⁹ In the time of the sixth Baron Vernon (1866-83) who was keenly interested in agriculture [in 1880 he won prizes for two-year-old fillies at the Royal Agricultural Society's Show at Derby], the farm was in hand and a manager, John Lees, occupied the house.¹⁰ John Jeffery was the tenant;¹¹ he was the grandfather of the present occupants of the house, the Misses Jeffery, whose nephew farms the land.

ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS: EXTERIOR

The general appearance of the east front can be seen from the drawing (see Fig. 1). The two southern bays are jettied and gabled, the ground floor being close studded and the upper part weatherboarded, with four symmetrically disposed three-light windows. (Both close studding and jetties are unusual in this area). This symmetry is not the original design, since the lefthand groundfloor window has been moved south from its original position between two extra-wide studs secured with double pegging. There are no braces at this end of the building, but the bay adjoining to the north has straight braces upwards at both ends of its ground floor. The plates clasping the jetty, as well as the sillplate, are all scarfed on the south side of the end post of this northern bay. In this bay there are three studs not corresponding to pegs in the upper plate, showing that the original window was smaller than the present one. At the north end, where this bay abuts onto the porch, the corner post is grooved for the infill of a wall to run eastwards from it, though the wall of the porch is not jointed onto the post but runs behind it. It is thus clear that the two bays were each separately built, the southern bay having been added to the northern one, and the front wall has been regularised at a later date. From inside the roof it can be seen that the southern bay has a north-south roof ridge and its contemporary east gable matches that of the porch, whilst the northern of the two bays has an east-west roof ridge and its east gable has been rebuilt in brick behind the weatherboarding. The first-floor walling cannot be seen.

The porch projects from the east front, concealing the fact that the two southern bays are not in line with the bay north of the porch. In the porch and the bay north of it the close-studding is divided by a middle rail, and it seems likely both are of the same build. Some of the timber here has been replaced, probably in the period 1870 to 1900 when the owner, Lord Vernon, proposed a radical restoration for which the architect George Devey prepared drawings [there is an unsigned drawing believed to be by Devey in the Estate Office] though his design was never carried out. The replacement of these timbers has not affected the original design.

At the north end of the house can be seen the framed end of the northern bay (see Fig. 2). Projecting from it are the ends of three plates, each supported by an ornamental bracket. One is at the level of the eaves on the east side, and the other two, higher up, appear as if supporting the tiebeam of an aisled hall. The gable roof, however, does not run down on the west side so far as it does on the east, but beyond the western (apparent) arcade post continues westward at that level in brick, forming the north side of a kitchen wing. The lower part of the north gable wall is stone to halfway up the window, and continues in brick up to the bottom of the timber walling.

The back (west) of the house is all brick. The west wall at the north end is in line with a brick-arched cart shed giving onto the farmyard, and behind the shed is a dairy leading off the north side of the kitchen wing. The end facing the farmyard is a neat little two-storey block with a platband dividing the storeys and a north-south roof ridge, abutting onto the brick east-west kitchen wing whose north side was described above. There is a big double chimney between the two. The brickwork of the end block appears earlier than that of the range that links it to the main part of the house — the bricks are darker in colour and narrower. In the south wall of the linking range is the back door.

The short stretch of the wall of the main house that separates this part from the two brick gables south of it is also brick, and has one window to each storey.

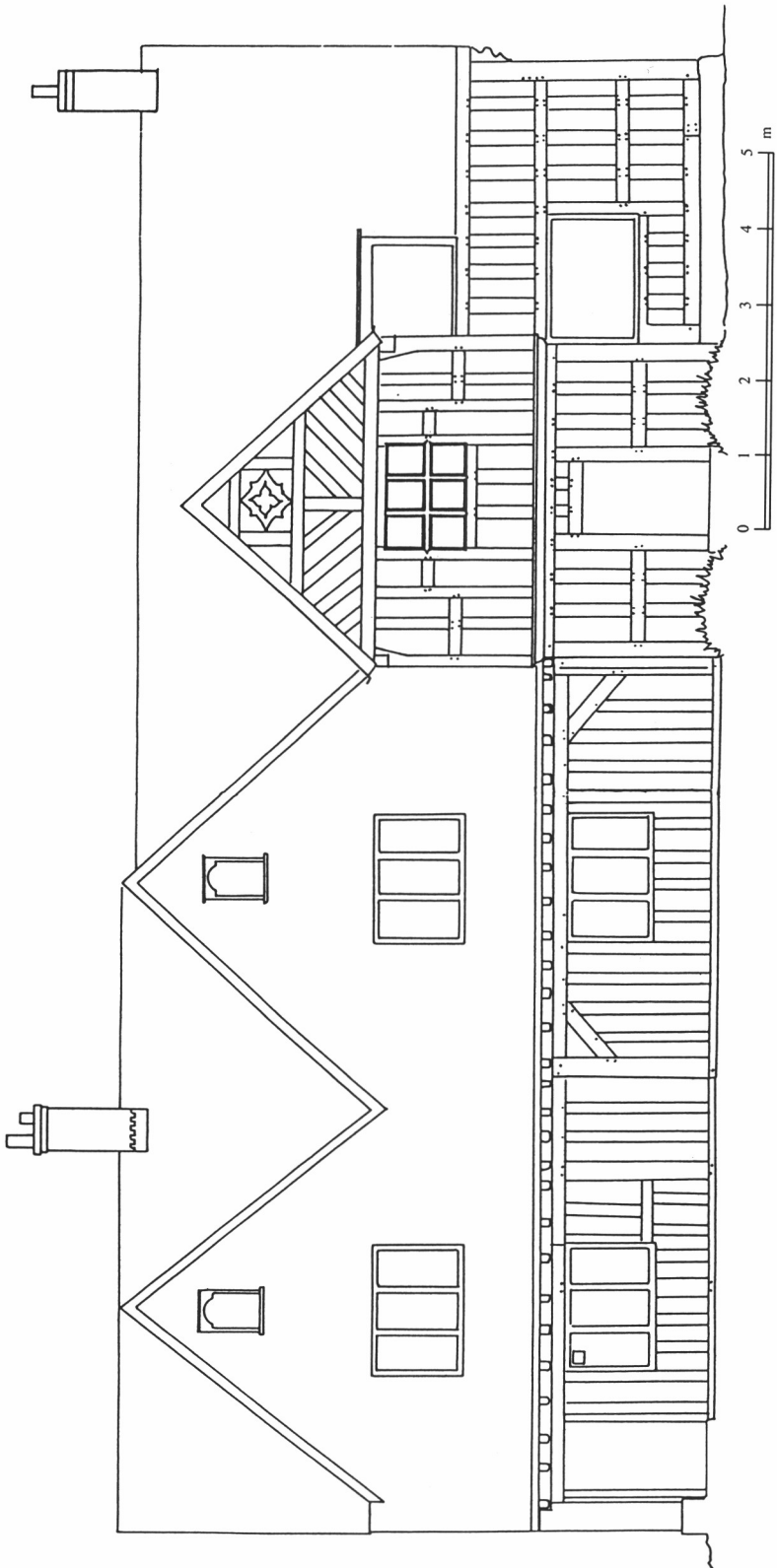


Fig. 1 Sudbury Home Farm: east elevation.

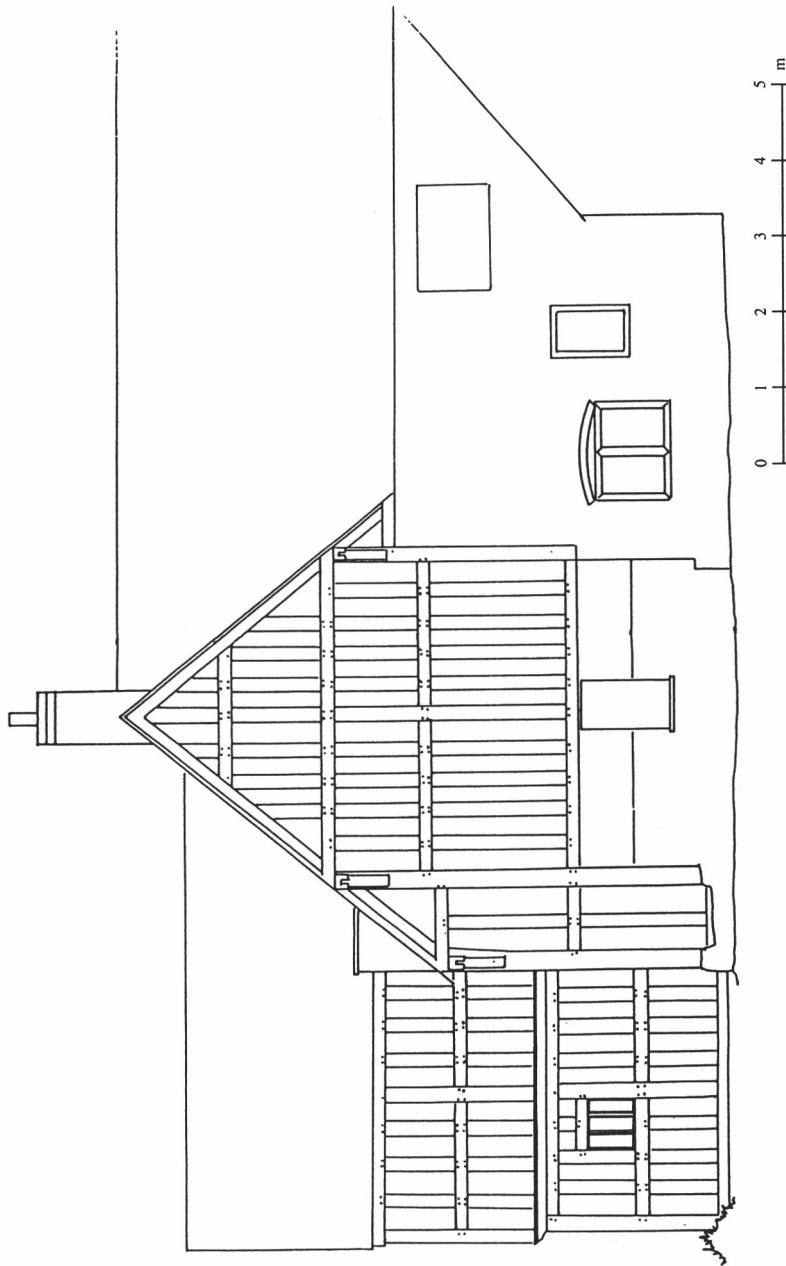


Fig. 2 Sudbury Home Farm: north elevation.

The northern one of the two projecting west-facing gables has been block bonded onto the brick north wall of this cross-wing which from inside can be seen to have been built with a full timber frame. There is a pretty latticed attic window, a three-light first floor window set centrally under an arched head built of headers, and below this a pantry window offset to the south. The southern gable projects still further forward to the west, and has a chimney on the ridge but no north or west windows. The brickwork here is of early 19th-century date.

From the south, the side of this 19th-century range can be seen, with to the east of it the gable end of the east front, clad in similar brick.

INTERIOR

All the exterior timberwork has an early 17th-century flavour, although it is of at least three builds. Inside the north end of the house (see ground plan, Fig. 4) there are two east-west ceiling beams to the ground floor and two to the first floor which all have run-out ovolo mouldings, and these two would accord with an early 17th-century date. Such a date, however, would be quite inappropriate to an aisled structure, such as is suggested by the north end wall frame.

Examination of the roof from inside clarifies this somewhat (Fig. 3). Above the northern range of the house, which will now be called the hall, the roof is heavily sooted throughout. At

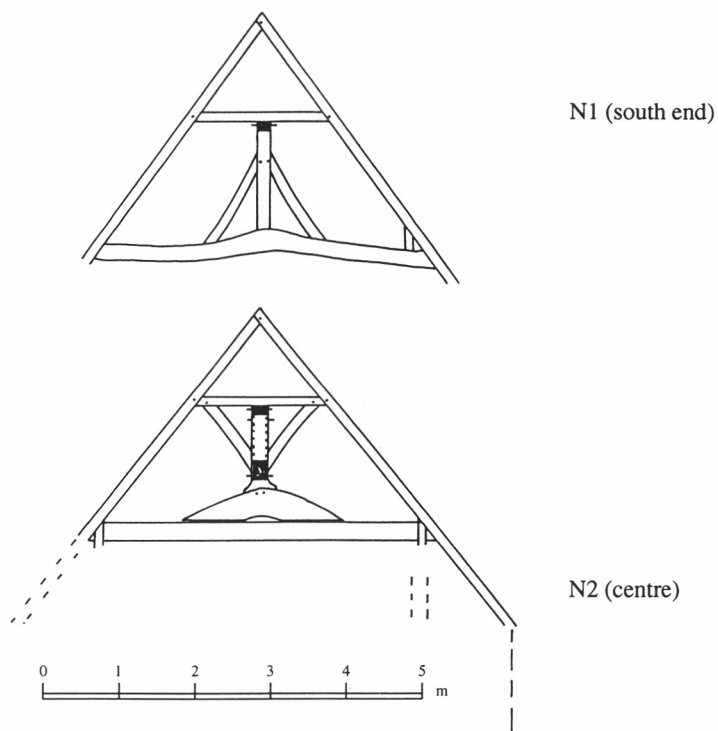


Fig. 3 Sudbury Home Farm: north end roof over hall from south side.

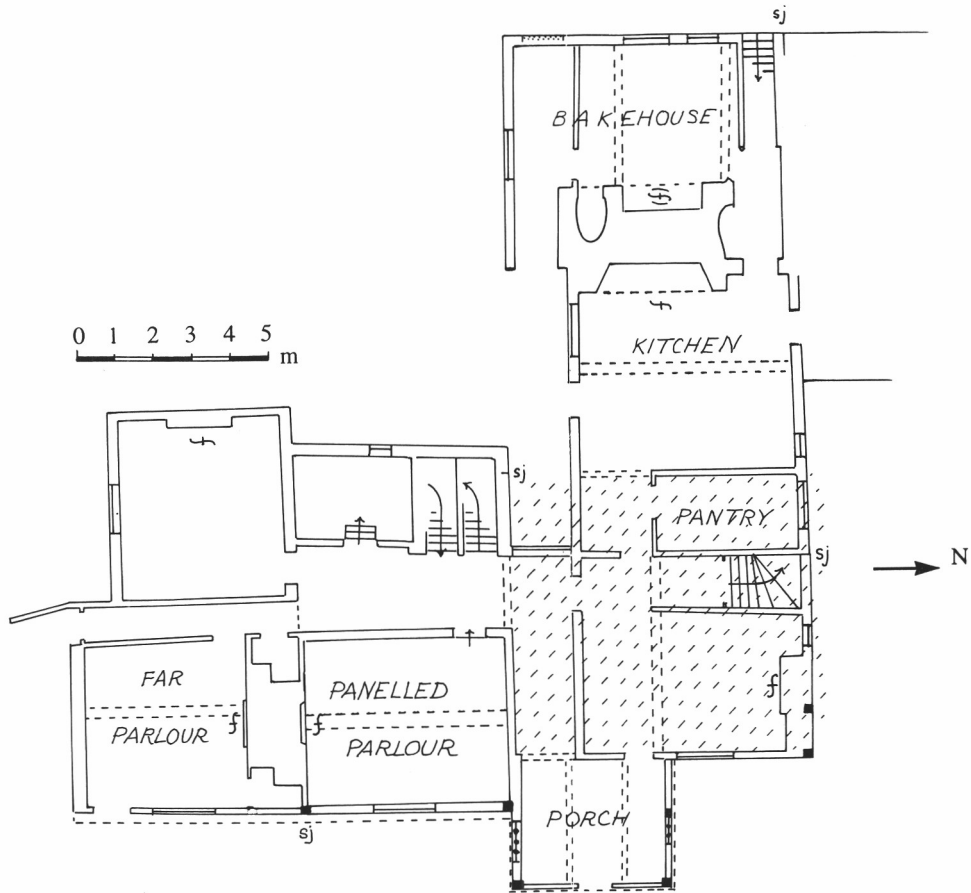


Fig. 4 Sudbury Home Farm: ground plan.

its north end the 17th-century gable framing is completely detached from the roof structure although it mirrors it. The northernmost roof truss (N3) stands between the outer wall and the brick stack of the end chimney. The truss has a cambered tiebeam supported on jowled posts and with arch braces (the east one is missing); this beam carries a short crownpost that has had four-way bracing down to the tiebeam and (now removed) up to the collar plate on both sides. The latter are evidenced by empty mortices. The tiebeam rests at each end on massive plates, about 45cm across, which width is needed because the plates carry both the feet of the common rafters and those of ashlar-pieces to them.¹² There are (or have been) five common rafter couples between this truss, N3, and the next, N2. Here the tiebeam is a 17th-century unssooted ceiling beam, with ovolo mouldings on its lower arrises seen in the bedroom below. On top of this is perched the centre part of an earlier cranked tiebeam which is heavily sooted but which has been removed from beneath its crownpost, the soffit cut off flat, and replaced on top of the 17th-century tie. The post's tenon has been put back into its mortice on the remaining part of the original tiebeam and secured with new pegs.¹³ The crownpost has a chamfered base, chamfered and stopped arrises and four tenoned braces — two going up to the collar and two to the crown plate. The dimensions of the roof members approximate to 15cm square with

slight variations, in other words, this is a 'uniform scantling' roof.¹⁴ Another five common rafter couples with collars and ashlar intervene before truss N1, which has a taller, plain crownpost with a brace up to the plate on its north side, braces running down in a concave curve to the tiebeam, but with no further structure to the south, the crown plate being finished with a half-round terminal. This crownpost is blackened on its north side but relatively clean on the south, where horizontal marks show that laths have run across to close the truss on the outside.

This is an early roof, perhaps of the 14th century. Crownposts are at present virtually unknown in Derbyshire — there is one at Repton and part of another at Etwall but so far no more. In adjacent Staffordshire, however, a building with a crownpost roof has recently been discovered at Burton upon Trent,¹⁵ and it is likely that this is an eastern extension of the Staffordshire distribution. Uniform scantling and square-section members suggest the 14th rather than the 15th century, though it is not impossible that the roof might be still earlier. Further examination on the first floor shows that it is the roof of an aisled hall (also unusual in this area). At the south end under wallpaper and plaster there appears to be a post under the east end of the tiebeam N1 with an arch brace running up from it to the plate, though the western arch brace has been removed to allow a later doorway to be made. The eastern arcade plate, deeply chamfered on its inner face under the plaster, shows in the ceilings of two bedrooms. The post below the eastern end of truss N2 (if there was one) has been replaced by two narrow iron struts, evidently because the plate has cracked. North of this in the soffit of the plate is a mortice for a brace, and this mortice does suggest that there was an arcade post rather than a base cruck, for which the brace would probably have entered the plate at an angle, though Mr Meeson points out that this is not always so. Whether or not this central truss was aisled — and it may at different times have been an aisled and a base-cruck truss — the two other trusses belong to an aisled structure. Further north along the plate is the brace for truss N3 still in position, disappearing into the wall behind which its post must be hidden. The western arcade plate can be seen at its north end on the stairs that run up from the livingroom, where it is carried by the western post of truss N3. Under this plate a studded partition has later been fitted, the studs set into a narrower top-plate which is wedged under the original arcade plate; it need hardly be pointed out that if there was originally a wall under the arcade plate, there would have been no need to add a new plate beneath it. In the west side of the arcade plate (which can be seen from the loft over the kitchen wing, into which the stairs lead) Richard Hewlings¹⁶ saw what he interpreted as seatings for aisle rafters, but on more careful examination these are seen to have been cut both into the arcade plate and into the wallplate under it, and take the form of seatings for ceiling joists. There is no sign of aisle rafters, and we must suppose that they were birdmouthed over the upper arris of the plate alternately with the upper rafters, whose ends can just be seen. It is suggested that the interpolated studding is of the same date as the outer walling of the hall and porch, and that at this stage the western aisle was removed. There is also no sign of a post under the western end of truss N2.

The northern end of the house, then, represents the remains of a probably 14th-century open hall, aisled on the east and west sides, whose northern end has been removed and the whole extensively restored and converted into a storeyed, early 17th-century house. The 14th-century hall would have had further accommodation: service rooms, a kitchen (perhaps detached) and a solar or private chamber. In earlier houses of this nature the solar is often found above the service rooms; in slightly later examples it is found at the high end leaving the service at the low end. Earlier houses may have these rooms in an extension in line with the hall range, whilst later houses may have cross wings.

Which was the low end of the hall? The present front entrance leads into a passage across the house within the southern bay of the hall; beyond this is a parlour crosswing dating from the early 17th century. Perhaps the entrance has always been in this position, and there was always a crosswing which was replaced by the present one. On the other hand, we have no evidence concerning the north end of the hall, which must have been beyond the present 17th-century north end wall. Truss N3 may be a spered truss and if so there could have been a screened passage at the north end with service rooms beyond it, either with a solar above the service or with a solar elsewhere — as a detached camera or as a southern crosswing. The southern gable end of the hall has clearly been built as an outside wall, so a solar in line with the hall at that end can be ruled out.

DEVELOPMENT

By the end of the 16th century the north end of the hall and any further extension of the house in that direction ceased to function. There was, however, an extension built at some time after the hall in a rather unusual position, namely, butted up against the west aisle in the middle of the hall.¹⁷ This extension, which has no decorative features and was probably a kitchen, was timber-framed and may have had a fireplace with a timber and plaster hood at its western end. The earliest features remaining from it are the truss W1 (Fig. 5) which stands on posts in the brick walls and is clearly part of what was originally a complete frame; and the ceiling of the present kitchen which has a beam with 13cm wide chamfers and flat-laid joists 17cm wide by 10cm deep. All this could be early 16th-century work. The rest of the roof is 18th century, and may be related to the replacement of an earlier kitchen firehood by the present double brick stack. At ground level, the position of the former west aisle is represented by a pantry between the present kitchen and the livingroom.

In the early 17th century, then, the hall was cut short and built around with new timber walls that continued the line of the north wall of the existing kitchen, enclosed the eastern aisle, and incorporated a handsome porch facing east with a new(?) main entrance. This rebuilding included a partition on the line of the western arcade, with provision for a ceiling to the upper floor of the kitchen wing which we suspect was never built because the curve of the existing tiebeam would have made it unsuitable to carry level joists. The hall was provided with ceilings to the ground and the (new) first floor built on ovolo moulded beams, and here the same difficulty arose as in the kitchen wing: the arched open truss N2 was unsuitable for carrying ceiling joists, so a complicated and difficult operation was set in train to introduce a level tiebeam under it.

Did this new work abut onto an earlier crosswing at the south end of the hall, or was that crosswing (if it ever existed) already rebuilt in the form we see now? It now contains a large, panelled east-facing parlour on the ground floor with a stone-framed fireplace on its south side, the brick chimney for which stands outside the timber frame of the wing. To the west of the parlour, which takes up half the ground floor, is a wide north-south passage from which a staircase rises west at its northern end; next to the stairs that go up is a flight going down to a semi-cellar or sunken dairy. The stairs go down only one flight, so the room over the dairy, a pantry, is reached by going up steps from the ground-floor passage. Whilst this may not have been the arrangement when the present wing was first built, we think it probably was because the stairs have a 17th-century appearance although there are no decorative details. They go up to the first floor and then on to the attic and enter it beside the west end wall which, it will be

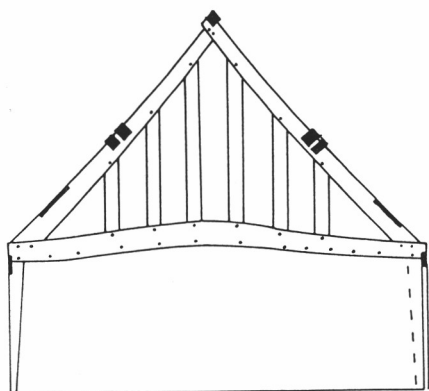


Fig. 5 Sudbury Home Farm: truss W1 from east side.

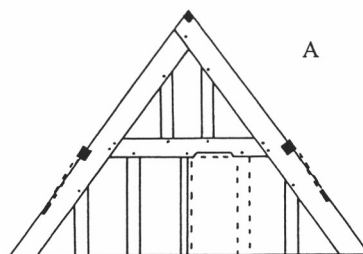
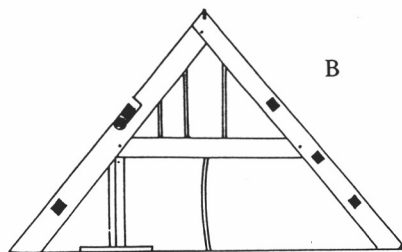


Fig. 6 Sudbury Home Farm: southern roof trusses A and B.

recalled, is now built entirely of brick. In the attic we can see the purlins entering this brick wall, with seatings in them for windbraces from a timber roof truss which is now replaced by the brick wall. The central wing truss, numbered here SA, is shown in Fig. 6. It has had a doorway through it, although the plaster attic floor of the western half of the attic is not continued across the eastern half. The central truss is marked on its eastern face with circular assembly marks unlike any seen elsewhere in the building. There is a rather small ridge purlin and a pair of trenched side purlins, with windbraces on the west side of the truss. There is a double-pegged collar; above it are two single-pegged studs and below it five, between two of which the collar is shaped as a doorhead. The east gable of the wing is also built of brick under its weatherboarding, but in this case the brick is much later, probably late 19th-century.

The only point at which the structure of the wing and that of the re-walled hall meet is on the south side of the porch, where the corner post of the crosswing has a groove in its east face indicating either the presence of, or the intention to build, something eastwards from it. If we have to make a distinction of date between close studding the full height of a storey as in the crosswing, and studding interrupted by a middle rail, the former is probably earlier since the latter is a slightly more localised form. If so, the crosswing was probably rebuilt before the hall was re-walled, a sequence that would on balance seem probable.

It cannot have been long after the construction of the crosswing, however, that a further extension was made to the south. This enclosed the brick chimney from the panelled parlour and added on its far side a second flue backing onto the first (see Fig. 4). This provided two small closets, one on each side of the stack, of irregular plan. The extension consisted of a further parlour and a passage along its west side leading to a south end door. There is also a

door at the south end of the east front wall, but this is probably not original. The south wall of this range is clad in brick which appears to date from the early 19th century. The roof can be seen by going up a very narrow flight of stairs from the first-floor landing on the west side of the chimney. The attic is floored with plaster and has a roof truss within the brickwork of the south end and another on the north side of the chimneystack that can be seen from the attic of the crosswing. The two are similar, but the northern truss is somewhat less well built, as might be expected if it had to be erected around an existing structure. There are two pairs of tenoned purlins with windbraces, and a collar with double pegging in the south end truss and single pegging at the north end. The southern collar, however, has been taken out to put in a south window, which is now again blocked. There is no ridgepiece in this roof. The front gable, concealed from outside by weatherboarding, is an original feature of the roof and has been designed to match the gable of the porch. It has a small window in place of the porch's cusped panel, but this may be a later alteration. The gable has one pair of tenoned purlins and a ridgepiece set diagonally, necessary to tie it into the main roof. It seems, therefore, that all three phases of this reconstruction of the house took place within a very short time-span. The use of butt purlins subsequent to trenched purlins may seem logical in this region when many 16th- and even 17th-century buildings were cruck built with either back- or trenched-purlins.

In the early 18th century a brick bakehouse or scullery block was added onto the west end of the kitchen, and this was probably done when the earlier kitchen chimney was replaced with a brick stack. The outer walls of the kitchen were later rebuilt in brick and the same was done to the western end of the crosswing, in two stages — first replacing the gable end and then the north side wall.

In the southwest corner between the crosswing and the southern extension of the front is a final extension of one room on each of its two floors. The walling is brick and the roof-ridge runs east-west with an internal chimney on the west gable. The tall sash windows face south. The date of this part is probably early in the 19th century, perhaps when Doctor Williams lived here in the 1830s.

POSTSCRIPT

Since this paper was written, analysis of the tree rings of eight samples taken on 23 November 1995 from the smoke-encrusted roof over the medieval hall has produced a building date of 1319. This analysis was commissioned by Derbyshire County Council with the support of Lord Vernon and was undertaken by the dendrochronology laboratory at Nottingham University.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My attention was drawn to the house by the late Professor M. W. Barley, who showed me an excellent report written by Mr Richard Hewlings, then of the Department of the Environment. I have since been able to visit the house a number of times through the kindness of the occupants, the Misses Jeffery, who have given me every facility to examine and record the structure so far as it can be seen. In this I have had the help of my late husband, Kenneth Hutton, of Mrs K. Padfield and Mrs Joan Davies, and especially of Mr and Mrs Robert Meeson. Whilst we have been able to see everything that is exposed to view, it has not been possible to reach uncontravertible conclusions about the history of the building. I also want to thank Mr Maxwell Craven of the City Museum who has generously given me the benefit of his research

into the descent of the Manor of West Broughton. I hope by setting out the facts here to establish what has been ascertained at the present time, and to put some record of the house in the public domain.

NOTES

1. Avrom Saltman (ed.), *Tutbury Charters* (Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts), nos. 214 and 224.
2. I. H. Jeayes (ed.), *Derbyshire Charters* (Derby, 1906), nos. 377c (c. 1353) and 2714.
3. W. Woolley, *History of Derbyshire* (Derbyshire Record Society, Vol. 6, 1981), section 77, p. 118.
4. Derby Local Studies Library, Local Ms 6341.
5. Jeayes, *op. cit.*, lease 350, to R. Palmer, 1507.
6. Derby Local Studies Library, deeds 1667 (1632), 202 (1663) and 5574 (1676).
7. Woolley, *op. cit.*
8. *Pigot's Directory*, 1829, 1835.
9. Information from Sudbury Estate Office.
10. Information from present tenants.
11. *Bulmer's Directory of Derbyshire*, 1895.
12. cf. Sutton Courtenay, *Oxoniensia* LVII (1992), 229.
13. I am grateful to Bob Meeson for this careful observation of detail.
14. J. T. Smith, 'Medieval roofs: a classification', *Archaeological Journal* CXV (1958), 113.
15. Information from Staffordshire County Planning Department.
16. Department of the Environment report, December 1986.
17. cf. Meirion-Jones (ed.), *Manorial and Domestic Buildings in England and Northern France*, Wolvesey c. 12th century, Fig. 5.