

Report on

**Rosamond Cottage, Botolph Claydon,  
Buckinghamshire**

*Site Code: BOT-A*

*from*

The Medieval Peasant House in Midland England

**by**

Nat Alcock and Dan Miles



Fig. 1. View of Rosamond Cottage, Botolph Claydon.

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***Oxbow Books***

**BOT-A: ROSAMOND COTTAGE, BOLTOLPH CLAYDON, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE**  
(formerly Pond Cottage)

Grid reference: SP 7320 2451

Survey Date 22 May 1990

By: D. Miles

*Illustrations:*

1. View

2. Ground floor plan

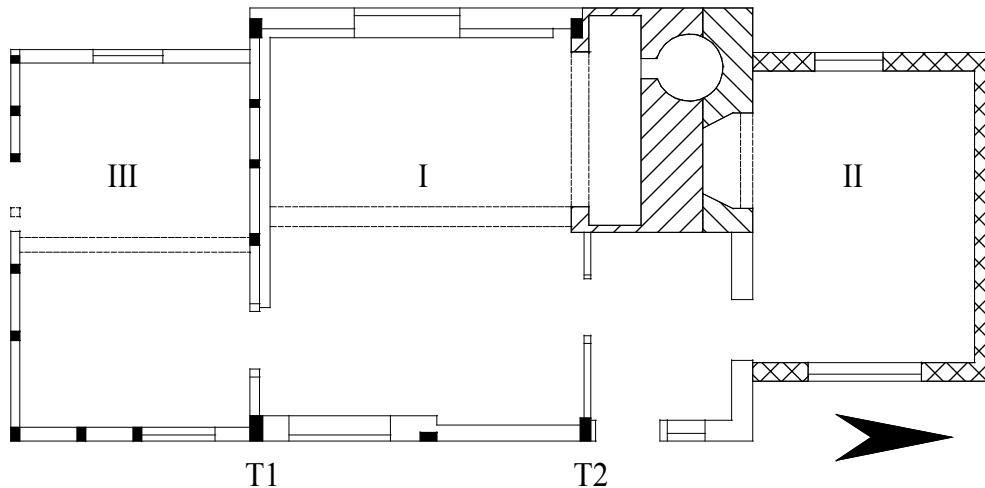
4. Sections of trusses T2-T5

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**Rosamond Cottage, Botolph Claydon**

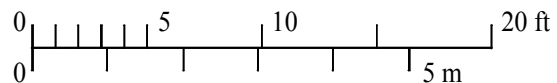


Fig. 2. Plan, showing truss and bay numbering.

## **ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION**

### **SUMMARY AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT**

**PHASE 1:** Rosamond Cottage is oriented gable to the road, with its end set back about 5ft from the frontage line. The core of the house consists of the open hall and part of the next bay; it probably contained only two bays originally. The two trusses are of types V (blades truncated for a half-hip) and W1 (truncated blades with a king post). From the pattern of smoke-blackening, the one complete surviving bay (I) is identified as a one-bay hall, with an adjoining unfloored chamber bay. The timbers have given felling dates of 1507/8 and 1508/9, although one windbrace has a felling date range of 1366-1398. Construction in the summer of 1509 is suggested. The windbrace is presumed to have been re-used from an earlier building.

**LATER PHASES:** Probably in the sixteenth century, bay I was floored over with a spine beam and heavy joists, possibly with a timber smoke hood. A chalk stone and brick chimney stack with a date stone of 1643 was later inserted. Perhaps at the same date, a low bay (III) was added to the south of T1 of poorer quality box-framed construction. By this period, the house had a lobby-entry, with the stairs located beside the chimney. In the nineteenth century, most of bay II was rebuilt in brick..

### **STRUCTURAL FEATURES**

**PHASE 1:** Truss T1 has boxed heart crucks measuring 8 x 9in with a collar (7in square), and a tiebeam (6in high by 7in wide), both also boxed heart.. The truss is of type V, with the truncated blades carrying a half hip, part of which still remains within the roof of the later bay to the south. Truss T2 is similar, with a type 'W' apex (cruck blades terminating at collar level); they are cut from whole trees, boxed heart, and measure approximately 9in wide by 7in deep. The collar is lightly cambered, and is 6in square, again

boxed heart. The collar has mortices for stave holes in both the upper and lower faces, set flush with the south side of the collar. The 5½-6in by 8in purlins are trenched and halved over the backs of the blades. The tiebeam is relatively slight (5in high). It carries a series of small mortices on its north side, probably for a later floor in bay II.

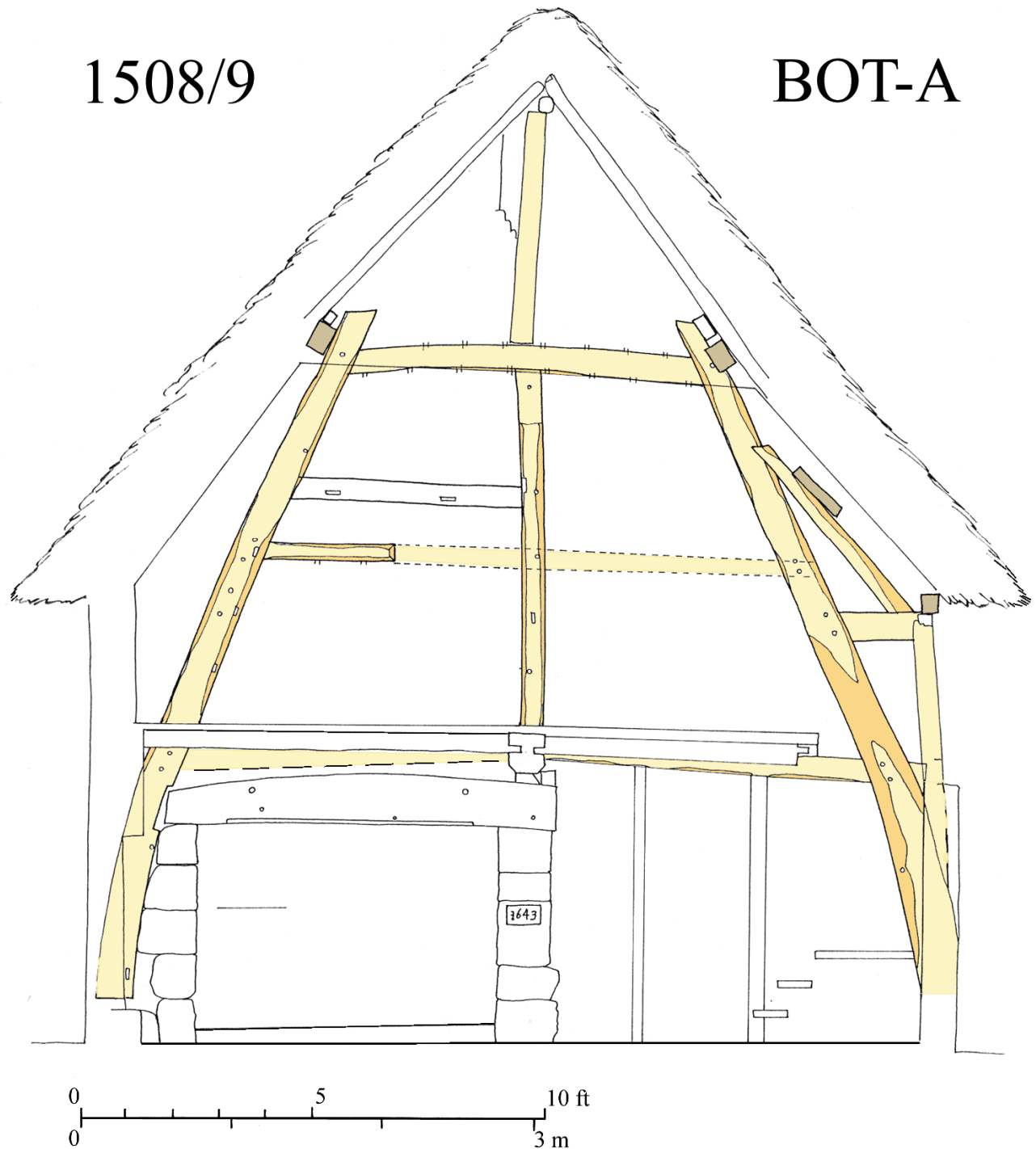


Fig. 3. Section of Truss T2

A considerable number of original smoke-blackened rafters survive in bay I; these appear to be in situ, although they must have been re-fixed at their heads, as the ridge has been replaced. They are 2-3in x 5-6in, halved, set at 11in - 15½in centres. The replacement rafters are clean, of cleft beach or chestnut, measuring 2in x 4in, and the replacement ridge is 4in square. The roof is thatched.

The eastern windbrace to T2 (S side) (which gave a felling date range of 1366-1398) is pegged onto the back of the cruck packing piece. It is 3in thick by 14in wide, slightly curved and steeply set.

Although it shows no clear evidence of re-use, it is carefully sawn, with sharp arrises, and is somewhat neater in its appearance than the other timbers of the truss. The packing piece rests on the the top of a cruck spur which in turn supports the wall-plate, and is supported at the outer end by a cruck stud. Other windbraces are concealed behind plaster (or have been removed), but the pegs for the remaining three in bay I are visible in the purlins.

Truss T2 retains portions of apparently original infill structure. A king post, tenoned and pegged into the top of the collar of T2, now supports the replacement ridge. This post is a section of smoke-blackened elm wall-plate, presumably reused from an earlier building; it measures 6in by 5½in and has mortices for 2½in x 1in stave holes set at 12in centres, with birdsmouthed rafter seatings on the other side. Between the tiebeam and the collar is a 6-7in wide post with an applied bracket at the top to support a later axial beam at collar height. The south side is chamfered, and it has a few later mortices and notches in the face of the post. About four feet below the collar is a narrow intermediate tie (4-4½in high), in two sections, tenoned into the central post, providing intermediate support for the staves between the collar and main tie. This survives only on the western side of the truss, but originally extended to the east cruck where an empty halving remains; it was a primary timber because the open housing on the eastern cruck shows unmistakable signs of shrinkage, proving that the halving was cut whilst the timber was still green. In a second stage of infill, laths were nailed over T2, plastered flush with the south face of the cruck blades.

The whole of bay I is smoke-blackened, although this is rather irregular in intensity; for example, the purlins near T2 are relatively clean, though both T1 and T2 are blacker, including both sides of the latter, despite its original infill. The proposed interpretation is that bay I was an open hall, with a floored chamber in bay II. The blackening on the north of T2 is attributed to leakage through the infill; the need to replace this infill, and the insertion of a strengthening post suggests that it was not very effective.

Original wall-framing survives on the east side of bay I. It comprises a wide mid-bay stud and two mid-rails. An upper stud is pegged in the centre of the southern mid-rail, but the corresponding stud in the northern half of the bay is unpegged (though it may also be original).

Although bay II has been completely replaced beyond the chimney, it is suggested that the house did not have a third bay to the north. The estimated northern end of bay II corresponds closely to the building line of several near-by sixteenth and seventeenth century cottages and is close to the present road line. It is therefore unlikely that there could have been a third bay at this end.

#### LATER PHASES:

The ceiling joists in bay I are 5in x 6½in and run E-W at 18in centres; they are jointed to the 10in square axial beam with bare-faced tenons. This beam appears to be earlier than the chimney, and may have related to a smoke hood (on the site of the present chimney). The chimney is built of dressed chalk stones with a brick stack beginning just below roof line. The bricks measure 2in x 9-9¼in x 4¼in and may be coeval with the 1643 date incised in red on a small date stone inset in the right hand jamb. The fireplace includes a bread oven to the west (retaining its cast iron door). The northern part of the stack is of 17th century brick as is the fireplace in bay II, presumably indicating that this second fireplace was inserted after 1643. The stair formerly ran up beside the stack in the lobby entrance (removed in recent renovations). Reused 6in x 3in joists are set above the tiebeam north of T2; they run N-S at 16in centres.

The bay to the south of T1 (bay III) is almost entirely constructed of elm, with 5in x 4in joists, 4in x 2in windbraces, 6in x 5in purlins, and 4in x 8½in tiebeam. It is very low, with the wallplate at the same height as the mid-rail of bay I. The 19th century brick replacement of bay II beyond the chimney is built in rat-trap bond. The further extension beyond this is of the 1970s and most of the external walls were lined internally at this time, concealing the framing.

#### **DENDROCHRONOLOGY**

For dendrochronology abbreviations and master sequence references, see page facing Introduction.

*Sampling Comments:* Eight samples were obtained through coring by Robert Howard on 22 May 1990.

#### TREE-RING SAMPLE RECORD AND SUMMARY OF DATING

***BOT-A: Rosamond Cottage, Botolph Claydon***

Sample Code	Sample Location	Total Rings	Sapwood Rings	FMR Date	LHR Date	LMR Date	Date Cat
BOT-A01	Front cruck blade truss T2	40	17	—	—	—	—
BOT-A02	Windbrace truss T2 front	109	07	1256	1357	1364	3a
BOT-A03	Rear cruck blade truss T2	54	14C	—	—	—	—
BOT-A04	Central stud truss T2	26 NM	—	—	—	—	—
BOT-A05	Front cruck blade truss T1	46	16C	1463	1492	1508	2
BOT-A06	Collar truss T1	40	14C	1468	1493	1507	2
BOT-A07	Rear cruck blade truss T1	48	09C	1460	1498	1507	2
BOT-A08	Tie beam truss T1	30 NM	5	—	—	—	—

Site sequences: (comp. samples 5, 6, 7), 49 rings long dated 1460–1508 with *t*-values of 6.0 (KENT 88), 5.3(STE-A, site sequence of Folly House, Steventon, VA20.89). Samples 5, 6, 7: (all with complete sapwood), **1507/8** (samples 6,7) and **1508/9** (sample 5).

Sample 2 only: 109 rings long dated 1256–1364 with *t*-values of 5.1(LOW-A, site sequence of Turret Close, Long Wittenham, VA20.89), 4.5(E.MID). 95% felling date range: (sample 2), **1366–1398** (previous 1370-1393).