

Report and Documentary History for  
**Woodpeckers, 25 High Street, Long Crendon,  
Buckinghamshire**

*Site Code: LON-B*

*from*

The Medieval Peasant House in Midland England

by

Nat Alcock and Dan Miles



Fig. 1. View from the south

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***Oxbow Books***

LON-B: WOODPECKERS, 25 HIGH STREET, LONG CRENDON,  
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Grid reference: SP 6964 0886      Survey Date: January 1989      By: D. Miles

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This report has been compiled using notes provided by Catherine Murray.

Documentary history by Nat Alcock and Eric Sewell, building on the work of John Chenevix Trench†.

For court roll and documentary source references, see the primary bibliography of primary sources.

Abbreviations:

- CBS            Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies  
Rousham      Rousham (Cottrell-Dormer) archive; T-numbers refer to Long Crendon deeds.  
TNA            The National Archives

**ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION**

**SUMMARY AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT**

PHASE 1: 25 High Street is a three-bay cruck-framed house running east-west along Burts Lane, at right angles to the west side of High Street. The house is now walled in rubble limestone and is still thatched. Three cruck trusses survive, the fourth at the east end having been removed, perhaps in the early eighteenth century when the wing running north along the street was added. The two bays nearest the

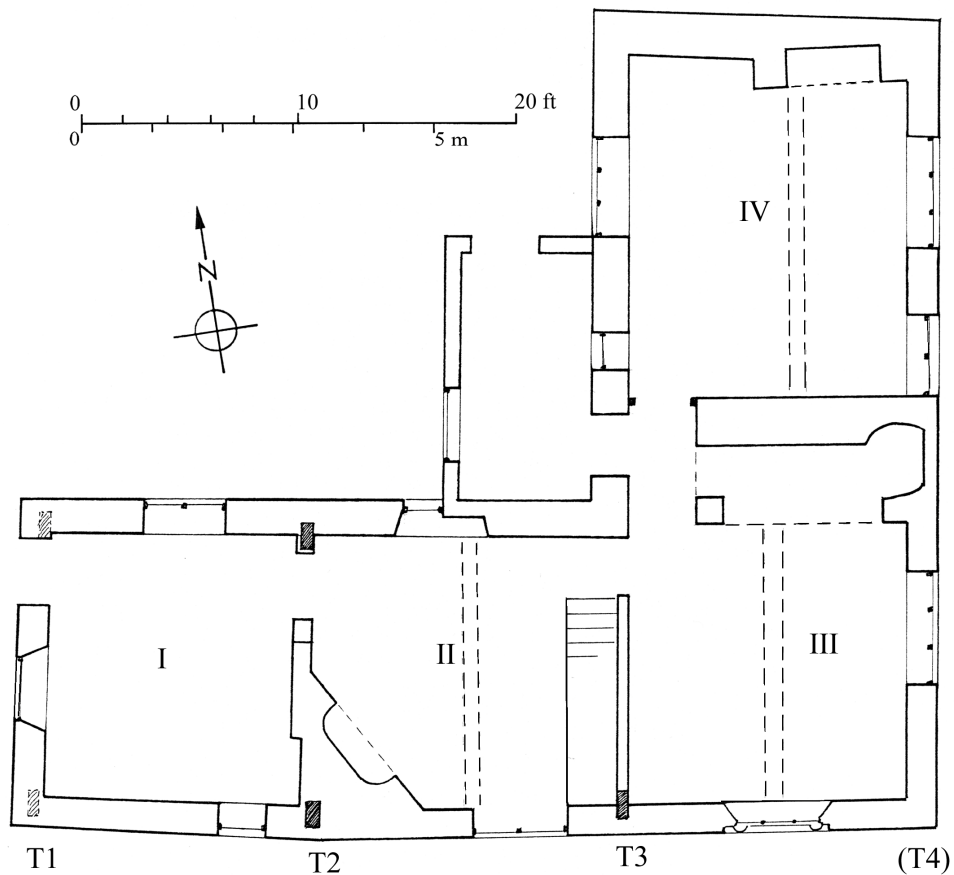


Fig. 2. Plan, showing truss and bay numbering.

road (II and III) are soot-blackened suggesting an open hall and kitchen/service, with the western bay (I) probably being the chamber end. Truss T3 is closed above the collar, but may have been partially open below, dividing the hall proper from the service end. No tree-ring date was obtained for this building but stylistically it could date from the late fifteenth to sixteenth centuries.

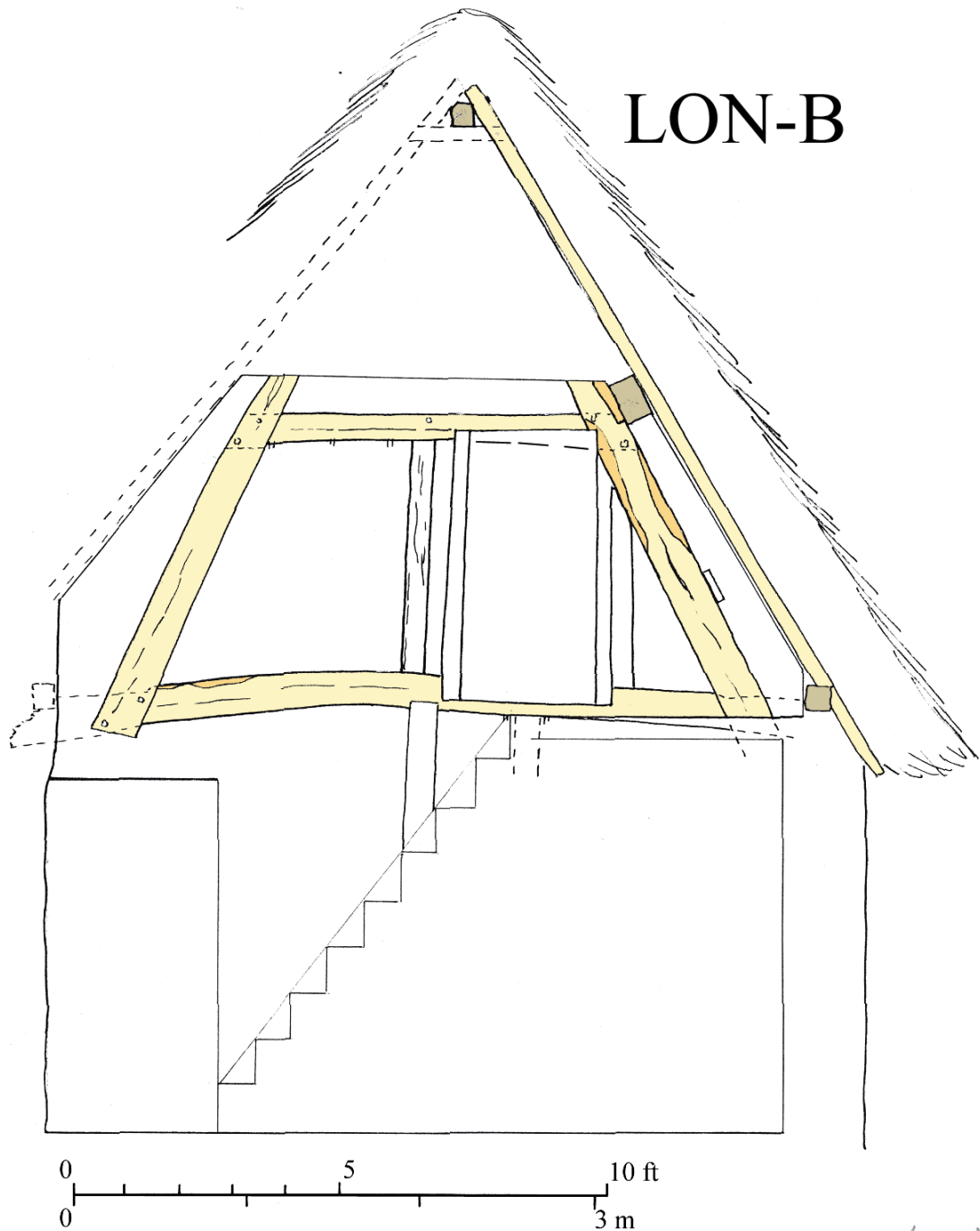


Fig. 3. Section of Truss T2.

PHASE 2: Probably in the early to mid-eighteenth century bay III was reconstructed and extended northwards to form a two-storied wing with two bays and chimney bay. At the same time, bay II was cased in limestone rubble walling with an angled corner chimney, and the upper floor in this bay probably inserted.

LATER PHASES: In the early nineteenth century bay I was encased in rubble stone walling with fossil ammonites set into the side walls. The former doorway in the yard side (now with a 20th century casement) has a segmental brick arch of this date. The staircase is probably also 19th century as the cupboards below have c.1830-40 panelled doors with reeded surrounds and reeded panel borders.

In the twentieth century an extension was built in the rear angle, and then was further extended from the rear gable.

## **STRUCTURAL FEATURES**

PHASE 1: There is definite evidence for three bays but it is not possible to determine whether the building once extended beyond the present gable end at truss T1. The three trusses are visible only at first-floor level; each has a collar and tiebeam, attached with skew-pegging. Trusses T2 and T3 are closed and have central studs, truss 3 also showing a groove in the top of the tiebeam and stave holes in the soffit of the collar. The cruck blades of this truss extend above the collar but have been cut off between ceiling and loft level with the ends concealed, so it was not possible to determine if they originally had a type 'W' apex, although the trapping of the ridge between the common rafters is consistent with this form. Trusses T1 and T2 are not visible above collar level but truss T1 must have truncated blades because the roof is half-hipped (type 'V'). Trusses T1 and T2 have their fair faces towards the west, truss 3 towards the east. Truss T3 is smoke-blackened on both sides. The front gable end of the 16th century building has been completely rebuilt leaving no trace of the original truss T4.

The roof retains its original purlins in bay I and along the south side of bays II and III. These rest on the backs of the cruck blades at collar level and are trenched for windbraces. Only one windbrace survives, in bay II, and is of the simple straight type. Encased in the later hipped roof of bay III is the ridge piece with original rafters on the south side. The rafter in line with truss T3 has a peg-hole for the former yoke. The yoke, although removed, was found lying in the roof space. The ridge stops short of the front of the house, indicating that T4 was half-hipped, and the southern hip-rafter is visible. The rafters measure 3 by 4in and are set at 16-18in centres. The roof timbers of bays II and III are smoke-blackened whereas those of bay I appear darkened but not sooted. No traces are visible of any original walling or upper floor structure.

PHASE 2: FRONT WING: The reconstructed bay III is built of coursed rubble limestone with a shallow plinth. The thatched roof is hipped over the junction of the two wings and has queen strut trusses with clasped purlins. The purlins over bay III are both re-used, the rear one smoke-blackened, the front a former mid-rail with mortices and stave holes. The wing has a central chimney with lobby entry at the rear. This entry may be original as it has an old timber lintel, but its jambs have been altered. The chimney stack is built of rubble stone and has a rectangular brick shaft. The ground-floor fireplace to bay III has a heavy timber lintel with narrow chamfer, an altered oven opening in the right side, and is rebuilt on its left side with a modern cut-through opening. Upstairs there is a small fireplace with arched wooden lintel to bay III and a later fireplace with re-used lintel to bay IV. The chimney in the gable end of bay IV is probably a later insertion. It is also of rubble stone but has 19th century brick in the left jamb and in the wall flue visible externally.

The main ceiling timbers of the wing are exposed. Both ground-floor rooms have 10½in axial beams with 2in chamfers, bay III with stepped stops at the fireplace end, bay IV with rough altered stops. This bay also has exposed joists varying from 3 to 5in wide with one odd 6½in curved one. All the joists have narrow chamfers. Trimmers in bay III may indicate the site of an earlier stair. Upstairs, bay IV has a chamfered 10in axial beam with a run-out stop at one end.

Bay II has been re-cased in limestone rubble walling. The upper floor in this bay has a 9in axial beam, chamfered, with stepped stops at one end. The ground-floor fireplace is of fairly narrow brick and plaster. The fireplace reveals are curved, and flanking the flue are small rectangular niches 5in by 7½in by 9in. The fireplace lintel is modern. Between bays II and III is a timber stud wall on a high rubble stone plinth. The sill beam is re-used and has many irregular pegholes. This wall is not part of the original cruck structure although it is in line with the truss.

Most windows in the wing have 20th century leaded casements in altered openings with wooden lintels. One small rear window, now giving into the lobby, retains its original splayed jambs and has a re-used timber lintel with stave holes. The south wall of the main range retains older windows: the ground floor of bay III has an interesting 3-light window with 18th century wooden mullions, intermediate diamond mullions, leaded glazing and iron fittings. This has been re-set in a 19th century surround made

up of semi-circular coping bricks. The window to bay II has late 19th-20th century wooden glazing bars and splayed internal reveals. The single light to bay I has an early 19th century leaded casement with iron catch and hook.

## DENDROCHRONOLOGY

For dendrochronology abbreviations see page facing Introduction.

*Sampling Comments:* Eight samples were obtained through coring by Robert Howard on 12 January 1989. None of the samples matched each other, but the three longest samples were compared against the reference chronologies individually. No matches were obtained.

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

Sample Code	Sample Location	Total Rings	Sapwood Rings	FMR Date	LHR Date	LMR Date	Date Cat
LON-B01	Cruck blade truss T1 N side	76	HS	—	—	—	—
LON-B02	Tiebeam truss T1	30 NM	3	—	—	—	—
LON-B03	Collar truss T1	NM	—	—	—	—	—
LON-B04	Purlin bay II S side	48	06	—	—	—	—
LON-B05	Purlin bay III S side	77	13	—	—	—	—
LON-B06	Purlin bay III N side	37 NM	12	—	—	—	—
LON-B07	Cruck blade truss T3 N side	80	12	—	—	—	—
LON-B08	Cruck blade truss T3 S side	NM	—	—	—	—	—

**Not dated**

## DOCUMENTARY HISTORY

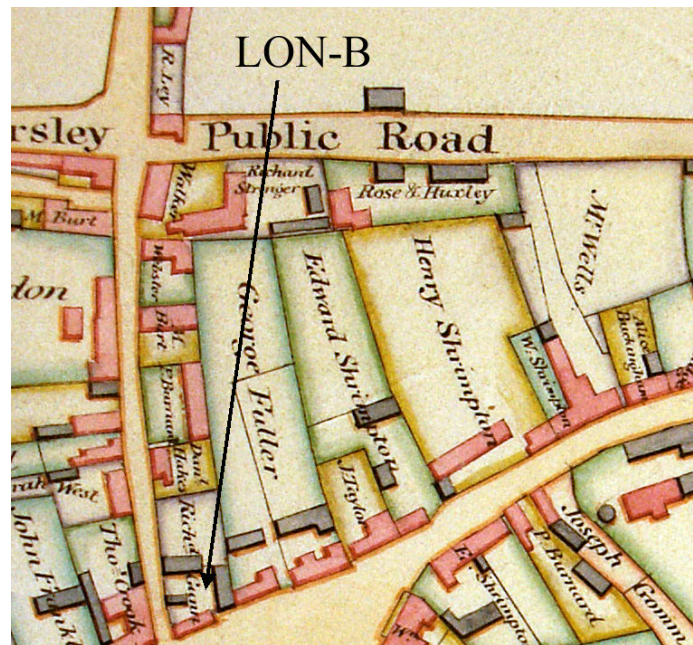


Fig. 4. Part of the 1827 map of Long Crendon (CBS IR/95/Q).

### Summary

This can be traced as a freehold from 1734 to the present day, initially associated with five acres of land (sold separately in 1807). Prior to this, it can tentatively be linked to a copyhold cottage, traced from 1543 until it was enfranchised in 1708. From 1651 onwards, this was in the hands of the Clack (or

Clarke) family who also held the adjoining property to the east (LON-R).<sup>1</sup> In 1827 (Fig. 4) the house was owned and occupied by Richard Gunn, who also held some copyhold land not originally associated with this house. He described himself in his will as a farmer, but his holding was very small, amounting before enclosure to 4 freehold acres in the common fields and ¼ yardland held of All Souls, plus another acre held of Windsor. At enclosure he was awarded only 2½ acres.

### Deeds

An abstract of title (1734-1801) and a deed of 1807 for this house clarifies what would otherwise be an obscure story.<sup>2</sup> It starts with the feoffment (29 Sep 1734) by John Abbott, of Fencott, Oxfordshire, yeoman, selling to John Carter, tailor of Long Crendon, for £105, a cottage in the occupation of John Preston (with other unspecified property), paying a chief rent of 5s. It was bequeathed by John Carter in 1744 (as a messuage and five acres), eventually passing to the children of his brother Richard and sister Mary Fryer. In 1768, in a complex transaction, one of these children, William Carter, cordwainer of Long Crendon, bought out the others, the cottage then being occupied by John Burt. It was mortgaged in 1780 to Thomas Burch of Cuddington. In 1800, the mortgage was assigned to Thomas Howlett of Long Crendon, and in 1807, the cottage was sold to Richard Hurst, blacksmith of Long Crendon, by John Carter (William's son). The 'cottage or tenement with outbuilding, garden & appurtenances' was then occupied by Henry Shrimpton and William Harris.<sup>3</sup>

In 1800, Richard Hurst married Mary Eagleton; he had died by 1814, when his widow married Richard Gunn. Thus, the latter's name is shown on the 1827 map (Fig. 4). Before enclosure, Richard Gunn held a freehold messuage, two cottages (presumably this property) and 4½ acres freehold.<sup>4</sup> Although Gunn appears in the Land Tax, this is probably in relation to his land, rather than the cottages, at least until 1826.<sup>5</sup> Richard Gunn died in 1837, leaving all his property to Mary, and in her will, Mary left the house she lived in, a close of land (probably Richard Gunn's allotment 78) and a cottage in trust to the children of her two daughters (by Richard Hurst), Elizabeth Jakeman and Mary Shrimpton.<sup>6</sup> It was sold to George Wyatt in 1893 (apparently following a mortgage foreclosure).

### Earlier history

As for LON-A, the size of the quit rent indicates an enfranchised copyhold and we are able here to suggest that this was the cottage and four acres granted as freehold in December 1708 by John Dormer, to Thomas Clarke, tallow-chandler of St Dunstons in the East, London, and Margaret Clarke (his daughter?), for an annual rent of 5s.<sup>7</sup> The cottage was occupied by Elizabeth Presson [i.e. Preston], widow, and the four acres arable (those usually belonging to the cottage) were occupied by John Burcham, gentleman. The fact that in 1734 25 High Street paid the same chief rent, was occupied by John Preston and had almost the same amount of land reinforces the correlation, sufficiently for it to be

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<sup>1</sup> The transcripts of the court entries confuse the spelling *Clack* with *Clarke*. It seems that the former was the original form of the name, though possibly Clarke was adopted later.

<sup>2</sup> In the owner's possession.

<sup>3</sup> John Carter paid £2 6s in land tax, which was not affected by this sale. Typically, for cottages at this date, the name of Richard Hurst is absent from the tax lists.

<sup>4</sup> CBS, D78/box1/11. He also held 3 acres of All Souls copyhold land, to which he was admitted in 1813.

<sup>5</sup> 1811: 1s; 1810 9d; [absent previously]; 1816: 2s 10d and 4s 2d; 1825: Richard Gunn 5s 8d; 1826: Richard Gunn 8s 6d.

<sup>6</sup> CBS, DAWe 141/108 (1837); D/A/We/148/126 (1857). In 1823 Elizabeth Hurst married James Jackman, farmer (of 50 acres in 1851). In 1828 Mary Hurst married Solomon Shrimpton, wheelwright (1851).

<sup>7</sup> Rousham, T122.

tentatively accepted, even though at present no direct link can be established between the Clacke/Clarke family and John Abbott, the 1734 owner.

This leads to a sequence of copyhold admissions for the same property back to 1543:

*Court roll entries*

1543: Roger WATTYS died, holding a cottage and 4 acres (Dormer), Elena WATTES his widow holds during her widowhood. To distraint her to make fealty.

1546: Jn WAKELYN, took a messuage and 3 acres (Dormer), rent 4s.9d.

1549: John Wakelyn, tenant of a cottage, 5 londes and one ley, rent 4s 9d.<sup>8</sup>

1588: Ann WAKELYN died, held a messuage & 4 acres, Roland HOWLETT, admitted.

1651: Peter HOWLETT, cottage & 4ac (Dormer), surrendered to Edward CLACK.

1687: Edward Clack died, held cottage of Robert Dormer, surrendered to use of son Thomas.

1708: Tho CLARKE, messuage & 4ac (Dormer), surrendered to Margaret CLARKE, his daughter.<sup>9</sup>

*Building Evidence*

In the Hearth Tax list, Edward Clacke paid for two hearths, but these may have been either here or at no. 27 High Street.

1910 Valuation (Hered 576): Stone & thatch, 2 up, 2 down; outhouse. Owner: Alfred G Wyatt (in Canada, address unknown); also owned 572 – 5 (further west on High St). Empty.

1901 census: occupied by Reuben Shurrock, aged 68, hawker, also Sydney Shurrock aged 28, general labourer. A photograph of about 1900 shows neglect and a boarded-up window.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Rousham, 1549 Court of Survey.

<sup>9</sup> The name appears to be *Clarke* in this entry.

<sup>10</sup> Photo [JD] in possession of Eric Sewell