

Report and Documentary History for
**Warwick Farm, 31 Bicester Road, Long Crendon,
Buckinghamshire**

Site Code: LON-I

from

The Medieval Peasant House in Midland England

by

Nat Alcock and Dan Miles



Fig. 1. View of Warwick Farm from the south

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Oxbow Books

LON-I: WARWICK FARM, 31 BICESTER ROAD, LONG CRENDON,
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Grid reference: SP 6919 0884

Survey Date: May 1989

By: D. Miles

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Report compiled with the help of notes from 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: Warwick Farm is a three bay cruck structure with one surviving cruck truss, with a thatched roof. The external walls were originally timber framed but are now mainly encased in stone. Bay I was the chamber end (floored?) with bays II and III as an open hall. Truss T1 was a gable truss abutting the road, probably of cruck form; it has since been replaced in stone. Truss T2 is a cruck with F1 apex, truss T3 is an arch-braced collar truss and truss T4 was half-hipped (removed for the phase 2 extension). Evidence for a smoke louvre exists towards the end of bay III and much original thatch remains around this area with very heavy soot blackening. A tree-ring date could not be obtained, but a fifteenth century date is likely on stylistic grounds. Indeed, the striking similarity between truss T3 and the intermediate truss at Tudor House, Steventon (STE-B, 1355/6) suggests a possible date of c. 1400.

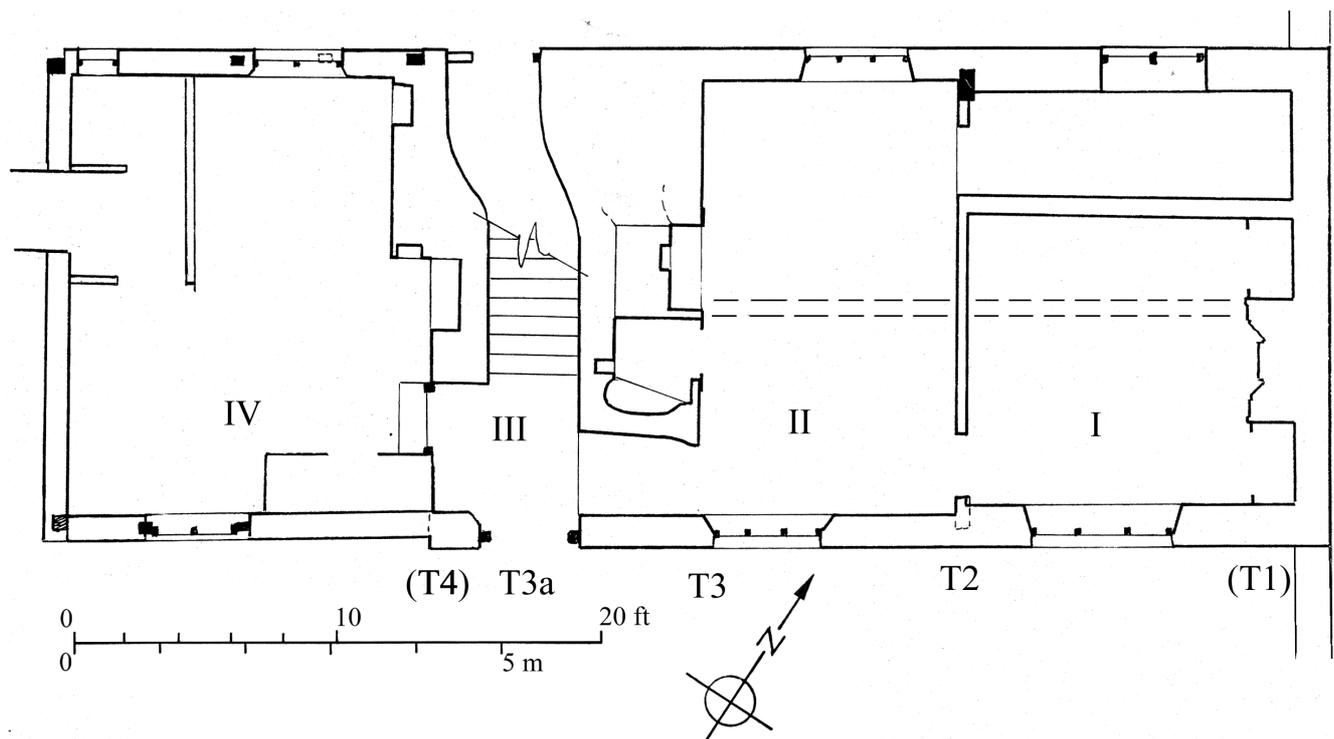


Fig. 2. Plan, showing truss and bay numbering.

PHASE 2: In the late sixteenth century a chimney stack was built in bay III adjacent to truss T3, in the centre of the former hall. It is highly likely that the first floor was inserted into bay II at this time.

PHASE 3: In the early 1600s, the end truss, T4, was removed and bay IV was added, a two storey bay of box frame construction. This includes a second chimney stack which was placed at the end of bay III, leaving a passage between the two chimneys, now holding the staircase.

LATER PHASES: In the eighteenth century, rubble limestone walls were built for bays II and III. The north ground floor window of bay II may be of this date, as it has wide wooden mullions and iron fittings for a locking bar. This window and adjacent door to the passage have wooden lintels with narrow chamfers and run out stops. The south window also has an old frame. Later in this century, the ground floor of bay IV was also encased in rubble stonework. During the early nineteenth century bay I was encased or rebuilt in coursed rubble stonework, using larger blocks with brick quoins and window jambs.

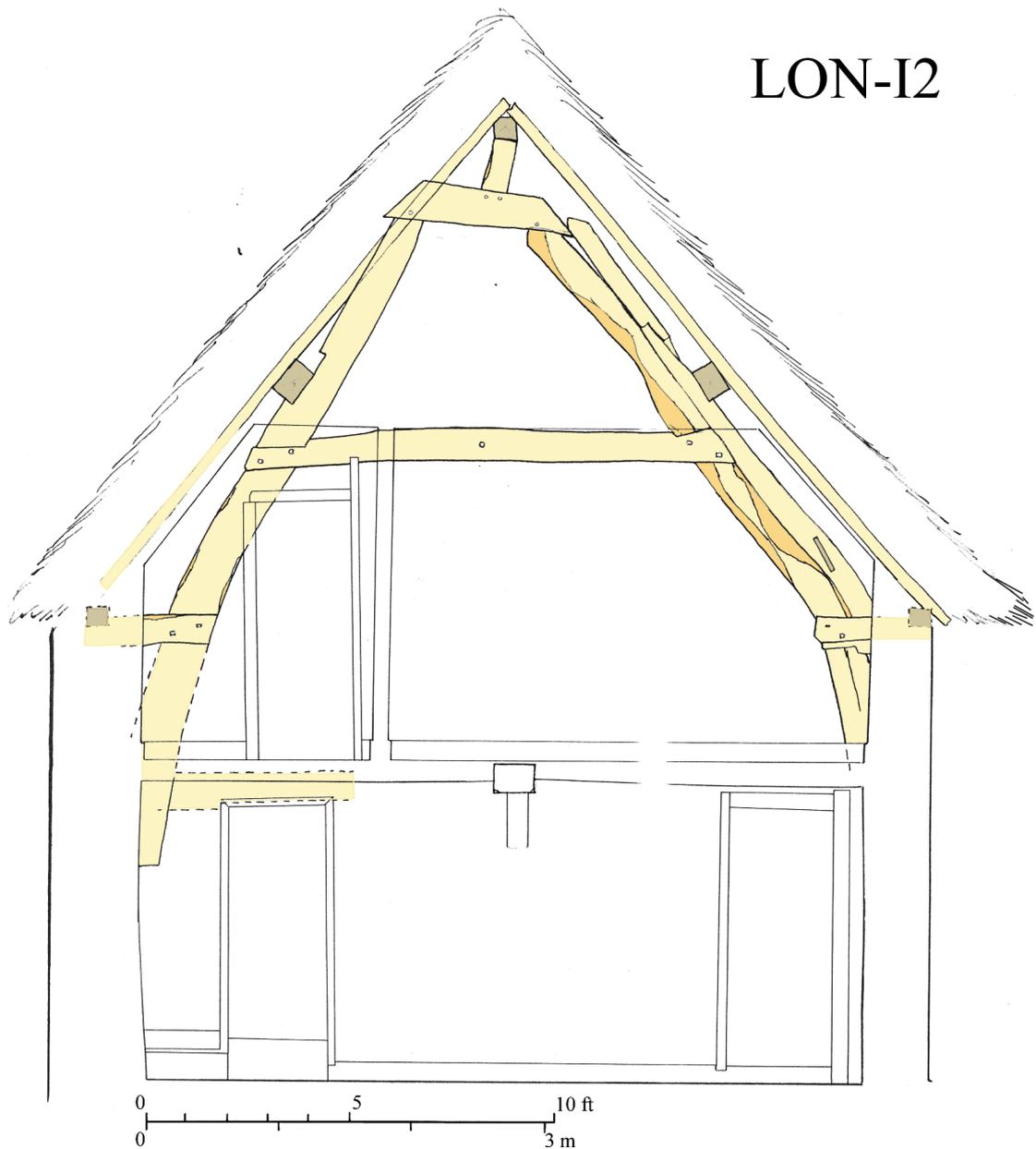


Fig. 3. Section of Truss T2.

STRUCTURAL FEATURES

PHASE 1: The presence of truss T1 as a gable truss is indicated by the purlins continuing to the end wall with wind brace halvings. There is no smoke blackening to any of the timbers in bay I and this strongly suggests that it was floored over from the start as a chamber; indeed transverse joists can be seen under

the floor boards, which measure 4½in deep by 6½in wide. The underside of these joists are all obscured by plaster, as is the main axial beam (into which they are presumed to be tenoned).

Truss T2 (Fig. 3) is a cruck truss with a saddle carrying a king-post about one foot high. It has a collar and tiebeam (part visible over the northern doorway into the store). The wall plates are carried on spurs located half way between tiebeam and collar. As the walls have all been replaced with stone, the wall plates could only be seen beside by truss T3; however it is very likely that they all remain in situ. The truss has always been infilled with wattle and daub panels to partition it off from the hall. Some of this wattle and daub remains above the saddle and between the thatch and the outside of the blade, and staves holes are visible in the soffit of the saddle. The cruck blade on the northern side is well shaped, measuring 13½ by 8in. The purlin rests in a trench cut in the back of the blade about a foot above the collar. However, the blade on the other side is less well shaped and the purlin is carried on a packing piece which also picks up the wind brace and is tenoned into the cruck spur. The purlins measure 7 by 10½in and are of elm.

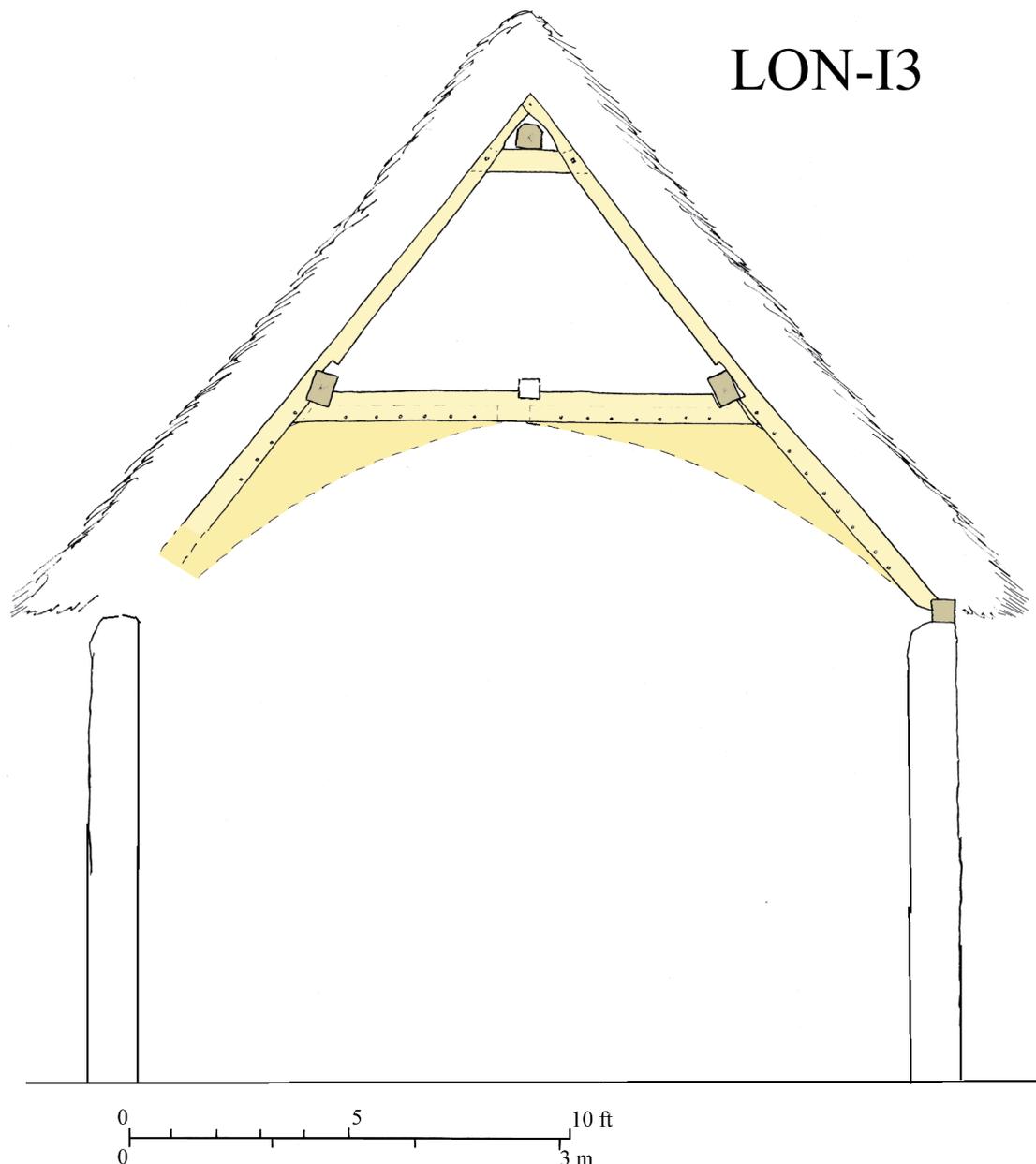


Fig. 4. Section of Truss T3.

Truss T3 (Fig. 4) is an arched braced collar truss with clasped purlins. The principals are 5½in wide by 7in broad; immediately above the collar they diminish to 4½-5in wide, tapering to 3-3½in wide at the top (by 6in). The square-set ridge measures 6½in square and is carried by a yoke. Both arch braces

have been removed. They were pegged to the collar by no less than six pegs each and to the principal by no less than eight. The foot of the principal is set rather crudely into a socket in the upper inner edge of the wall plate. The absence of seating for a post-head may indicate that the walls had no principal posts here, and the truss was essentially an intermediate truss.

Further into bay III is a pair of heavier rafters which have been designated truss 3a. These are joined at the top by a yoke as well as a bridled joint and formed the start of the half-hip. The northern hip rafter still survives; it was originally fixed into the side of the main rafter, although it has now slipped down. The two main rafters each have a downwards facing peg about 2ft below the ridge, which probably indicates the position of a plate for a smoke louvre, pegged onto their top faces. The whole area around this feature including the underside of the thatch is very heavily smoke blackened, in some places more than ¼in thick. The rafters average 3 by 4in and are generally halved poles, mostly elm.

Truss 4, at the end of bay III, was removed when bay IV was added. Its existence is indicated, as at the position of truss T1, by a halving on the north purlin for a wind-brace to the missing truss. Some fragments of timber wall-frame remain on the north side of bay III. A short section of wall-plate is visible over the window and a side girt remains over the door into the store, which retains a mortice for a lower stud. Both have stave holes indicating that the original walls were of wattle and daub.

PHASE 2: The main work in this phase was the introduction of the chimney stack adjacent to truss T3 and the first floor over the whole of bay II. The stack is probably built of rubble stone, plastered over, and has a narrow brick shaft. Part of the fireplace is visible in a cupboard; it has a heavy timber lintel, a side alcove with stone seat and elbow rest, and a small rectangular niche in the rear wall. Above the seat is a later ceiling of pierced boards. The remainder of the fireplace is blocked. On the north side of the stack is a blocked off area that may conceal an oven. The floor joists are 3½in wide by 4½in deep and are supported by an axial beam which is 11½in wide by 8in deep. The joists are concealed, but the main beam is chamfered with stepped stops.

PHASE 3: It appears that bay IV was built onto the western end of the house in about 1600, from the style of the timber framing. The bay is of box-frame construction with full-storey rectangular panels and diagonal bracing. At the ground floor level this has been covered over and the only visible parts are the corner posts, the end of the north sill beam, and the studs flanking the south window. The upper storey has framing visible internally on the south wall and externally on the north wall, with peg holes suggesting an original window in the north corner. The roof trusses have three queen struts below the collar, clasped purlins, wind braces and a ridge carried on yokes. The ceiling on the ground floor has a roughly chamfered axial beam with ogee stops at truss T4, and has iron meat hooks.

The chimney which served bay IV is built inside bay III. It is plastered, probably over rubble, with a rectangular shaft of narrow bricks. The ground floor fireplace is completely blocked up with two small high cupboards. The right hand cupboard has an old wooden door with butterfly hinges. The first floor fireplace is secondary, with traces of an old lintel on brackets, and a century grate with tiled surround.

DENDROCHRONOLOGY

For dendrochronology abbreviations see page facing Introduction.

Sampling Comments: Eight core samples were taken by Robert Howard, from bays II-III.. Of these, five were of elm and the other three oak samples had too few rings to date.

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-I01	Principal rafter truss T3a south	not oak	—	—	—	—	—
LON-I02	Principal rafter truss T3a north	not oak	—	—	—	—	—
LON-I03	Yoke truss T3a	20 NM	—	—	—	—	—
LON-I04	Collar truss T3	not oak	—	—	—	—	—
LON-I05	Yoke truss T3	21 NM	2	—	—	—	—

LON-I06	Cruck blade truss T2 north	20 NM	—	—	—	—	—
LON-I07	King post truss T2	not oak	—	—	—	—	—
LON-I08	Packing piece truss T2	not oak	—	—	—	—	—
Not dated							

DOCUMENTARY HISTORY

Summary

This All Souls copyhold message and yardland can be firmly traced from 1693-4, when it passed from the Benham to the Howlett family. What is believed to be the same property is recorded from 1615 in the hands of Richard Burnham. It was bequeathed in 1814 by Thomas Howlett to his nephew Richard Brangwin, who separated the house and surrounding close from the farmland in 1838.

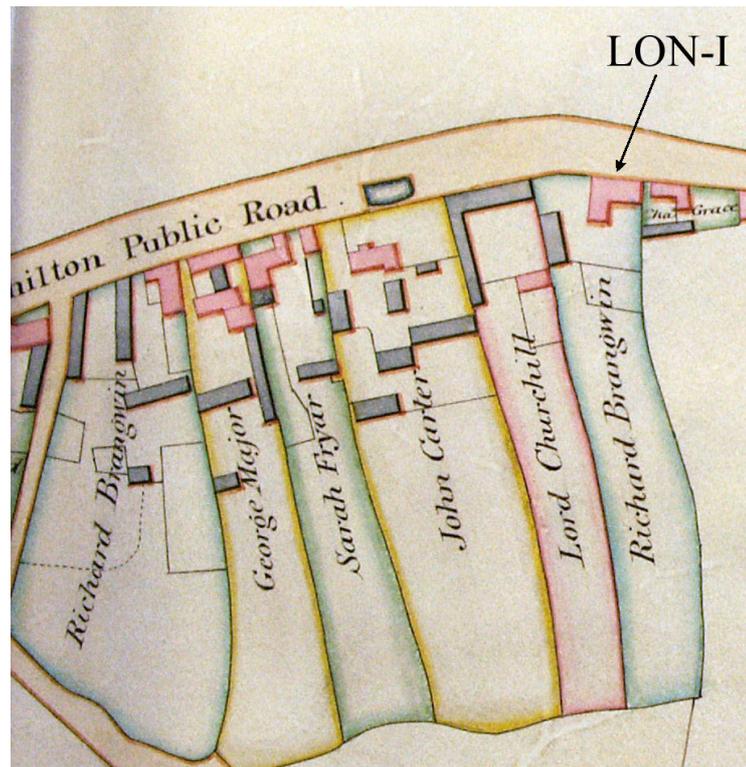


Fig. 5. Part of the 1827 map of Long Crendon (CBS IR/95/Q).

Topography

This copyhold message and yardland is one of a block of All Souls manor holdings on Bicester Road. Its name may have come from the Warwick family, who flourished from the 1640s to the 1720s, although none of them are linked to this holding; the adjoining holding to the north was also known as Warwick, a name recorded as early as 1722.¹

Court References

The earliest definite court roll entries show the acquisition of the farm in 1694 by Thomas Howlett, following the death of Richard Benham father and son, leaving no male heirs. It can be followed through

¹ In his 1722 will (proved 1725), William Cannon left to his son William a house and one yardland called Warwicks. This was acquired by the Duke of Marlborough in 1764, passing to trustees for Lord Churchill on his death in 1817; eventually it was sold by Lord Churchill in 1874, by which time it had lost its house. It was copyhold in 1722, but apparently had been enfranchised by 1874. A freehold close called Wardenwick, recorded from 1545 onwards, is unconnected to the two Bicester Road farms, since it lay towards the eastern end of High Street.

to the death of the fourth successive Thomas Howlett in 1815, who bequeathed it to his nephew Richard Brangwin.² The latter is recorded as the owner in 1827, when he received allotment 14 (9¾ ac) in lieu of the open-field land. He sold the messuage and the enclosure allotment separately in 1838. The house and close were bought by Aaron Spiers, from whom it passed in 1848 to George Gibson and from him to the Crook family.³

The court rolls contain no admission for Richard Benham, though he is named as a juror between 1662 and 1687. However, it is probably that a sequence of admissions to an All Souls messuage and yardland involving Richard *Burnham*, which have no later successors, relate to the same property, which may well be that of John Burnham, senior, admitted in 1543 but whose successor is not known.

Court roll references

- 1543: John BURNHAM, senior took messuage & 1ydl (AS) late in tenure of Joan Fynche, widow, which he had by the grant of Joan.
- 1615 Rob BURNHAM died, holding messuage & 1ydl (AS). Richard BURNHAM his son, being a minor, his mother Elizabeth was admitted.
- 1672 Ric BURNHAM, tenement & 1ydl (AS), surr to use of Edw BURNHAM, roper, admitted.
- 1676 Joan BURNHAM, messuage & 1ydl which she occupies, surr to use of Ric BURNHAM, adm. [Joan Illiman married Edward Burnam in 1620]
- 1693: Ric BENHAM died (Register, 1692), holding a messuage & 1 ydl (AS), succeeded by Ric Benham his son, who also died. Joanna Burnham, his sister is next heir, but Lords say she cannot inherit.
- 1694: Thos HOWLETT junior adm messuage & 1 ydl (AS) prev Ric BENHAM junior, who died without male heir. TH admitted.
- 1740: Thos HOWLETT died, messuage 1 ydl (AS). Thos H junior, his son admitted.
- 1762: Thos HOWLETT died, messuage & ydl (AS). Thos H son & heir.
- 1765: Thos HOWLETT died, messuage & 1 ydl (AS), Thos H junior, his son & heir admitted
- 1814: Will of Thomas Howlett includes:⁴ To nephew Richard Brangwin: Copyhold messuage & 1 ydl held of AS; arable land + 1 ydl lot meadow held of AS.
- 1827 Enclosure: Ric BRANGWIN.
- 1834: Tho HOWLETT gentleman held messuage close orchard & 9a.3r.5p [allotment 14 in exchange for 1ydl] (AS) in Down field, Ric BRANGWIN heir, admitted.
- 1838: Ric BRANGWIN yeoman, holding a messuage, bakehouse, barn stable, yard, garden & adjoining close (1a.34p) (AS) to which he was admitted in 1834, lately occ by Spencer SEWELL now William ARCHER, surrenders for £189 9s 2d to Aaron SPIERS, yeoman, admitted.
- 1838: Close surrendered to George Gibson by Richard Brangwin*
- 1848: Aaron SPIERS holding house, bakehouse, barn yard formerly surrendered in 1840 by Richard BRANGWIN, occ by Spencer SEWELL & Wm ARCHER, surrenders for £200 to Geo GIBSON sadler & Geo MARGERSON of Aylesbury saddler, [devisees in trust for sale]
- 1849: Geo GIBSON & Geo MARGERSON messuage etc & close, surrender for £100 to Geo GIBSON.

² Richard Brangwin was only admitted in 1834, an exceptionally long delay after his inheritance.

³ Richard Brangwin also held another messuage and a close called Parrotts/Perrotts, and a messuage & 1 yardland (ASC), to which he succeeded his brother John in 1817 (at the left hand end of Fig. 5). However, the messuage (Warwick Farm) acquired by Aaron Spiers in 1838 is identified as that to which he was admitted in 1834. The 1824 *Abstract of Claims* indicates that he lived in this house, and that the other messuage was tenanted by John Taylor.

⁴ TNA, PROB 11/1571, proved 28 Aug 1815.

1869: All Souls Copyholds: Messuage with bakehouse, barn, stable, yard, garden & close formerly occ by Spencer SEWELL since of Wm ARCHER & lately of Aaron SPIERS, copyholders Thos HOWLETT 1765, Ric BRANGWIN 1834, Aaron Spiers 1840, Geo Gibson 1849.

1874: Jane Crook admitted on death of Aaron Spiers [suggests that the 1849 admission was a mortgage].

1893: Jane CROOK†, messuage & bakehouse barn stable yard & 1a.35p (AS) to which adm 1874 formerly occ by Spencer SEWELL now Ann WALKER, inherited by Herbert CROOK

1931 Enfranchised (plan): Herbert Gibson CROOK, house with former bakehouse stable barn garden & close lately occ by Spencer SEWELL then Ann WALKER. Admitted 25 May 1893.

Building References

In the Hearth Tax return, Richard Burnham is listed with two hearths, although one Benham, one Binham and four other Burnhams are also listed.

1869: Messuage with bakehouse, barn, stable, yard, garden & close.

1910 Valuation: H210. Owner/occupant: Herbert G CROOK. House of stone & thatch, ... & living room, kitchen, 3 bed. Close at back very wet, dips marshy. Stable, shed, pigstye. Orchard, trees rotten. 1a.1r.2p.