

Report on

**Jasmine Cottage, 52 Westbrook End, Newton
Longville, Buckinghamshire**

Site Code: NWL-A

from

The Medieval Peasant House in Midland England

by

Nat Alcock and Dan Miles



Fig. 1. View of Jasmine Cottage (photo: Paul Woodfield)

© N W Alcock and contributors 2012. Copyright in this document is retained under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, with all rights reserved including publication. Copyright in illustrations is reserved to the original copyright holder.

Oxbow Books

NWL-A: JASMINE COTTAGE, 52 WESTBROOK END, NEWTON LONGVILLE,
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Grid reference: SU 8471 3135 Survey Date: 16 May 1990 By: D. Miles

Illustrations:	Page
1. View	1
2. Ground floor plan	2
3. Sections of truss T2	3

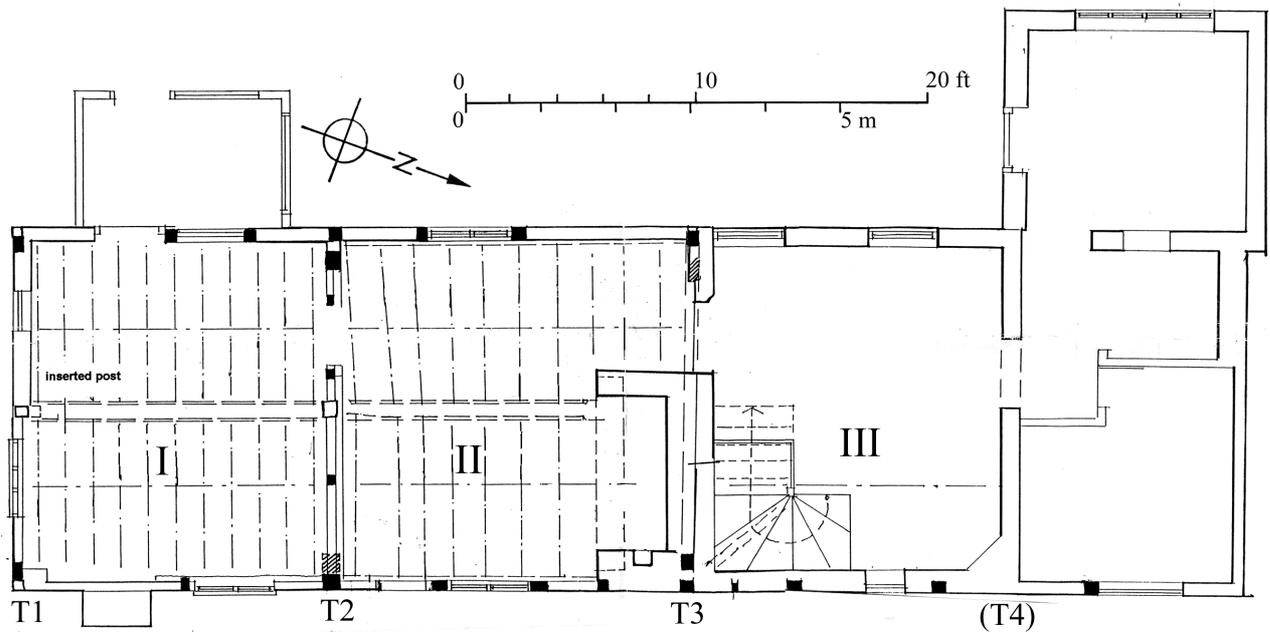


Fig. 2. Plan, showing truss and bay numbering (from a survey by Paul Woodfield).

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Jasmine Cottage is a three-bayed cruck house with a half-hipped thatched roof at the southern end running north-south along the road. Three cruck trusses survive with a fourth at the north end lost when the end bay was partially truncated. T1 at the south end is half hipped (type 'V' apex), and trusses T2 and T3 have truncated (type 'W') apices. The southern bay would appear to have been the chamber end, and the middle and northern bays the hall, as there is some smoke discoloration on the timbers in these areas. The small extent of this sooting makes the use of a smoke-hood likely in bay II. It appears that the southern bay (I) was floored over from the start, although none of the original joists remain; a mortice in the south face of the lower tiebeam of T2 for a trimmer suggests that ladder or stair access was given to this bay only. The other bays seem not to have been floored originally as the tiebeams run through about two feet above first floor level. A felling date range of **1536-8** has been obtained by dendrochronology.

LATER PHASES: Probably during the next century the floors were inserted, and a fireplace constructed in bay II, possibly replacing an earlier smoke-hood. Truss T2 is notable for a good set of floral wall paintings discovered on the timbers below the inserted floor. These would have dated from shortly after the insertion, as they do not extend above the first floor level. In later work, T4 has been destroyed and part of the upper half of the wall frame in to bay III removed to first floor level. Apart from this and the usual alterations to window and door openings, the house has remained little altered.

STRUCTURAL FEATURES

PHASE 1: The crucks rise to just above the collar to form a type 'W' apex, a common variety in Buckinghamshire. The blades are formed from whole trees, boxed heart, as are most of the other structural

timbers. The crucks measure about 7 by 8in and taper towards the top. The collars have a large hole in the centre which is thought to relate to the setting out of the frame on the ground. The upper tiebeam carries the wallplates. Between the collar and this tiebeam are two struts, and from underneath the upper tiebeam to the sill level is a central post into which an interrupted tiebeam is framed at first floor level. Beneath this lower tiebeam are two intermediate studs which with the central post divide the truss into four panels. Two short studs reach between the two tiebeams, in line with the lower studs. The lower interrupted tiebeam is morticed into the crucks, while the upper tiebeam and collar are simply halved and skew pegged, without any form of half-dovetail. All three surviving cruck trusses have this basic form.

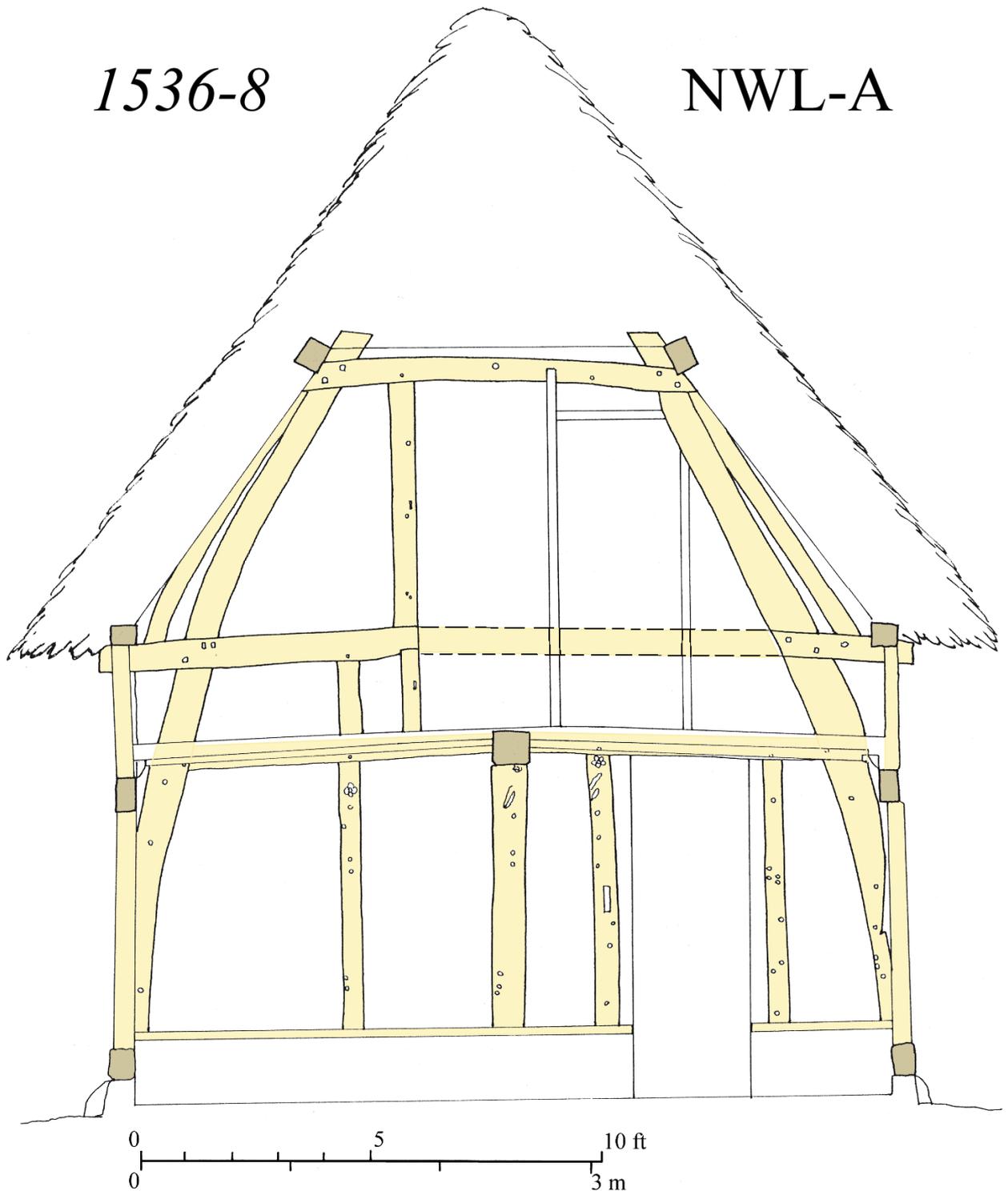


Fig. 3. Section of Truss T2

The purlins are boxed heart, measure 6 by 8in, and are trenched on the backs of the crucks and collars. They have splayed scarfs adjacent to the trusses. No windbraces or rafters survive in any of the three bays. However, it is fairly certain that there were windbraces because the packing pieces on the backs of the cruck were presumably needed to receive them.

In bay I, the central post on T2 is jowled on the south side to take the axial beam for the floor; T1 also has a similar jowl. This beam has 6in wide mortices at about 1ft 4in centres, but the joists have been replaced with new 4in joists in the old joist sockets. The floor boards in this bay measure about 2ft 9in wide. The axial beam is 10½in wide with a 1½in rough chamfer without stops. A pegged mortice in the south face of the west lower tiebeam marks the position of an original ladder stair to the first floor. The outer ends of the joists are lodged on girts (mid-rails) on the side elevations. This girt continues along the whole length of all three bays, suggesting the possibility of the whole range being floored originally. However, the tiebeams two feet above the first floor levels it would make communication between upstairs rooms extremely difficult.

The wall frame survives basically intact. The side wall framing is similar to that of the cruck trusses. An intermediate post is placed in the centre of each bay, with a girt at first floor level and an intermediate stud on either side above and below the girt. This gives each bay four small half-height panels over four full height ones. On the west side of bay I, a small window opening 1ft 4in high is framed to the north of the centre post.

LATER PHASES: The inserted floor in bay II have joists which measure 4in wide and are framed into a 9 by 10in elm axial beam with a 2in chamfer with a simple stop. In bay II the side frames have sunk, and the joists are instead supported on triangular cleats fixed to the inside of the walls above the first floor girts. The main tiebeam has been severed in trusses T2 and T3 to allow intercommunication between bays, and later the openings moved to the west, trimming the ties back to the cruck blades to allow the middle room to be partitioned off with a passage. An interesting feature are the 19th century cast iron diamond light windows in bay III.

DENDROCHRONOLOGY

For dendrochronology abbreviations see page facing Introduction.

Sampling Comments: Eight samples were obtained through coring by Robert Howard on 16 May 1990. Three groups of two samples matched together: samples 1 and 7 forming a sequence of 68 rings; samples 2 and 3 a sequence of 50 rings, and samples 5 and 6 a sequence of 67 rings with the same complete sapwood end date. However, only the second sequence could be dated against reference chronologies, and in view of its shortness, this must be treated with caution.

TREE-RING SAMPLE RECORD AND SUMMARY OF DATING

Sample Code	Sample Location	Total Rings	Sapwood Rings	FMR Date	LHR Date	LMR Date	Date Cat
NWL-A01	Rear purlin	54	16	—	—	—	—
NWL-A02	Front purlin bay I	37	14c	1496	1518	1532	3b
NWL-A03	Rear cruck blade truss T2	50	16c	1486	1519	1535	3b
NWL-A04	Front cruck blade truss T2	50	05	—	—	—	—
NWL-A05	Front purlin bay II	67	27C	—	—	—	—
NWL-A06	Rear cruck blade truss T3	43	20C	—	—	—	—
NWL-A07	Front cruck blade truss T3	56	21C	—	—	—	—
NWL-A08	Rear cruck blade truss T1	40	HS	—	—	—	—
Average date of last heartwood ring				1519			

Site:sequence (composed of samples 2, 3) 50 rings long matched at 1486–1535 with *t*-values: 4.3(OXFORD), 3.6(E.MID), 5.6(DHR-UHN), 3.3(DHR-WHW), 4.7(MOUASQ10, VA22.91). Samples 2 and 3 had complete sapwood, but lost an estimated 3/8in and 1/8in respectively in coring.

Estimated 95% felling date range: **1536-8**, allowing for the lost sapwood (previously 1535–1557).