

Report on

**Beverley Cottage, 34 Westbrook End, Newton
Longville, Buckinghamshire**

Site Code: NWL-D

from

The Medieval Peasant House in Midland England

by

Nat Alcock and Dan Miles



Fig. 1. View of Beverley 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-D: BEVERLEY COTTAGE, 34 WESTBROOK END, NEWTON LONGVILLE,
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Grid reference: SP 8436 3135 Survey Date: 17 October 1990 By: D. Miles

Illustrations:	Page
1. View	1
2. Ground floor plan	2
3. Section of truss T3	3
4. Section of truss T2	4

Reference: Alcock, N. W. and Moran, M. (1984) 'Low open-truss beams (mantle-beams): Problems of function and distribution', *Vernacular Architecture*, **15**, 47-55.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

PHASE 1: Beverley Cottage is a cruck house originally comprising a two bay hall (I-II) spanned by an arch-braced truss having a mantel beam (low beam in an open truss; Alcock & Moran, 1984); another bay to the south (III) was probably the chamber. The two bays forming the hall still survive. An interesting feature of the hall open truss is that it still shows the compass setting out arcs for the braces. The house has been dated through dendrochronology to 1492.

PHASE 2: Probably in the sixteenth century, a smoke hood was constructed against the open, mantel-beam truss (T2) and a floor was inserted into bay II and probably bay III.

LATER PHASES: The chamber end of the house was rebuilt, probably in the late seventeenth/early eighteenth century, judging by the style of the framing, and this appears to have involved the total demolition of the original end of the house. Bay I was floored over at this date, while the earlier flooring of bay III was retained in the new chamber bay. Fireplaces were built on either side of T2, but the original smoke-hood lintel was retained. The last substantial extension was to the north where a single storey extension was built in the early 19th century, again dated from the scantling of the timber frame.

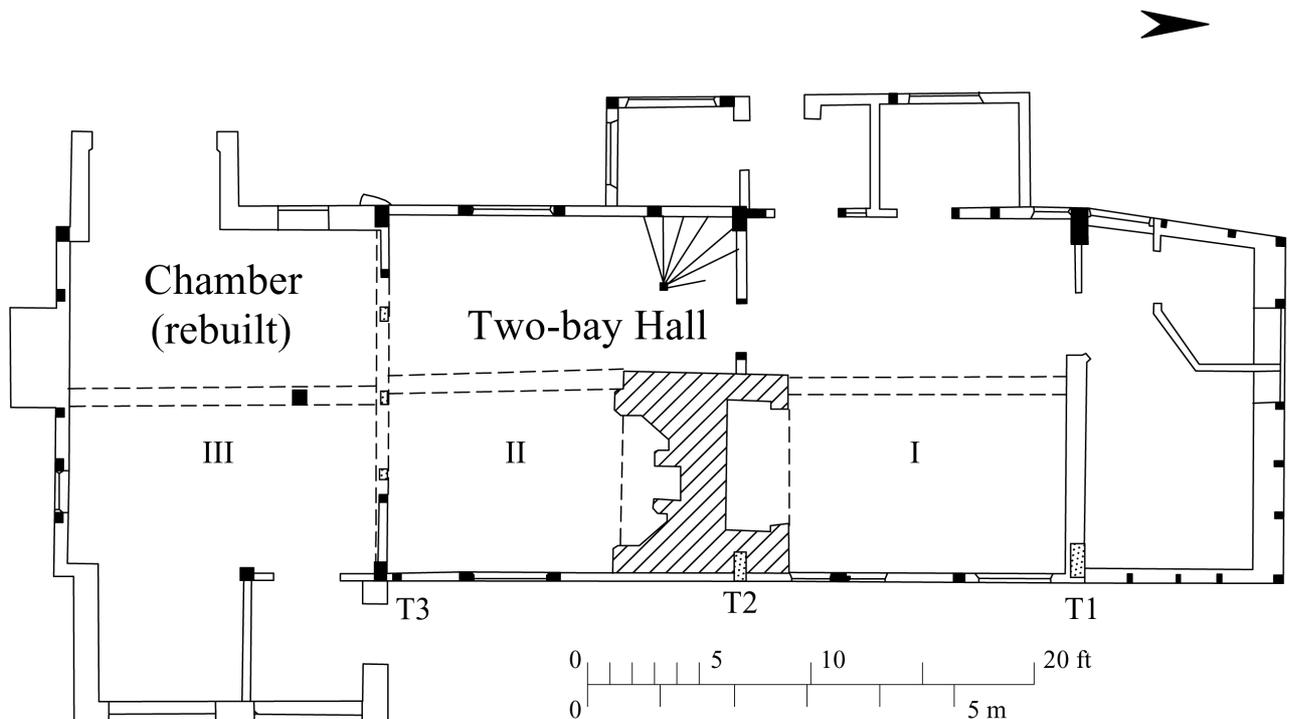


Fig. 2. Plan, showing truss and bay numbering.

STRUCTURAL FEATURES

PHASE 1: Truss T3 is the most southern surviving truss of this phase, although it was originally an internal truss. This is evidenced by the fact that the tiebeam is set back 3in from the southern face of the crucks, and there are no stave holes in the end panels of this wall at ground floor level, indicating the presence of doorways through into a further bay. The truss has the usual half-dovetailed lapped tiebeam and collar construction with three studs below the tiebeam, two studs between tiebeam and collar, and one stud above the collar. It was not possible to see much above the collar level, so the apex type is unknown. Truss T1 is similar to T3, but with an elm collar. This was presumably an end truss, but the north side could not be inspected to confirm this.

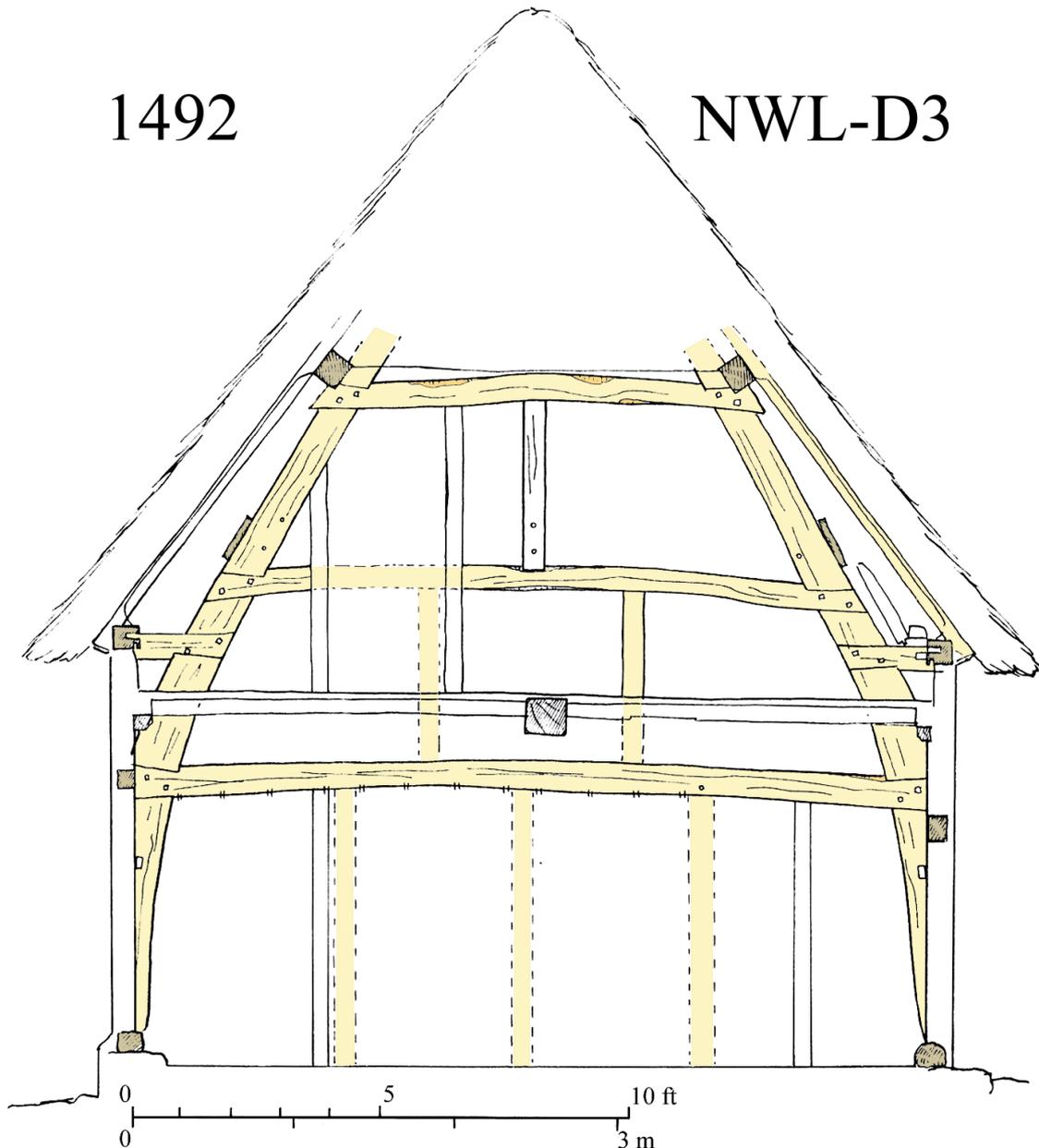


Fig. 3. Section of truss T3

Truss T2, by contrast is an open truss with a 'mantel-beam'. It lacks the centre stud which is often found in such trusses, but comprises a tiebeam, collar and two arch-braces, one since removed. That the two horizontal members are coeval is proved by the fact that the crucks are chamfered and that this chamfer runs out where it abuts both of these members. The cruck blades measure 13½in wide and whereas the collar is 6in thick, the arch brace is only 1½in thick. Both the brace and collar are chamfered

on both sides and are comparable in style to the open truss at Three Chimneys, Mapledurham (MDM-C), dated to 1458. The chamfer continues above the collar. The junctions of the arch-braces and the cruck blades carry are scribed assembly marks, a II on the left side and a II tag on the right. What is perhaps most significant is the almost perfect preservation of the setting out lines scribed on the north face of the truss. These include a scribed half-circle of 5 ft 8½in radius with its centre at the bottom edge of the tiebeam (on the part removed for the insertion of the doorway).

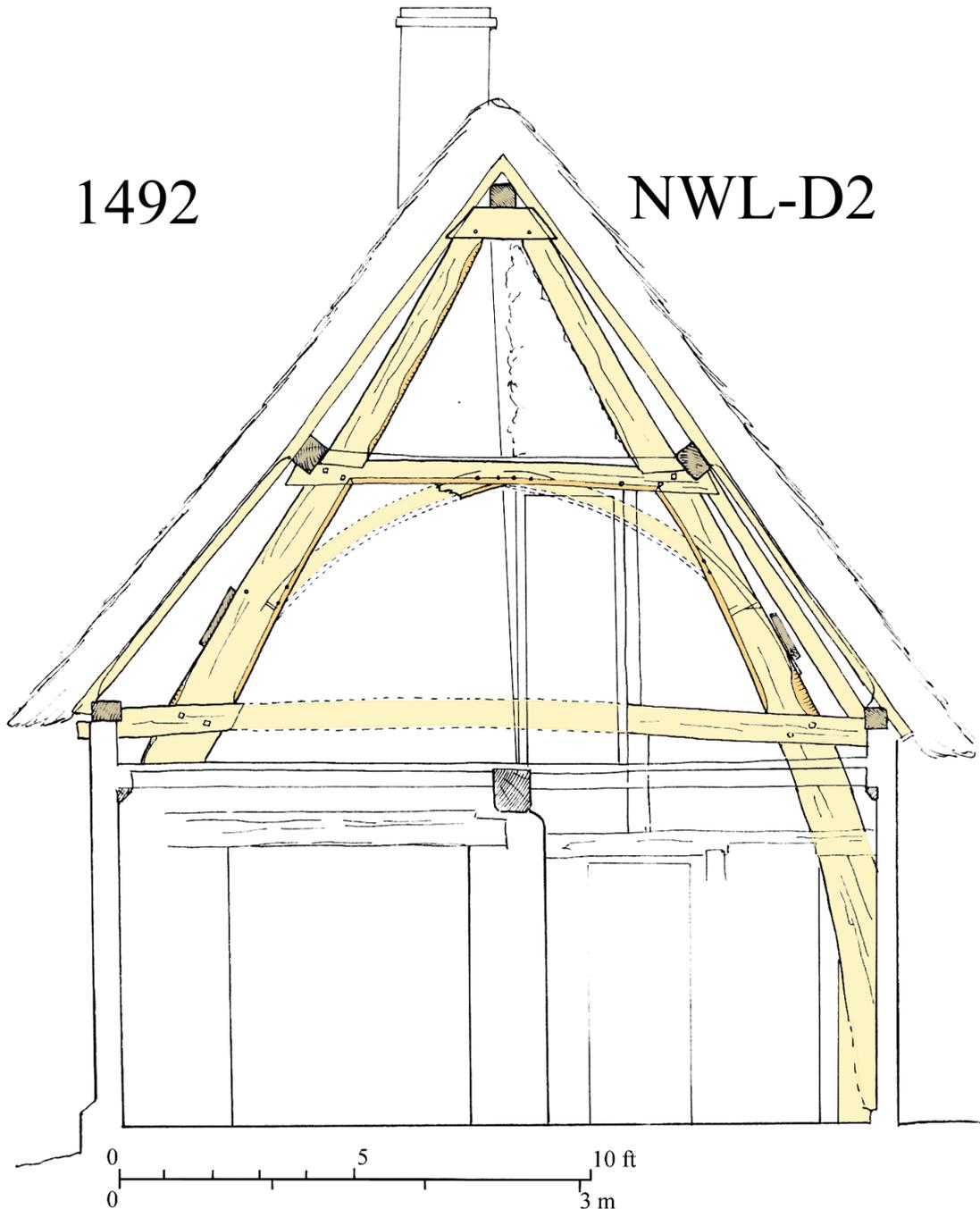


Fig. 3. Section of truss T2.

The purlins are carried on the backs of the cruck blades and supported by the collars and packing pieces except where they abut truss T1; here the purlins appear to be butt-jointed into the blades. The 5½ x 8in purlins have a 2in chamfer in bay II only. The curved windbraces measure 6½in by 1½in. The rafters average 5 x 2in and are set at 16 to 20in centres. Those in bay I are much rougher than in bay II.

PHASE 2: The most significant feature of this period was the construction of a smoke hood, whose lintel is now used as the lintel in the present brick fireplace. This timber measures 9in wide by 10in high and the stave groove in the upper surface is clearly visible where it has been severed on the left hand end. At about this time a floor was inserted into bay II and probably into bay III, that of bay II being the more substantial. Here the joists which measure 4½-5in wide by 5in deep are set at 12in centres; they are chamfered with a 1in adzed bevel and have stepped stops at the front of the house and run-out stops where they join the axial beam (which itself has a 2in chamfer).

LATER PHASES: The reconstruction of the southern bay (III) is almost wholly in elm and the scantling of the framing members indicates a rather late date. The corner posts are 7in square and the studs are 5in wide. The joists are similar in size to those in bay II and seem likely to have been reused from the earlier structure. They are not chamfered, but the main axial beam has a 3in chamfer with a fine run-out stop with bar where it adjoins T3. The joists are set at 16½in centres. Probably at this period, bay I was also floored over. The 3in by 5in deep elm joists are set at 14-16in centres and are finished with small ¼in chamfers with run out stops. The axial beam has 2in chamfers and run-out stops.

DENDROCHRONOLOGY

For dendrochronology abbreviations see page facing Introduction.

Sampling Comments: Eight samples were obtained through coring by Robert Howard on 17 October 1990. Of these, six samples matched together and dated.

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-D01	Front purlin bay II	41	16	—	—	—	—
NWL-D02	Front brace cruck-purlin bay II	30	27C	1462	1464	1491	1
NWL-D03	Front cruck blade truss T3	73	—	1355	1427	1427	1
NWL-D04	Rear cruck blade truss T3	75	—	1377	1451	1451	1
NWL-D05	Rear purlin bay II	43	08	—	—	—	—
NWL-D06	Rear cruck blade truss T2	126	36C	1366	1455	1491	1
NWL-D07	Tiebeam truss T2	116	—	1299	1414	1414	1
NWL-D08	Front cruck blade truss T1	120	—	1310	1429	1429	1

Site sequence: (composed of samples 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8) 193 rings long dated 1299–1491 with *t*-values of 7.7(E.MID), 5.6(KENT 88).

Estimated felling date: (samples 2 and 6 with the latest dated rings have complete sapwood and well formed spring growth for the following year) **Spring/early summer 1492.**