

Report for

**Eastgate House, East End, Weedon,
Buckinghamshire**

Site Code: WEE-A

from

The Medieval Peasant House in Midland England

by

Nat Alcock and Dan Miles



Fig. 1. View from north

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WEE-A: EASTGATE HOUSE, EAST END, WEEDON, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Grid reference: SP 8187 1801

Survey Date: 8 March 1989

By: D. Miles

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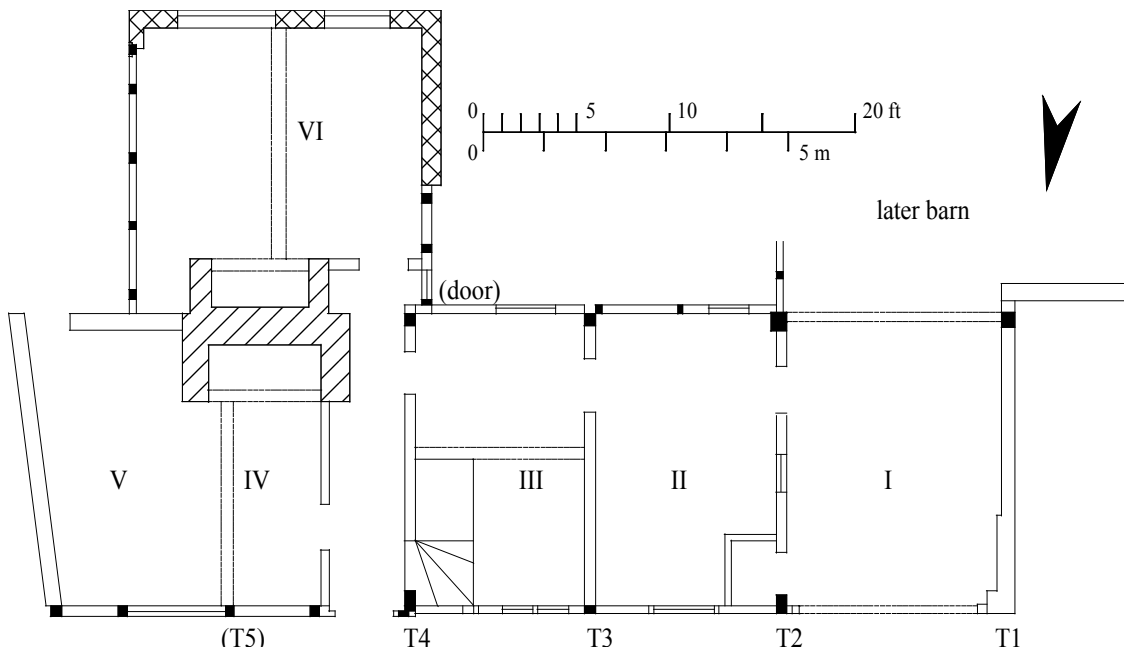


Fig. 2. Plan, showing truss and bay numbering.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

PHASE 1: Eastgate House consists of a four-bay cruck house built parallel to the road with a later timber-framed cross-wing replacing the fourth bay. All four remaining cruck trusses have saddle apices (type 'C'). The roofs are tiled and the walls are of timber-frame with infill brickwork, much of which was probably inserted early this century. The middle two bays are separated by an open arch-braced cruck truss and were obviously the hall, with much smoke blackening remaining on the roof timbers. The presence of the fourth bay is demonstrated by the extension of the ridge piece 9ft beyond T4. Presumably there were chamber and service bays at the ends, but the use of the surviving bay I is uncertain. The cruck phase has been dated through dendrochronology with a likely felling date range of **1446-1450**. It is interesting to have evidence for a four-bay house which, despite the simple character of the surviving timberwork, is likely to have been the home of a reasonably wealthy individual.

PHASE 2: In the sixteenth century (from stylistic evidence), a fifth in-line bay was added beyond bay IV. This probably provided additional service accommodation.

LATER PHASES: In the seventeenth century, again based on stylistic detail, a two-bay cross-wing with a front gable was built, replacing bay IV and part of bay V and extending back as bay VI. In the early 18th century, part of the walls of bay VI were replaced in brick with a plat band at first floor level, probably following structural failure of the S gable of bay VI. In the late seventeenth or eighteenth century, a timber-framed barn/cow-shed was added behind bay I. This bay was converted into a barn with high threshing doors to the front. In the nineteenth century, a lean-to was added in the corner between bays V and VI.

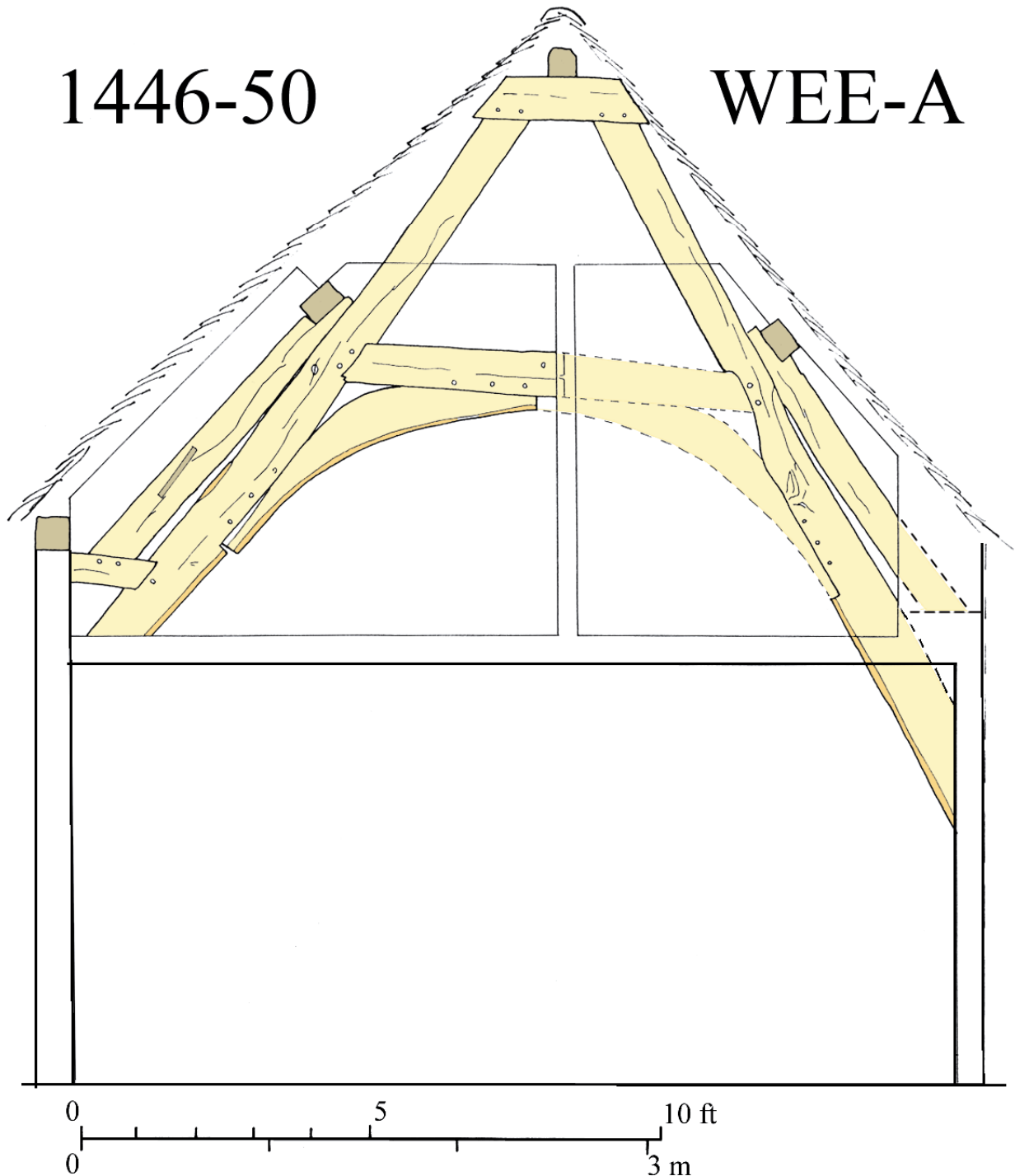


Fig. 3. Section of Truss T3.

STRUCTURAL FEATURES

PHASE 1: The open truss, T3, has been somewhat altered, with most of the lowest four feet obscured by the ground floor walls (but visible externally); it has also dropped substantially to the south, so that one spur is now above and the other below the inserted floor level.. However, enough is visible to allow a reasonable reconstruction. The crucks are fairly straight and rise to a saddle (5 by 9in) forming a typical type 'C' apex. This supports a square-set ridge piece (6in square) with chamfers on the upper arrises on which the rafters are seated. A collar (8½ by 5in) is tenoned and double-pegged to the cruck blades rather than halved and is strengthened by arch-braces which are of substantial thickness and chamfered, as are the cruck blades below them. The collar has a hole drilled through the centre line of the truss, a couple of inches below the top of the collar. The wall-plates are supported on tenoned cruck spurs which in turn rest on cruck studs. The cruck spurs carry packing pieces which are cut back to support the purlins; they

also hold the lower end of the wind braces, most of which have been removed. The purlins measure 7½-8 by 5in and are joined with double splayed scarf joints, as in many other Buckinghamshire cruck buildings. Many rafters survive, measuring 3 by 2in to 5 by 3in; they are set at about 17in centres. Smoke blackening was noted in bays II and III on the surviving rafters, ridge piece and crucks.

On trusses 2 and 4, the collars have been removed, as have most of the elements of T1. The tiebeam of T4 remains, with two studs below it. Only one assembly mark was found, a // on the east face of T4, at its junction with the saddle; this suggests that the trusses were numbered in reverse order to that used here. The position of the assembly mark may indicate that was the high, upper, end was to the east.

What little remains of the wall-framing consists of the main crucks and cruck studs with later intermediate framing, mostly of eighteenth century origin. The front wall has been infilled with brickwork, the horizontal courses being mainly coeval with the later framing while the herringbone brickwork dates from the early twentieth century. The rear wall of the house is somewhat lower than the front and retains much stonework in the foundations of bay II; half of the wall of this bay has been rebuilt in stone rubble retaining one intermediate rail.

LATER PHASES: The in-line extension to the left (phase 2) is box-framed with tiebeam and collar with clasped purlins; it is visible in the east gable end. The timber framing below the tiebeam has been replaced entirely with brickwork, while the panels above have brick infill.

The corner posts of the third phase cross-gable interrupt the wall-plate. The roof construction is the same as in phase two. As with the front elevation of the cruck range, the infill brickwork consists of early coursed brick panels with later herringbone work. Most of the windows at the front of the house are leaded lights in wooden and steel casements and probably date from the twentieth century. The windows at the rear of the house are also modern. The wall studs are complete on the E wall of bay VI, but only the first three studs survive on the W wall. Beyond this, the walling has been replaced in brick on a stone foundation, with a three course plat band projecting at first floor level. The rear gable end is timber-framed to the same design as the front gable. A cellar below bay VI was probably constructed when this section was rebuilt. It is entered from the lean-to to the east of bay VI.

Internally, bay V and VI have axial ceiling beams with scroll stops, with small scroll stops on the chamfered joists also. The south end of the beam in bay VI is stopped, showing that this end wall was not moved when it was rebuilt. The position of the beam in the north room indicates that the present passage has been added. The back-to-back stone fireplaces have ashlar jambs and chamfered timber lintels.

DENDROCHRONOLOGY

For dendrochronology abbreviations see page facing Introduction.

Sampling Comments: Eight samples were obtained through coring by Robert Howard on 8 March 1989. Although the samples were all quite short, five matched together to form a site sequence of 60 rings. This matched somewhat weakly with a number of site sequences.

TREE-RING SAMPLE RECORD AND SUMMARY OF DATING

Sample Code	Sample Location	Total Rings	Sapwood Rings	FMR Date	LHR Date	LMR Date	Date Cat
WEE-A01	Front cruck blade truss T3	59	24	1386	1420	1444	5
WEE-A02	Rear cruck blade truss T2	35	10	1411	1435	1445	5
WEE-A03	Front cruck blade truss T2	44	11	1401	1433	1444	5
WEE-A04	Front cruck blade truss T4	17 NM	—	—	—	—	—
WEE-A05	Rear cruck blade truss T4	40	—	—	—	—	—
WEE-A06	Rear cruck blade truss T1	28 NM	—	—	—	—	—
WEE-A07	Rear cruck blade truss T3	51	25	1395	1420	1445	5
WEE-A08	Front purlin bay II	52	17	1394	1428	1445	5
	Average date of last heartwood ring				1427		

Site sequence (composed of samples 1, 2, 3, 7 and 8), 60 rings long matched at 1386–1445 with *t*-values 4.3 (OXHA-SQ02), 4.2 (HIWA-SQ01), 4.1 (STCA-SQ01), 4.1 (BIFA-SQ04), 3.9 (LOWH-SQ01), 3.4 (HARA-GP04), 3.3 (STCC-SQ01).

Estimated felling date range: 1446-1468 (previous 1446–1465). The clustering of the last ring dates strongly suggests that felling took place within a few years of 1446, indicating likely felling in the range **1446-1450**.