

Report for
29-31 Bondgate, Castle Donington, Leicestershire

Site Code: CAS-B

from

The Medieval Peasant House in Midland England

by

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Fig. 1. View from south

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Oxbow Books

CAS-B: 29-31 BONDGATE, CASTLE DONINGTON, LEICESTERSHIRE

Grid reference: SK 4455 2741 Survey Date: 23 August 1989 By: D. Miles

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This report draws heavily on Barbara Hutton (1982), 'Report 23', *Derbyshire Buildings Record (DBR)*.

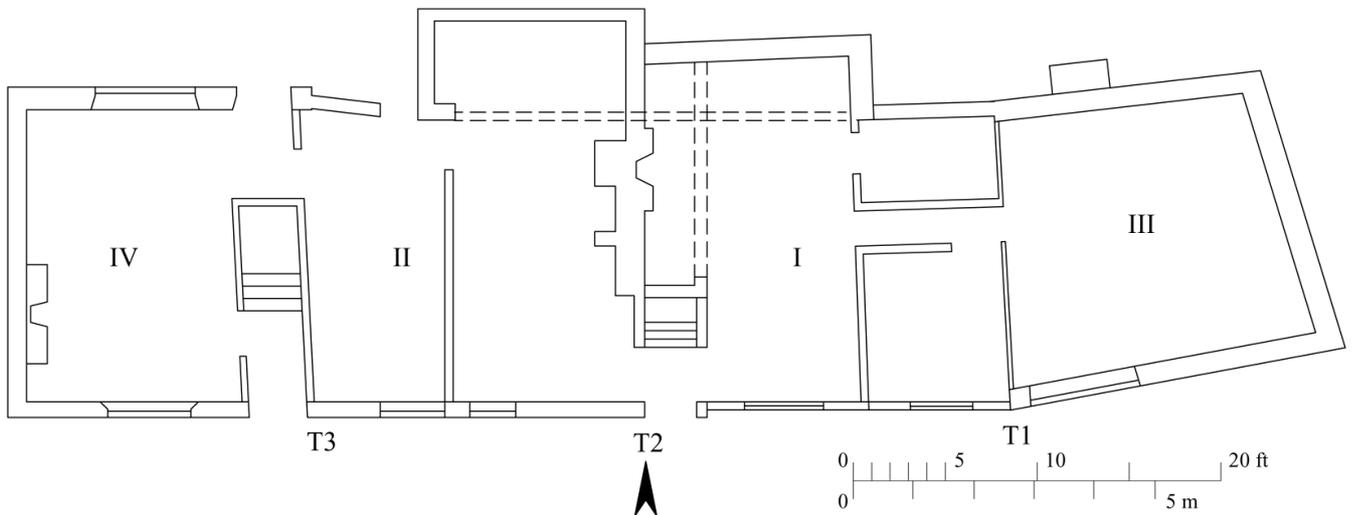


Fig. 2. Plan, showing truss and bay numbering (after DBR).

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

PHASE 1: 29-31 Bondgate is oriented roughly parallel to Bondgate, facing south. The land slopes away steeply from the front so that the house is perched on a basement storey in stone rubble walling. The earliest part (bays I and II) is a two bay cruck house, dated by dendrochronology to 1553/4. Bay I was divided in two by a partition, leaving the western end as the hall with the bressumer resting on the east door post. Early first floor joists are still extant in this area, running east/west. Bay II has a later floor at a higher level, perhaps replacing an earlier lower one. Neither bay has visible evidence for any smoke blackening in the roof space. The end crucks have type 'D' apexes with a type 'F1' apex in the centre. It is unusual for having the wind-braces on truss T1 running down from the crucks to the purlins.

PHASE 2: The subsequent development of the house is complex and varied but basically involved the addition of an eastern bay in the late seventeenth century and a western one in the eighteenth century. Probably in the late seventeenth century, bay III (east end) was added with timber-framed side walls and stone gable end. All of the walls to this bay are out of square with each other and with bay I. Under this extension is a cellar which was excavated out of the rock at the rear. At about this time the later ceiling in the northern half of bay II was added or altered.

PHASE 3: During the eighteenth century various other alterations were carried out, primarily the addition of bay IV to the west of bay II. This is entirely brick built and again incorporated a cellar half cut out of the living rock. It is probable that the roof was raised along the eaves in bays I, II and III at this time, new windows being set on the old wall-plates. The hall (bay I) was also extended northwards and the fireplace bressumer renewed with a longer beam to run the entire width; a new brick chimney stack was built over or in place of an earlier timber smoke hood. The kitchen (bay II) chimney stack was probably built at the same time as its northern wall was removed and extended further out, probably forming a scullery. The house was also divided into two at about this time, with a new front door made in bay IV.

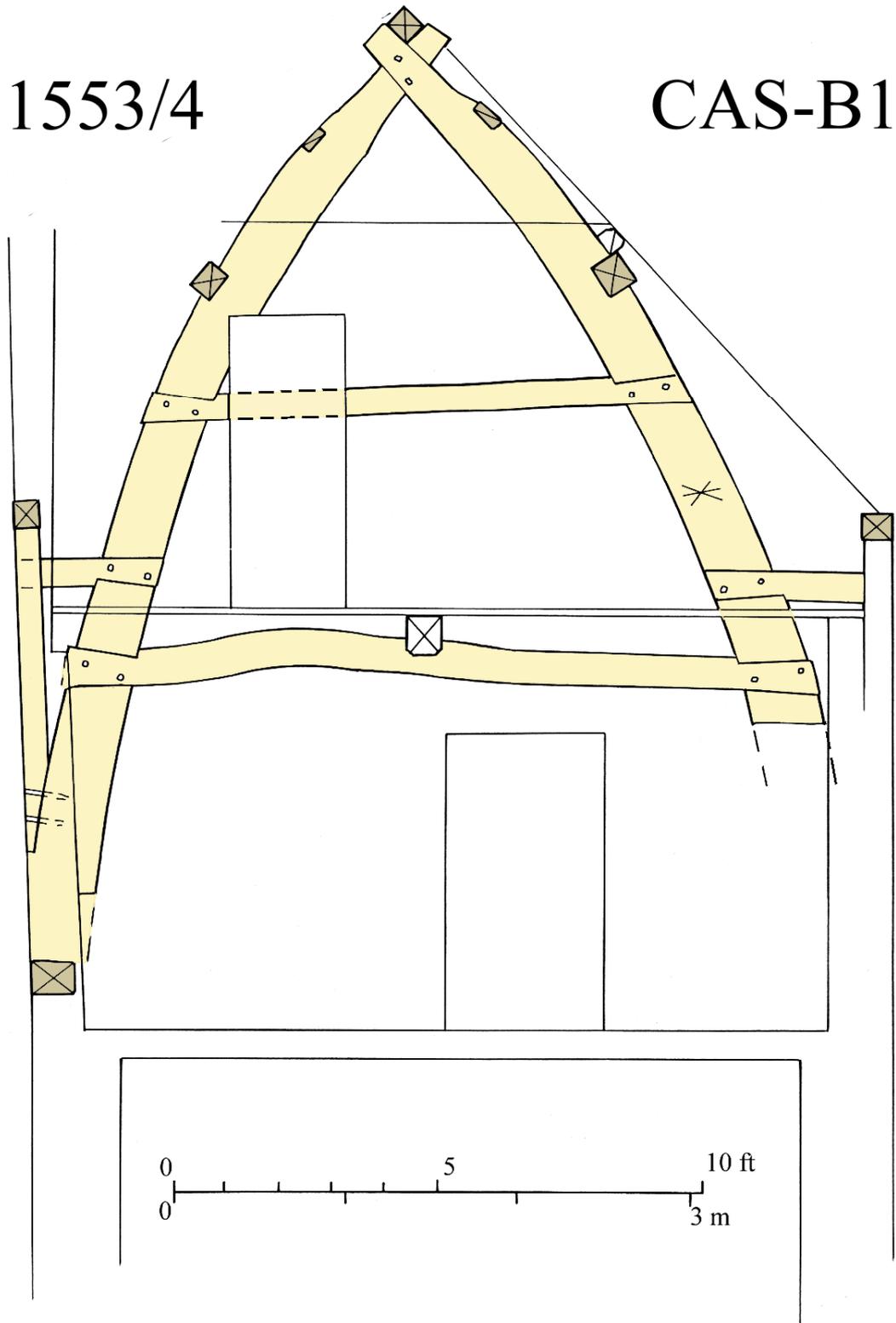


Fig. 3. Section of truss T1 from the east.

STRUCTURAL FEATURES

PHASE 1: *Bays I and II*: Truss T1 is clearly the original end to the house, from the weathering of the east face of the timbers and by the fact the wall plate and purlins project only a short distance beyond it. The crucks measure 15 x 5in and are heart sawn, both from the same tree, with the heartwood facing inwards (less usual than the opposite orientation). The crucks have a type 'D' apex (blades halved over each other

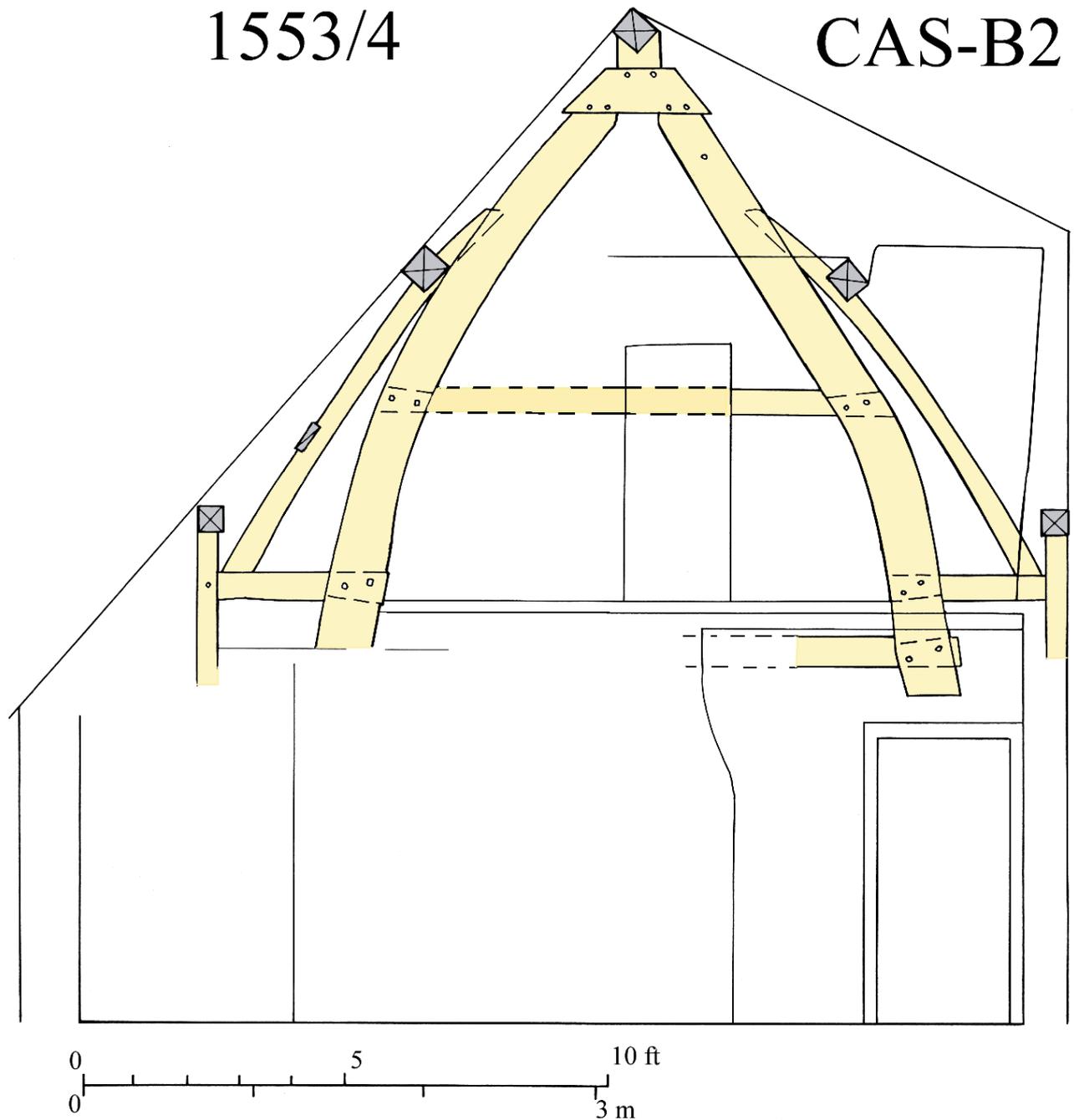


Fig. 3. Section of Truss T2 from the west.

continuing to form a cradle holding the 8in square diagonally-set ridge piece). The collar (6 by 5in) and tiebeam (7 by 5in) both have barefaced dovetail lap joints on the eastern side. Much original wattle and daub exists both above and below the collar. A doorway was cut through the collar when bay III was added. The purlins are trenched over the back of the blades and measure 8 by 7in. A most interesting feature is that the wind-braces descend from the top of the crucks to the purlins, rather than the opposite. The wall plates are supported on cruck studs which are jointed into the backs of the blades. The upper parts of these studs are tied to the blades by cruck spurs positioned about 6in below the wall-plates.

Truss T2 is similar to T1, apart from having an 'F1' apex (blades jointed into a saddle carrying a short king-post to hold the ridge). Again the blades appear to have been cut from the same tree only here the heartwood is on the eastern, or face, side of the truss. In the cupboard to the rear of the chimney stack in bay I, the junction of the wall-plate, cruck stud, spur and packing piece is visible. Here, the wind-braces rise from the packing pieces to the purlins in the usual manner. The ridge extends about 28in to the west of T2, where it is cut at a steep splay, presumably for a scarf joint.

Truss T3 is not very accessible, but the apex is identical to T1, and it would appear that again the crucks were halved from the same tree. The front foot of this cruck has visual evidence for a removed cruck stud which was jointed onto the back of the cruck blade through a notched half lap.

No roof timbers survive apart from the purlins and ridge. Most of the floors are of lime-ash on reeds. The joists to the east part of bay I are supported on a half beam pegged to this side of the cruck rather than on the tie. No assembly marks were visible, but a 'square' mark was noted on the east side of the rear cruck of T1 between the collar and the tie. Some original exterior framing survives on the south face of bay I, which contains four large panels separated by a mid-rail and a central stud.

PHASE 2: East End: This bay has timber-framed front and rear walls, much like the adjoining cruck bay. It sits on a brick basement storey at the front through which a door gives access to a cellar, which is also linked to the ground floor by stairs rising into the north west corner of bay I. The gable end wall is of stone with a blocked window above the first floor. The first floor joists run transversely, bearing on an axial beam fixed to the tiebeam of truss T1.

PHASE 3: West End: This bay is wholly brick-built in Flemish bond. The side elevation has a bricked-up window at first floor level, and what appear to be bricked up ventilation slits in the ground floor end. When this bay was built, as well as raising the other three bays to the same height along the front, all the windows were probably changed to horizontal sliding sashes, most of which remain.

DENDROCHRONOLOGY

For dendrochronology abbreviations see page facing Introduction.

Sampling Comments: Eight samples were taken through coring by Robert Howard on 23 August 1989. All the samples dated with the exception of sample CAS-B07, a packing piece, which had too few rings to date. Visually it was clear that samples CAS-B01 and B02 were cut from the same tree, as were B05 and B06. The crucks from truss T3 appear also to be from a single tree but were not sampled.

TREE-RING SAMPLE RECORD AND SUMMARY OF DATING

| Sample Code | Sample Location | Total Rings | Sapwood Rings | FMR Date | LHR Date | LMR Date | Date Cat |
|-------------|----------------------------|-------------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| CAS-B01 | Rear cruck blade truss T2 | 110 | 20C | 1444 | 1533 | 1553 | 1 |
| CAS-B02 | Front cruck blade truss T2 | 113 | 11 | 1428 | 1529 | 1540 | 1 |
| CAS-B03 | Yoke truss T2 | 82 | 24C | 1472 | 1529 | 1553 | 1 |
| CAS-B04 | Ridge piece bay I | 80 | HS | 1448 | 1527 | 1527 | 1 |
| CAS-B05 | Front cruck blade truss T1 | 69 | 18C | 1485 | 1535 | 1553 | 1 |
| CAS-B06 | Rear cruck blade truss T1 | 83 | 17c | 1469 | 1534 | 1551 | 1 |
| CAS-B07 | Packing piece truss T2 | 28 NM | 18 | — | — | — | — |
| CAS-B08 | Rear purlin bay I | 67 | HS | 1458 | 1524 | 1524 | 1 |

Site sequence: (Samples 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8), 126 rings long dated 1428–1553 with *t*-values 6.3(OXFORD), 6.2(E.MID).

Felling date: (samples 1, 3, 5 with last dated rings have complete sapwood), **1553/4** (VA21.90).