

Report and Documentary History for
**The Plough Inn, 33 Hall Gate, Diseworth,
Leicestershire**

Site Code: DIS-A

from

The Medieval Peasant House in Midland England

by

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Fig. 1. View from the south-west

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Oxbow Books

DIS-A: THE PLOUGH INN, 33 HALL GATE, DISEWORTH, LEICESTERSHIRE

Grid reference: SK 4526 2456 Survey Date: 13 June 1989; 10 Sept 2003 By: D. Miles; N. W. Alcock

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Reference: Webster, V. R. (1954), 'Cruck-framed buildings of Leicestershire', *Leicestershire Archaeol Hist Soc Trans*, **30**, 26-58.

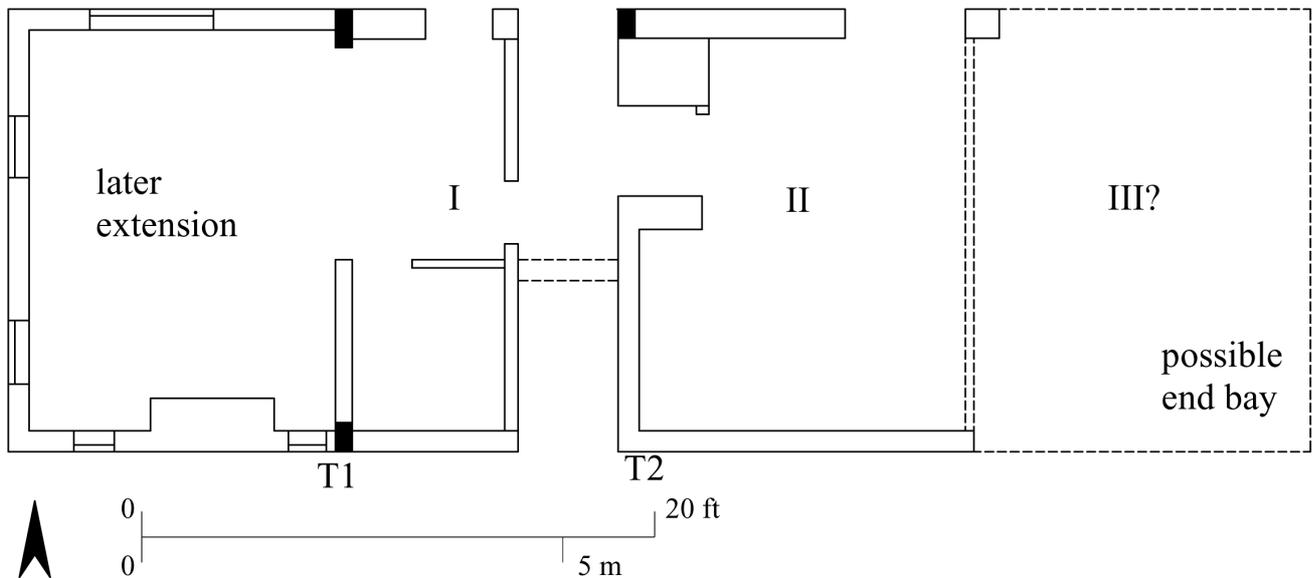


Fig. 2. Outline plan, showing truss and bay numbering.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The Plough Inn was probably a three-bay cruck building, of which one end and one internal cruck truss remain. Very little survives of the original internal structure, thus making interpretation difficult and only an outline plan can be recovered. The upper floor in bay I is early, suggesting that this may have been a floored inner room. There appears to be little smoke-blackening in any of the bays, and the roof space contains no evidence for either truss having been infilled. It is also possible that truss T2 was only partly closed which could indicate that the middle and western bays made up an open hall, later floored. A presumed third truss at the E end of bay II may be the cruck referred to by Webster (1954) as having been partly cut away during alterations made in June 1954; further alterations have removed the whole of any truss at this point. Truss T2 has a type 'D' apex whilst the western cruck (T1) has a type 'A' apex. Samples were taken for dendrochronology but failed to date; the 15th century can be tentatively suggested.

STRUCTURAL FEATURES

Truss T2 is constructed of a pair of matching cruck blades cut from the same tree. These are halved across each other at the top, forming a cradle to support the diagonally set ridge which measures 7½in square. The crucks are approximately 12in wide, tapering to 7in at the apex, and are 7in thick. The blades were jointed by a collar, since cut away, which was half-lapped and pegged; the ends still protrude beyond the blades to support the purlins (8in square). Wind-braces are in situ on the rear (N) blade, although the front ones have been removed. The wall-plates are supported on cruck spurs which are jointed into the blades with half-lapped bare-faced dovetails. A halving some two feet below the spurs may have been for a tie beam although it would have been unusually low.

Truss T1 (mainly visible in the attic) has a completely different apex construction. The blades just meet at the apex, giving a seating for the ridge piece., and the blades are linked by a yoke immediately below the ridge (type 'A'). A very interesting feature is a peg which pins the two blades together immediately below the ridge. Where this emerges on the back of the cruck, the peg is fox-wedged to prevent withdrawal. This has only been recorded once elsewhere, in a very high quality building, the Round Tower, Windsor Castle, dated to 1354/5.

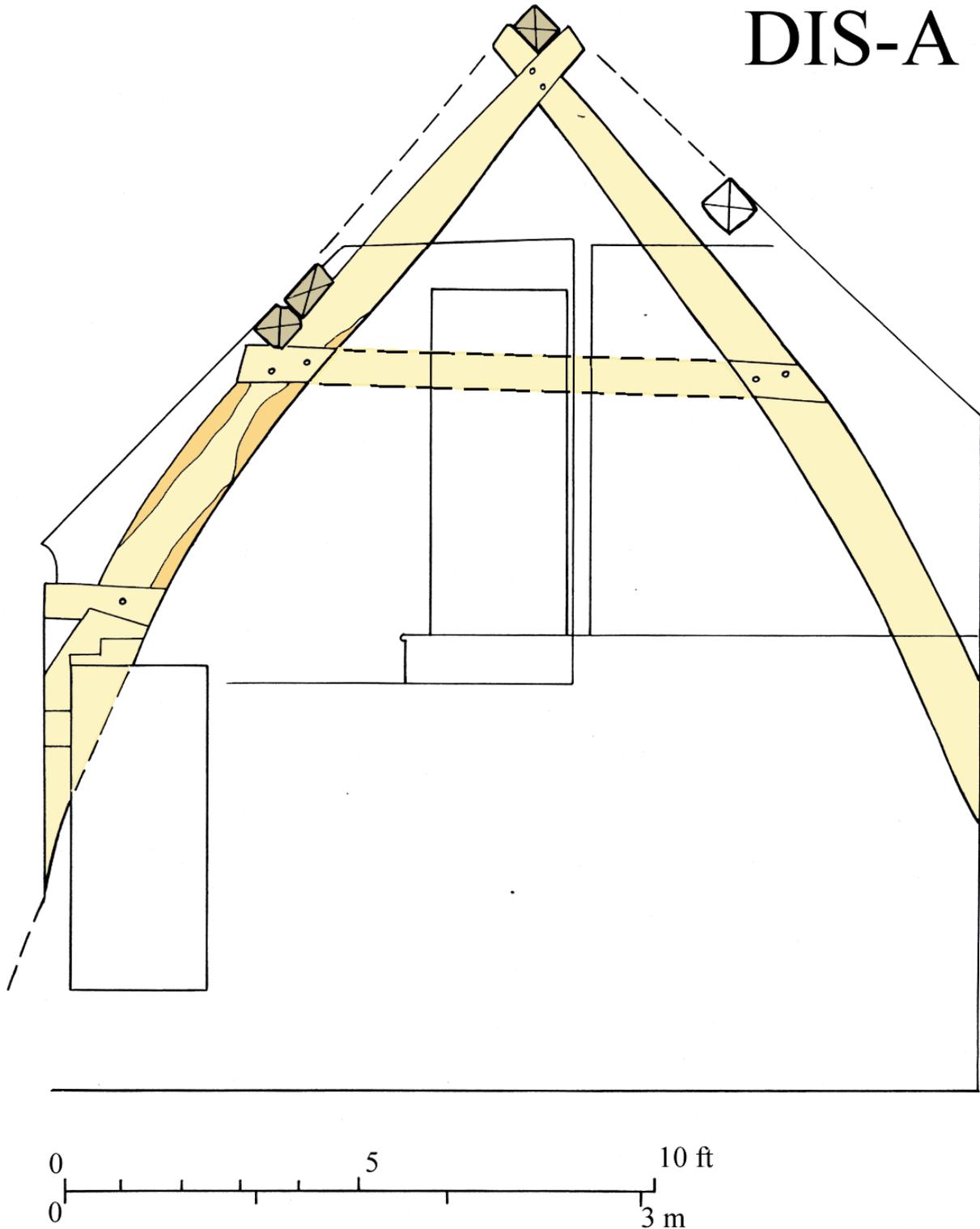


Fig. 3. Section of truss T2.

The ridge piece is scarfed immediately to the west of T2 with a simple splayed joint twice pegged from above. A few rafters remain in situ, but several others had been cut away during a recent roof reconstruction. These rafters were *riven* radially from logs, rather than sawn, measuring about 4-6in wide and they were laid at 20½in centres. The roof was originally covered in thatch to which such rough rafters were obviously well suited, whereas the roof has now been tiled in new pantiles on new rafters.

The plan of the building has been greatly obscured by alterations, including the removal of most of the original walls, especially at the east end. An axial ceiling beam with a chamfer and roll stops is visible in the passage to the west of T2; it carries what appear to be lodged transverse joists. Thus, this is possibly the inner end of a three-bay building; an alternative is that bays I and II were an open hall, subdivided by a partly closed truss.

DOCUMENTARY HISTORY

In 1795, the Plough Inn is numbered on the Enclosure map of the village (Fig. 4). It belonged to the Christ's College, Cambridge estate, rather than being a freeholding, and it comprised a quarter-acre croft and 1¼ acres of open-field land, in the tenure of Thos Upton junior. In 1698, it can be identified as held by William Orguile, and in 1659 by Michael Hall.¹ Both had a quarter-acre croft and about 10 acres of open field land, rather less than a half-yardland.

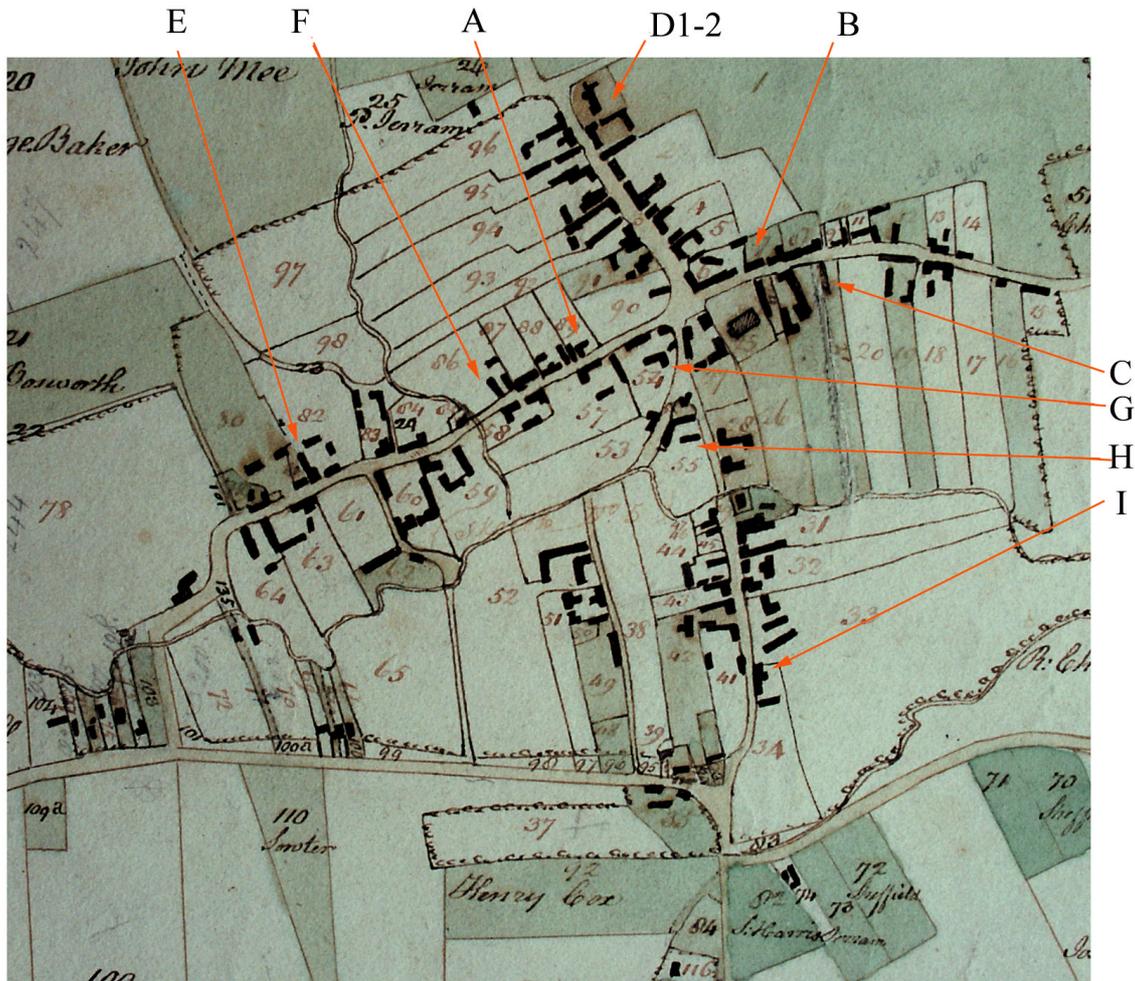


Fig. 4. Diseworth in 1795, showing the location of the cruck buildings. (CCC, Diseworth, Agg(1), reproduced with permission of the Master, Fellows and Scholars of Christ's College, Cambridge).

¹ Their property abutted the land of either William Randon (1698) or Thomas Exon (1659) on the east, which in turn adjoined that of the Vicarage on the north (no. 91 on the 1795 map).

On 1st August 1700, Elizabeth, the widow of William Orgill of Whitwick, yeoman, and Ralph the son and executor of William Orgill, assigned to John Clifford of Diseworth, yeoman, the 21 year lease of a cottage and nine acres of land in Diseworth, made to William Orgill by Edward Bigland (the Christ's College lessee) on 24 Mar 1696[/7]. The rent was 3s 7½d *per annum* and the consideration for the assignment was £73.² On 16th March 1743, Charles Barwell of Leicester (now the lessee) leased a messuage and backside and a cottage and nine acres in Diseworth to John Clifford of Kegworth, yeoman and Richard Clifford of Kegworth, yeoman, to hold for 16 years, rent 5s 3d.³ These two leases probably relate to DIS-A, and the latter suggests that a cottage may have been added to it by 1743. A Mary Upton, widow and executrix of Thomas Upton of Diseworth, labourer, is named as the tenant of a Diseworth cottage in 1766, and the tenant in 1795 may perhaps be connected to them; however, she paid only 1d rent, so probably was not a tenant of the Plough.⁴

DENDROCHRONOLOGY

For dendrochronology abbreviations see page facing Introduction.

Sampling Comments: Eight samples were obtained through coring by Robert Howard on 28th April 1989. Only two of the samples had over 50 rings, and these were matched against national and local reference chronologies but failed to date conclusively. A number of the removed rafters were examined but proved to have too few rings for useful analysis.

TREE-RING SAMPLE RECORD AND SUMMARY OF DATING

| Sample Code | Sample Location | Total Rings | Sapwood Rings | FMR Date | LHR Date | LMR Date | Date Cat |
|-------------|----------------------|-------------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| DIS-A01 | Ridge bay I | 74 | 24 | — | — | — | — |
| DIS-A02 | Rear cruck truss T2 | 35 NM | HS | — | — | — | — |
| DIS-A03 | Front purlin bay II | 53 | 05 | — | — | — | — |
| DIS-A04 | Front cruck truss T2 | 20 NM | — | — | — | — | — |
| DIS-A05 | Rear purlin bay II | 13 NM | — | — | — | — | — |
| DIS-A06 | Rear cruck truss T3 | 20 NM | 10 | — | — | — | — |
| DIS-A07 | Front rafter bay II | 11 NM | — | — | — | — | — |
| DIS-A08 | Rear rafter bay II | 19 NM | — | — | — | — | — |

Not dated.

² Leicestershire Record Office, DE1107/15

³ *Ibid.* DE1107/168.

⁴ *Ibid.* DE1107/186.