

Report for
29 High Street, Hallaton, Leicestershire

Site Code: HAL-A

from

The Medieval Peasant House in Midland England

by

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Fig. 1. View from south (Photo: N. Hill)

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Oxbow Books

HAL-A: 29 HIGH STREET, HALLATON, LEICESTERSHIRE

Grid reference: SP 7889 9665

Survey Date: 17 July 1989

By: D. Miles

Additional surveying: Sept 2010

By: N. Hill

Illustrations:

1. View from the south

2. Plan

3. Section of Truss T2

4. Carpentry details

5. Inserted timber-framed fireplace

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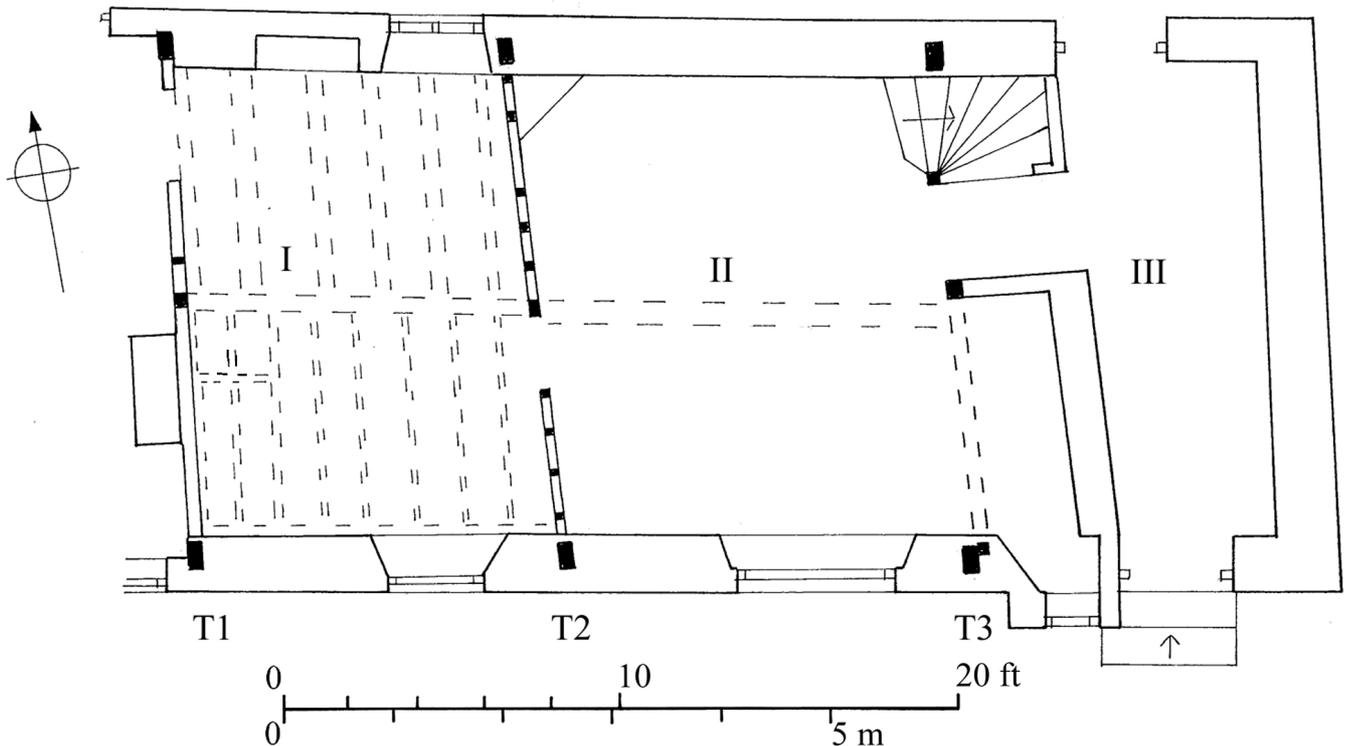


Fig. 2. Plan, showing truss and bay numbering.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION**SUMMARY AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT**

PHASE 1: 29 High Street Hallaton is a cruck house now of three bays, aligned parallel to the village street, retaining three cruck trusses. The external walls were of mud on a stone plinth and the house is still thatched. The central cruck has given a felling date range of 1465-83. The cruck spurs are unusual, being dovetailed in section and pushed into corresponding dovetail trenches in the cruck blades. Detailed analysis indicates that the building may be more complex than it appears. Multiple pegging of many joints and a strange pattern of smoke-blackening suggest that the building was re-planned, perhaps in the mid-sixteenth century. Thereafter, the house had a central open hall (bay II) with a timber chimneystack, a floored bay (I) to the west with a chamber over a parlour, and a short service end to the east (III), including a cross passage. A further bay at the west is likely since truss T1 lacks a stone plinth, as would be expected if it had been part of an external wall.

LATER PHASES: In the early seventeenth, a first floor was inserted in the hall. A datestone of 1841 records the rebuilding of the east gable wall, by which time the property was owned by Revd. J H Dent. Probably at this time, the roof was raised over bay III and dormers added to each of the other bays. A low brick extension has been added beyond T1, perhaps in the nineteenth century.

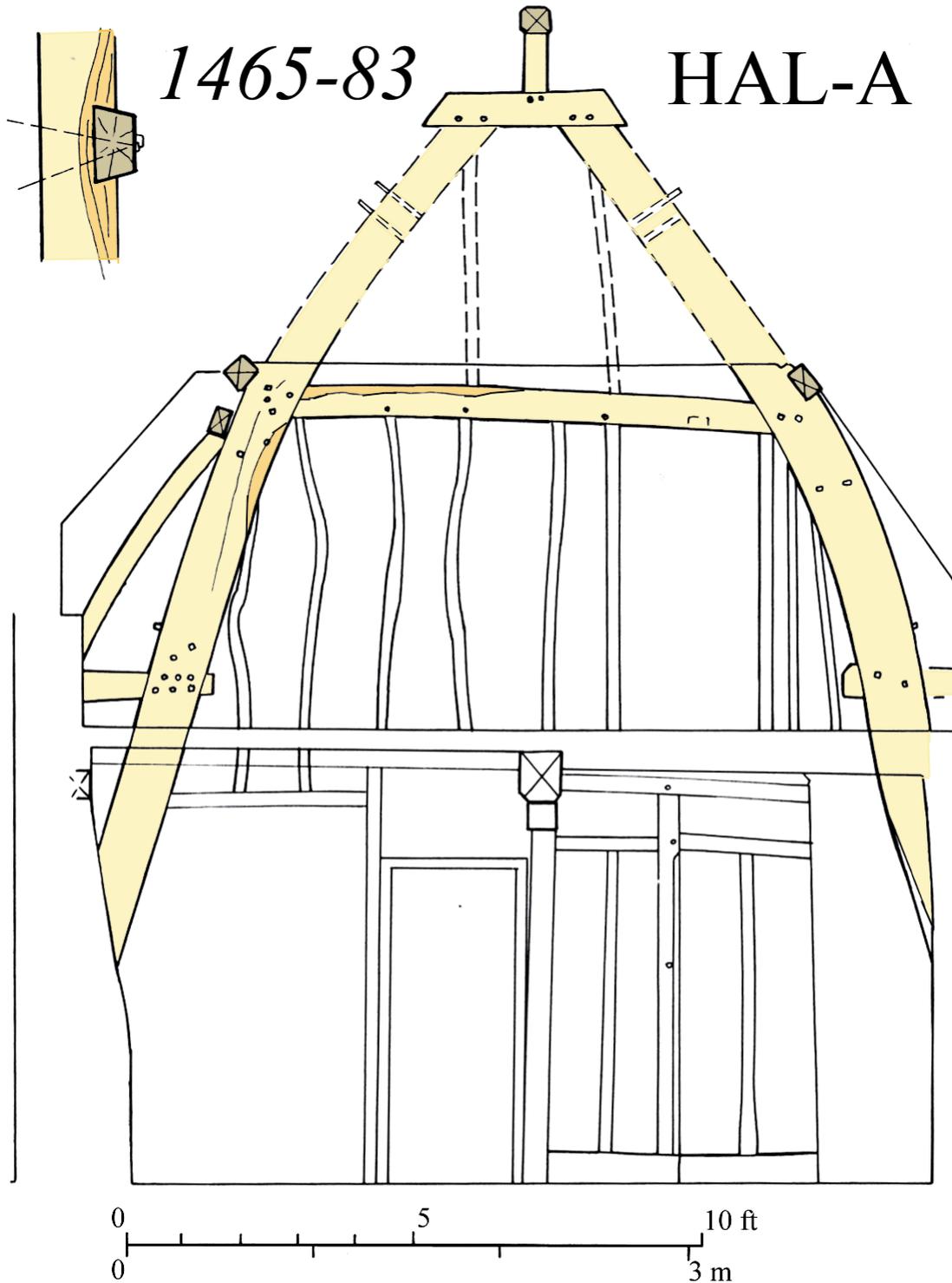


Fig. 3. Section of truss T2 from east. Inset: face view of cruck spur dovetail.

STRUCTURAL FEATURES

PHASE 1: Both trusses T1 and T2 have an apex with a short saddle and king-post, supporting a square-set ridge (type F1). However, truss T3 towards the east has a plain saddle apex (type C), which is the normal local form. The cruck blades have gently curving profiles and trusses T1 and T3 are irregular and of rather slight scantling. The F1 apex type, where the blades stop short of the apex, may have been the result of difficulty of obtaining suitable timber for the more normal C-apex. The north blade of truss T1 is visible almost to ground level, and it seems likely that all the original blades extended down to the ground. In truss T2, the blades measure 12 x 6 in, and appear to be halved from the same tree.

All three trusses have lapped collars, which extended past the cruck blades to support the purlins. The collar of truss T3 is probably of re-used timber. It seems there were no tiebeams, though the visible evidence at truss T1 is not conclusive. Instead, all three trusses had cruck spurs, set a little above the current first floor level. In the one instance where the spur joint is fully visible, it takes an unusual form, being slid into a long dovetailed trench in the side of the blade with two skew pegs (Figs. 3-4). On the north side of truss T3, the outer end of one cruck spur is visible, with a through-peg which fixed the wallplate down onto the spur. The square-set ridge runs along all three bays of the building, with splayed scarf joints at each truss. The purlins are largely concealed, but may survive towards the west. Pegs for removed windbraces are present on the back of the blades above the spurs and pairs of long pegs passing through the top of the blades of T2 and T3 (Fig. 3) may have supported longitudinal framing for a louvre, although they might have been for downward wind-braces.



Fig. 4. (a) Multiple pegging of spur to truss T2. (b) Dovetailed cruck spur to T3 (photos: N. Hill).

Truss T1 has a carpenter's mark, a chisel-cut 'I' to the north blade/saddle joint, though there is no similar mark on truss T2. This truss, T1, was closed, though some of its wattle and daub has been replaced with brick. As noted above, a further bay probably stood to its west, presumably without a further truss. T2 is also closed with staves and daub, but the upper part of T3 is open. The presence of a further cruck beyond T3 is inferred from the fragment of a cruck blade that has been reused as a door lintel in bay III.

Sooting in the roof is most intense on truss T1 (though absent from the present daub infill), moderate on T2 and only present on the saddle of T3, although some slightly sooted pole rafters survive beyond it. This pattern suggests that when constructed the hall was at the western end. However, the house appears later to have been given a more conventional layout, with a floor in bay I, open hall with timber chimney in bay II and (presumably) service room in bay III.

LATER PHASES: Bay I has early floor joists carried on an axial beam, with a trimmer for a ladder stair, passing through either the larger southern or smaller central opening. Bay III contains a well-preserved timber-framed fireplace with framed stack above. Framing remains in T2 for a doorframe between bays I and II, with the southern doorpost and the door head surviving. The doorpost has a chamfer up it,

stopping at the position of the door head. This doorway was later blocked and the framing beside it altered to match. The modern doorway is to the left of the axial beam.

The inserted hall floor is carried on an axial beam with scroll stops and joists with soffit tenons; the east end is supported on a chamfered stub post rising from the lintel of the timber-framed fireplace (Fig. 5). The west end of the beam is attached to the end of the axial beam of bay I, itself carried by the central post of the T2 infill.



Fig. 5. Foot of truss T3 with inserted timber fireplace and ceiling (photo: N. Hill)

DENDROCHRONOLOGY

For dendrochronology abbreviations see page facing Introduction.

Sampling Comments: Six samples were obtained through coring by Robert Howard on 11 July 1989. Four of the cruck blades were sampled, and each pair from T2 and T3 matched and formed two site sequences, although only those from T2 could be dated.

TREE-RING SAMPLE RECORD AND SUMMARY OF DATING

SAMPLE CODE	SAMPLE LOCATION	TOTAL RINGS	SAP RINGS	FMR DATE	LHR DATE	LMR DATE	DAT CAT
HAL-A01	Collar truss T2	NM	—	—	—	—	—
HAL-A02	Collar truss T3	45	13	—	—	—	—
HAL-A03	Front cruck blade truss T3	73	HS	—	—	—	—
HAL-A04	Rear cruck blade truss T3	73	01	—	—	—	—
HAL-A05	Rear cruck blade truss T2	67	HS	1387	1453	1453	3b
HAL-A06	Front cruck blade truss T2	69	HS	1384	1452	1452	3b

Average date of last heartwood ring

1453

Site sequence: (composed of samples 5, 6), 70 rings long dated 1384–1453 with *t*-values of 6.0(BROUGHTON), 4.1 (E.MID).

95% felling date range: 1465–1494 (previously 1466–1491). OxCal refined felling date range: 1465–83.