

Report for
**Roof Tree Cottage, 4 Brooksby Road, Hoby,
Leicestershire**

Site Code: HOB-A

from

The Medieval Peasant House in Midland England

by

Nat Alcock and Dan Miles



Fig. 1. View from the north (Photo: Nick Hill)

© 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

HOB-A: ROOF TREE COTTAGE, 4 BROOKSBY ROAD, HOBY, LEICESTERSHIRE
(now The White House)

Grid reference: SK 669 173

Survey Date: 5 Oct. 1989

By: D. Miles

Illustrations:

	Page
1. View	1
2. Ground floor plan	2
3. Section of truss T2	3
4. View of the purlin in bay IV	

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

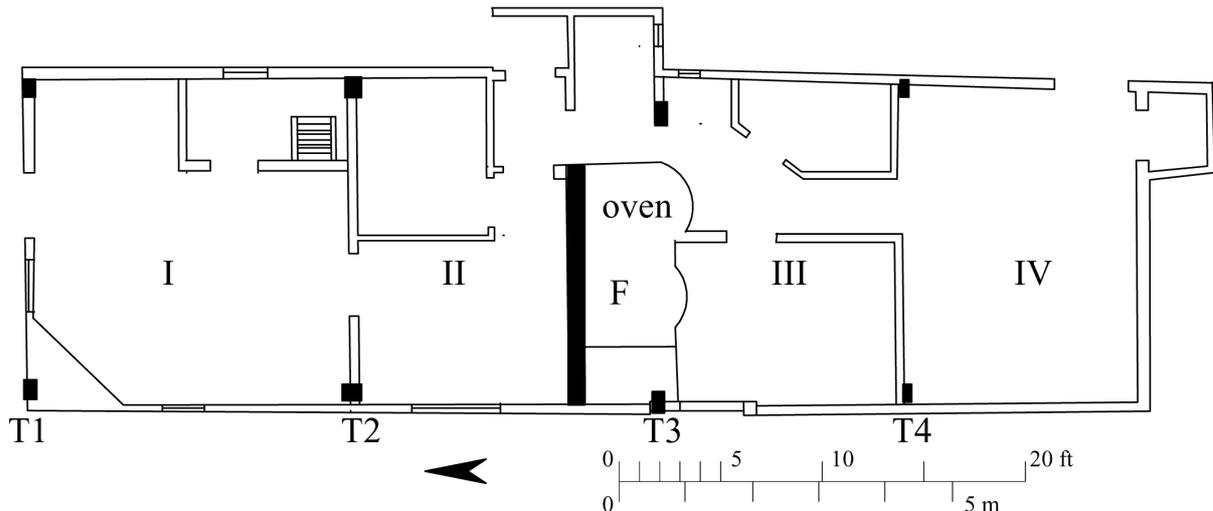


Fig. 2. Plan, showing truss and bay numbering (after Webster (1954)).

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

PHASE 1: Roof Tree Cottage is a cruck house aligned north-south, gable end to the street and is covered in thatch. It contains four cruck trusses, three having type 'C' apexes. The main phase of construction seems to have started with the north end and certainly included bays I and II and possibly III although this last bay has been heavily reconstructed. Bay II was originally the open hall, as shown by the heavy soot blackening, especially adjacent to truss T2. Some smoke blackening is noticeable in bay I, and coupled with the fact that the floor is a later insertion, suggests that this bay was open as well. Assuming that bay III is contemporary with the first two, then it is likely to have been divided from bay II from the beginning, as the west purlin of bay III adjacent to truss T3 shows only a slight amount of soot blackening. This bay apparently had an original floor and, if so, would have been the chamber and solar. Timbers from bays I and II have been tree-ring dated to 1440/1.

LATER PHASES: Sometime during the sixteenth century, a smoke-hood was added against the south end of bay II. The ridge was severed at this point and propped on the horizontal mid-rail of the smoke-hood by what appears to be a section of reused cruck blade with a section of collar or tie still affixed to it. This bears the assembly marks II and II tag, but seems not to relate to the existing structure. During the seventeenth or eighteenth century, bays I and II were floored over, bay III was reduced in height and bay IV was added. This is somewhat lower than the other three bays and may have been a byre or shippon.

STRUCTURAL FEATURES

PHASE 1: Truss T2 is made up of full crucks joined with a saddle on which the square-set ridge beam (6½ by 6in) is set (type 'C' apex). The crucks measure 12 by 10in and are boxed heart. The purlins (9 by 5in) are laid on the backs of the blades and are supported by the extended ends of the collar (7in square) and by the packing pieces below. The purlins were braced by wind-braces (some removed). The wall-plates (6in square) are in turn supported on the ends of the tiebeam which is 6½in square. It was not

possible to determine whether the cruck studs survive, hidden in the thickness of the walls. The collar has been severed to form a doorway from bay I to bay II. There are staves extant between the tiebeam and what may be the original sill beam.

1440/1

HOB-A

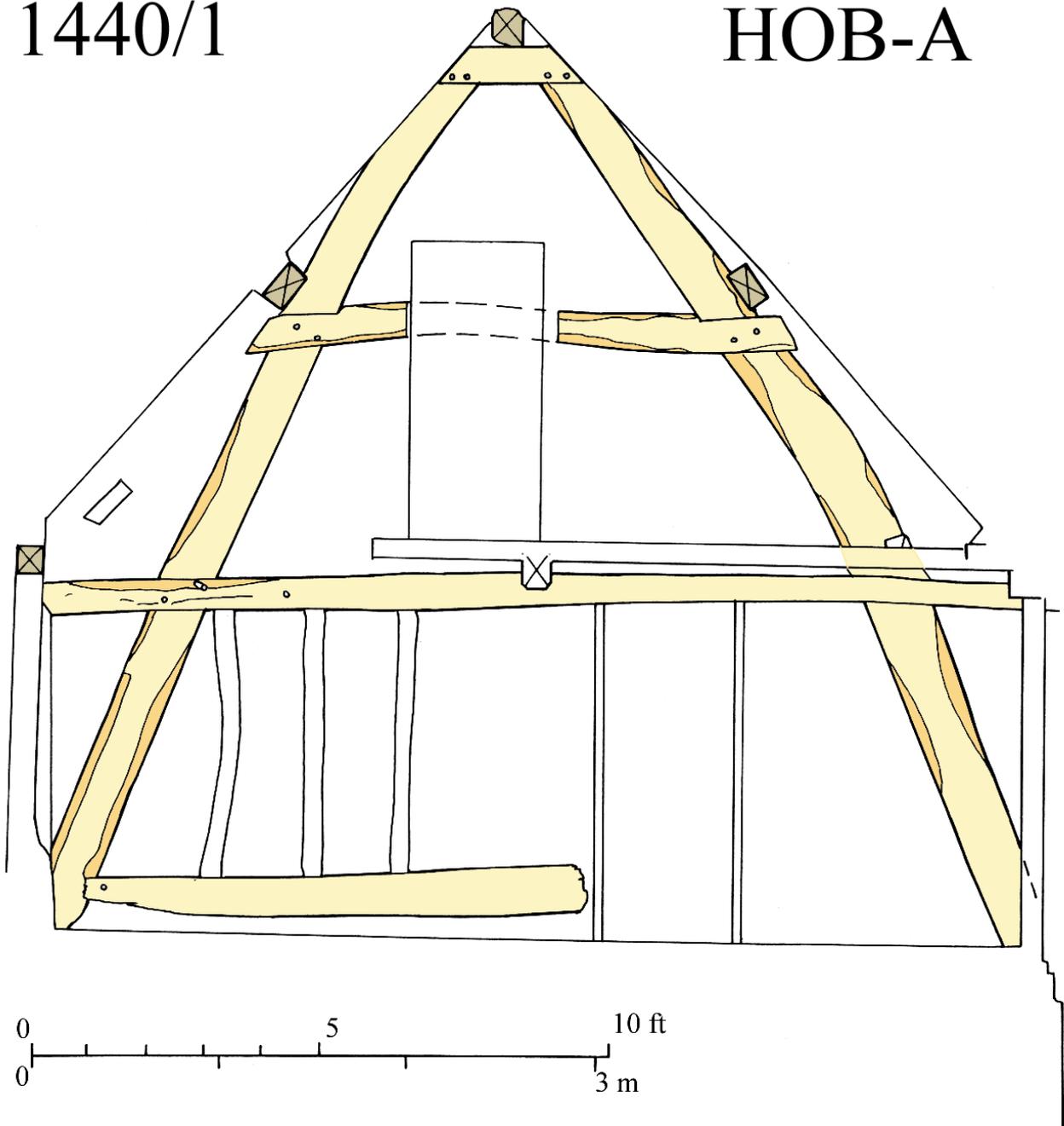


Fig. 3. Section of truss T2.

Truss T1 appears to be identical to truss T2, also with a type 'C' apex. Truss T3 is obscured on the north side by the fireplace and smoke hood, but is visible upstairs in bay III. This cruck is of much slimmer section than the other trusses and appears to have a centre stud between collar and saddle. It is not clear if the ridge originally sat on this saddle, or if it was raised on a block or king-post. The roof above bay III has been reconstructed, one purlin being set higher than the other. Webster (1954), 49 mentions an upper floor in this bay supported by massive rafters [*sic*, meaning joists?] suggesting that it was originally floored. Original rafters are visible in both bays I and II and are mainly halved poles measuring 3-5 by 3in, laid at 16-20in centres. The floors are all boarded, although in 1951 bay I had a plaster floor.

Bay IV is built of very rough timber, one unusual piece being a purlin fashioned out of a tree limb with a branch which has been cleverly positioned to serve as a wind-brace. The external walls are mainly

of brick, probably replacing earlier wattle and daub. They sit on a stone foundation which is about four feet high on the west side due to the sloping ground level. The north gable end is plastered over above the tiebeam.



Fig. 4. View of the purlin in bay IV.

DENDROCHRONOLOGY

For dendrochronology abbreviations see page facing Introduction.

Sampling Comments: Eight samples were taken through coring by Robert Howard on 5th October 1989. The samples were restricted to the first two bays and included both crucks in trusses T1 and T2, plus both purlins in each bay. All samples had complete sapwood and all have been dated with the exception of the western blades of both trusses. It will be noted that four of the samples were felled in Spring 1440, whilst the other two were felled in Autumn 1441. Therefore, construction is likely to have taken place in late 1441 or 1442.

TREE-RING SAMPLE RECORD AND SUMMARY OF DATING

Sample Code	Sample Location	Total Rings	Sapwood Rings	FMR Date	LHR Date	LMR Date	Date Cat
HOB-A01	Front cruck blade truss T1	92	20C	—	—	—	—
HOB-A02	Rear cruck blade truss T1	94	29C	1348	—	1441	2
HOB-A03	Front purlin bay I	79	20C	1363	—	1441	2
HOB-A04	Rear purlin bay I	92	26C	1349	—	1440	2
HOB-A05	Rear cruck blade truss T2	79	20C	1362	—	1440	2
HOB-A06	Rear purlin bay II	90	24C	1351	—	1440	2
HOB-A07	Front purlin bay II	76	20C	1365	—	1440	2
HOB-A08	Front cruck blade truss T2	80 +10NM	10+10NMC	—	—	—	—

Site sequence: (composed of samples 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7), 94 rings long dated 1348–1441 with *t*-values of 5.5(E.MID), 7.5(ROTBSQ01, the site sequence of April Cottage, Rothley, VA21.90).

Estimated felling date: (all samples have complete sapwood) **1440-1** (VA21.90).