

Report for
**4 Main Street, Long Whatton, Leicestershire ,
Leicestershire**

Site Code: LWH-A

from

The Medieval Peasant House in Midland England

by

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Fig. 1. View from the north

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Oxbow Books

LWH-A: 4 MAIN STREET, LONG WHATTON, LEICESTERSHIRE

Grid reference: SK 4758 2363

Survey Date: 4 April 1991

By: D Miles

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References: Lloyd, Nathaniel (1925), *History of English brickwork*, London, H. G. Montgomery, 1925; Webster, V. R. (1954), 'Cruck-framed buildings of Leicestershire', *Leicestershire Archaeol Hist Soc Trans*, **30**, 26-58.

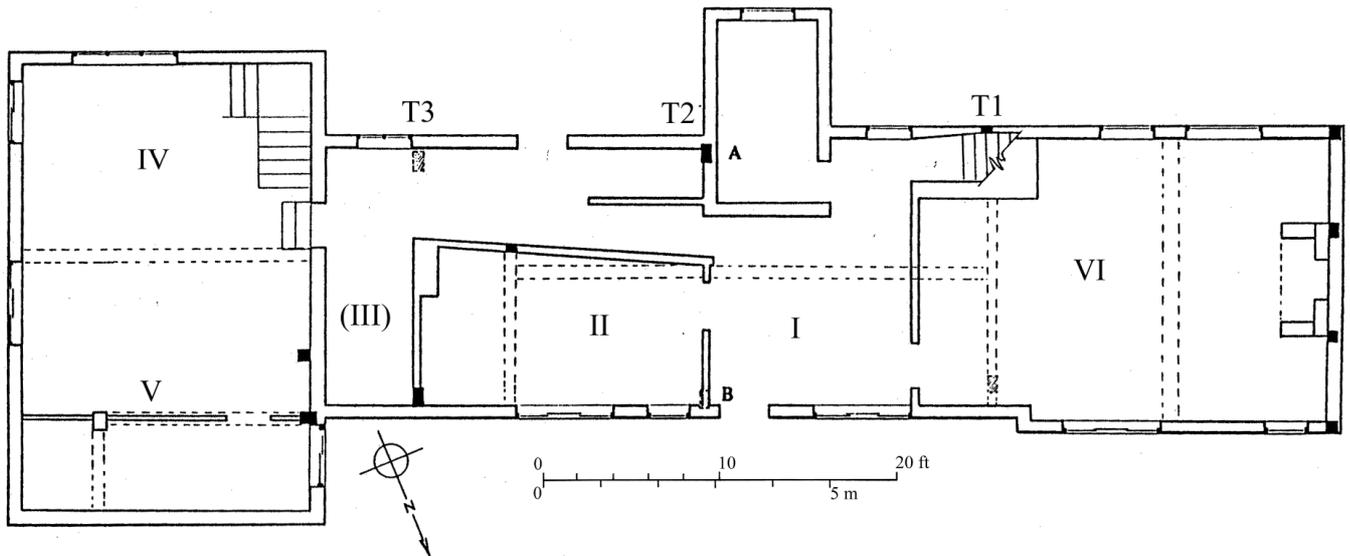


Fig. 2. Plan, showing truss and bay numbering.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

PHASE 1: No. 4, Main Street, (formerly the Boot Inn) is a substantial thatched house now comprising a core of two and a half cruck bays facing north and running parallel to the road (nominally east-west), with a two bay cross-wing at the east end, and a single bay wing at the west. When built, the original cruck house probably had three bays. Bay III was partially replaced by the cross-wing at the eastern end and is evidenced only by the purlins which continue through to the east of truss T3. No smoke blackening visible in bays I or II, but some residual soot blackening can be seen around truss T3, although this most likely came from the adjacent smoke hood which appears to be original. The small scantling of the joists suggests that there were no first floors initially. All three cruck trusses have saddle apexes (type 'C'). Timbers in the cruck part of the house have a felling date range of 1558-1562.

PHASE 2: Probably in around 1600, the kitchen cross-wing was added to the eastern end of the house, partially removing bay III. This comprised a main room (bay IV) and a short bay (bay V) that must have been used as a large smoke-hood, as the roof timbers are soot blackened. Until recently the chimney at this end rested on the smoke-hood bearers, which are still present. The upper floor of bay IV was reached by a staircase in the south west corner of the room below. It is likely that bays I and II and the remaining part of III were floored over at this date.

PHASE 3: During the 17th century, the western cross-wing was built (bay VI). This butts up to, but is not integrated with bay I. It is a two storey block, the upper part of which was reached from a staircase in the rear of bay I. The vaulted cellar under bay I may also have been inserted at this time.

STRUCTURAL FEATURES

PHASE 1: Truss T2 comprises two slightly curved cruck blades joined at the top by a saddle which supports the ridge beam (7 by 6½in). The blades measure 11 x 9in at the bottom and may have been cut from the same tree, although insufficient of the face sides of the crucks is visible to verify this. The inside edges are finished with an inch-wide chamfer continuing to the saddle. It has a collar and a tiebeam. The latter continues out to support the wall-plates and is in turn supported by the cruck studs. The purlins (5-9 by 5-6in) are trenched into a packing piece on the front side, while at the back they are

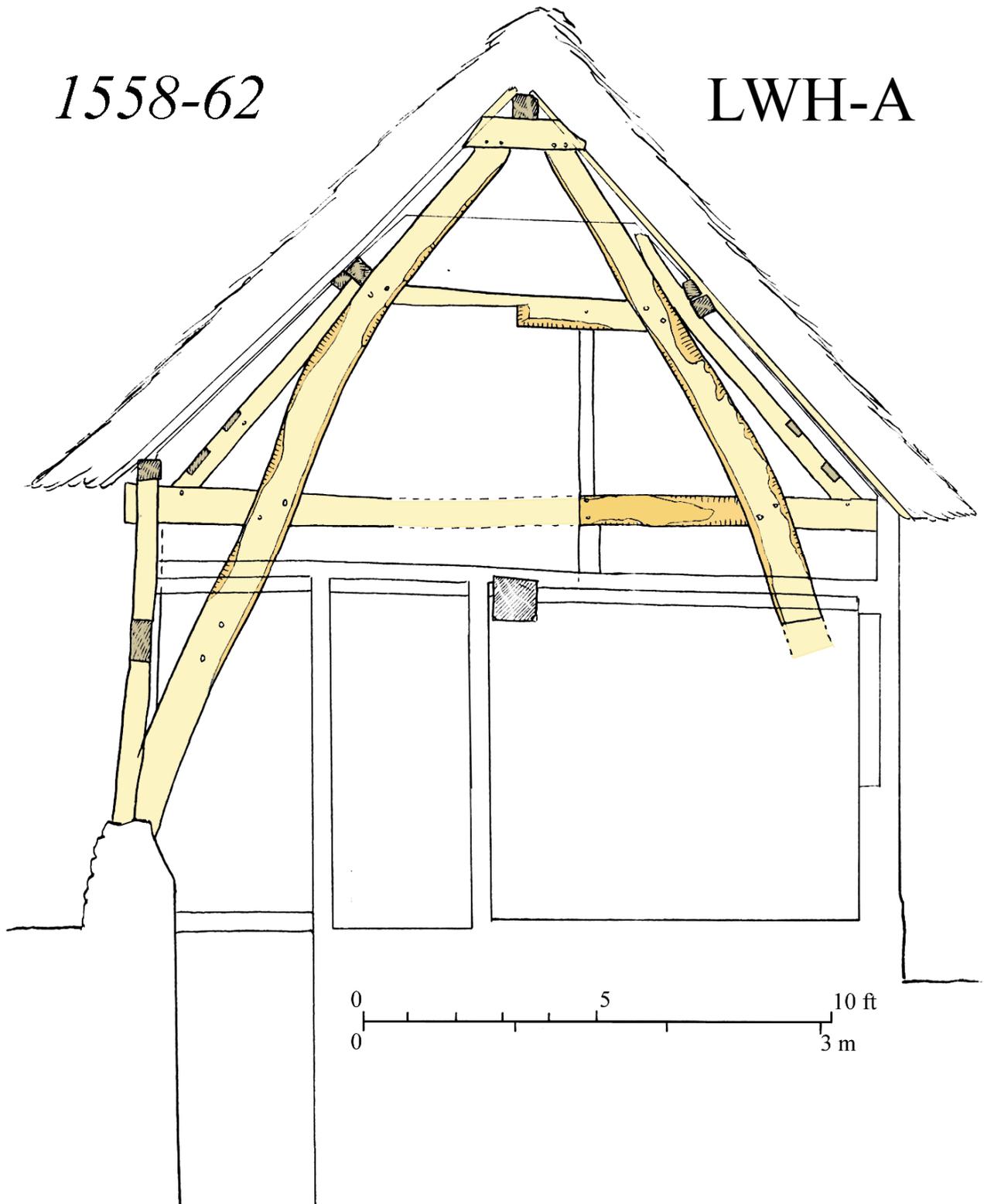


Fig. 3. Section of Truss T2.

pegged to the back of the purlin and supported below by the packing piece. Wind-braces, all since removed, lapped over and were trenched into the backs of the packing pieces. The face side of the truss faces west. The feet of the crucks probably sat on the side sill-beams which in turn rested on a stone foundation plinth. The tiebeam has been severed for a doorway which was later moved further to the rear. The front cruck has apparently been either cut back or removed altogether below first floor level.

Trusses T1 and T3 appear to be basically the same as truss T2, except that truss T1 does not have packing pieces, the wind-braces and purlins being trenched directly into the back of the blades. Both these trusses apparently have paired blades, cut from the same tree. Truss T3 is also chamfered on the east side, adding to the evidence for a third bay. The rear cruck of T1 is cut off just above collar level and is supported on what may be a section of collar or tiebeam laid on the flat, the stave groove being visible on the east face. The front cruck of this truss is also severed roughly at tiebeam level and is supported on a transverse beam of similar section to the axial beam in bay VI. The rear cruck of T3 is also cut off at first floor level. Assembly marks are present on the face side of the front crucks around the tiebeam joint in the form of a 'cc' gouged into T2, and 'ccc' into T3. A 'square' mark was also noted on this cruck above the tie, adjacent to the 'ccc' mark. The pegs in truss T3 were driven from the west, rather than from the east, as would have been expected if it had been an outside wall. These pegs give a notable example of skew-pegging (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4. Skew-pegging in truss T3, viewed from the east.

The rafters above bays I and II have been preserved within a later roof. They are all cleft or riven plank-like timbers which are between 4 and 8in wide by 2in thick at the outer sapwood edge of the sector. They are laid opposite each other at about 16in centres and are lathed with riven laths 1-4in wide by ½in thick at 5-8in centres. Both rafters and laths still retain much complete sapwood. Some wall-framing is exposed at the back of bay II. This consists of a centre post between the two cruck studs which interrupts a rail at first floor level. One panel nearest the rear cruck of truss T2 is infilled with 2¼in brickwork. The wall-plate is jointed above this panel with a through-splayed scarf. A section of transverse sill beam and post is evidence for a smoke bay at the eastern end of bay II. The axial beam in this bay also ends at this point, indicating that the smoke hood probably predates the floor, and the lack of smoke-blackening in the roof suggests that it is original.

INSERTED FLOORS: The first floor in bay I has 4½ x 3in deep joists without stops laid at 15in centres fixed into a 10in square axial beam with a 3½in flat chamfer with stepped and run-out stops. Bay II has

4in square joists with ½in chamfers with lambs-tongue stops, again laid at 15in centres fixed into an 11½ x 10in axial beam with ovolo moulding but no stops. The floors are all of lime-ash on reeds, as are the ceilings to the first floor rooms.

PHASE 2: EAST CROSS-WING: This is a timber-framed wing projecting some five to six feet forward of the cruck range. It is box framed, with the end and off-centre middle truss having paired principal rafters cut from the same trees and halved across the top as in a type 'D' apex. The wind-braces are overlapped and trenched into the back of the principals as in the cruck range. The principal posts are jowled. Above bay V the rafters and laths are all heavily smoke blackened. This area contains the remains of a corbelled chimney stack resting on the timber lintels forming a hood, the bricks measuring 9¼ by 4 by 2¾in and most likely dating from the second half of the eighteenth century. (Lloyd, 1925) The first floor joists in bay IV are 3-4 by 4in with ¼in chamfers laid at 16in centres and bearing on a transverse beam measuring 11in square with a 2½in flat chamfer, again without stops. As in the rest of the house, the first floor is of lime-ash on reeds.

PHASE 3: WEST CROSS-WING: The main sitting room occupies the whole of bay VI plus part of bay I. It has two transverse main beams, one running under truss T1, and the other in the centre of the bay. Both are approximately 14in deep and have 2in chamfers. The joists are laid at 16in centres and are cut down from older timbers to 4in square. Some assembly and 'square' marks can be observed on the joists deriving from their former use. This wing has down-braces from the corner posts to the sill beams, and between the collars and tiebeams are slightly raking queen struts. Most of the windows in the house are of horizontal sliding sashes and probably date from the eighteenth century.

DENDROCHRONOLOGY

For dendrochronology abbreviations see page facing Introduction.

Sampling Comments: Eight samples were taken from the cruck bays through coring by Robert Howard on 7th August 1989. Of these, six samples, including two of the three trusses, could be dated, indicating that all are contemporary.

TREE-RING SAMPLE RECORD AND SUMMARY OF DATING

Sample Code	Sample Location	Total Rings	Sapwood Rings	FMR Date	LHR Date	LMR Date	Date Cat
LWH-A01	Front purlin bay I	101	23	1457	1534	1557	2
LWH-A02	Rear purlin bay I	102	09	1444	1536	1545	2
LWH-A03	Rear cruck blade truss T2	64	HS	—	—	—	—
LWH-A04	Front cruck blade truss T2	87	15	1466	1537	1552	2
LWH-A05	Front cruck blade truss T1	75	HS	—	—	—	—
LWH-A06	Front purlin bay II	65	14	1490	1540	1554	2
LWH-A07	Rear purlin bay II	105	14	1451	1541	1555	2
LWH-A08	Front cruck blade truss T3	96	15	1455	1535	1550	2
Average date of last heartwood ring						1537	

Site sequences: (composed of samples 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8), 114 rings long dated 1444–1557 with *t*-values of 5.6(E.MID), 6.3(DHL-M, site sequence of the Manor, Donington-le-Heath, VA20.89).

95% felling date range: 1558–1583 (revised from 1558–1587, VA21.90, due to new sapwood estimates). OxCal estimated felling date range **1558-1562**.