

Report for
**Golden Cottage, 280 Forest Road, Woodhouse,
Leicestershire**

Site Code: WOE-A

from

The Medieval Peasant House in Midland England

by

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Fig. 1. View from the west

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WOE-A: GOLDEN COTTAGE, 280 FOREST ROAD, WOODHOUSE,
LEICESTERSHIRE

Grid reference: SK 5410 1550 Survey Date: 24 August 1989 By: D. Miles

Illustrations:	Page
1. View of the house	1
2. Ground floor plan	2
3. Sections of trusses T2 and T3	3-4
4. Decoration of the fireplace in bay II	5

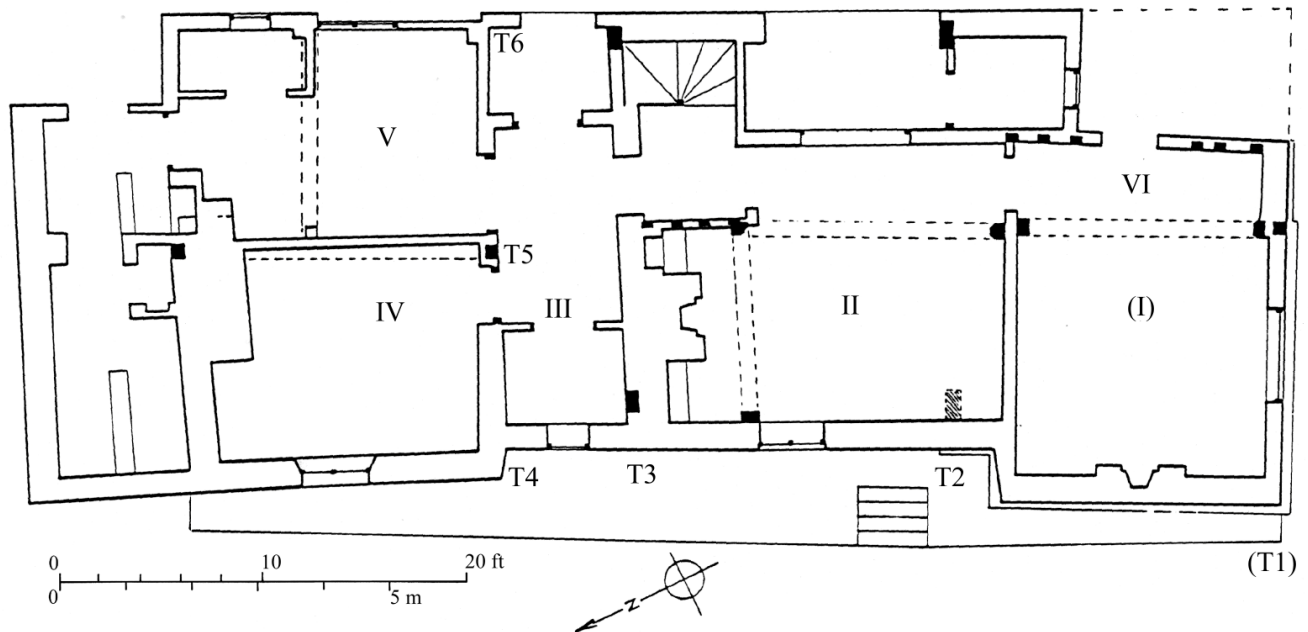


Fig. 2. Plan, showing truss and bay numbering.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

PHASE 1: Golden Cottage is aligned parallel to the road facing west. It is a multi-phase building consisting originally of a three-bay cruck hall range with a contemporary two-bay box-framed crosswing separated from it by a probable cross-passage. A later two-bay crosswing (only one bay of which survives) replaces the south-west end of the hall. The cruck hall range and box-framed crosswing have been dated by dendrochronology to 1426-30. Two features of interest in this phase are the curved tension braces in the closed cruck truss, and the position of the smoke louvre visible in the roof space, as indicated by peg holes. The walls are now of stone, and the roof is covered in stone slates with clay ridges.

PHASE 2: An early sixteenth century date is suggested for the insertion of the hall fireplace; this has a finely moulded jamb and battlemented bressemer carrying a smoke hood. It probably pre-dates the flooring of the hall.

PHASE 3: In about 1600, most of the south-western half of the hall (bay I) was replaced by the south-western crosswing. At this time, the internal functions were apparently reversed, this wing becoming the parlour end and the older crosswing to the north-east becoming the new service end. The hall was probably floored over at this time.

LATER PHASES: Sometime before 1875 the rear half of the phase 3 crosswing was demolished and replaced with a lean-to; the new arrangement is shown in a water-colour of the house, then called 'Garden Cottage - Beaumanor', by H. M. M. Hanford, 1875 (in the house).

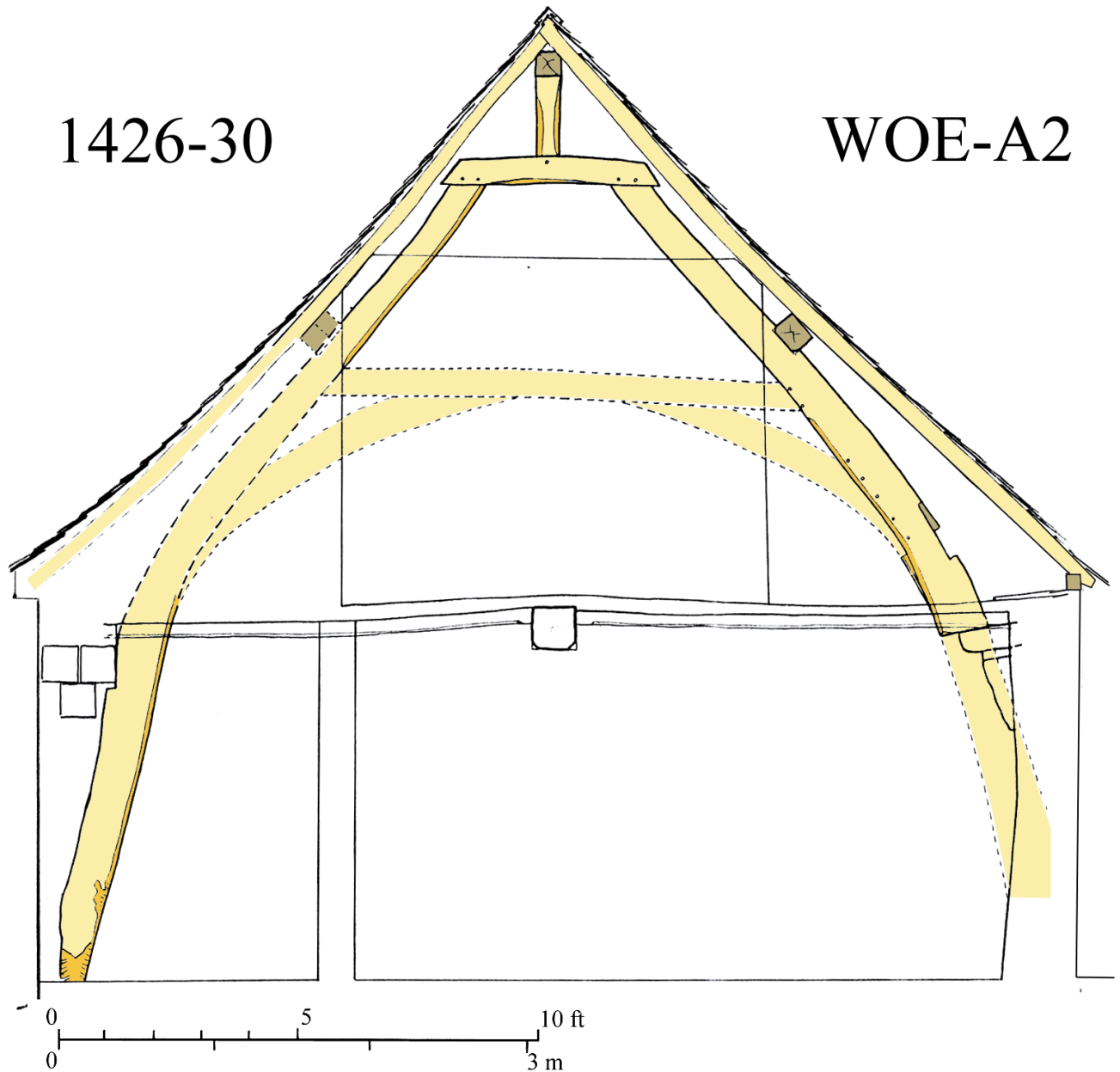


Fig. 3(a). Section of truss T2.

STRUCTURAL FEATURES

PHASE 1: Of the original hall, bay I has been almost wholly replaced (leaving less than a foot), by the phase 3 wing. The two-bay hall was divided by an open truss (T2) of arch-braced construction, the collar and braces having been subsequently removed. The blades and arch braces are decorated with double chamfers. The blades are joined by a saddle which supports a king post holding the square set ridge piece ('F1' apex). The purlins are trenched into the backs of the blades and carried windbraces halved into the backs of the blades. There are no packing pieces. The blades measure 8in deep at the base, reducing to 5in at the apex, and are 12in wide. No assembly marks were noted.

The purlins measure 6½ by 8in and are joined by simple splayed scarfs. The front purlin is scarfed twice in a short distance on either side of T2. On the bay II side, the purlin has a splayed scarf, but on the other side of the cruck blade there is a bridled scarf just before it passes through the wall of the crosswing. This second scarf perhaps relates to a repair of the roof at this point. Only one windbrace remains, at the back of T3, of plank form. The ridge is about 7in square. The wall plate still survives on the front; it is tied to the cruck frame by a spur which is almost wholly hidden by the later floor.

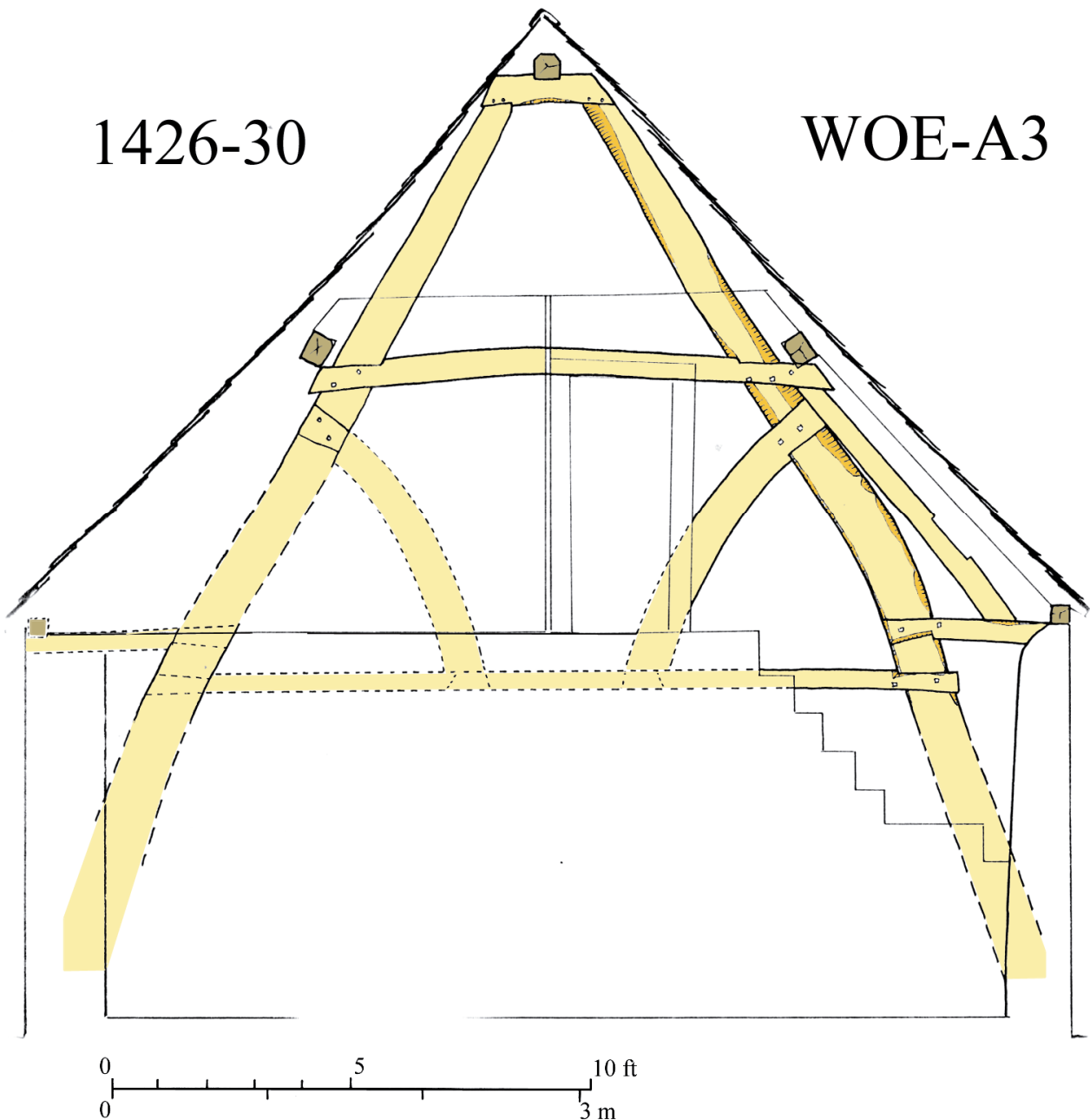


Fig. 3(b). Section of truss T3.

Truss T3 has a type 'C' apex (saddle supporting the ridge). This truss was always closed and, instead of having arch-braces, employ reverse-curved tension braces. They are very similar to the braces in Keeper's Cottage, Rothley (ROT-D), rising from the centre of the tiebeam to the crucks just below the collar. That to the front of the truss have been removed, but the halving in the cruck blade is still visible. Unlike T2, this truss includes packing pieces. The wall-plates are supported by spurs as in T2. A scribed assembly mark is visible on the south-west side of the truss, and a 'square' mark is visible on the same side of the rear blade, halfway between the collar and the cruck spur.

In the roof the ridge continues beyond T3 into bay III by at least 10 feet although access is prevented by a reed lath-and-plaster partition on the line of the adjoining crosswing wall. At the other end of the roof, the ridge continues into bay I until it is intersected by the phase 3 wing wall lining, with a splayed scarf just beyond T2. Most of the original rafters survive, measuring 3-4in deep by 4½-6in wide, set at 18in centres; all show signs of smoke blackening. The third, fourth and fifth sets of rafters to the south-west of T3, contain oblique peg holes for the base plates of a smoke louvre (compare Mill Farm, Mapledurham, MDM-A). Although the two outer rafters in the front roof slope have been renewed, the

four remaining holes are placed about 2ft 5in down the roof slope from the ridge. The sixth rafter from T3, in the front roof slope, carries an iron hook set about 3ft 9in down from the ridge; this may have related to some sort of shutter control arrangement.

CROSSWING: This is a two-storied two-bay box-framed wing (bays IV-V) set at right angles to the hall range. Although the roof space above the collar is inaccessible, the rear end gable (T6) has principal rafters reduced above the collar with clasped purlins. No queen or king struts are visible. The tiebeam in the centre open truss (T5) is braced with short curved solid braces with double chamfers which run into a thickened centre section of tiebeam and are not unlike the cruck blades of the open truss. The purlins are braced by plank-like windbraces. Most of the rear framing has been replaced with nineteenth-century brickwork. However, some timber framing is visible in the lean-to shed at the north-east end, including a tension brace up to the front post, and an upward brace from a centre post to the side girt. The floor is supported on sizeable joists, one possibly being a reused cruck member; this seems to have been much rearranged. The floor itself, as in the rest of the house, is of solid plaster construction on reed.

PHASE 2: The fireplace in the Hall is remarkably elaborate, with a cranked mantel beam decorated with a triple row of battlementing above a series of roll mouldings. The right hand jamb continues the mouldings down and is jointed with a masons mitre, although the left hand end appears unfinished, ending only in a rough chamfer stop. This must date from around 1500. Above the mantel beam is the remains of a smoke hood which survives up to first-floor ceiling level.



Fig. 4. Decoration of the inserted fireplace in bay II

PHASE 3: The south-west crosswing was of similar size to that at the other end, but only the front half survives, with a part of the rear (bay VI) in the present lean-to. The centre truss consists of a tiebeam and collar with raking struts to the purlins below the collar and with another set of raking struts above the collar. This truss has the struts, braces and studs centred on the tiebeam and collar rather than flush to the exterior (as would be the case if it was an outside wall). Below the braces to the tiebeam, the wall is close studded. As well as the transverse joists in the front bay, truncated joists remain in the fragmentary bay

VI. The joists are unchamfered but the main post and transverse beam have heavy chamfers with pyramid stops which meet neatly. The main posts are flared at the top with thickened heads.

The Hall is floored in a similar manner, employing the same pyramid stops on the support for the axial beam. The stops on this beam are not finished to the same degree of precision as the crosswing adjoining suggesting a different hand and slightly different date. The joists are chamfered with simple oblique stops.

DENDROCHRONOLOGY

For dendrochronology abbreviations see page facing Introduction.

Sampling Comments: Ten samples were obtained through coring by Robert Howard on 24 August 1989. These were from the cruck range. Although all of the samples had sapwood, none was quite complete and it is considered that the actual felling date is in between two and six years after the last measured ring date of 1424. Of eight samples taken from the crosswing, two could be dated, with heartwood/sapwood boundaries in the same range as for the hall range, and it is considered that the two ranges 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
WOE-A01	Rear cruck blade truss T1	27 NM	—	—	—	—	—
WOE-A02	Front cruck blade truss T1	10 NM	—	—	—	—	—
WOE-A03	Rear cruck blade truss T2	55	10	—	—	—	—
WOE-A04	Front cruck blade truss T2	51	01	1354	1403	1404	2
WOE-A05	Front purlin bay I	62	19c	1362	1404	1423	2
WOE-A06	Common rafter front bay I	72	30c	1353	1394	1424	2
WOE-A07	Common rafter rear bay I	64	17c	1361	1407	1424	2
WOE-A08	Rear packing piece truss T1	48	15c	1375	1407	1422	2
WOE-A09	King post truss T2	44	25c	—	—	—	—
WOE-A10	Saddle truss T2	33 NM	—	—	—	—	—
WOE-A11	Main post SW corner truss T4	40	HS	1363	1402	1402	2
WOE-A12	South wallplate bay IV	NM	—	—	—	—	—
WOE-A13	Tiebeam truss T5	60	HS	—	—	—	—
WOE-A14	Tiebeam middle truss T5	43	HS	—	—	—	—
WOE-A15	South main post truss T5	46	HS	—	—	—	—
WOE-A16	North wall plate bay V	57	HS	1332	1408	1408	2
WOE-A17	Tiebeam truss T6	NM	—	—	—	—	—
WOE-A18	Girding beam bay IV	58	HS	—	—	—	—

Site sequences: (composed of samples 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 16), 73 rings long dated 1352–1424 with *t*-values of 8.5(E.MID), 9.6(ROT-B, Site sequence of April Cottage, Rothley, VA21.90)

Estimated felling date: (samples 5, 6, 7, 8 have 2-6 sapwood rings estimated lost in coring), **1426-1430**