

Report for

**The Old Post Office, 244 Forest Road, Woodhouse,  
Leicestershire**

*Site Code: WOE-B*

*from*

The Medieval Peasant House in Midland England

**by**

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*Fig. 1. Old Post Office, Woodhouse, from the north*

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***Oxbow Books***

WOE-B. The Old Post Office, 244 Forest Road, Woodhouse, Leicestershire

Grid reference: SK 5401 1537 Survey Date: 25th August 1989 By: D. Miles

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

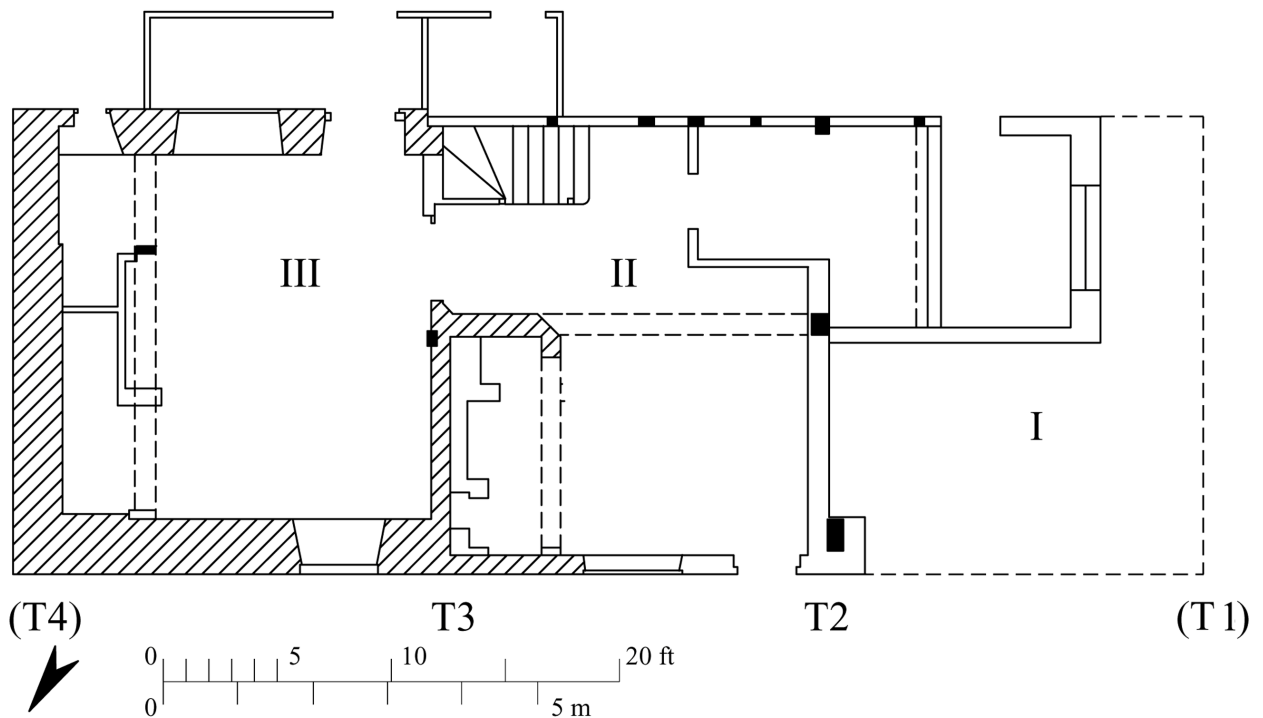


Fig. 2. Plan, showing truss and bay numbering.

## ARCHITECTURAL SURVEY

### SUMMARY AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

PHASE 1: The Old Post Office is a three bay cruck house, although most of the first bay has been demolished. It had a two bay hall at the north-eastern end (bays II-III) with a floored chamber end to the south (bay I). Two cruck trusses survive, both with saddle apexes (type 'C'). It is dated to 1455/6 by dendrochronology.

LATER ALTERATIONS: Probably in the seventeenth century the house underwent considerable alteration. Most of bay I was demolished and a range running south added at this end. Truss T2 then became an exterior wall in which two mullioned windows were inserted, the lower one with high quality mouldings. The hall was floored over and internal partitions erected. The axial beam in bay II is also of high quality and may have been reused. Most of the exterior walls have since been replaced in brick and stone.

### STRUCTURAL FEATURES

PHASE 1: Truss T2 comprises two slightly curved cruck blades (13 by 11½in) jointed at the apex with a saddle (9in high) on which sits the square set ridge beam (7 by 7in). The collar (7in high) is jointed to the blades with a bare faced dovetail and extends beyond to carry the purlins (7in square) which are trenched into the backs of the blades. A tiebeam (9 by 7in) is similarly jointed to the blades but does not connect with the cruck studs. The joint between the rear cruck and the tiebeam has withdrawn about 4 in. The tiebeam soffit is also cut away for over half its depth. The wall plates (6½

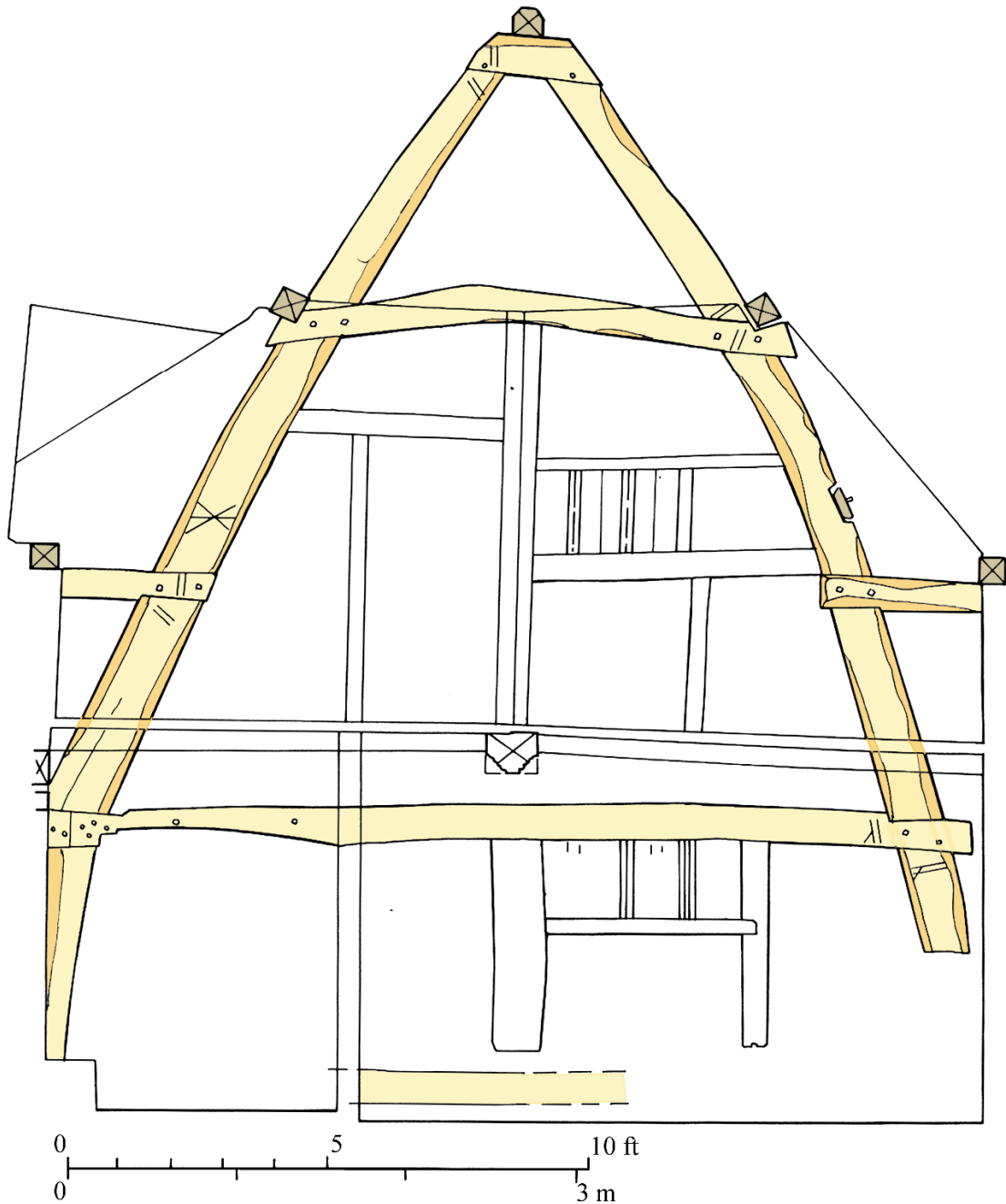


Fig. 3. Section of truss T2, east side

by 6in) appear to be supported on the tops of the cruck spurs which are in turn carried by cruck studs which have half lapped notched joints to the back of the cruck blades. Wind-braces, since removed, were trenched into the back of the blades. The truss contains later infilling including two mullioned triple casement windows which are obviously secondary. The upper one has a simple bevelled chamfer whereas the ground floor one has a more elaborate profile with a series of hollows and steps. To the rear of the upstairs window, pintles in the wall indicate the position of a door which used to communicate with the room above.

Truss T3 is very much obscured but is thought to have been open. The apex is as in T2 but the blades touch below the saddle. It has been infilled with studs with a reed and plaster partition facing bay III, obscuring any earlier smoke blackening. Truss T2 has assembly marks in the form of a scribed II at the rear and II tag at the front. Truss T3 is similarly treated but with III and III tag visible at the apex. On both trusses, the assembly marks are on the 'fair' northern faces. A 'square' mark is visible on the rear blade of truss T2 just above the cruck spur. Only three original rafters

were found. These measured 2-3 by 4-6in and were laid at 16-18in centres with the tops staggered along the ridge.

Only the back half of bay I is still standing, the front half having been demolished when the windows were inserted in T2. It is likely that the ridge continues for some distance into this bay, but the upper floor is in the ownership of the adjacent property and it was not possible to inspect this at the time of the survey. A number of heavy flat joists run from the tiebeam of truss T2 to a transverse beam. These are probably the remnants of an original floor structure.

Bay III has stone walls about two feet in thickness, indicating major rebuilding. Nothing was found at the position of truss T4 except a gap between the gable end wall and the first floor partition. It is likely that this was the position of the missing truss which had been removed during alteration. Remains of the lower part of the crucks may be encased in the end wall.

LATER PHASES: In bay II, an inserted floor and chimney stack are the chief items of interest. The axial beam is heavy (12 by 9in) with a series of rolls and a stepped hollow moulded along the majority of its surface. It has two soffit mortices by the chimney stack, indicating that it has been reused. The joists are 3½-4 by 5½-6in with an inch chamfer with ogee stops, laid at 9-14in centres. At the rear of this bay, most of the wall-framing has either been obscured or removed; however a mid rail is visible at first floor level with a smaller, secondary rail just below it, near truss T2. Webster(1954) mentions the remains of ‘a fairly elaborate timber structure, possibly of Elizabethan period, being of post and panel construction and having upright timbers set close together.’ Whether this refers to the rear of this bay, or a separate building or wing adjoining is unclear.

## DENDROCHRONOLOGY

For dendrochronology abbreviations see Appendix III.

*Sampling Comments:* Nine samples were taken through coring by Robert Howard on 25 August 1989 from all four crucks, both saddles, both sections of ridge, and the collar from truss T2. The rear cruck blades from trusses T2 and T3, and the saddle from truss T3 gave dates.

### 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-B01	Rear cruck blade truss T2	73	21C	1383	—	1455	2
WOE-B02	Saddle truss T2	52	12	—	—	—	—
WOE-B03	Ridge piece bay II	80	13	—	—	—	—
WOE-B04	Collar, truss T2	65	13	—	—	—	—
WOE-B05	Saddle, truss T3	81	21C	1375	—	1455	2
WOE-B06	Front cruck blade truss T3	87	23	—	—	—	—
WOE-B07	Rear cruck blade truss T3	82	20	1374	—	1455	2
WOE-B08	Ridge piece bay III	80	08	—	—	—	—
WOE-B09	Front cruck blade truss T2	69	—	—	—	—	—

Site sequence: (composed of samples 1, 5, 7), 82 rings long dated 1374–1455 with *t*-values of 5.2(E.MID), 5.8(ROT-B, Site sequence of April Cottage, Rothley, VA21.90).

Felling date (samples 1, 5 with last dated rings have complete sapwood with the last measured ring complete): **Winter 1455/6** (VA21.90).