

Report for  
**TIL House, 56 Village Road, Clifton,  
Nottinghamshire**

*Site Code: CLI-B*

*from*

The Medieval Peasant House in Midland England

by

Nat Alcock and Dan Miles



Fig. 1. View of the house from the south

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CLI-B: TIL HOUSE, 56 VILLAGE ROAD, CLIFTON, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Grid reference: SK 5446 3500 Survey Dates: 1960/1998 By: M W Barley; P W Dixon; Nat Alcock  
 Survey Date: 17 July 1989 By: D. Miles

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References:

M W Barley, *English Farmhouse and Cottage*, 1961, 24-26; P W Dixon, *Trans. Thoroton Soc.*, in preparation. We thank Dr Dixon for information from his study of the building in advance of publication.

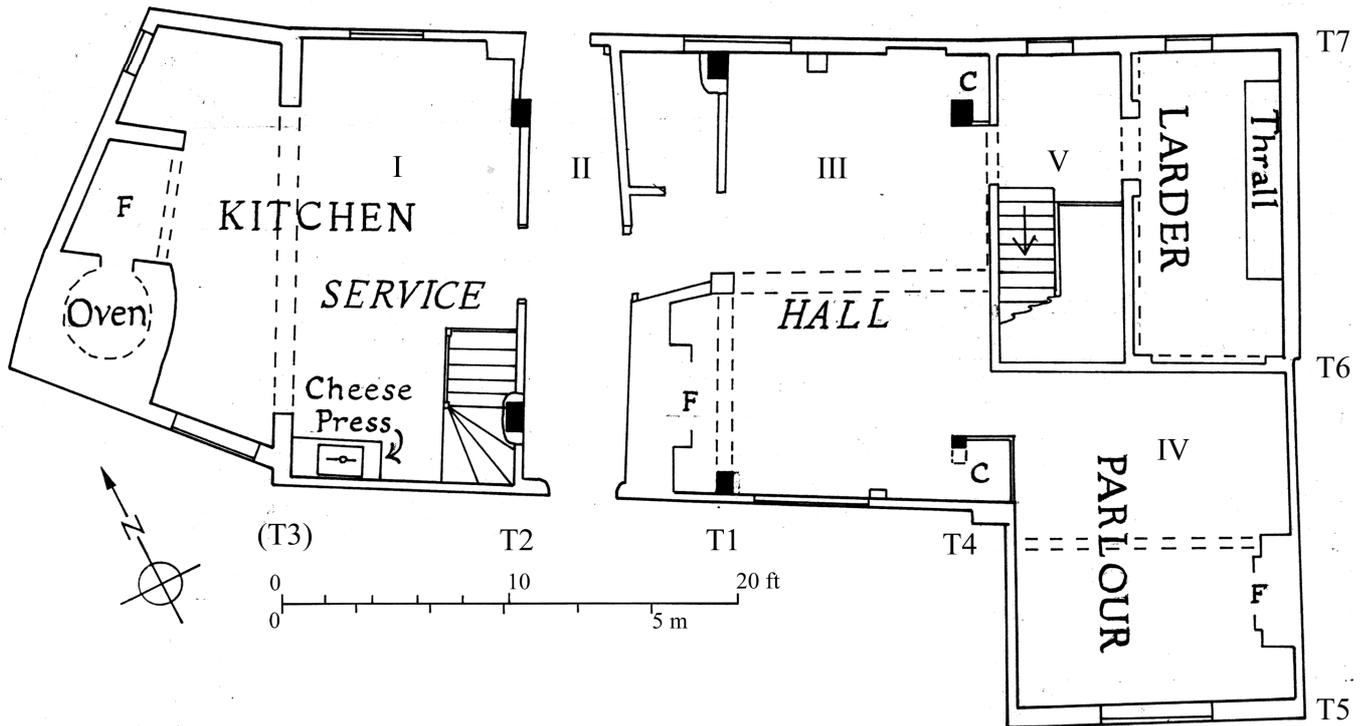


Fig. 2. Plan, showing truss and bay numbering (from Barley (1961)).

## ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

### SUMMARY AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

**PHASE 1:** The house is now brick-cased and thatched. The main range faces SW onto the village street, (here described as S). The earliest existing section of the house comprises a two-bay base-cruck hall (including the cross-passage) with a service bay (probably a kitchen) at the lower end; it may have adjoined an earlier chamber block at the upper end. This range has been dendro-dated to **1319/20**.

**PHASE 2:** In 1466, a framed crosswing was added at the upper end of the hall. This wing is of notably crude construction, including a simple common-rafter roof (with clasped purlins).

**LATER PHASES:** In the later sixteenth century, a smoke-hood was inserted in the hall and the lower bay of the hall was floored. Somewhat later, the upper bay was floored, and in 1707 the crosswing was cased in brick. Still later (nineteenth century?), the kitchen was extended to the west, with a large fireplace with oven and copper. In the 1990s, a fire destroyed the thatch and the roof at the W end.

### STRUCTURAL FEATURES

**PHASE 1:** The open base cruck truss (T1) and the west aisled closed truss (T2) of the two-bay open hall are complete. The base cruck is of relatively plain construction, with curved square-section arch braces to the tiebeams and curved braces to the arcade plate. The south base-cruck blade projects through the later

brick wall and must originally have been visible externally; the wallplate has a mortice in its underside at this point for the cruck stud, but the latter's seating in the blade is hidden. The boxed-heart tiebeam is smoothly curved, but has a severe warp at the north end, which apparently happened soon after construction. The tiebeam has split along the line of the north arch brace pegholes (east side), where the toe of the brace was bound to the beam with a metal strap (now removed); this probably original repair is similar to that undertaken on the base cruck at Long Marston (LNG-M). The octagonal crown-post has roll mouldings at head and foot, and is up-braced to the crown-plate and the collar of the common rafter truss.

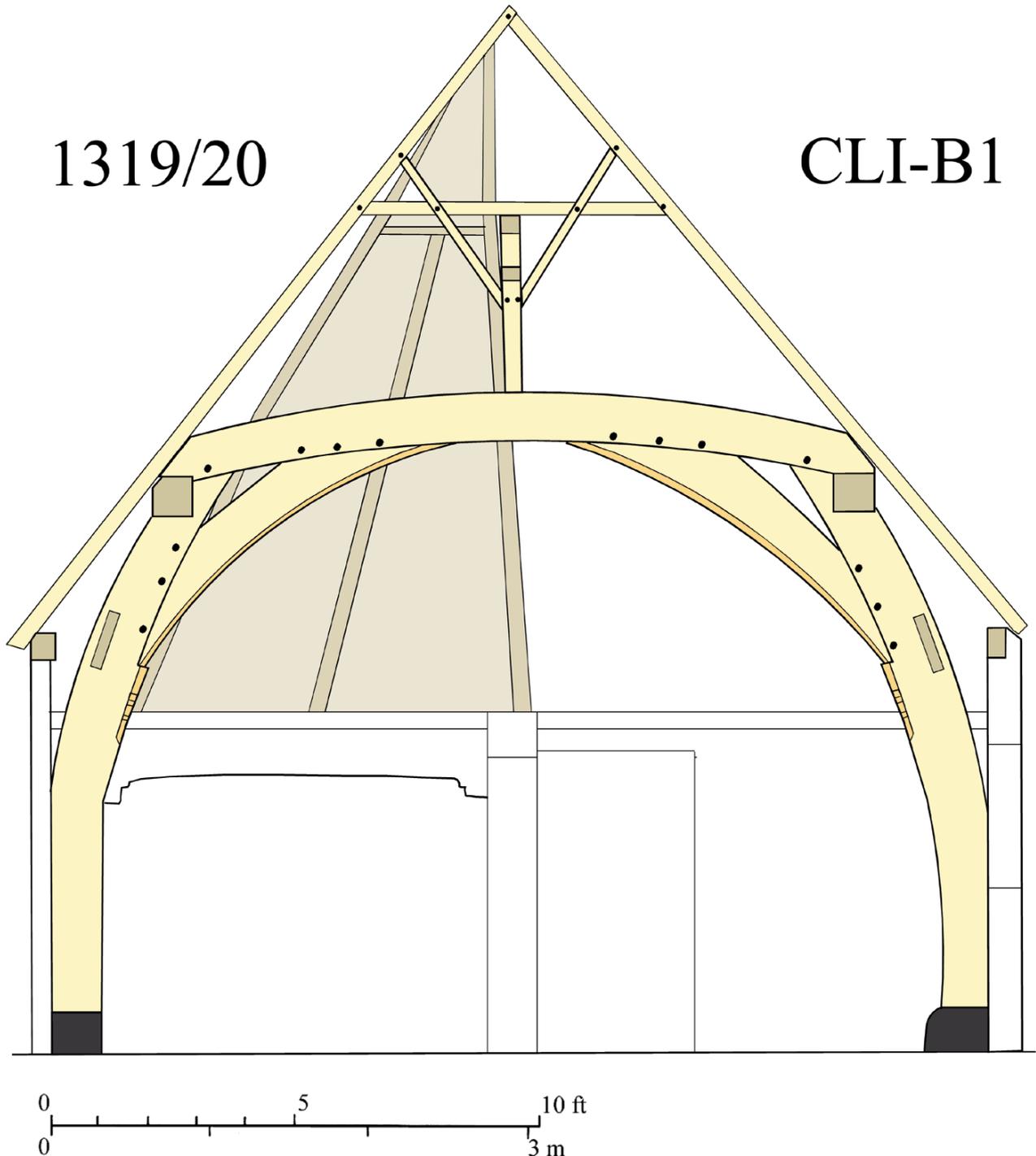


Fig. 3(a). Section of truss T1 from the east (from Barley (1961), re-drawn with addition details). The grey tone shows the position of the timber chimney.

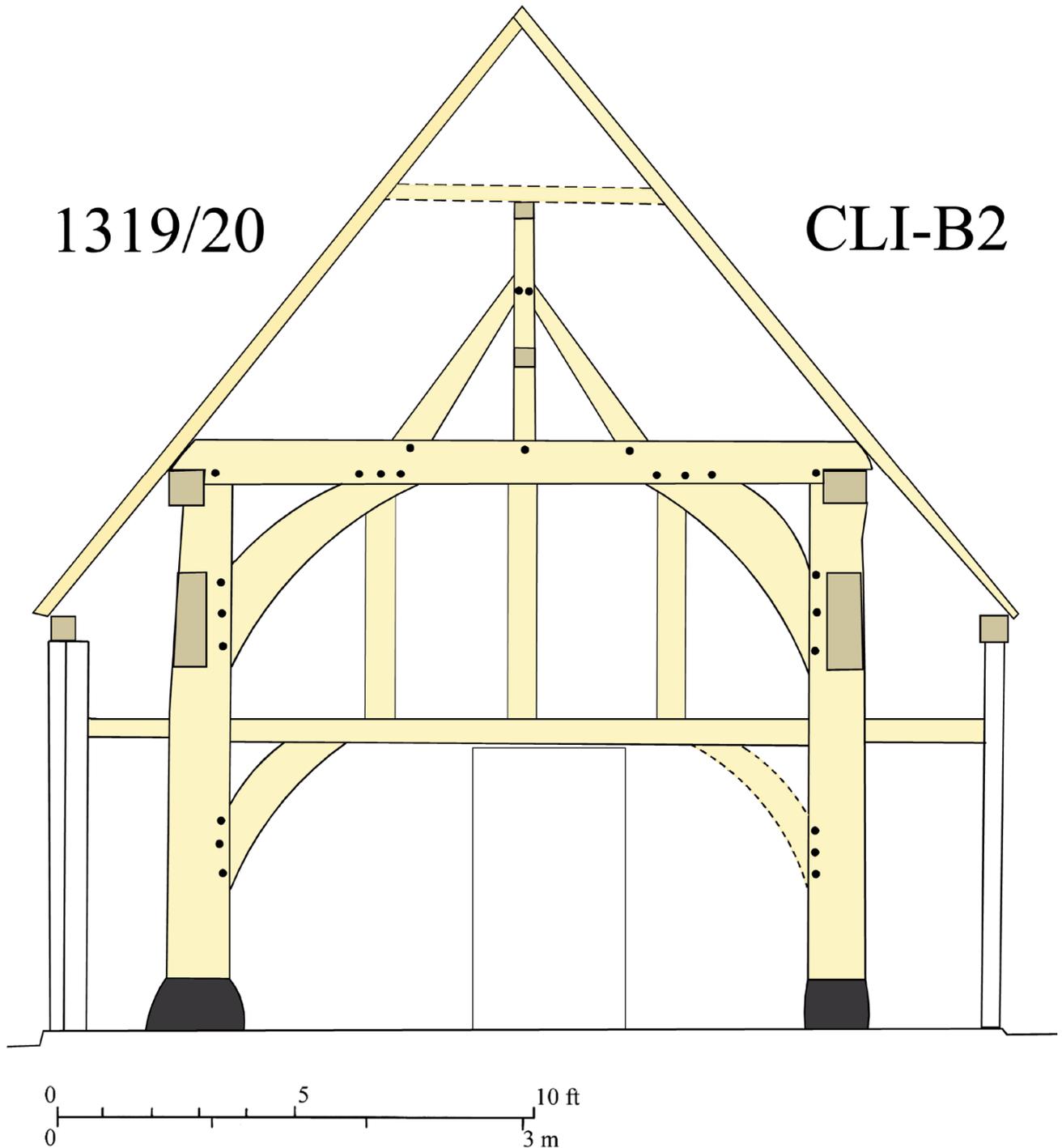


Fig. 3(b). Section of truss T2 from the east (from Barley (1961), re-drawn with addition details).

The arcade posts of T2 are exceptionally massive, 18in across, by 9in thick. Both the tiebeam and the mid-rail are arch-braced. Three original studs span between these two horizontals, with the original wattle and daub infill surviving at this level, secured on hazel rods driven into pegholes in the soffits of the tiebeam, studs and braces. Surprisingly, there were never any studs below the mid-rail. Although the rail and the posts also have drillings for the daubing rods, it seems likely that the lower part of this truss was originally open. The mortices for the aisle ties are at the level of the mid-rail. The ties must therefore have engaged with the wallposts, rather than carrying the wallplate directly. The unchamfered crown post of T2 has down-braces to the tiebeam and up-braces to the crown plate; the pairs of mortices are slightly offset.

Nothing remains of truss T3, although the arcade and wall plates continue to this point; the latter are supported on the stub brick walls that were the former end of the house. At T4, only the stub ends of the tiebeam survive with the centre cut away, presumably to increase the space in the room over the hall and give access to the doorway cut through the side wall of the wing and to the stair beyond it. The north post has been replaced (apparently at a fairly early date), but the south arcade post is original, with mortices for the aisle tie and the arch-brace. Surprisingly this post is only 9in square, much smaller than the massive posts of truss T2. The arcade plates project 6in beyond the truss, and the east surfaces of this truss are moderately weathered.

The square-section arcade plates (8½in across by 9½in deep) have *trait-de-Jupiter* scarfs in the centre of bay II. Dovetail halvings above these scarfs carried a flying tiebeam, whose stub ends survive. Although too little of the beam remains to show any mortices, it seems likely it carried light studs for either a partition or speres defining a cross-passage on the line of the present one. The west side post and the head-beam of the north doorway survive; the beam has long mortices for an arch-braced doorhead. Unusually, the east side post did not engage with the wallplate, but seems to have been free-standing, while the east end of the head-beam was also not fixed in any way.

The upper roof has common rafter couples with single collars; it is complete over the hall, but was replaced with pine rafters over bay I; parts of many of the original rafters remained reused and have been reinstated following the destruction of the later rafters in the 1990s fire.

The two hall bays are of unequal length (bay II 8ft 6in; bay III 10ft 6in), apparently reflecting similar functions to those found later. The eastern half of bay II probably held the hearth on the site of the later firehood, probably standing against a reredos on the line of the passage partition. Although the hall open truss is not heavily smoke-blackened, it seems to have been cleaned off at some period, as more sooting remains in the joint interstices than on the outer surface.

It was originally suggested that bay I was floored, and the mid-rail could indeed have held lodged joists (Barley (1961), 26). However, sooting in the roof of this bay seems to have arisen from an open hearth, suggesting use as a kitchen. There is no evidence of a closed partition at T4, although the surviving structure certainly ends here. The absence of any chamber in the house suggests the possibility that an earlier structure stood on the site of the crosswing.

PHASE 2: The two-bay crosswing has a central arch-braced truss (T6), with the braces tenoned into the splayed-head posts but crudely halved onto the tiebeam. The wallplates have side-halved and bridled scarfs just N of T6. Wall-braces were only used on the north side of the truss, apparently to strengthen these scarfs. The original studs and mid-rail remain in the west side-wall adjoining the hall, but otherwise only the principal posts survive. The original floor exists in the north bay (V), carried on transverse lodged square-section joists, supported by a later axial chamfered beam; the present floor in bay IV is seventeenth century. The stair opening is defined by a morticed trimmer. Both ground and upper floors were divided into two rooms, later with a dairy and a small parlour below, two bedrooms above. The upper floors are all of lime-ash construction, carried on reeds.

The roof has common rafters only, with halved collars of rough construction, using a variety of woods, including holly and elm. The prominent south end is gabled, but it is hipped to the north.

LATER PHASES: In the late sixteenth century, a smoke hood was inserted in bay II, with chamfered and mason-mitred post and bressummer; the latter was later cut back and given decorated ends. At this stage, the house was partitioned at the base-cruck and bay II was floored. Somewhat later, the floor was inserted in bay III, carried on an axial beam with roll stops; the joists have small chamfers and similar stops. The present floor in bay I is no earlier than the eighteenth century.

The crosswing was cased in brick in 1707; this work is dated in raised brickwork with the initials T I L from which the house takes its name, for Thomas and Joan Lambert. Considerably later, the lower end was extended, with a large kitchen chimney with bake-oven and copper. When recorded in the 1960s, a cheese press stood against the south wall of bay I.

## DOCUMENTARY HISTORY

In the nineteenth century, TIL house was a tenant farm of the Clifton Hall estate. Its earlier history has not been examined.

## DENDROCHRONOLOGY

For dendrochronology abbreviations see page facing Introduction.

*Sampling Comments:* 8 samples from the hall trusses were obtained through coring by Robert Howard on 22 April 1991 and a further 8 samples from the crosswing on 15 June 1994. Note: The truss numbering has been amended from that in the original report.

### TREE-RING SAMPLE RECORD AND SUMMARY OF DATING

Sample Code	Sample Location	Total Rings	Sapwood Rings	FMR Date	LHR Date	LMR Date	Date Cat
CLI-B01	Front (S) main post truss T2	111	HS	1188	1298	1298	2
CLI-B02	Brace, post to tie, front truss T2	163	32c	1153	1286	1315	2
CLI-B03	Tiebeam truss T2	110	11	1181	1279	1290	2
CLI-B04	Brace, post to tiebeam, rear truss T2	182	—	1080	—	1261	2
CLI-B05	Rear main post truss T2	144	30C	1176	1289	1319	2
CLI-B06	Front arcade plate (bay III?)	112	24c	1197	1284	1308	2
CLI-B07	Tiebeam truss T1	196	—	1077	—	1272	2
CLI-B08	Brace, blade to tiebeam, rear truss T1	51	07	—	—	—	
Crosswing samples							
CLI-B19	West main post truss T6	29	HS	—	—	—	
CLI-B20	Tiebeam truss T7	31	05	—	—	—	
CLI-B21	East main post truss T6	61	20C	1405	1445	1465	1
CLI-B22	East wall plate bay IV	26	08	—	—	—	
CLI-B23	Tiebeam truss T5	42	11c	1421	1451	1465	1
CLI-B24	West wall plate bay IV	40	11C	1426	1454	1465	1
CLI-B25	Tiebeam truss T6	20	HS	1432	1451	1451	1
CLI-B26	West wall plate bay V	35	12C	1431	1453	1465	1

Site sequence: (composed of samples 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7), 243 rings long dated 1077–1319 with *t*-values 7.0(E.MID), 6.0(BAT-ASQ01, site sequences of The Hollies, Bathley, VA21.91, List 41). Felling date: (sample 5 with complete sapwood), **1319/20**.

Site sequence: (composed of samples 21, 23, 25, 25 and 26, using the ‘maximum consistent *t*-value method), 61 rings long dated 1405–1465 with *t*-values 6.8(MGMB-E01), 6.4(WWM-A01M). Felling date (samples 21, 23, 24, 26 with complete sapwood, and under the microscope it could be seen that the spring cells for the following year have started): **Spring 1466**.