

Report for
**Old Forge, Church Street, East Hendred,
Oxfordshire**

Site Code: EAH-A

from

The Medieval Peasant House in Midland England

by

Nat Alcock and Dan Miles



Fig. 1. View of the group of houses in 2001.

Hillside is the nearest, the Old Forge is in the centre with Forge Cottage beyond (photo: David Clark)

© *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

EAH-A: OLD FORGE, CHURCH STREET, EAST HENDRED, OXFORDSHIRE

Note: The Old Forge is now part of Hillside.

Grid reference: SU 4587 8858 Survey Date: 29th July 1988 By: D. Miles

Illustrations:	Page
1. View of the house	1
2. View during rebuilding	2
3. Ground floor plan	3
4. Section of truss T2	4

References: Steane, J M (1985). 'East Hendred. The Old Forge', *South Midlands Archaeol*, **15**, 75-76.
Fletcher, J. M. (1968), 'Crucks in the West Berkshire and Oxford Region', *Oxoniensia*, **33**, 85-86.



Fig. 2. The Old Forge during rebuilding in 2001, showing the cruck trusses (photo David Clark)

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Hillside is a three-unit complex running north-south, facing Church Street with the two northernmost sections nearest the church being in one occupation. The oldest section is the centre part, known as the Old Forge, lodged between Forge Cottage to the south and Hillside Cottage to the north. Most of this report is based on a field investigation by John Steane (Steane, 1985).

PHASE 1: The Old Forge is the remnant of a cruck house originally of at least two bays, but now of one bay only. Although it might appear that The Old Forge is a later infill between two sixteenth/ seventeenth century timber framed houses, it is in fact earlier and the intimate connection with the later buildings must be the result of alternate rebuilding. Only the southern two cruck frames exist, the third truss (and any further trusses) along with the second bay having been demolished during the building of Hillside Cottage. It is fairly clear that the cruck structure did not extend further south than T1, from the weathered surface of the south face of this truss. The northern face of truss T2 is smoke blackened, indicating the presence of an open hearth beyond it. The crucks have type 'W' apices, terminating at the (removed) purlins. The cruck blades have given felling dates of 1553 and 1556, indicating construction soon after then; this supersedes the early to mid-fourteenth century date suggested by Fletcher (1968) on stylistic

grounds. From the date picked out in the roof tiles, this block was reconstructed in 1899, possibly when it was converted to a forge.

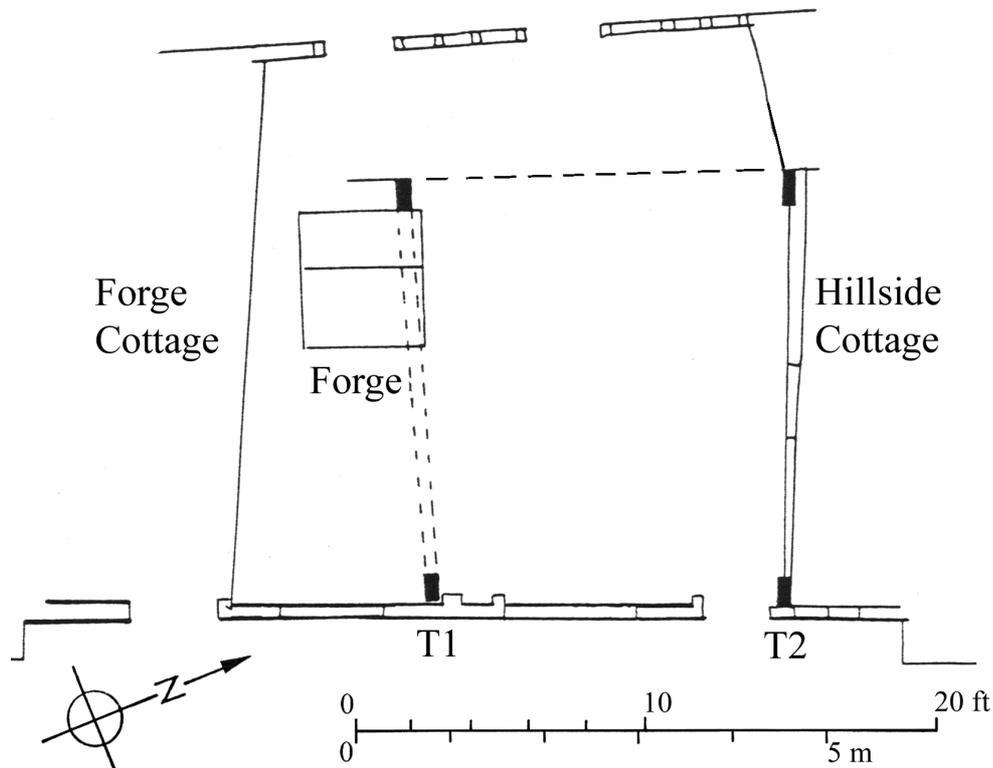


Fig. 3. Plan, showing truss numbering (from Steane (1985)).

PHASE 2: The northern block (Hillside) is a two-storey box-framed structure of three unequal bays terminating in a gable-end jetty on Church Street. The largest bay, to the south adjacent to the cruck range, is 16ft long, of which the southern 5ft has been divided off by a storey post and higher floor level. Evidence of door posts in both front and back wall frames at this end of the bay suggest it formed a cross passage. Later, a massive chimneystack was inserted here, converting it to a lobby entry. At the rear of the wall frame, a small window was cut into the wall brace. Tree-ring dating on the very few timbers from this block suitable for dating produced felling date ranges of 1497-1517, 1538-52 and 1521-50. However, these dates appear too early for the surviving structure, for which framing and carpentry details suggest a seventeenth-century date, and it seems likely that the dated timbers were reused, perhaps from the replaced part of the cruck house.

STRUCTURAL FEATURES

PHASE 1: The blades of truss T1 (measuring 11 x 5½in) continue a short distance above the collar and are notched for purlins, since removed. The crucks were also joined by a tiebeam (5½in high), only the western end of which is left. The slightly cambered collar is tenoned into the blades rather than having half-lapped barefaced dovetails (the more usual joint form). The tiebeam has a half lap, but without a tapered dovetail. Truss T2 is similar, except that its tiebeam seems to be a later insertion. This continues past the eastern cruck blade as a spur. The space between the collar and the tie is infilled with wattle and daub and this and the tiebeam are probably contemporary with the construction of Hillside Cottage. There appears to have been a small window in the west wall immediately to the north of T1; the rail there is only visible on one cruck and is considerably lower than the wall-plate.

DOCUMENTARY HISTORY

This was a freeholding belonging to the Eyston estate at enclosure in 1802 (Berkshire Record Office, D/P66/26B), but neither the tenant's name nor the size of the holding are known.

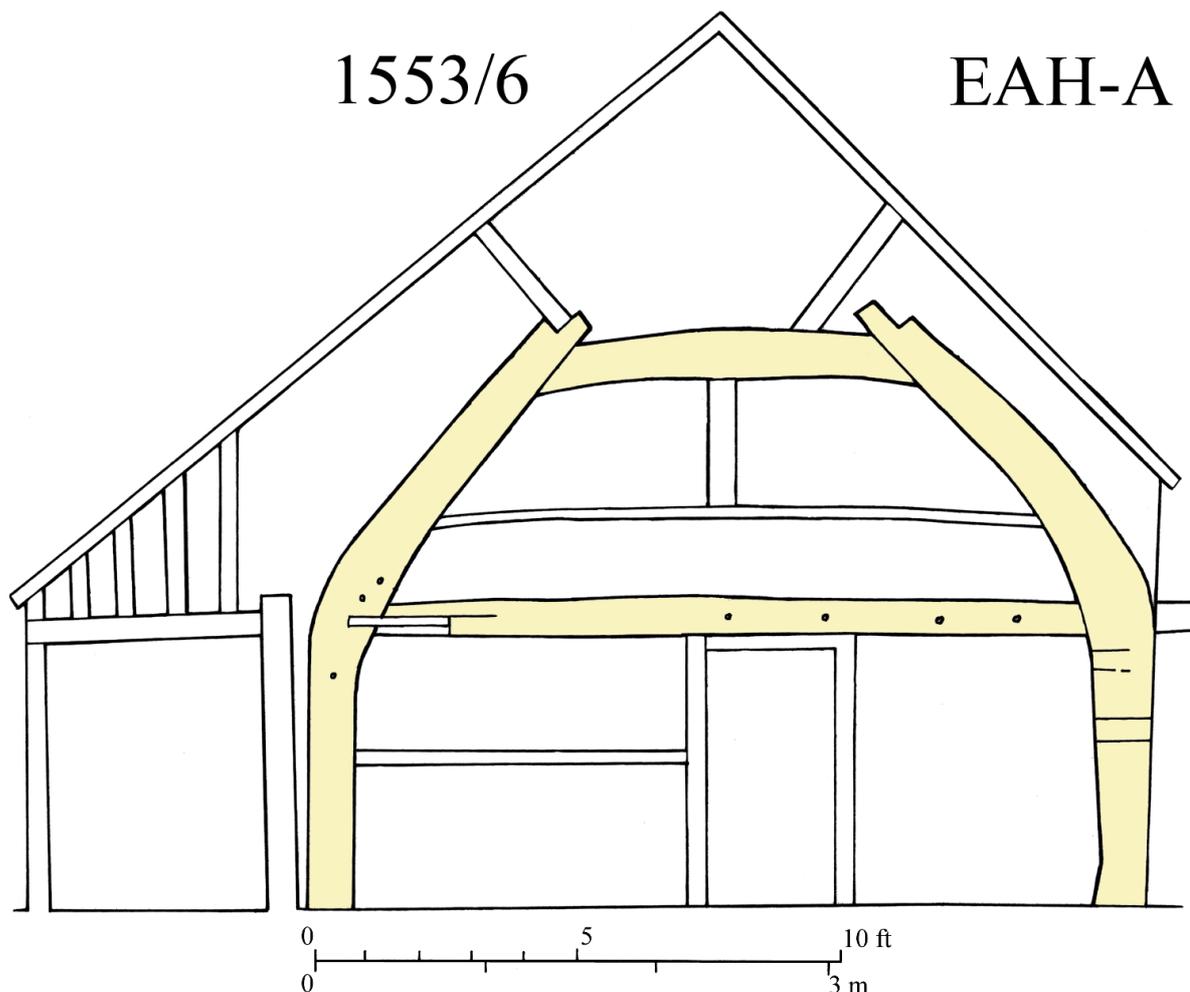


Fig. 4. Section of truss T2 (redrawn from Steane (1985)).

DENDROCHRONOLOGY

For dendrochronology abbreviations see page facing Introduction.

Sampling Comments: Four samples were obtained through coring by Robert Howard on 29 July 1988, of which two samples could be dated. Further sampling undertaken by Dan Miles in 2001 allowed a site master to be constructed covering all the samples; date categories have not been assigned for these dates. As well as the dates for crucks T1 and T2, early to mid-sixteenth century dates were obtained for timbers in Hillside, which are believed to come from re-used timbers (VA33.83). The 2001 work was commissioned by the Hendred Estate.

TREE-RING SAMPLE RECORD AND SUMMARY OF DATING

Sample Code	Sample Location	Total Rings	Sapwood Rings	FMR Date	LHR Date	LMR Date	Date Cat
EAH-A01	Cruck blade truss T2 west side	132	05	1390	1516	1521	3d
EAH-A02	Cruck blade truss T2 east side	127	HS	1379	1505	1505	3d
EAH-A03	Cruck blade truss T1 west side	80	21	1475	1533	1554	
EAH-A04	Cruck blade truss T1 east side	60	23	1495	1531	1554	
EAH-A05	Cruck blade truss T2 west side	178	34¼C	1375	1518	1552	
EAH-A06	Cruck blade truss T1 west side	68	19¼C	1488	1536	1555	

Site sequence: (all samples), 176 rings long dated 1379-1555, *t*-values of 9.3 (HANTS97), 8.8 (SOUTH), 8.5 (SENG98). Felling dates **Spring 1553** and **Spring 1556** (previous felling date range 1524–1549 (VA20.89)).