

Report for
**Godfrey's Farm, 2 St Mary's Road, East Hendred,
Oxfordshire**

Site Code: EAH-C

from

The Medieval Peasant House in Midland England

by

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Fig. 1. View of the house from the west.

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Oxbow Books

EAH-C: GODFREY'S FARM, 2 ST MARY'S ROAD, EAST HENDRED,
OXFORDSHIRE

Grid reference: SU 4604 8852 Survey Date: 2 August 1988 By: D Miles

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Reference: Currie, C. R. J. (1976) 'Smaller domestic architecture in North Berkshire, c 1300 - c 1650', Oxford, D. Phil thesis.

Report compiled with the assistance of notes from Dr C R J Currie; see also Currie (1976).

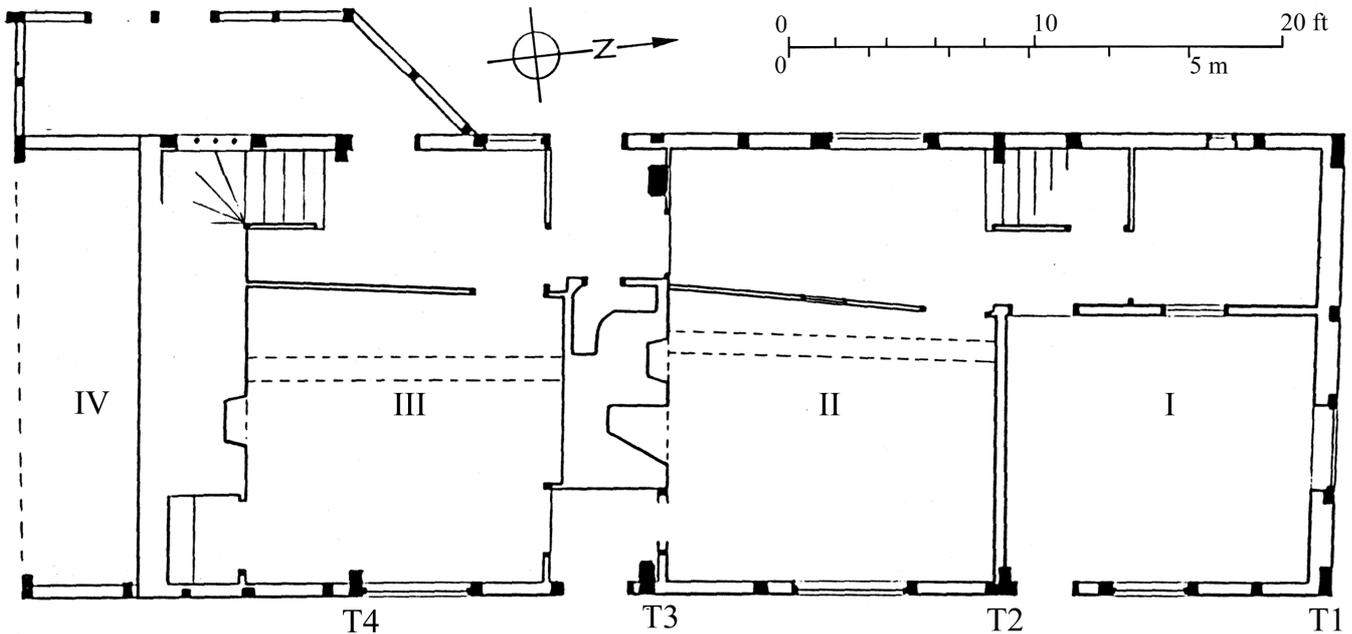


Fig. 2. Plan, showing truss and bay numbering (after Currie (1976)).

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

PHASE 1: Godfrey's Farm is a fine example of a large and substantial four-bay hall-house which has been dated through dendrochronology to **1418/20** (felling in winter 1418/9 and winter 1419/20). The main range runs north-south, parallel with the road. In the centre is a two-bay open hall (II-III) with a well-shaped arch-braced open cruck truss. Of the bays at its ends, it appears that the northern one was the chamber, probably though not certainly with a low floor, with windows lighting the upper floor. The service bay was at the southern end, probably with a second open hearth. The entry may have been in the south end of bay III, adjacent to the service bay. The three other surviving trusses are of post-and-tiebeam form. Most of the roof frame survives intact and the longitudinal timbers are joined with complex scarf joints. Much of the wall framing is also original, including a remarkable cusped wooden head to the five-light window at the upper end of the hall.

PHASE 2: The house was later extended to the south by at least one bay, this service bay (IV) being partitioned off with a clunch wall and the end truss (T5) being reconstructed. All framing south of this clunch wall was demolished in 1974. The central fireplace has a chamfered stone surround and probably dates to the seventeenth century.

LATER PHASES. In 1974 much work was carried out to renovate the house which had fallen into considerable disrepair. This involved the removal of winder staircases in bays I and IV, and of the central chimney stack (to the south of truss T3) from the first floor level upwards. Most of the doors and windows were altered at this time, but great care was taken to preserve and repair the main frame of the building.

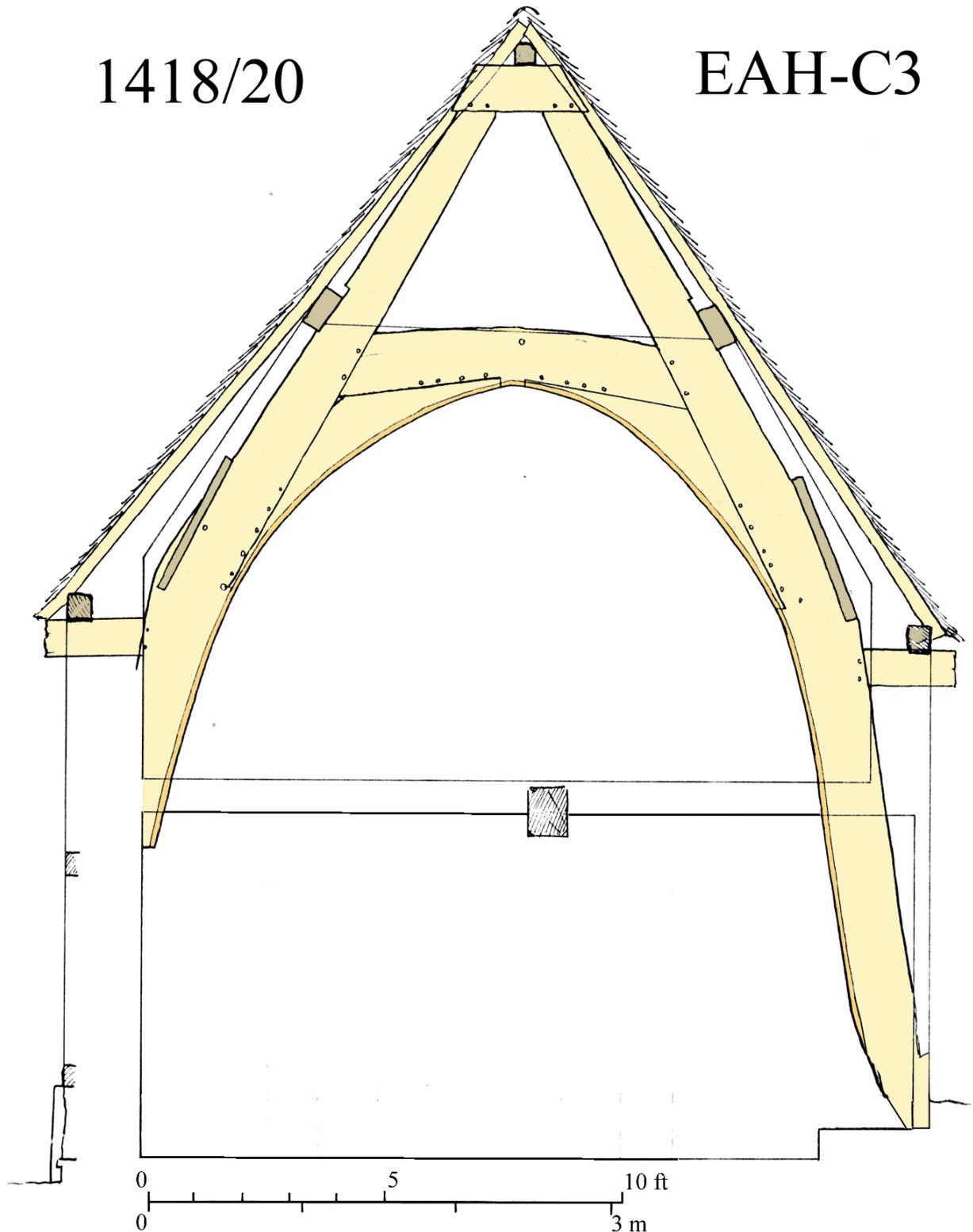


Fig. 3. Section of truss T3.

STRUCTURAL FEATURES

PHASE 1: The most interesting feature of this period is the two bay open hall. Truss T3, dividing bays II and III, is a massive arched-braced cruck open truss with a continuous 2in chamfer on the underside of the crucks and braces creating a slightly four-centred arch. The blades are of elm and measure 21 by 7in

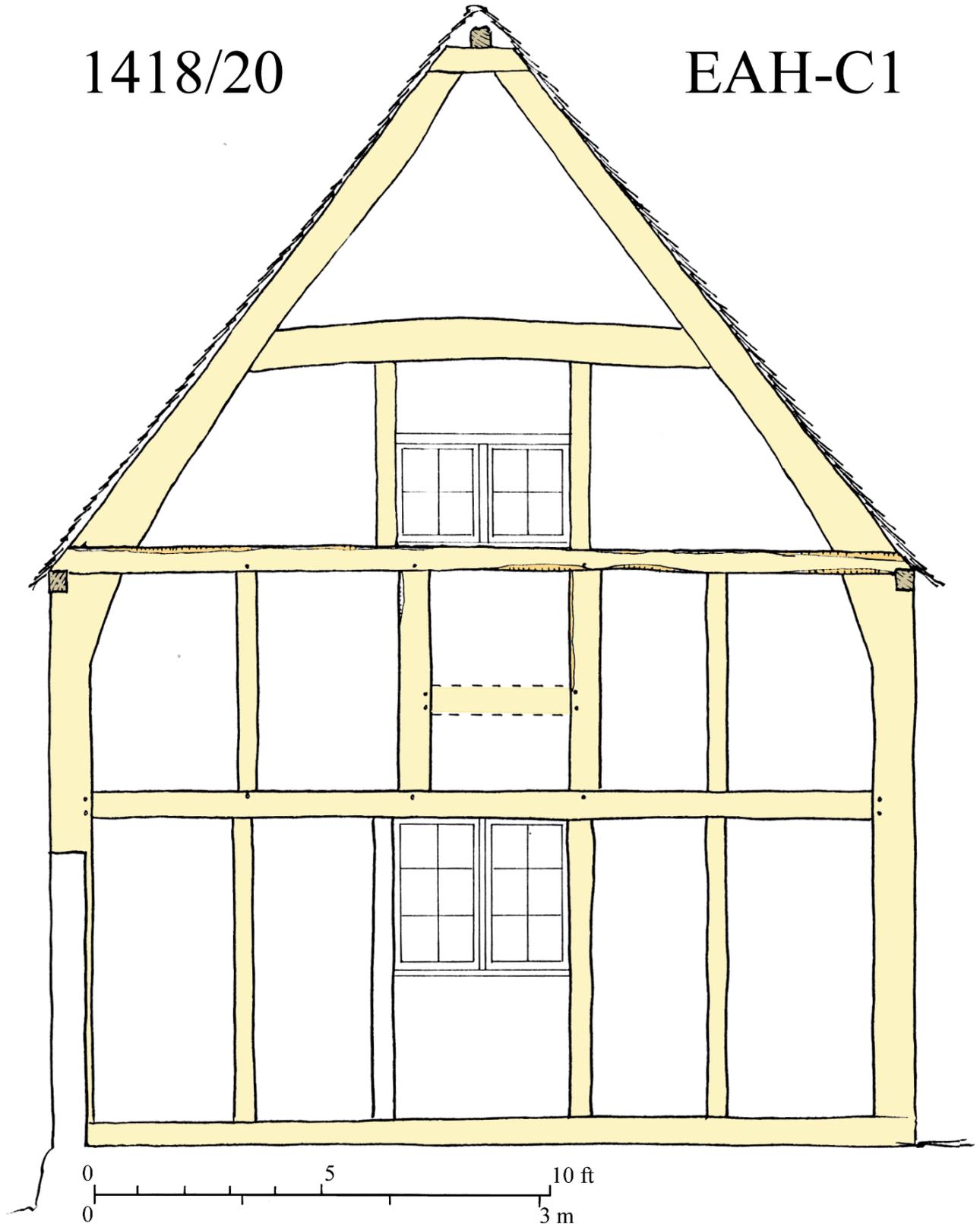


Fig. 4. Elevation of truss T1.

thick at eaves height. They have been cut from a single tree, halved down the centre to give a perfectly matching pair. Two scribe marks were noted on the north side of the collar and arch-brace, just to the east of centre. It has a saddle at the apex (type 'C'). Large elbowed windbraces are present in the hall, 18in across by 3in thick, rising steeply from mortices set near the back faces of the blades. The top centre of the collar contains a large peg hole, presumably to suspend some object. The top of the collar has a groove for staves, but neither the inner face of the crucks or the underside of the saddle have any stave sockets. However, it is possible that the central truss was closed above the collar with the staves being nailed to the timbers. The wall-plates are carried on cruck spurs tenoned into the back of the blades and supported at the outer end by cruck studs or wall posts. The method of jointing at the bottom of the cruck is not visible but the stud is likely to be set in a notched housing on the back of the cruck blade.

The other three surviving trusses (T1, T2 and T4) are of post-and-tiebeam construction. The principal rafters have thickened feet sitting on square-section tiebeams and are joined at the top with saddles (as in T3). The tiebeam in truss T4 has been removed, but the collar has the stave holes for a partition. The roof has been entirely renewed with the exception of the principal timbers. The purlins are of elm, 11 x 5½in in section, and are trenched on the back of the crucks and principals. Several complex scarf joints were noted, the purlin joint at T4 being a splayed scarf, counter tongued-and-grooved with four edge pegs (see Fig. 5.7g). The ridge runs from truss T1 to just beyond truss T2 where it is joined with a similar scarf. This second length of ridge finished just beyond the open truss (T3) where the cut end is clean. The ridge over bay IV has been reset under the saddle, being clasped in a yoke which is itself somewhat smoke blackened, as is the cut end which projects about 12in beyond truss T4. Smoke blackening is present throughout bays II through IV. The soot is particularly thick on the central truss, as much as ¼in near the top. The removed chimney stack immediately to the south of this truss was most likely on the site of the original open hearth.

The wall frames are largely intact on the east and west elevations. At the front (east), bay I has a mid rail, with two primary studs above and below, probably originally with a third one as well. At the rear there are four studs above the rail; only the centre two are pegged, trimming a small blocked window opening. Below are the remains of three studs, none of which are pegged. The north end (Fig. 4) has a tiebeam and mid-rail with the same panel and window arrangement as on the west side wall. Below this a couple of studs remain but it is not clear whether these are primary timbers. The corner posts have thickened heads which start two feet below the tiebeam and almost continue the line of the principal rafters. The tiebeam has a peculiar feature in that it projects about 1½in beyond the face of the rest of the frame yet there is no evidence for another bay to the north.

Bay I must be the chamber end. It has no sign of an original first floor and the roof-timbers are free of soot. However, the height of the windows in the end and side walls suggest that it originally had a low floor with the chamber above, the floor later being replaced at a rather higher level.



Fig. 5. Detail of the head of the hall window.

Bay II has two full-height wall posts on the front elevation with the elaborately carved cusped head for a five-light window between them. The west wall has three full-height posts/studs although the one furthest to the south has been renewed; two of these serve as the jambs of a smaller window. The framing to bays III and IV appears to have been reconstructed, although the mid-rails seem to be in situ.

The south end of bay IV is infilled with coursed clunch with the corner posts probably being reset from the demolished bay V.

Bay IV is thought to have been a service bay, and when inspected by Dr C R J Currie before its alteration, he noted that the roof had been reconstructed re-using original timbers and postulated that this was a kitchen with an open hearth. A winder stair at the south west corner communicated with bays III and IV before the removal of the main chimney stack. This was lit by a mullioned window which possibly survives within the panel. The area of the stairs is now sealed off. The chamfered ceiling joists in this bay are 5 x 4in in size with lambs-tongue stops, laid at 19in centres. The axial beam is 11in wide by 10in deep and has a 2in chamfer with matching stops.

DOCUMENTARY HISTORY

This was a freeholding belonging to the Eyston estate at enclosure in 1802, but neither the tenant's name nor the size of the holding are known.¹

DENDROCHRONOLOGY

For dendrochronology abbreviations see page facing Introduction.

Sampling Comments: Nine samples were taken through coring by Robert Howard in 1988. An additional sample (EAH-C10) was taken during 2001 by Daniel Miles whilst undertaking structural timber repairs (commissioned by the owner). Three samples had bark edge on them, the latest being felled during the winter of 1419/20. As the timbers show signs of shrinkage after conversion, it may be assumed that the building was constructed during the year 1420, or shortly thereafter.

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-C01	Cruck blade open truss T3 west side	Elm	—	—	—	—	—
EAH-C02	Cruck blade open truss T3 east side	Elm	—	—	—	—	—
EAH-C03	Collar of open truss T3	118	10	1296	1403	1413	4b
EAH-C04	Saddle of open truss T3	103	23B	1316	1395	1418	4b
EAH-C05	Collar of truss T4	112	15	1307	1403	1418	4b
EAH-C06	Arch brace of open truss T3	66	21B	1353	1397	1418	4b
EAH-C07	Saddle of truss T2	55	19	—	—	—	—
EAH-C08	Cruck spur of open truss T3 west side	89	17	1317	1388	1405	4b
EAH-C09	Cruck spur of open truss T3 east side	68	—	1305	—	1372	4b
EAH-C10	Tiebeam truss T2 (box-frame)	119	34C	1301	1385	1419	

Site sequence: (composed of samples 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9), 123 rings long dated 1296–1418 with *t*-values of 5.1(STECSQ06, site seq from STE-C), 5.0(HARBEP01, site seq from HAR-B, VA20.89).

Felling date: (bark present on samples with latest rings) **1418/1420** (individual felling dates: Winter 1418/19 and Winter 1419/20).

¹ Berkshire Record Office, D/P66/26B.