

Report for  
**33 High Street, Long Wittenham, Oxfordshire**

*Site Code: LOW-C*

**from**

The Medieval Peasant House in Midland England

**by**

Nat Alcock and Dan Miles



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

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***Oxbow Books***

## LOW-C: 33 HIGH STREET, LONG WITTENHAM, OXFORDSHIRE

Grid reference: SU 5480 9389

Survey Date: 21 May 1990

By: D. Miles

## Illustrations:

1. View of the house
2. Ground floor plan
3. Section of truss T2

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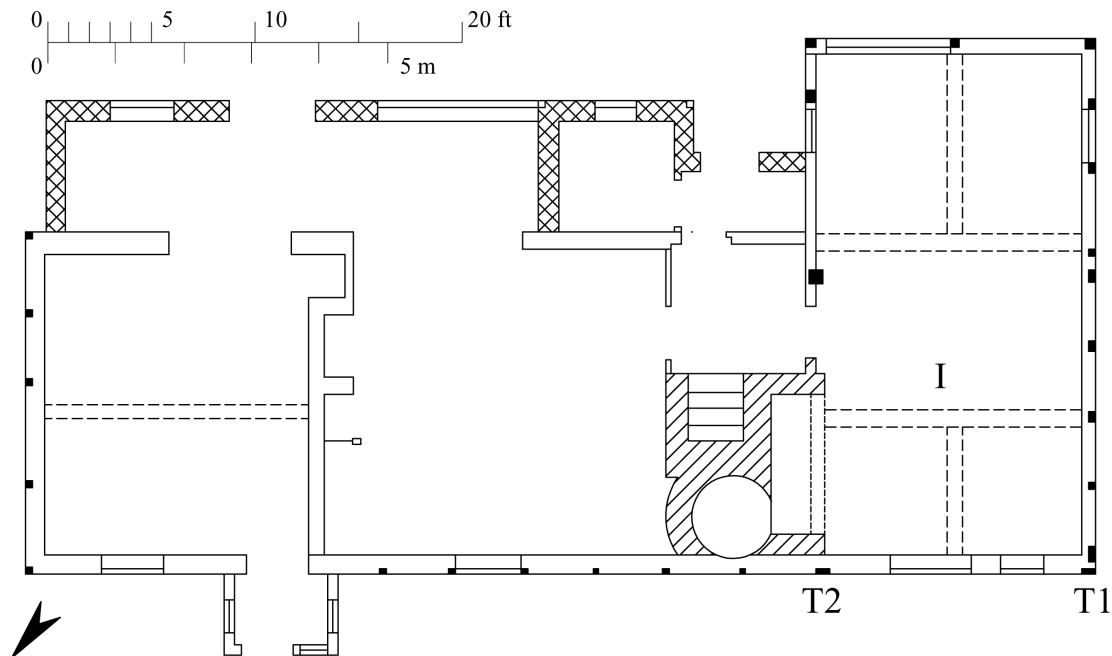


Fig. 2. Plan, showing truss and bay numbering.

## ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

### SUMMARY AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

PHASE 1; No. 33 High Street, Long Wittenham is a three-phase building with a cruck core, running parallel to the road, aligned south-west to north-east (here described as west to east). The cruck range was of at least two bays, although only the western bay remains, incorporated in the phase 2 crosswing. The western cruck truss is heavily weathered, indicating that it was the end of the house; it is now truncated above the collar, and may originally have been half-hipped. Truss T2 has a saddle apex (type 'C'); its timbers are generally smoke blackened and the lack of infilling shows that bay I and the missing bay II were a two bay open hall.

This phase has a felling date range of 1323-49. If the house was originally of three bays, it would have been comparable in form to Mill Farm Cottage, Mapledurham (MDM-A), dated to 1335, although the house is exceptionally narrow for its early date, with an external span of about 15ft 6in.

PHASE 2: This is a two-bay crosswing, the northern bay of which was built over bay I of the cruck range, leaving the cruck exposed in the side wall (Fig. 1). The jowled posts and floor joists indicate a date in the later sixteenth to seventeenth century. The fireplace beyond truss T2 was inserted at this stage, probably in the position of the open hearth. Much reconstruction of this part of the house has taken place recently using second-hand material.

LATER PHASES: Probably in the late eighteenth, century, the remaining cruck bays were demolished and rebuilt. The house may well have remained the same size, with two original bays being replaced. The external elevations are timber-framed, of thin scantling elm, infilled with bricks measuring  $2\frac{3}{4}$  by 9in. The bread oven was probably inserted at this time. A modern extension has been added at the rear.

## STRUCTURAL FEATURES

PHASE 1: CRUCK BAY: Truss T1 is at present truncated above the collar but it is not clear if this is its original form. The truss is very weathered on the outside and has been infilled with later brickwork. Truss T2 is a full cruck with a cranked collar but no evidence for a tiebeam or arch braces. The saddle apex (type 'C') is interesting in that it is scalloped underneath in an arch-shaped profile with the inch-wide chamfers on the cruck blades being continued around the saddle. This is very similar in form to the cruck saddle at 3 Birmingham Road, Stoneleigh (STO-B). A peg projects down from the centre of the saddle which formerly held the removed ridge piece. The collar (7 by 3½in) is tenoned into the inside face of the cruck blades (8½ by 10in) and it has a large hole for a one inch diameter peg in the top centre, presumably for hanging things over the fire. The purlins have been removed but two 1-1¼in tapered peg holes are visible on the back of the cruck blade at collar level which indicate their probable position. The western sides of the cruck blades have two mortices which are probably for wind-braces. Assembly marks are visible on the eastern side of the crucks (not seen on Fig. 3), with II scratched on both ends of the saddle. The rest of this side of the truss is obscured by the chimney stack.

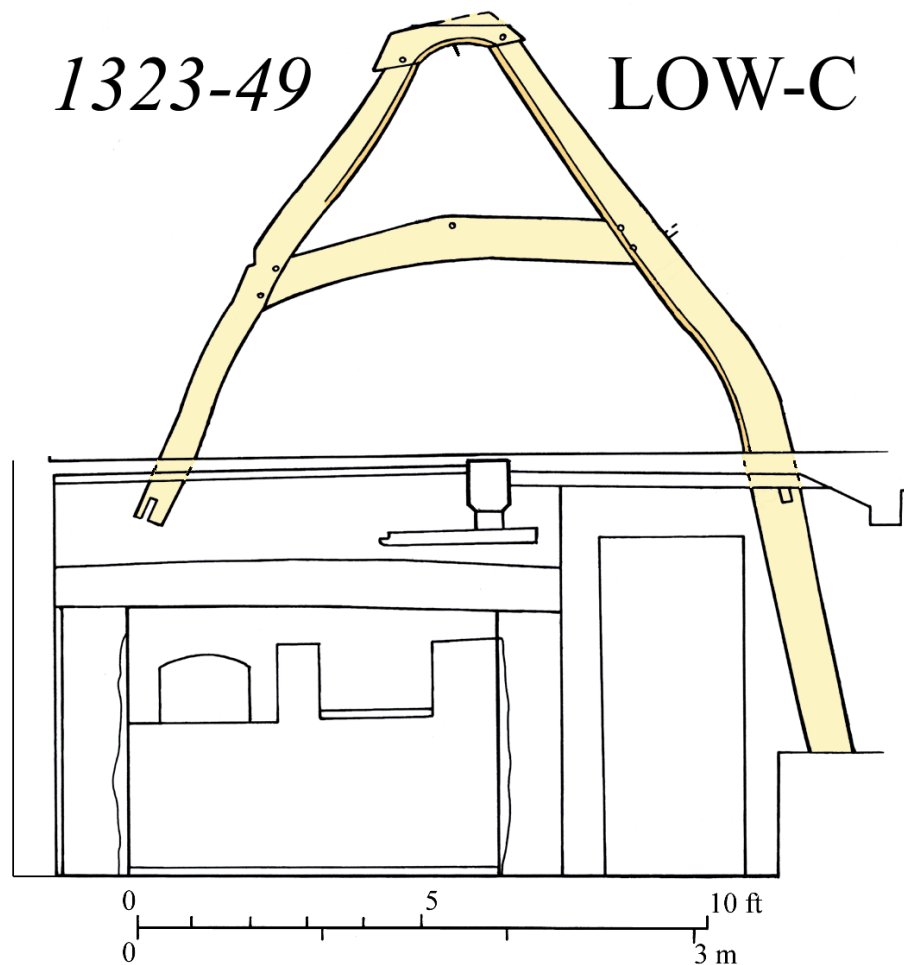


Fig. 3. Section of truss T2 from the west.

## DENDROCHRONOLOGY

For dendrochronology abbreviations see page facing Introduction.

*Sampling Comments:* Eight samples were taken through coring by Robert Howard on 21 May 1990. None of these cross-matched with each other, however sample C01 matched on its own with local reference chronologies. Since none of the other samples could be dated on their own, the results must be treated with caution.

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

Sample Code	Sample Location	Total Rings	Sapwood Rings	FMR Date	LHR Date	LMR Date	Date Cat
CODE	SAMPLE LOCATION	RINGS	RINGS	DATE	DATE	DATE	CAT
LOW-C01	Rear cruck blade truss T2	57	HS	1257	1313	1313	3b
LOW-C02	Front cruck blade truss T2	30 NM	—	—	—	—	—
LOW-C03	Collar truss T2	75	28	—	—	—	—
LOW-C04	Saddle truss T2	46	08	—	—	—	—
LOW-C05	Front cruck blade truss T1	63	11	—	—	—	—
LOW-C06	Tiebeam truss T1	23 NM	—	—	—	—	—
LOW-C07	Rear cruck blade truss T1	57	01	—	—	—	—
LOW-C08	Collar truss T1	48	HS	—	—	—	—

Sample 1 matched at 1257–1313 with *t*-values: 4.0(OXFORD), 5.1(DHR-CFL), 6.4(DHR-QHC1), 4.2(READING).

Estimated 95% felling date range: 1321-1354 (previously 1326–1351). OxCal refined felling date range **1323-49**.