

Report for

The Thatched Cottage, 46/48 Lower Radley, Radley, Oxfordshire

Site Code: RAD-A

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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RAD-A: THE THATCHED COTTAGE, 46/48 LOWER RADLEY, RADLEY, OXFORDSHIRE

Grid reference: SU 5346 9898

Survey Date: 21 Nov. 1989

By: D. Miles

Illustrations:

1. View of the house
2. Ground floor plan
3. Section of trusses T2 and T3

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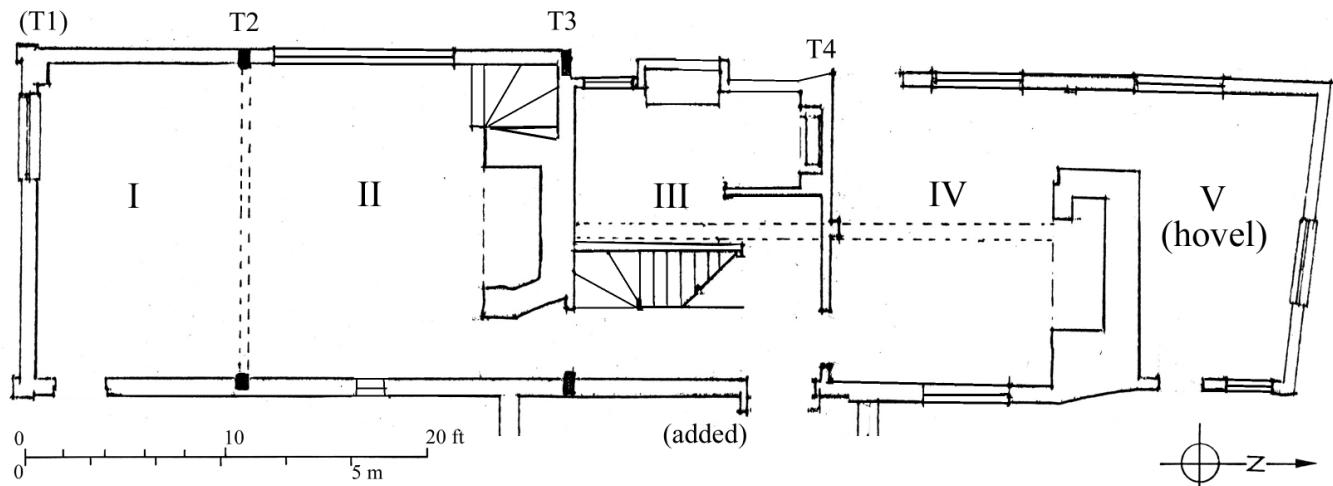


Fig. 2. Plan, showing truss and bay numbering (redrawn from architect's plan).

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

PHASE 1: The earliest part of The Thatched Cottage is a two-bay cruck house running north-south at right angles to the road. This occupied bays I and II; the northern side face of the western half of truss T3 is weathered, although the eastern purlin protrudes into bay III. The south side of truss T3 has substantial soot blackening, with some slight traces on the timbers at the southern end of bay II. Dendrochronology has dated the house to 1522/3 for the cruck bays in their present form, although the cruck blades themselves in truss T2 are reused. The blades of truss T3 cross at the apex (type 'D' apex); truss T2 has a yoke carrying a king post (type 'F1'), although the blades had originally crossed as in truss T3.

PHASE 2: Sometime between the late sixteenth and early eighteenth centuries bays III and IV were added. The chimney stacks at the northern end of bay II and the northern end of bay IV were probably inserted in the earlier part of this period. Bays I and II were presumably floored over at this time. The western walls of bays III and IV are noticeably out of line with the preceding two bays and truss T3 leans markedly to the south. Finally, a low hovel was built at the north end. A modern extension has been added to the

STRUCTURAL FEATURES

PHASE 1: Truss T2 contains a tiebeam, collar, yoke and king-post supporting a square set ridge. Dendrochronology has shown that the collar and the yoke are contemporary with the purlins and other elements of truss T3, although the cruck blades of T2 are reused. All of the members of this truss including the purlins are boxed heart and have an adzed finish. The crucks themselves were originally half-lapped across at the apex (as is truss T3) and the blades have been spread apart at the apex and connected by a yoke. Halvings are visible for an earlier collar and tiebeam. A 1in chamfer running up the inside edge to the underside of the yoke probably dates from the reconstruction phase.

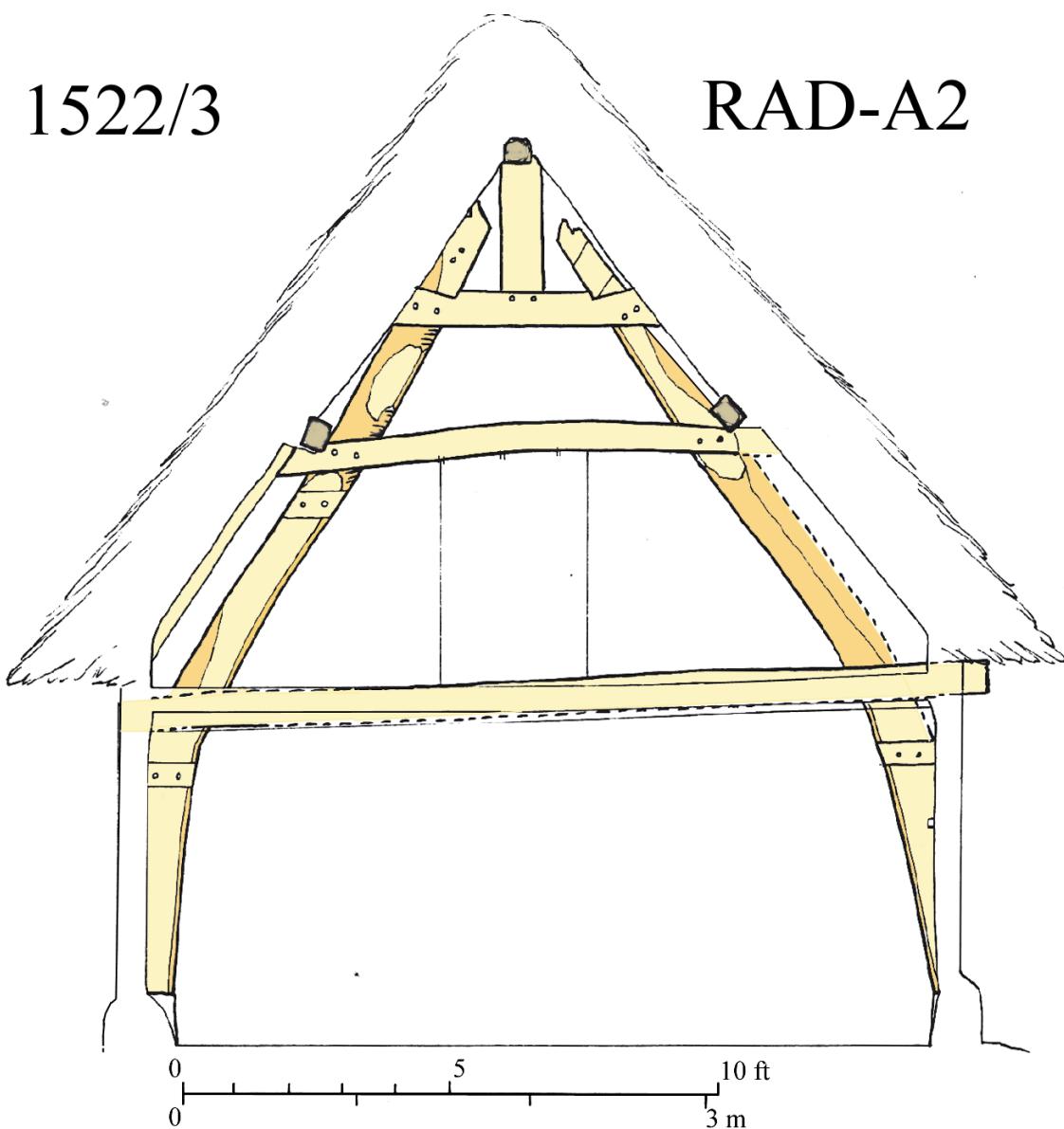


Fig. 3(a). Section of truss T2.

Truss T3 is a straightforward example of a type 'D' cruck with a collar and tiebeam. The purlins are supported as at truss T2, and the western one protrudes 8in into bay III, probably to carry the final verge rafter, which still survives. The ridge projects 11in into this bay, and the weathered surface of the timbers indicate that this was the northern end of the original house. Unlike truss T2, most of the members of truss T3 are heart-sawn, with the exception of the tiebeam. Again the surfaces are adze-finished. The crucks themselves are very thin and plank like, ranging in thickness from 4½in lower down to 3½in at the top. It is not clear whether they were cut from the same tree. Some wattle and daub infill survives near the apex.

The roof over bay II is fairly intact. The purlins measure about 7 by 5in and sit on the backs of the cruck blades, supported by the extended ends of the collars. There are indications of wind braces at both trusses although these have been removed. The lengths between the trusses and the wind braces along the purlins vary from 4ft 4in to 5ft 6in. The rafters themselves are not visible but were set at 16 - 22in centres.

The roof in bay I has been reconstructed. The end truss is box framed with a fully hipped roof. The purlins continue beyond T2, respectively 15 in (west purlin) and 5 ft (eastern purlin). There is an indication of a wind-brace to the latter purlin terminating five foot from the truss.

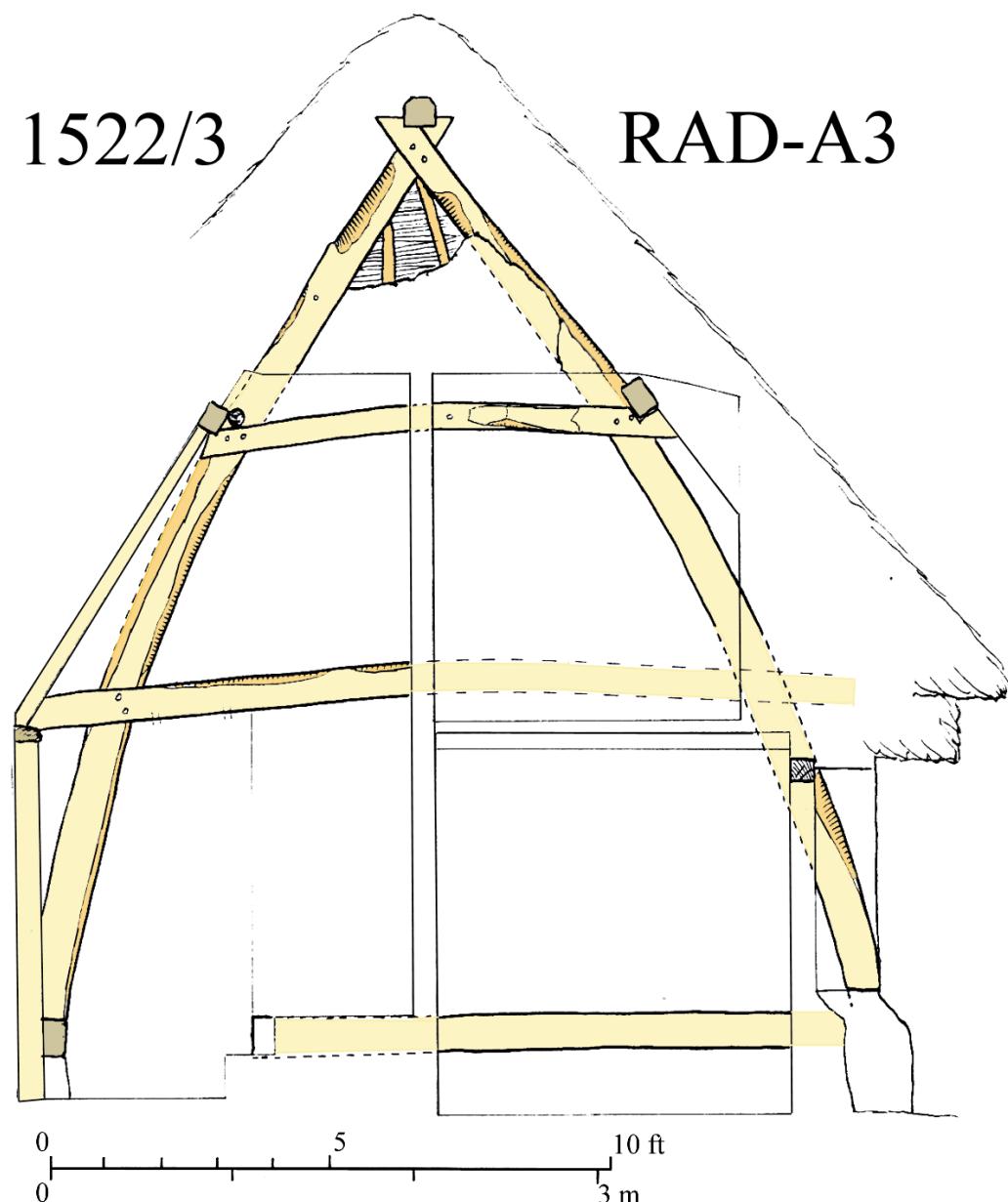


Fig. 3(b). Section of truss T3.

LATER PHASES: The northern end of bay II has a fireplace built up against the truss with a staircase winding up the western side. The bricks are early seventeenth century, measuring about $2\frac{1}{4}$ by $4\frac{1}{4}$ by 9in and are laid on-edge. Behind the chimney, laths are nailed over the wattle and daub panel near the top, possibly surviving from an earlier smoke hood. No floor joists or beams are visible in either bay I or II.

The second phase rafters in bay III are of elm, 3in square with chisel cut assembly marks where the tops are bridled. The diagonally-set ridge is also of elm and is of the same section as the rafters. The floor is carried on an 8 by $6\frac{1}{2}$ in elm axial beam, unchamfered with elm joists of dimensions similar to the rafters, laid at 18 in centres. The wall plate on the western side is $5\frac{1}{2}$ by 4in and stave holes are visible over the rear doorway.

Truss T4, in bay IV has a 'D' type apex with diagonally set ridge. The heart-sawn principals are of elm and are very slight, measuring 7 by 3in. The first floor is carried on an elm axial beam 8in wide by 7in high with $1\frac{1}{2}$ in unstopped chamfers. The joists are similar to those in bay III but spaced at $19\frac{1}{2}$ in centres. At the northern end of the bay, the fireplace is of the same period as the one in bay II, with identical brickwork. Next to it is a later chimney stack with bricks measuring $2\frac{1}{2}$ in x $4\frac{1}{2}$ in x $8\frac{1}{2}$ in.

BAY V: HOVEL: This most northern part of the house has a fully hipped roof and is poorly built. One feature of interest is a former wall plate turned on its edge and used as a beam, showing a double dovetail lap joint.

DENDROCHRONOLOGY

For dendrochronology abbreviations see page facing Introduction.

Sampling Comments: Ten samples were obtained through coring by Robert Howard. Of the dated samples, two were from truss T2, two from truss T3 and the two purlins which run between. These indicate that the two trusses were constructed in their present form in or around 1522/3. Samples RAD-A08 and 09 were from the reused cruck blades of truss T2. They matched together to form a sequence of 98 rings, but this could not be matched.

TREE-RING SAMPLE RECORD AND SUMMARY OF DATING

Sample		Total Rings	Sapwood Rings	FMR Date	LHR Date	LMR Date	Date Cat
Code	Sample Location						
RAD-A01	E cruck blade truss T3	79	23	1440	1495	1518	2
RAD-A02	Collar, truss T3	52	14	—	—	—	—
RAD-A03	W cruck blade truss T3	NM	—	—	—	—	—
RAD-A04	E purlin bay II	45	26C	1478	1496	1522	2
RAD-A05	W purlin bay II	74	22C	1448	1499	1521	2
RAD-A06	Collar	40	HS	1456	1495	1495	2
RAD-A07	Collar, truss T2	67	02	1436	15—	1502	2
RAD-A08	E cruck blade truss T2	93	—	—	—	—	—
RAD-A09	W cruck blade truss T2	64	—	—	—	—	—
RAD-A10	Sill beam, truss T3	53	HS	1451	1503	1503	2

Site sequences: (composed of samples 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10), 87 rings long dated 1436–1522 with *t*-values of 5.9(OXFORD), 8.7(DID-A)

Felling date: (sample 4 with last dated ring has complete sapwood), **1522/3**.