

Report for
Manor Cottage, Sutton Courtenay, Oxfordshire

Site Code: SUC-A

from

The Medieval Peasant House in Midland England

by

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Fig. 1. View of the cruck range, from the south (Photo: D. Clark).

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SUC-A: MANOR COTTAGE, SUTTON COURTENAY, OXFORDSHIRE

Grid reference: SU 5035 9416

Survey Date: 1971-1990

By: C R Currie; D Miles

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References: Currie, C. R. J. (1976) 'Smaller domestic architecture in North Berkshire, c 1300 - c 1650', Oxford, D. Phil thesis; Currie, C. R. J. (1992) 'Larger medieval houses in the Vale of the White Horse', *Oxoniensia*, 57, 81-244 (pp. 240-2; trusses renumbered).

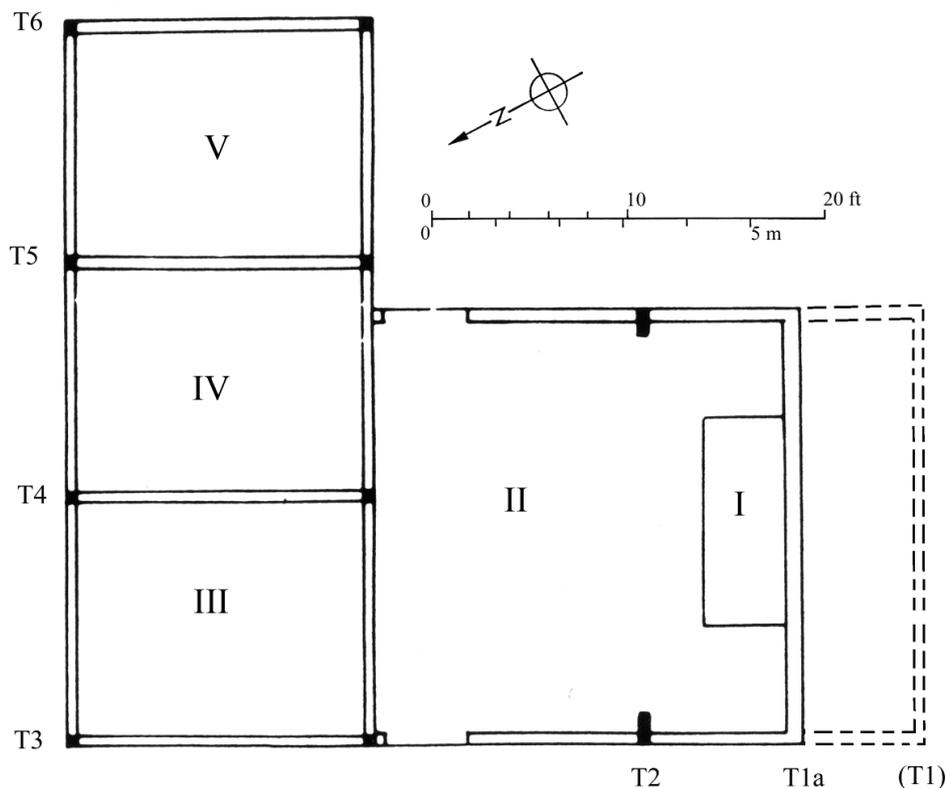


Fig. 2. Plan, showing truss and bay numbering.

ARCHITECTURAL SURVEY

SUMMARY AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The house was originally examined and partly surveyed by C. Currie in 1971 (1992, p. 240f.). It was intended to be surveyed in 1990 as part of the main Leverhulme project, but it was badly damaged by fire the day before the proposed visit. Samples for dating were obtained subsequently. The fire destroyed some structural evidence in the roof, but exposed other features for the first time, although the building has not been fully resurveyed. The report is primarily based on Currie's description.

PHASE 1: The house faces east across the village street, to the south-west of the Manor House. The existing house comprises a two-bay cruck-built open hall (bays I-II) (since truncated at the south end), and a three-bay floored crosswing with crown-post roof (bays III-V). The upper floor of the wing appears to have been a great chamber. Both hall and crosswing have been tree-ring dated to 1317/18. The original entry was most probably to the south of the present hall chimney, possibly with a service bay beyond this. Although hall entries adjoining cross-wings have been recorded (42 High Street, Milton,

Oxfordshire, X-MIL and Golden Cottage, Woodhouse, Leicestershire, WOE-A), this possible entry position is obstructed by an original wall brace.

Straight wall-bracing has survived in the cross-wing south wall, although the north wall framing has been reconstructed with intermediate studs and curved braces, perhaps in the fifteenth century.

STRUCTURAL FEATURES

PHASE 1: The open truss (T2) has sharply elbowed blades of thick cross-section with a saddle apex (type C); the removed collar was arch-braced. On one side, the wall plate rests on a step on the cruck, but the other plate is butt-jointed to the blade. The purlins are tenoned into the cruck blades and have the square-section chamfered windbraces lap-jointed to them. There is no truss adjacent to the wing, but the hall frame is carried on the corner post of the wing (east) and on an intermediate stud in the wing frame (west).

The wall-framing of the hall range comprises giant panels without middle rails. In the north bay, the wall posts had long steep braces to the plate. The presence of these braces indicates that the original entry was not in its present position, but presumably lay at the other end of the hall, where the inserted fireplace may have backed onto a cross-passage.

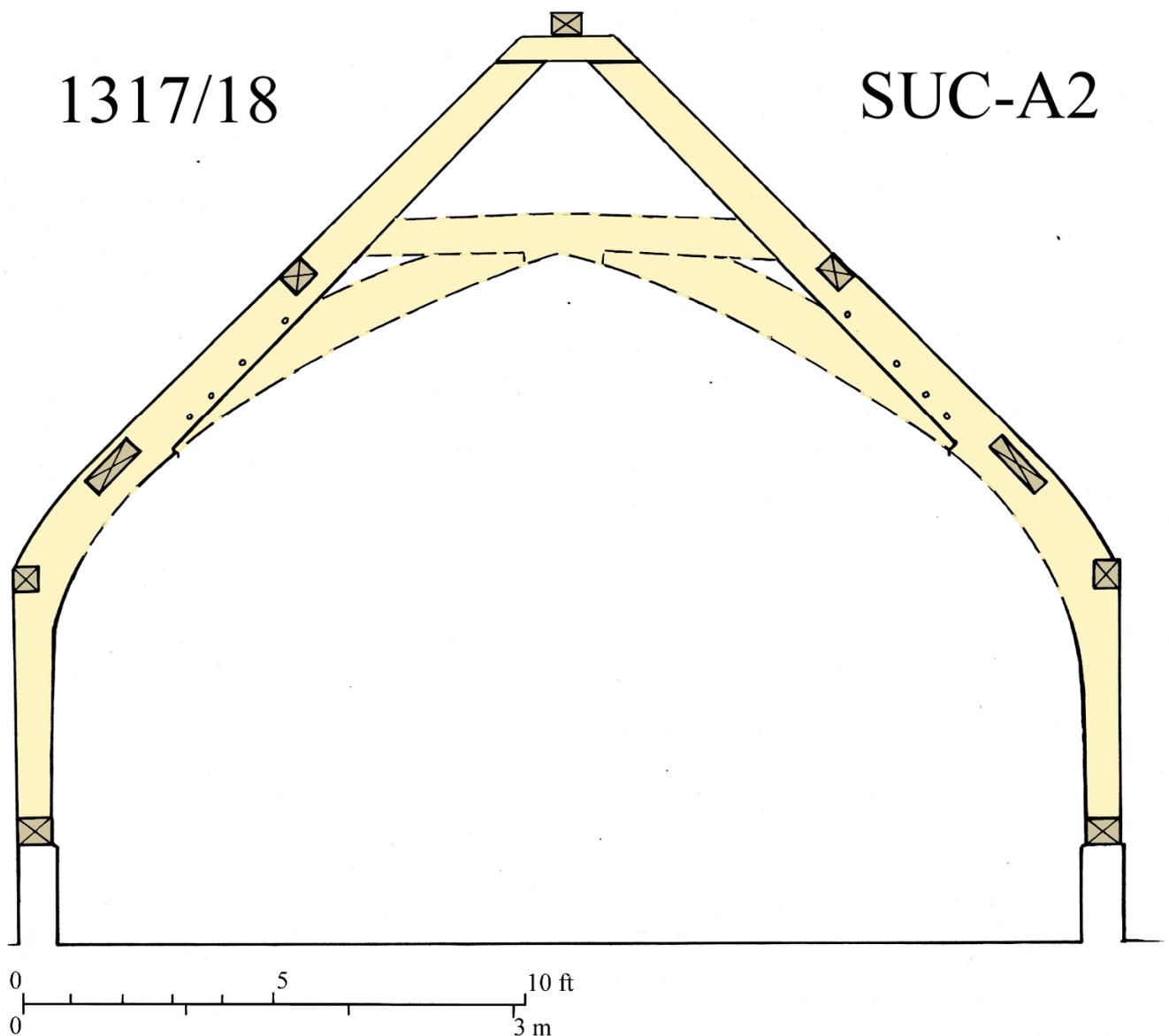
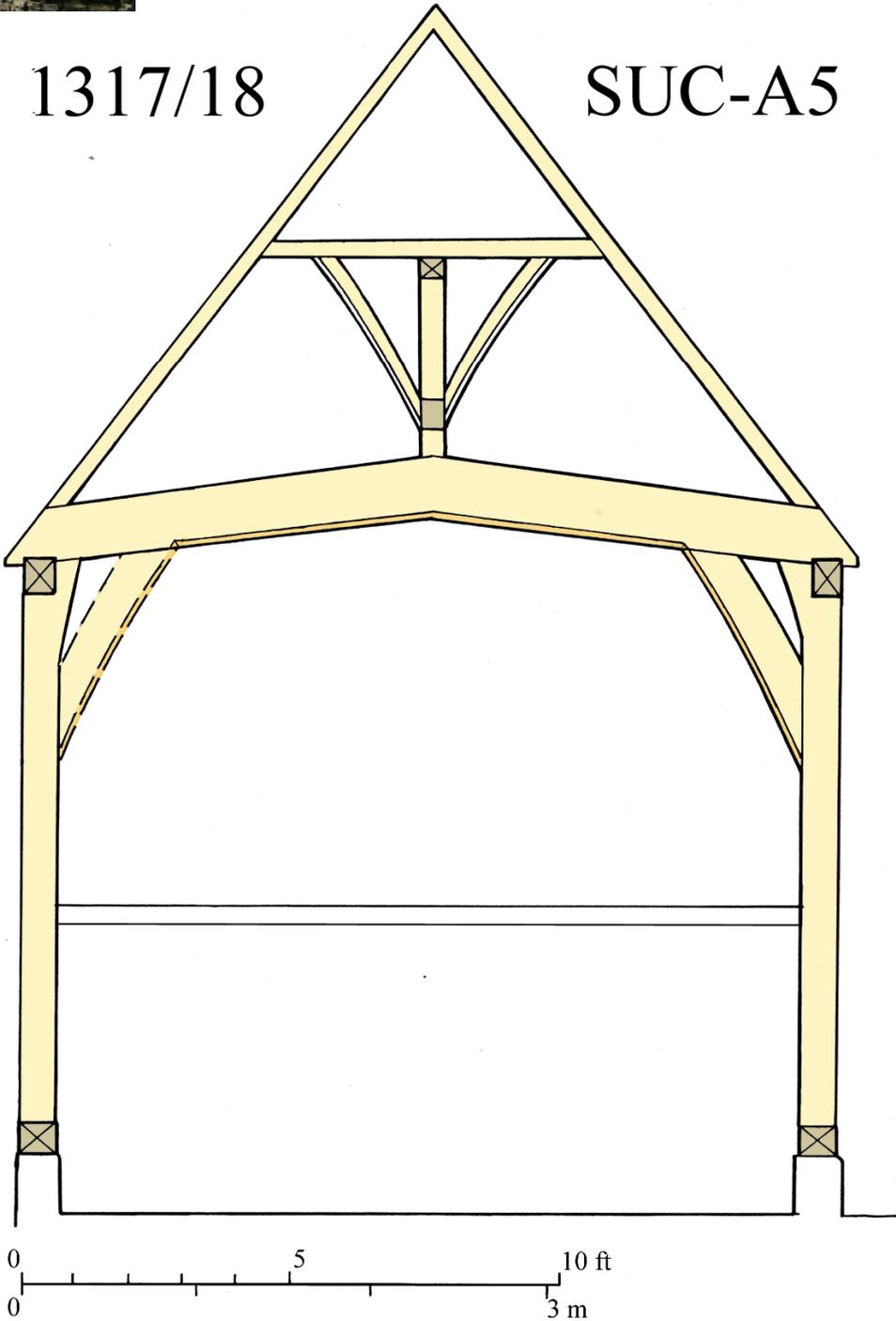


Fig. 3. Section of truss T2.



Fig. 4. View of the box-frame range (Photo: D. Clark).

Fig. 5. Section of truss T5.



In the wing, the front (east) wall may have been jettied, as it is now under-built in brick and stone. The principal posts have a variety of head forms, slight jowls, upstands, and unjowled. The wall-framing is in large panels, with intermediate studs in each bay and with braces to the wall plate; some of the braces are straight and are fixed by single pegs, while some are curved, with double pegs; the latter seem likely to be replacements. The intermediate studs are not characteristic of fourteenth century structures. Although they were not sampled for dating, they also seem likely to have been inserted during a repair. The wall plates have *trait-de-Jupiter* scarfs.

The two internal trusses in the wing (T4, T5) are open, indicating that the upper floor comprised a single large chamber. They have cambered and steeply arch-braced chamfered tiebeams. They carry jowled crown posts with four-way up-bracing, similar in character to the hall windbraces. The chamfered crown-plate is tenoned to the crown posts. Draw stops are used throughout. The west end truss (T3) also has a cambered tiebeam, though that at the east is flat. Both have dragon ties, although these are not used on the internal trusses.

LATER PHASES: The later alterations include the insertion of the hall chimney of roughly coursed rubble stone. It appears to be of two phases, the first phase with a tapered stack, which was then widened in brick and stone, bringing the front of chimney flush with the front (south-east) wall, with brick quoins at S corner, NW half of the hall end wall plastered T/F, no timberwork visible, ground and first floor windows (so stack cannot have gone across whole of wall). There was no truss at T1a, and the medieval timbers were apparently cut off and lodged in the stone and brickwork of chimney. The hall floor was not visible. The front (east) wall of the wing was under-built in irregular rubble stone (limestone/chalkstone); this may be quite a late alteration, as the narrow brick lateral stack intersects the stonework.

DOCUMENTARY HISTORY

The house was freehold in 1804. It received its present name after its purchase in 1902 by the owners of the Sutton Courtenay manorial estate (Currie(1992)).

DENDROCHRONOLOGY

For dendrochronology abbreviations see page facing Introduction.

Sampling Comments: Eight samples were obtained as sections of replaced timbers and as cores by D. Miles in 1991.

TREE-RING SAMPLE RECORD AND SUMMARY OF DATING

Sample Code	Sample Location	Total Rings	Sapwood Rings	FMR Date	LHR Date	LMR Date	Date Cat
SC01	Tiebeam, truss T6	96	21?C	1222	1296	1317	1
SC03	S wall plate, bay IV	86	23C	1232	1294	1317	1
SC05	Crown post, truss T4	74	20	1240	1293	1313	1
SC13	Wall-brace (crosswing)	91	5				
SC21	NW windbrace, truss T2	106	29½C	1212	1287	1317	1
SC22	E cruck blade, truss T2	131	9	1183	1304	1313	1
SC23	W cruck blade, truss T2	84	15C	1234	1302	1317	1
SC24	Ridge-piece, bay I	58	22½C				

Site sequence (composed of samples SC1, 3, 5, 21, 22, 23) 135 rings long, dated to 1183-1317 with *t*-values of 8.02 (HANTS97); 7.20 (SOUTH); 6.02 (E-MID). A possible tree-ring date of c. 1195 for the hall ridge-beam (sample SC24; Currie (1992), 242) was not confirmed in the definitive analysis.

Felling date: **1317/18**. Samples SC03 and SC23 (and probably SC01) have the 1317 ring complete. In SC21 this ring is incomplete, indicating felling in summer/autumn 1317.