

Report for

**19 Henley Street, Alcester, Warwickshire**

*Site Code: ALC-A*

from

The Medieval Peasant House in Midland England

by

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

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***Oxbow Books***

## ALC-A: 19 HENLEY STREET, ALCESTER, WARWICKSHIRE

Grid reference: SP 0908 5758      Survey Date: 10 November 1988      By: D. Miles

*Illustrations:*

1. View of the house
2. Ground-floor plan
3. Section of truss T1

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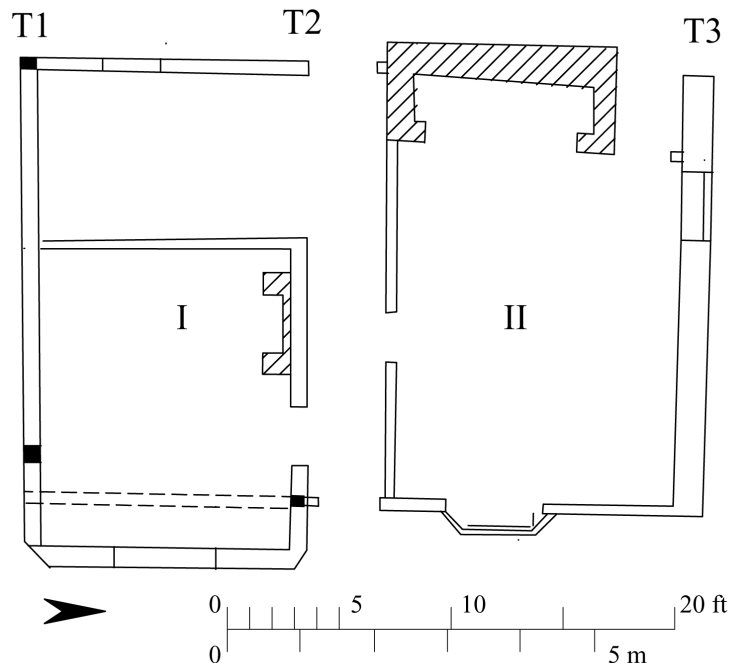


Fig. 2. Plan, showing truss and bay numbering.

**ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION****SUMMARY AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT**

**PHASE 1:** The house was probably originally of two or three bays, by analogy with other examples, although truss T1 is the only surviving element of this first phase. This truss has been dated by dendrochronology with a felling date range of **1398–1417**. No weathering was discernable on the north face of the truss, but the collar has clearly been repositioned. It has been postulated by the Chairman of the Alcester and District Local History Society, G Edward Saville, that the house extended only to the north of truss T1, bay I being a service area followed by a two-bay hall house encompassing and extending beyond bay II, with the present passage and front door on the site of the original entrance and cross passage. This hypothesis is unprovable, as the phase 2 rebuilding has obliterated all evidence. and it is equally possible that the surviving truss was internal. It was not possible to inspect the south side of the cruck blades, and the adjoining house to the south would be worth investigating in the future.

**PHASE 2:** During the fifteenth or early sixteenth century (approximately datable from the character of T2), the house was massively rebuilt, leaving only truss T1 intact from the first phase, most probably because it then served as a party wall. During this period, the second cruck truss (T2), was probably inserted. The lack of weathering on the north face of T1 suggests that this replaced an earlier phase 1 truss.

**LATER PHASES:** In about 1600, bay II, a two-storied, tiled, box-framed was built. The roof is some six feet higher than the original ridge line and extends over the whole of bay I as well. Bay II is served by a large inglenook fireplace on the rear wall. The framing of the north end (truss T3) does not seem to be of the same character as the front and the house possibly continued for another bay. Alternatively it may have abutted an earlier building to the north, since demolished.

Possibly during the 1800s, a gabled front was added to bay I throwing it some three feet further forward. It is of brick and has slightly canted angles externally. Sometime later than this, a small bay

window was built onto the front of bay II, replacing an earlier window. During this period many internal alterations were carried out to the whole of the house. A final phase is represented by the 19th century kitchen wing which runs off at a slight angle from the rear of bay II.

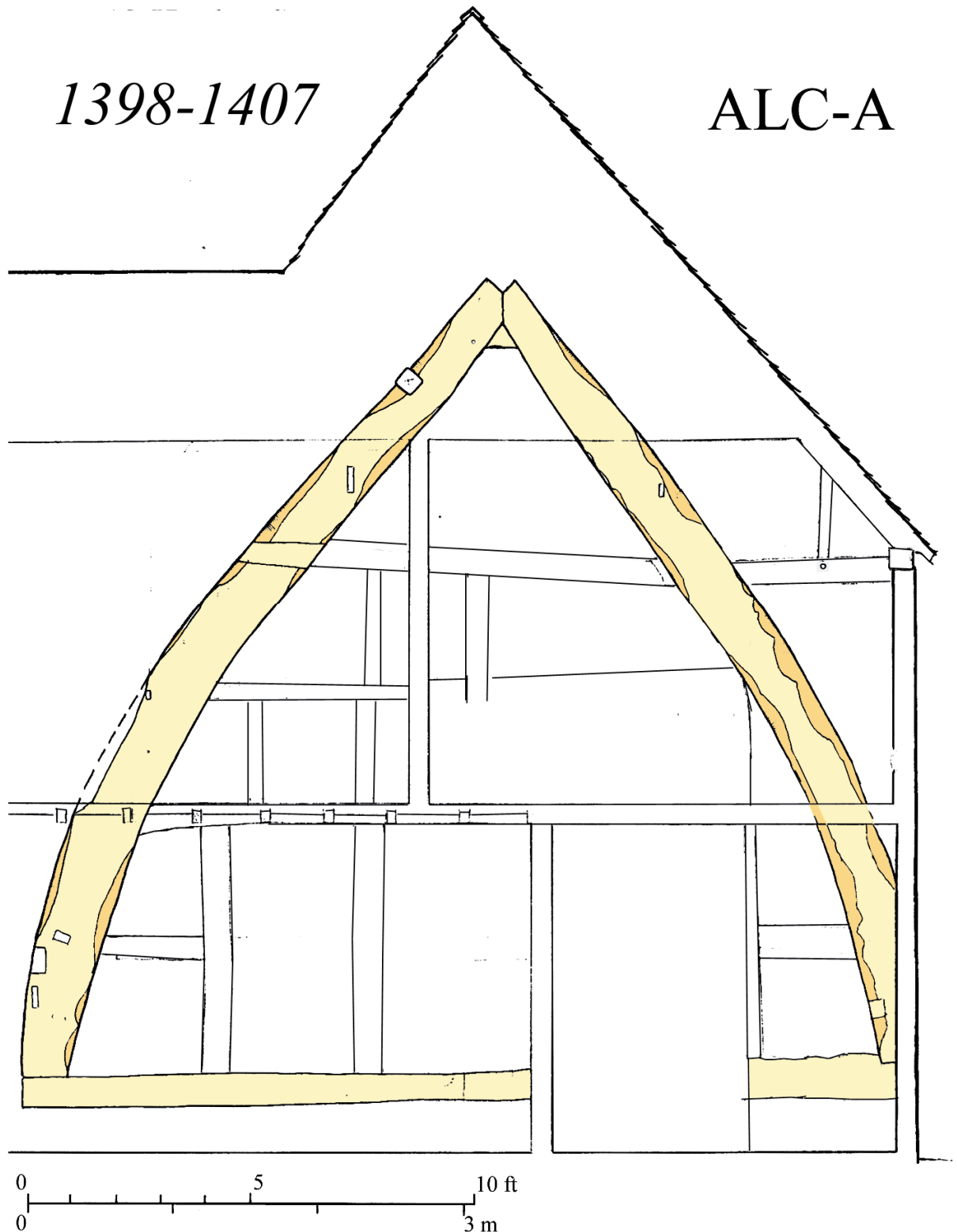


Fig. 3. Section of truss T1.

### STRUCTURAL FEATURES

PHASE 1: Both cruck blades of truss T1 are massive (19in wide by 6 in) and well-cut, possibly from the same tree although the dendrochronological matching does not confirm this. The apex type, L2, is unusual for this area; the blades are joined by a block or yoke and touch just below the ridge which is nestled in the top. It was not possible to see if a yoke was used, halved into the south side of the blades,

or a block with tenons. No original purlins survive, though a small 5½ in square timber is set into the back of the front cruck near to the top. It is unlikely that this was an original purlin, but its purpose is not clear. The feet of the crucks rest on a sill beam running transversely from front to back. The first section to about the centre point is of oak and could possibly be original, but a section of elm under the rear blade probably dates to phase 2 or 3. The tiebeam is mostly obscured by joists and flooring but it could be original, as a peg hole is visible where it joins the front cruck; the junction with the rear cruck is hidden. The front blade has a collar halving for a collar, also obscured on the rear blade. A collar, probably relating to phase 2, is in roughly the same position as its predecessor. No other primary timbers survive.

PHASE 2: Bay I and truss T2. Little remains of this phase apart from cruck truss T2. This is quite unlike truss T1 in that the blades are of very small section and are of elm. It has a type 'D' apex in which the blades are halved across each other, producing a V to carry the ridge. Much of the infilling of truss T1 probably belongs to this phase.

PHASE 3: Bay II. This is a box-framed wing running parallel to the road framed in square panels with no systematic pattern to the frame timbers. Some studs rise the full height, such as those on either side of the central window, while others only rise to the middle rail of the first floor. The framing is substantial and neat on the front, whereas the infill of the end truss (T3) is much lighter in comparison.

## DENDROCHRONOLOGY

For dendrochronology abbreviations see page facing Introduction.

*Sampling Comments:* Three samples were obtained through coring by Robert Howard on 10 November 1988. Of these, the two cruck blades matched together with a *t*-value of 4.1. However, this is not sufficiently high enough to match the two samples together or prove that the two blades were cut from the same tree and both samples were dated independently against the reference chronologies. Sample ALC-A03 is from a later purlin which is not contemporary with the first two samples.

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

Sample Code	Sample Location	Total Rings	Sapwood Rings	FMR Date	LHR Date	LMR Date	Date Cat
ALC-A01	Cruck blade truss T1, rear	49	14	1349	1383	1397	4a
ALC-A02	Cruck blade truss T1, front	72	24	1322	1369	1393	1
ALC-A03	Purlin bay I, front	13 NM	2	—	—	—	—
Average date of last heartwood ring					1376		

ALC-A. Sample 2 dated with *t*-values of 7.9 (OXFORD), 6.8 (E.MID). Sample 1 dated with *t*-values of 5.3 (OXHSQ04, Site sequence for OXH-A, VA20.89), 4.1 (ALC-A02)

Felling date range: **1398–1417** (revised from 1393–1419, VA20.89, due to new sapwood estimates).