

Report and Documentary History for
Trinity Cottage, Ashow, Warwickshire

Site Code: ASH-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

ASH-A: TRINITY COTTAGE, ASHOW, WARWICKSHIRE

Grid reference: SP 3107 7037 Survey Date: 28 August 1988 By: D Miles; N W Alcock

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Reference: Alcock, N. W. (1993) *People at home: Living in a Warwickshire village, 1500-1800*, Chichester: Phillimore.

For documentary source references, see the bibliography of primary sources.

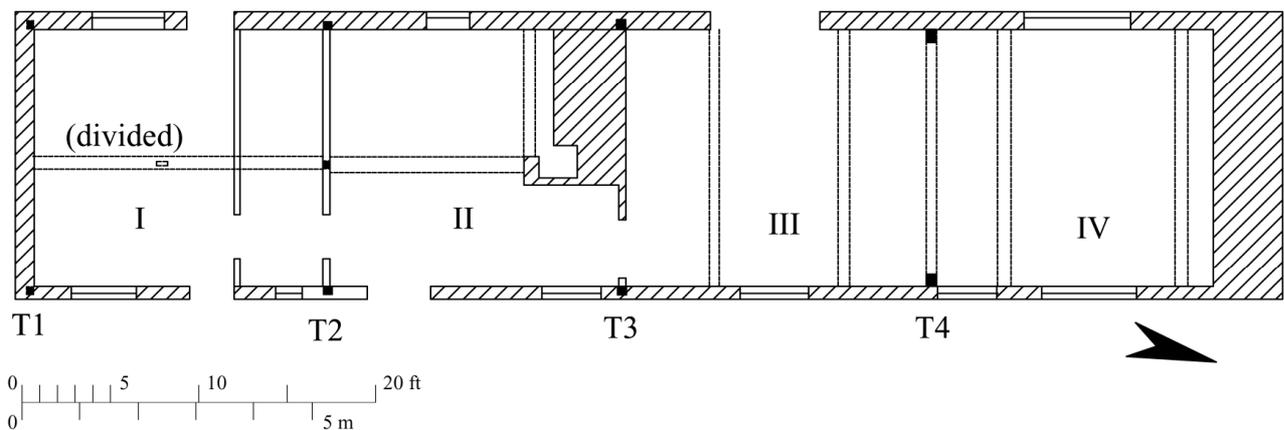


Fig. 2. Plan, showing truss and bay numbering.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Trinity Cottage is a four-bay house lying parallel to and south of the village street. The exterior walls have been almost entirely replaced in brick, and the roof is now of slate. Of the four surviving trusses, T1 to T3 are box framed with their principal rafters crossed at the apex to support the ridge piece. T4 is a cruck with 'A' type apex. Bay I was presumably the chamber end, apparently divided axially. Soot blackening between T2 and T4, makes it likely that Bay II was the original hall, with Bay III as a heated kitchen. Bay IV may have originally been in non-domestic use. A probate inventory of 1639 lists nine rooms, and suggests that by then bay III was divided between a storage area (space) and a small chamber, and that the kitchen was probably in a separate building.

Three timbers have been dated by dendrochronology with a felling date range of 1464-1475; the tiebeam of T3, with no sapwood, has been dated to *after* 1385; it was probably re-used, as it is unlikely that it has lost 85 rings. The dated samples include both cruck elements (the south cruck blade and the collar) and a box-frame element (the north wall-plate between T2 and T3). This demonstrates that the cruck phase and the box frame phase are contemporary. Further evidence for this is the uniform character of the ridge piece from T1 to T4.

STRUCTURAL FEATURES

The bays are 16ft long. The east wall was presumably the original gable end of end house. It incorporates truss T1 which consists of a tie-beam, inset principal rafters with crossed apexes, collar with queen struts and V struts above. The ground floor room in bay I has an axial beam with stave holes for a partition; a stud mortice indicates the possible position of a doorway between the two rooms. The west part of this beam is concealed.

Truss T2 is similar to T1, but the tie-beam is strongly cambered; although this has the appearance of a cruck blade, there are no signs of re-use. The collar contains a series of holes for pegs, probably for hanging objects (e.g. bacon joints). The truss has central studs under the tiebeam, above and below the mid-rail. There are raking queen struts between tiebeam and collar. Wattle and daub infill exists in much of this truss, and this is soot blackened on the west side above the tiebeam. On the ground floor, bay II has an inserted axial beam with scroll stops. A fireplace has been later inserted on the east side of T3.

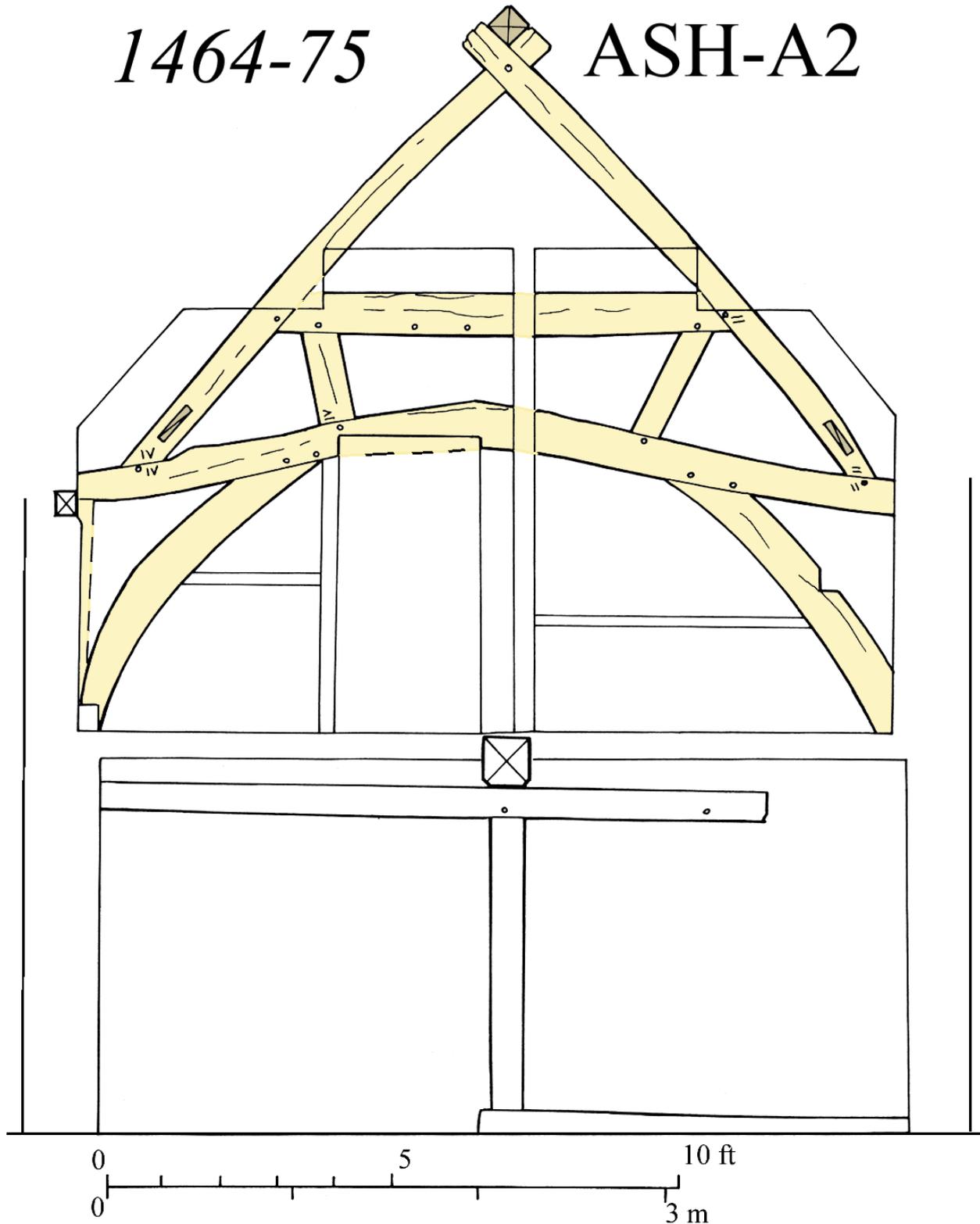


Fig. 3(a). Section of truss T2.

T3 is similar to T2, with the peg for a central stud under the tiebeam. It still contains some wattle and daub. Bay III has two transverse beams with small scroll stops on the ground floor, and the present staircase rises on the west side of T3. Wind-braces mortices are visible in T2 and T3.

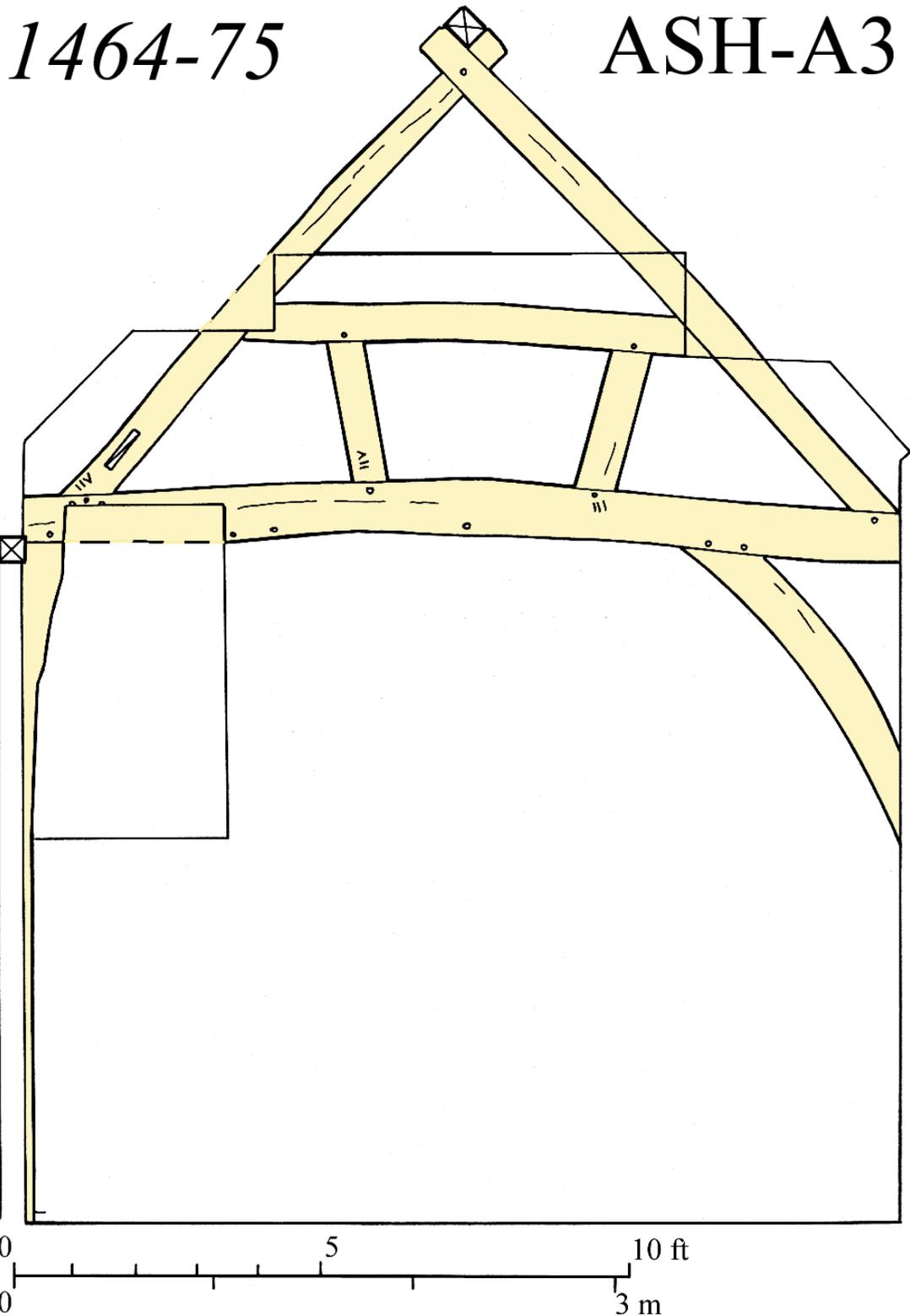


Fig. 3(b). Section of truss T3.

1464-75

ASH-A4

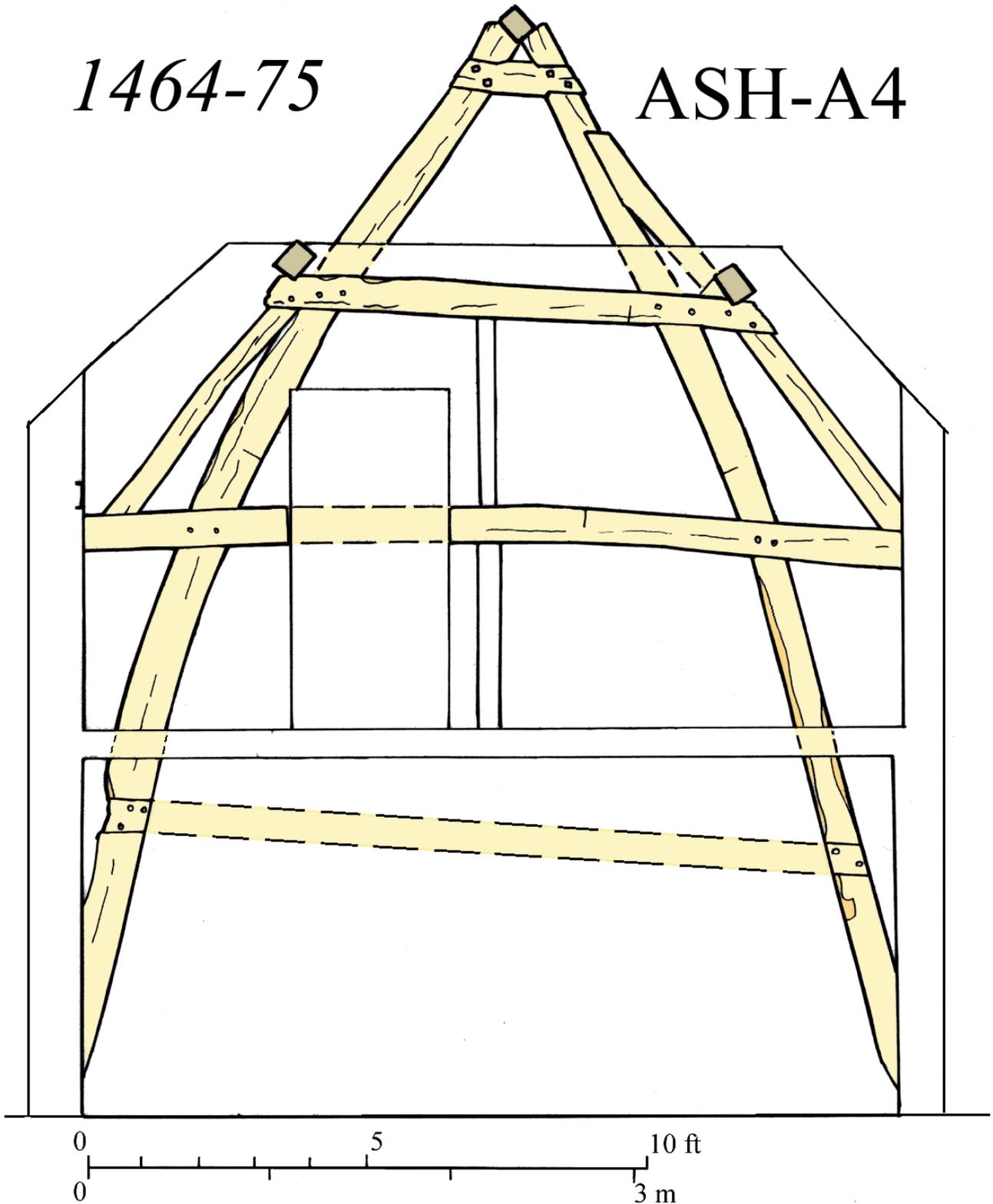


Fig. 3(c). Section of truss T4.

T4 is a cruck truss with collar, tiebeam, and lower tiebeam (removed). The irregular blades are of boxed heart, $6\frac{1}{2}$ in thick, of rather slender form. The apex is of 'A' type, with a yoke halved across the blades some $3\frac{1}{2}$ in below the ridge piece. Packing pieces (8 by 6in) carry the purlins which rest on the extended ends of the collar; they are not visible in the rest of the house. The wall-plates are carried on the ends of the upper tiebeam which is supported at the ends by wall posts; they are $4\frac{1}{2}$ by $5\frac{1}{2}$ in with both straight and oblique bridled scarf joints. A lower tiebeam has been removed. There were central studs both above and below the upper tiebeam. There is no visible evidence of the area above the collar having

ever been infilled. No windbrace mortices are evident in T4. The ridge piece (5½ by 6½in) is set at 45° with bridled scarf joints. Bay IV contains two transverse beams with scroll stops; its end wall has been rebuilt fairly recently. The ridge piece from T4 westwards is a replacement, with no evident soot blackening. The purlins are visible in bay IV and have been poorly jointed about a third of the way into the bay.

DENDROCHRONOLOGY

For dendrochronology abbreviations see page facing Introduction.

Sampling Comments: 14 samples were obtained through coring by Robert Howard on 18 April 1988.

TREE-RING SAMPLE RECORD AND SUMMARY OF DATING

Sample Code	Sample Location	Total Rings	Sapwood Rings	FMR Date	LHR Date	LMR Date	Date Cat
ASH-A01	Cruck blade truss 4 S side	40	HS?	1410	1449	1449	4a
ASH-A02	Cruck blade truss 4 N side	60	01	1389	1447	1448	5
ASH-A03	Tiebeam truss 4	5 NM	—	—	—	—	—
ASH-A04	Collar truss 4	48	—	1408	—	1455	4a
ASH-A05	Purlin bay IV N side	53	HS	—	—	—	—
ASH-A06	Purlin bay IV S side	54	—	—	—	—	—
ASH-A07	Tiebeam box frame truss 3	60	—	1310	—	1369	5
ASH-A08	Principal rafter truss 2 box frame N side	20 NM	—	—	—	—	—
ASH-A09	Principal rafter truss 2 box frame S side	28 NM	—	—	—	—	—
ASH-A10	Ridge piece box frame bay II	58	HS	—	—	—	—
ASH-A11	Tiebeam box frame truss 1	50	—	—	—	—	—
ASH-A12	Principal rafter box frame truss 1 N side	16	—	—	—	—	—
ASH-A13	Principal rafter box frame truss 1 S side	Broken	—	—	—	—	—
ASH-A14	Wall plate box frame bay II N side	31	HS	1411	1441	1441	4a
	Average date of last heartwood ring				1447		

Site sequence (composed of samples 1, 4, 14), 48 rings long matched at 1408–1455 with *t*-values 5.2 (HIWASQ01), 4.4 (STRASQ03), 3.8 (STODSQ01). Although sample 2 did not match with this site sequence, it gives a consistent though weak match with almost the same final date, with *t*-values of 4.1 (E.MID), 3.1 (WIWASQ01), 3.5 (BOUGHTON). This is regarded as acceptably dated (category 5).

The absence of sapwood on sample 4 indicates that the felling date is not likely to be earlier than 1464. 95% felling date range: 1464–1488 (previously 1460–1485). OxCal gives an estimated felling date range of **1464–75**.

Sample 7 matched at 1310–1369 with *t*-values (see VA20.89, 22.91 for Site sequences): 4.6 (E.MID), 4.8 (OXFORD), 4.3 (WELASQ01), 3.2 (STRASQ03), 3.2 (SOUASQ01), 3.5 (ALCASQ01). No sapwood; estimated felling date **after 1385**.

DOCUMENTARY HISTORY

The house is identifiable on the 1597 map and survey, when it was associated with a quarter-yardland holding (about 12 acres).¹ From 1566 onwards, it was generally held by members of the Cox family, although in 1570 it was clearly had a sub-tenant (Table1). It cannot be traced in the rentals before 1566, when additional property in Ashow was acquired by the Leigh estate.

Table 1. Rental entries for Trinity Cottage, Ashow.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Rent</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Notes</i>
1566	6s	Thomas Cox	Messuage
1570	6s	Thomas Cox	Messuage where William Freeston dwells
1574-7	6s	James Cox	Messuage where James Cox dwells
1577-82	10s	Robert Onesby	
1587	10s	Robert Powell	By lease
1595-7	10s	Robert Coxe	

The 1639 probate inventory of Thomas Cox, carpenter, lists nine rooms:

Hall, Chamber over Hall, Little Buttery, Dayrie House, Little Chamber below,
Space between Hall and Little Parlour, Little Buttery in the Hall, Kitchine,
Little Chamber next to Space.

This can reasonably be interpreted in relation to the present four-bay structure, placing the Little Buttery and Dayrie House sharing the end bay (I), the Hall and the Little Buttery in the Hall in bay II, the Space and the Little Chamber below (equated to the Little Parlour) in Bay III, and the other Little Chamber in Bay IV, with a detached Kitchen, although at least one upper room seems to have been omitted. See Alcock (1993), 43-4; 89.

¹ Shakespeare Centre Library and Archives, DR671/2 (map); DR18/30/24/279 (survey)