

Report for
Holywell Farm, Rowington, Warwickshire
Site Code: ROW-A

from

The Medieval Peasant House in Midland England

by

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

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Oxbow Books

ROW-A: HOLYWELL FARM, ROWINGTON, WARWICKSHIRE

Grid reference: SP 1979 6643 Survey Date: 12 November 1988 By: D. Miles

Illustrations:

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3. Sections of trusses T2 and T3

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Reference: Woodall, Joy (1974) *From Hroca to Anne*, privately printed [Copy in Warwickshire RO].

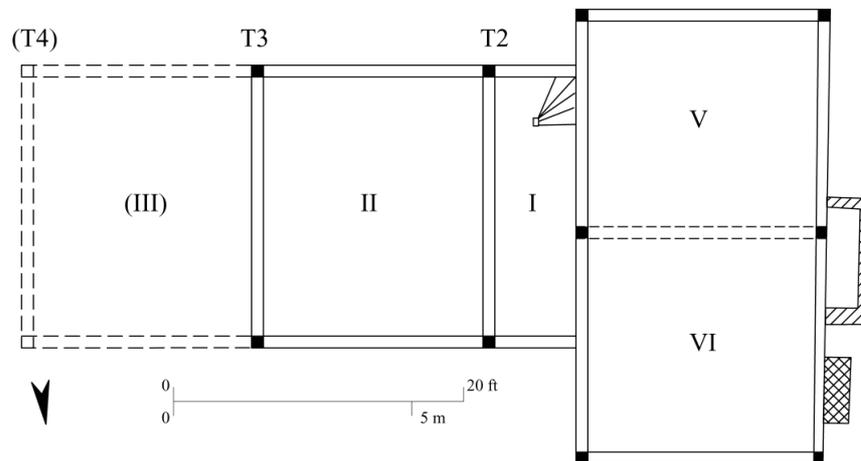


Fig. 2. Block plan, showing truss and bay numbering (scale approximate).

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

PHASE 1: Holywell Farm is a two-phase house which originally comprised a two-bay open hall (bays II and III) with a solar end bay (bay I) and possibly a service end (bay IV). However, only bay II and part of bay I now survive. The western end of bay I was removed to build the phase 2 chamber block, and the eastern half of the hall (bay III) and bay IV, (if it existed) were demolished, probably about 1900. Two cruck trusses remain, a closed truss at T2, and an open arch-braced truss at T3, both with type 'A' apexes (blades meeting above a yoke). Tree-ring dating has given a felling date range of **1383-1408** for a cruck blade.

PHASE 2: Probably in about 1550, a good quality two-storey parlour and chamber crosswing was built to the west, replacing half of bay I, the solar end. This block included two rooms on each floor and the existing eastern half of bay I was used for a stair.

LATER PHASES.

Possibly in about 1900, the eastern half of the hall and the possible service end were demolished and the open truss bricked up. The missing hall bay was restored in plan form in 1963, when an extension was built to its approximate dimensions, and additional eastward extensions were later made.

STRUCTURAL FEATURES

PHASE 1: The closed truss T2 consists of a pair of well shaped cruck blades which meet to clasp a diagonally-set ridge piece and are held together by a yoke positioned about 6in below the ridge. The cruck blades were further linked by a tiebeam and by two collars, (the lower one removed, presumably when the hall was floored over). Cruck spurs carry the wall-plate but the junction with the plate is not visible. All the horizontal members are jointed to the blades with bare-faced lap dovetails with refined entries. The joints of the tiebeam and the crucks have an unusual zigzag cut in the dovetail. Packing pieces rise from the spurs to abut the yoke and these are trenched for purlins which sit a little bit above the upper collar. Windbraces still exist on the east side of the truss and measure 2¼ by 10-12in . The under side of the tiebeam has been heavily notched but still carries signs of stave sockets for its infill.

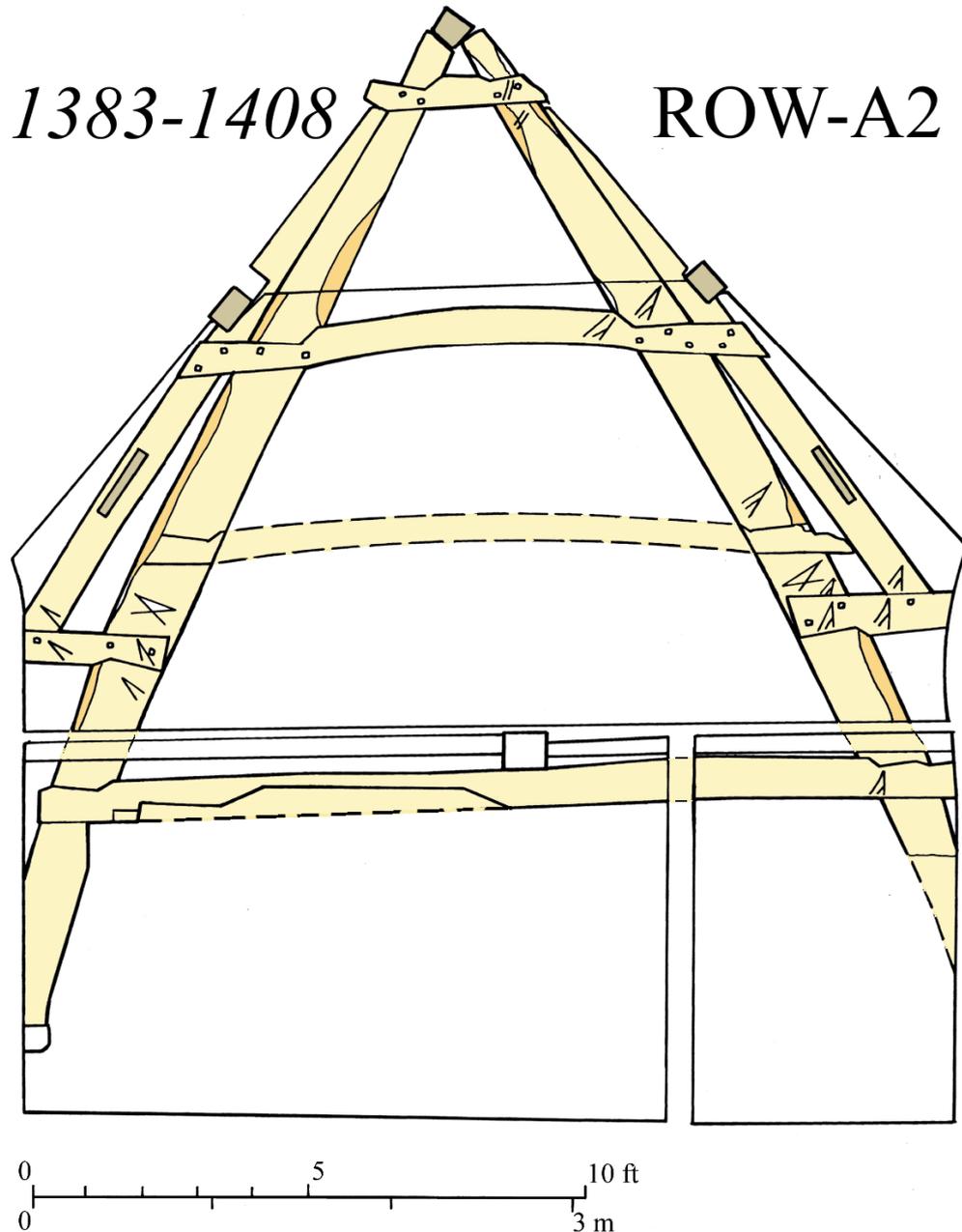


Fig. 3(a). Section of truss T2.

Truss T3 is an open truss, with the same apex detail, also with wind braces. The collar is tenoned into the blades and braced by well shaped chamfered arch-braces. The crucks are decorated by well-cut chamfers which step back at the springing of the arch-braces (cf. The Leopard, Bishop's Tachbrook, BIT-A), and run out above and below the junction with the unchamfered collar.

The upper face is towards the east in both trusses, rather than towards the chamber end. A complete set of scribed assembly marks are visible on the east face of T2. A // is used on the rear blade, with a //-tag on the front blade. Each of the blades of T2 also carries a 'square' mark, just above the cruck spurs. The east face of T3 is obscured by the 1960s building. Smoke blackening is present in the roof of bays I and II, and on both T2 and T3, indicating that bay I did not originally have an upper floor.

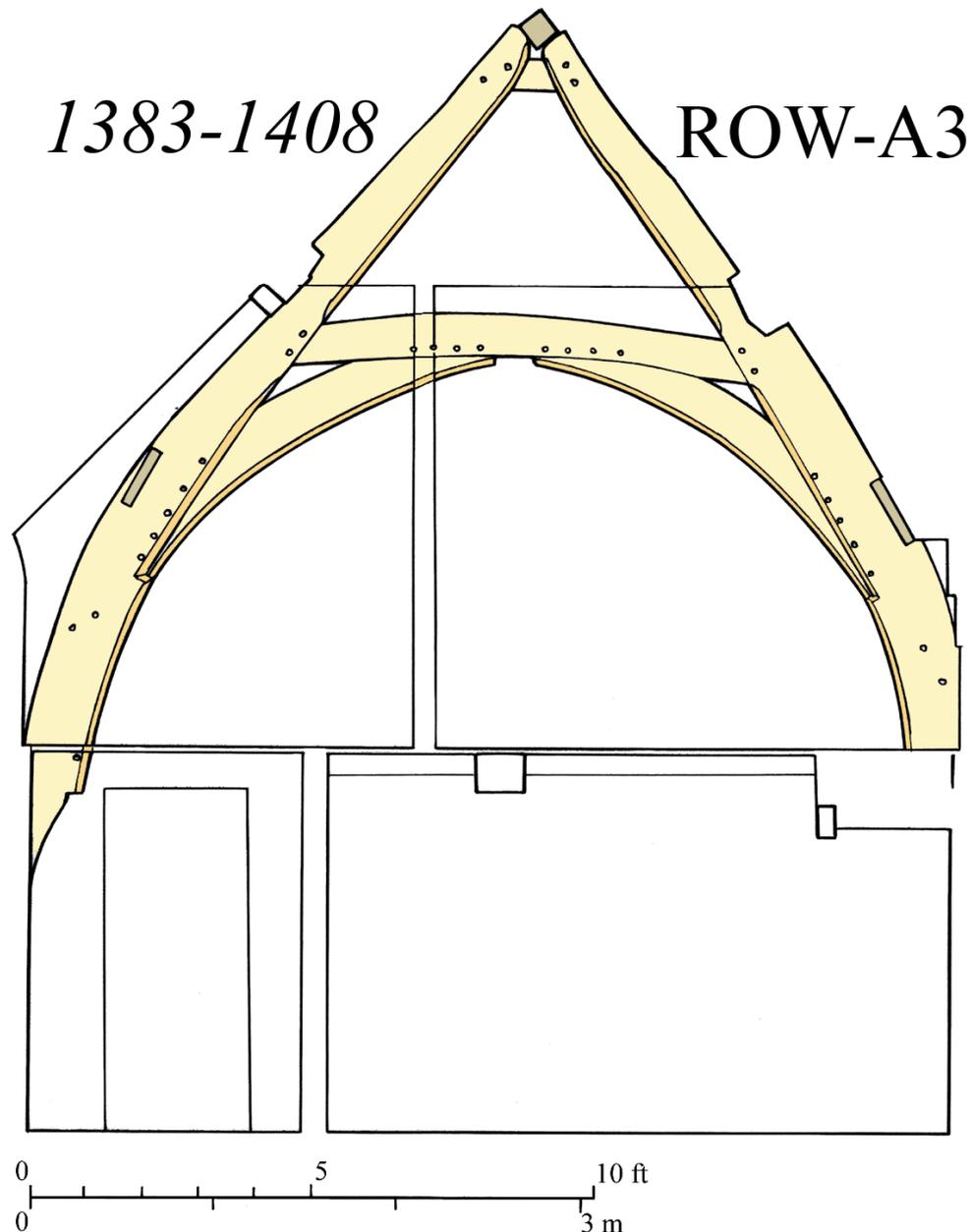


Fig. 3(b). Section of truss T3

PHASE 2: CROSS WING: The two-bay cross wing is built of substantial timbers. The trusses have tiebeams, principals and collars, with queen struts. The corner posts are jowled and some close studding remains on the ground floor front elevation. Most of the panels have been infilled with brickwork and many of the studs have been removed, probably in the eighteenth century. This crosswing has a massive external chimney stack built almost in-line with the central truss, presumably serving both rooms. A subsidiary chimney stack was later added to the front room.

DOCUMENTARY HISTORY

In 1646, this was a copyhold farm associated with about 14 acres of land (Woodall, 1974).

DENDROCHRONOLOGY

For dendrochronology abbreviations see page facing Introduction.

Sampling Comments: Ten samples were obtained through coring by Robert Howard on 12 November 1988. Of these, two matched together, samples ROW-A02 and ROW-A04 and were tentatively dated to give a felling date range of 1447-1482; however the significance level was low and this date is not now considered valid. Later, the sequence derived from STR-A became available (Ann Hathaway's cottage, Shottery), and re-examination gave a good match with sample ROW-A08 from the rear cruck blade of T3.

TREE-RING SAMPLE RECORD AND SUMMARY OF DATING

Sample Code	Sample Location	Total Rings	Sapwood Rings	FMR Date	LHR Date	LMR Date	Date Cat
ROW-A01	Wind brace truss T2 rear (south)	93	HS	—	—	—	—
ROW-A02	Cruck blade truss T2 rear	59	07	—	—	—	—
ROW-A03	Packing piece truss T2 rear	40	17	—	—	—	—
ROW-A04	Cruck blade truss T2 front	49	—	—	—	—	—
ROW-A05	Cruck spur truss T2 front	10 NM	—	—	—	—	—
ROW-A06	Wind brace truss T2 front	31 NM	—	—	—	—	—
ROW-A07	Packing piece truss T2 front	40	HS	—	—	—	—
ROW-A08	Cruck blade truss T3 rear	59	HS	1316	1374	1374	4b
ROW-A09	Cruck blade truss T3 front	46	—	—	—	—	—
ROW-A10	Tiebeam truss T3	27 NM	1	—	—	—	—

Site sequences: (sample 8 only), 59 rings long dated 1316–1374 with *t*-values of 6.4(OXFORD), 4.4(STR-A, the site sequence of Ann Hathaways Cottage, Stratford-on-Avon, VA22.91).

95% felling date range: 1383-1415 (previously 1387–1412) OxCal refined felling date range **1383-1408**.