

Report and Documentary History for  
**Motslow Cottage, Stoneleigh, Warwickshire**

*Site Code: STO-E*

**from**

The Medieval Peasant House in Midland England

**by**

Nat Alcock and Dan Miles



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

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***Oxbow Books***

STO-E: MOTSLOW COTTAGE, STONELEIGH, WARWICKSHIRE

Grid reference: SP 3290 7243

Survey Date: 1967-1988

By: N W Alcock

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References: Alcock, N. W., Braithwaite, J. G. and Jeffs, M. W. (1971-1973) 'Timber-framed buildings in Warwickshire: Stoneleigh village', *Trans Birmingham Archaeol. Soc.* **85**, 178-202; 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.

Abbreviation: SCLA Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon.

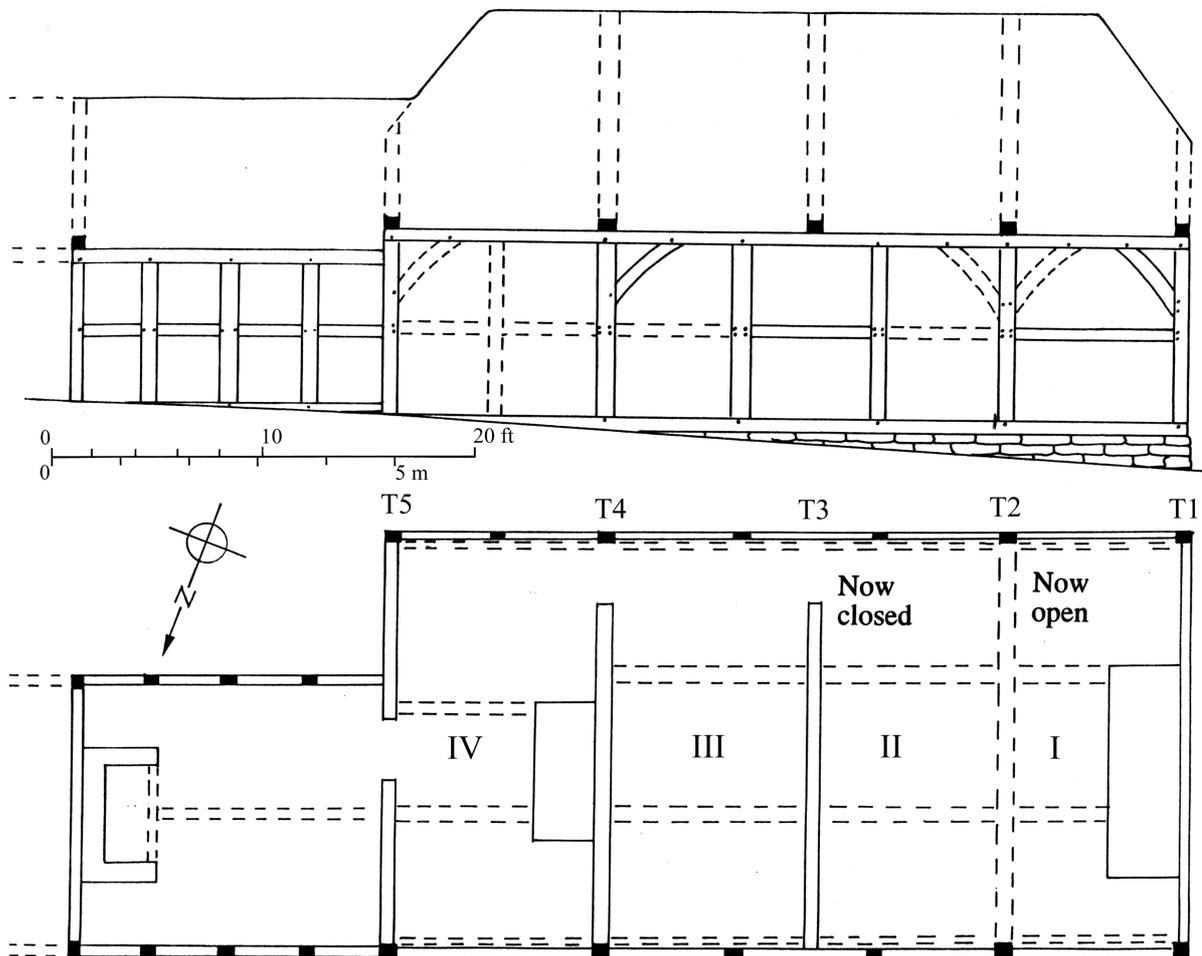


Fig. 2. Restored elevation and plan, showing truss and bay numbering (from Alcock *et al* (1971-3)).

## ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

### SUMMARY AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Originally, this house was entirely open to the roof, with a central two-bay hall flanked by a narrower and a wider room (possibly for service and chamber respectively). The trusses are of post, tiebeam and rafter construction, though the central hall truss lacks wall posts; they have a notably wide span. This phase has been dated to 1537 by dendrochronology, consistent with its architectural character. The original house apparently had three rooms: a narrow single bay room at the west (I) perhaps for service, a two-bay open hall (II-III), and a wider east bay (IV) which may have been the chamber.

At about the end of the sixteenth century, the house was radically replanned, with one end room enlarged at the expense of the hall, and floors inserted in bays I-III. It was extended at the east end at about the same date, with a further extension late in the seventeenth century. The house was divided into cottages in the eighteenth or nineteenth century, but has now been reinstated as a single house.

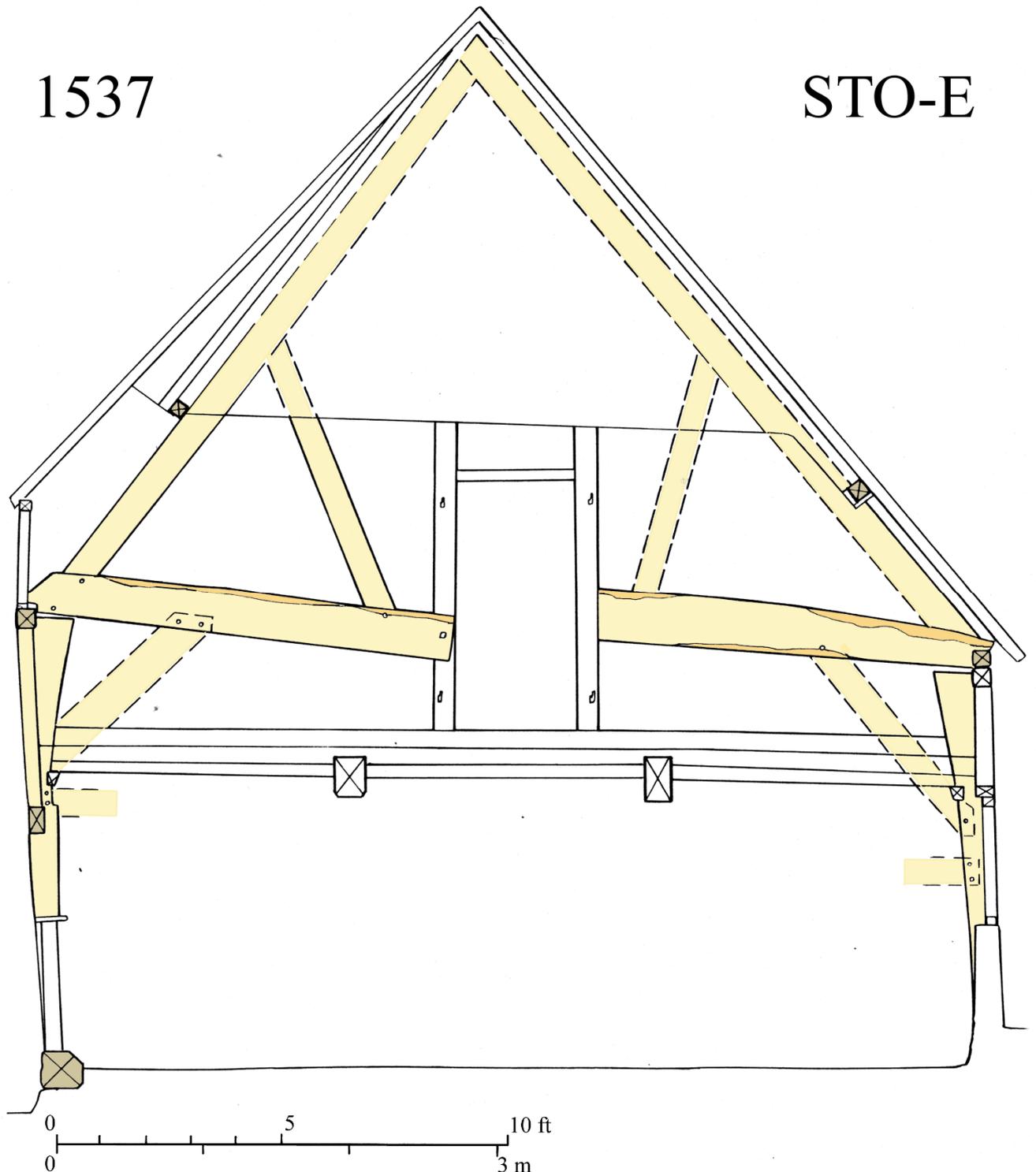


Fig. 3. Section of truss T2.

### STRUCTURAL FEATURES

PHASE 1: The house is of four bays, originally with a two-bay central open hall, though the central truss is unusual in being a 'flying' truss (i.e. without wall posts). It is exceptionally wide (20ft. span). The post-and-tiebeam trusses have large curved arch-braces, and their collars are braced by inclined and

vertical queen-struts. The end trusses are hipped at collar level. The purlin scarf is splayed, with a key passing through it, double pegged on each side.

The wall-framing is fairly well preserved, with large panels divided by mid-rails, and the principal posts have curved up-braces. Two plank intermediates divide bays II-III into three panels, and additional studs were later inserted to support the flying truss. Bay IV has no pegholes for a central stud, so this member may be an insertion. There is no good evidence for a door in either side elevation. Although part of the sill in bay II (south side) has been rebated, this is probably secondary, as the mid-rail is only 4ft above this. It is also possible that the omission of an arch-brace on the east side of T4 related to a door. However, the most likely entry position is through the east end wall.

LATER PHASES: Extensive re-planning took place in the first phase of modernisation, probably in the late sixteenth century. The central truss (T3) was closed, reducing the hall to one bay and the west end room was enlarged into the second hall bay, by removing the mid-rail and archbraces. The ceiling was inserted in bays I-III, carried on two main and two half beams (chamfered with step stops); that in bay IV appears rather later than the other ceilings. Although the fireplace in bay I now shows no early features, it was probably inserted in this phase (with that in bay IV as a later addition).

During this phase or soon after, a narrower extension was built at the east end (later floored with a scroll-stopped beam), with square panelled framing but no angle braces; this was probably the service end of the house after its re-planning. Later still (c. 1700) a further bay was added at this end in very poor timber-framing.

## DENDROCHRONOLOGY

For dendrochronology abbreviations see page facing Introduction.

*Sampling comments:* 9 samples were obtained through coring by Robert Howard on 23rd March 1990, of which one could be dated.

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

Sample Code	Sample Location	Total Rings	Sapwood Rings	FMR Date	LHR Date	LMR Date	Date Cat
STO-E01	Principal post truss 4 S side	45	09	—	—	—	—
STO-E02	Principal post truss 2 S side	56	06	—	—	—	—
STO-E03	Tiebeam truss 2	72	16	—	—	—	—
STO-E04	N purlin truss 3–4	54	HS	—	—	—	—
STO-E05	S purlin truss 3–4	60	14	—	—	—	—
STO-E06	S principal rafter truss 4	NM	—	—	—	—	—
STO-E07	Principal post truss 1 S side	76	20	—	—	—	—
STO-E08	Principal post truss 2 N side	NM	—	—	—	—	—
STO-E09	Tiebeam truss 4	94	30C	1444	1507	1537	5

Sample 9, 94 rings long dated 1444–1537 with *t*-values of 5.5 (E.MID), 4.5 (MAW-P1), 4.3 (TAM-C1), 4.1 (HAG-C1). Note: MAW-P1, TAM-C1 and HAG-C1 are components of E.MID and the date category is therefore given as 5 rather than 3a.

Felling date: **1537** (Sample 9 with complete sapwood).

## DOCUMENTARY HISTORY

Motslow Cottage was a freeholding with one yardland (app. 28 acres) (Alcock, 1993, 28-30). It was first established by a grant from Stoneleigh Abbey, probably in the 1250s.<sup>1</sup> By 1392, it was in the hands of John Schuckeburghe, but seems shortly thereafter to have been acquired by William de Staleworth, who

<sup>1</sup> R. H. Hilton (ed.), *The Stoneleigh Leger Book*, Dugdale Society, 24, 1960

owned it in 1427.<sup>2</sup> In 1448, he was dead and his property was to pass to his son John and his heirs, or failing this, to Staleworth's daughters, Elizabeth and Joan. By the time of the earliest complete rental, 1468,<sup>3</sup> it was recorded as held by the 'heirs of William Staleworth', and in the sixteenth century it was acquired by the Hudson family. They were already paying the chief rent in 1533, although it was not until 1543 that they bought one half of the property from Margett and Thomas Blount of Wigginton, Oxfordshire.<sup>4</sup> It is likely, though not certain that the Blount and Hudson families were the descendants of the two Staleworth daughters. The rebuilding of the house in 1537 may well have been undertaken in anticipation of the 1543 purchase.

The Hudson family also owned Crew Farm in Ashow, from before 1556 (will of Edmund Hudson) where they generally lived, so Motslow was lived in by junior members of the family or by their widows, or was leased out, and no full list of tenants' names can be established. The only probate record possibly associated with the house is that for Nicholas Hudson in 1568, but neither his will nor inventory have survived. On the 1597 map and survey, it is shown as a freeholding owned by Edmund Hudson (Fig. 4). The Hudson family eventually sold the house to Lord Leigh in 1668.<sup>5</sup>



Fig. 4. Section of the 1597 map of Stoneleigh (SCLA, DR671/3, reproduced with permission).

<sup>2</sup> SCLA, DR18/10/107, a bundle of deeds relating to the property, 1427-1599, included with those for the purchase of fields near Crew Farm, Ashow in 1728.

<sup>3</sup> SCLA, DR18/30/24/12; /11 is of the year before, but is damaged.

<sup>4</sup> SCLA, DR18/10/107, 1 Jun 1543, grant of half a messuage and lands by Margett Blount and Thomas, her son, of Wigginton, Oxon, to Edmund Hudson and Joan his wife.

<sup>5</sup> SCLA, DR18/3/29/15.

*Table 1. Rental entries for Motslow Cottages.*

<i>Date</i>	<i>Rent</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Notes</i>
1468	5s 10d	Heirs of Staleworth	
1533	5s 4d	John Hudson	For chief of Stalleworthes ground called Blunttis (Michaelmas rental)
1555	5s 10d	Hudson of the Kyngeswoode	
1570	5s 10d	Robert Hudson	For the house Isabell Hudson dwells in (probably Robert's mother)
1572	5s 10d	Robert Hudson	For the house Edmund Hudson dwells in (Robert's son)
1595-7	2s 10d	Edmund Hudson	(decreased following exchange of land in 1593)