

Report and Documentary History for  
**Phoenix Cottage, 1 Birmingham Road, Stoneleigh,  
Warwickshire**

*Site Code: STO-F*

*from*

The Medieval Peasant House in Midland England

by

Nat Alcock and Dan Miles



Fig. 1. View of Phoenix Cottage from the south.

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***Oxbow Books***

STO-F: PHOENIX COTTAGE, 1 BIRMINGHAM ROAD, STONELEIGH,  
WARWICKSHIRE

Grid reference: SP 3295 7280

Survey dates: 1967-1992

By: N. W. Alcock, J. G. Braithwaite &  
M. W. Jeffs

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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.

*Abbreviations:* SCLA Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon

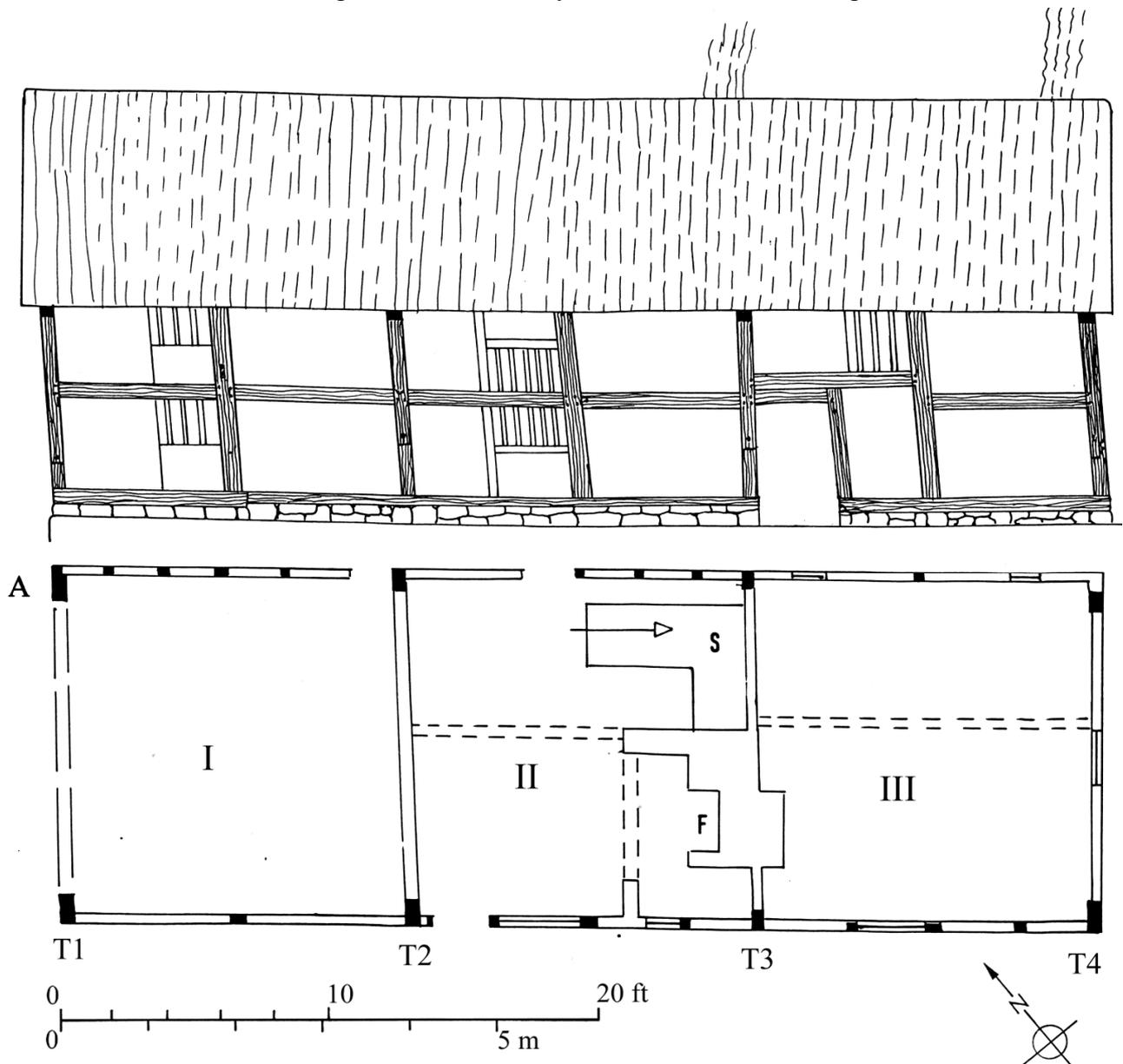


Fig. 2. Ground floor plan, showing truss and bay numbering (lower); reconstructed elevation (upper).

## ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

### SUMMARY AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

This is an exceptionally well-preserved cruck house, with virtually complete wall-framing, which has been tree-ring dated to 1480-2. The three bays comprised floored inner room & solar; hall; entry and service/kitchen. In the seventeenth century, the hall and kitchen were floored, and a chimney inserted. Later, the floor of the inner room was removed and it was used as a small barn.<sup>1</sup>

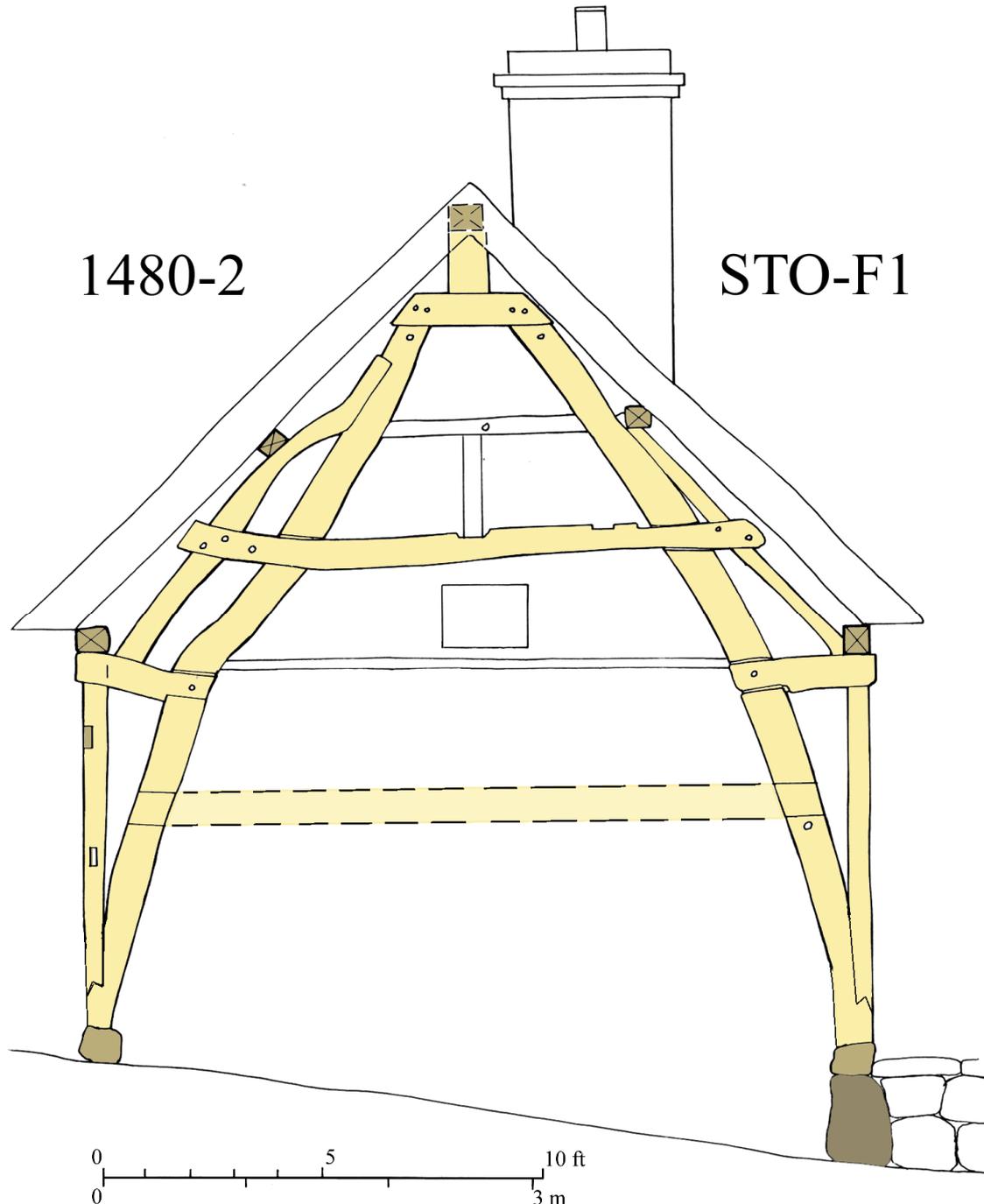


Fig. 3(a). Section of truss T1.

<sup>1</sup> The house has previously been described in 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.

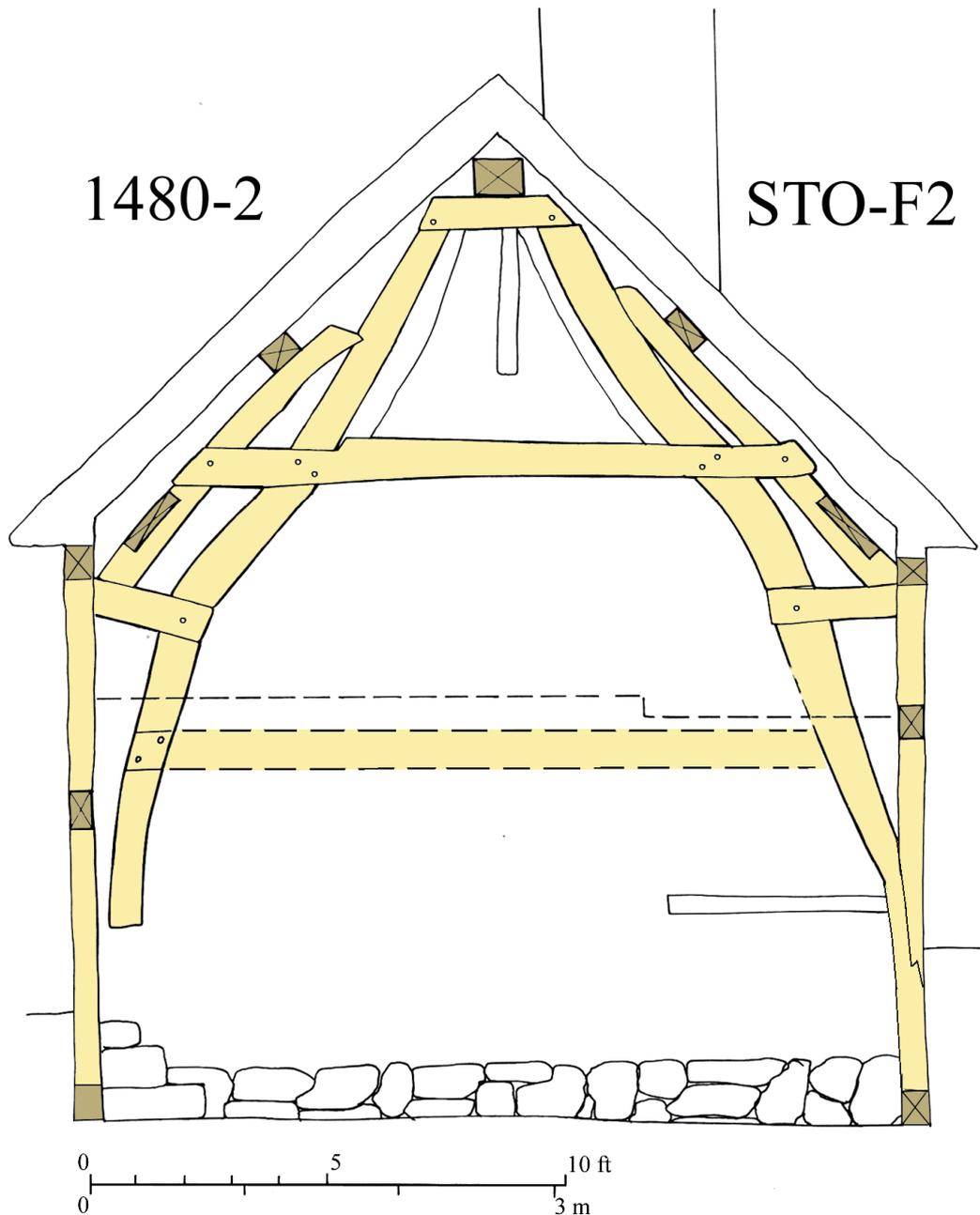


Fig. 3(b). Section of truss T2.

### STRUCTURAL FEATURES

PHASE 1: Four complete closed cruck trusses define the three original bays. The blades are boxed heart with notably irregular unmatched profiles; the trusses have saddle apexes (type 'C') or type 'F1' (saddle with short king post, T1) (Fig. 3). They include halved collars, spurs and tiebeams (removed on truss T1), and they carry packing pieces. None of the trusses have any decorative features, but well-shaped long curved windbraces are present. The sill beams are carried on low sandstone walls.

The original simple wall-framing is virtually complete (Fig. 2). Each cruck blade has a wall-stud ('cruck stud') on its outside, carried in a V-cut and splay on the cruck and secured by a face-peg (or on T1a free tenon, Fig. 4); the cruck spurs are halved across these studs, projecting beyond them. Plank-like studs (8in across) are set in the centre of each bay, and 8in mid-rails span from stud to stud. The large panels defined by these elements appear originally not to have been subdivided, although some bays have had additional lighter studs inserted. The presumed wattle-and-daub infill has been entirely replaced in brick. The door position in bay III is indicated by the mid-rail being at a slightly higher level, with a stud for a door jamb at the centre of this rail, and pegs in this and the cruck stud for a door-head. The sill wall

is interrupted at this point. Neither the window positions nor framing elements for them have been identified, and they were perhaps defined by light studs set into un-pegged mortices in the rails.



Fig. 4. The cruck foot of truss T1 (north-east), showing the V-cut and the free tenon.

Evidence for an original floor in bay I comes from the slot in its central wall stud. This can be recognised as being a through mortice for a transverse ceiling beam which would have carried heavy square joists running axially, similar to the beams and joists in three of the other Stoneleigh cruck houses (STO-C, STO-D, STO-H). Soot-blackening is present in both bays II and III. This leads to the identification of room use as: bay I, inner chamber with solar above; bay II, open hall; bay III, entry and kitchen/service.<sup>2</sup>

LATER PHASES: In later work, upper floors were inserted in bays II and III, with a chimney in bay II. The ceiling beam in bay II and the fireplace lintel have chamfers and scroll stops, indicating a seventeenth century date for this work. At some period, bay I was converted into a small barn by the removal of the floor (reinstated in the 1980s).

## DENDROCHRONOLOGY

For dendrochronology abbreviations see page facing Introduction.

*Sampling comments:* nine samples were obtained through coring by Robert Howard and one slice was obtained from timber removed during renovation (STO-F10).

### 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-F01     | Front (SW side) purlin T3-T4 | 84          | 12            | 1387     | 1458     | 1470     | 2        |
| STO-F02     | Brace purlin/cruck T3 front  | 20          | —             | —        | —        | —        | —        |
| STO-F03     | Front cruck blade truss T4   | 45          | —             | —        | —        | —        | —        |
| STO-F04     | Rear cruck blade truss T2    | 67          | 09            | 1409     | 1466     | 1475     | 2        |
| STO-F05     | Rear purlin bay I            | 76          | 14c           | 1402     | 1463     | 1477     | 2        |
| STO-F06     | Front cruck blade truss T2   | 48          | 03            | 1426     | 1470     | 1473     | 2        |

<sup>2</sup> C.f. Alcock, *People at home*, 23f.

| Sample Code                         | Sample Location           | Total Rings | Sapwood Rings | FMR Date | LHR Date | LMR Date | Date Cat |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| STO-F07                             | Front cruck spur truss T2 | 48          | 05            | —        | —        | —        | —        |
| STO-F08                             | Front purlin bay I        | 60          | —             | —        | —        | —        | —        |
| STO-F09                             | Rear cruck blade truss T3 | 51          | —             | 1403     | —        | 1453     | 3d       |
| STO-F10                             | Mid-rail                  | 59          | 13NM          | —        | —        | —        | —        |
| Average date of last heartwood ring |                           |             |               |          | 1464     |          |          |

Site sequence: SEQ 3 (composed of samples 1, 4, 5, 6), 91 rings long dated 1387-1477 with *t*-value 5.3 (E.MID), 5.2 (HIW-ASQ01, site sequence of Thatched Cottage, Hill Wootton, VA20,89)

Sample 9 dated 1403-1453 with *t*-values of 5.5 (E.MID), 4.7 (S. ENG).

Felling date: (sample 5 with last dated ring of 1477 lost about 3 or 4 rings in coring) **1480-2**.

## DOCUMENTARY HISTORY

Phoenix Cottage is identified on the 1597 map with the name Elizabeth Jenkens (Fig. 5). It can be traced continuously through the estate rentals and surveys for Stoneleigh Abbey and then the Leigh estate, from 1533 onwards, as a cottage, with only a ½ acre croft, occupied by people of low status (Table 1). From 1533 to 1551, its tenant was John Hogkyns (sometimes Hogekeynson), and he was succeeded (by 1559, the next surviving rental), by his widow Joan. He is regularly recorded in the court rolls from 1540 to 1546 as a juror and was tithingman in 1546; in 1539, he had two unringed pigs, and in 1546 was assaulted by one William Edwards. For her, they note the heriot paid as a cottage tenant on her death; her best possession was a *broach* [spit], valued at 4d (although her common rights would have allowed her to pasture two head of cattle). She was succeeded by John Jones and he in his turn by his widow, Elizabeth (tenant 1589-1606). Their occupations were as brewers and sellers of ale, typical of the poorest cottagers. ‘John Jones’ wife’ (later Widow Jones or Elizabeth Jones *alias* Jenkyn) was presented at virtually every court for breaking the assize of beer. In 1585 John was fined 1s for allowing four villagers to play cards in his house. No probate records relate to the house.

### STO-F



Fig. 5. Section of the 1597 map of Stoneleigh (SCLA, DR671/3, reproduced with permission).

Richard Heyllworth, the tenant before 1533 can probably be recognised as the Richard Eylward fined 2d in 1529 for failing to appear at the court, but he is not among those named in the 1522 listing of tenants.<sup>3</sup> Although the 1497 rental is broadly in the same order as that for 1533, and the latter's entries 10-18 and 25-32 can be matched from the sequence of rents, the six intervening entries (including this cottage, entry 19) do not correspond to the four entries listed in 1497, all of which have larger rents. It is therefore possible that the holding had been reduced in size in the intervening period.

<sup>3</sup> SCLA, DR18/30/24/126.

*Table 1. Rental entries for Phoenix Cottage, Stoneleigh*

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Rent</i> | <i>Name</i>                  | <i>Notes</i>   |
|-------------|-------------|------------------------------|--|
| Pre-1533    | 5s          | Richard Heyllworth           | Replaced in Lady Day 1533 rental by John Sawyer  |
| 1533        | 5s          | John Sawyer                  | Lady Day rental only [then in a different cottage]   |
| 1533-1551   | 5s          | John Hogkyns, for a cottage  | Replaces John Sawyer in Michaelmas 1533 rental   |
| 1559-71     | 5s          | Joan Hogkyns                 | 1559 Goodwife Hoggkynes  |
| 1575-88     | 5s          | John Jones                   |  |
| 1589-1606   | 5s          | Elizabeth Jenkyn alias Jones | 1597 Map (Fig. 5): Jenkens 266 ( <i>correctly</i> 260)<br>Survey: 260 Elizabeth Jedkin, widow 2 r 24p<br>common for 2 beasts & a horse<br>(SCLA, DR18/30/24/279) |