Report for

2 School Road, Wellesbourne, Warwickshire

Site Code: WEL-A

from

The Medieval Peasant House in Midland England

by

Nat Alcock and Dan Miles

Fig. 1. View of the house from the north

Oxbow Books

WEL-A: 2 SCHOOL ROAD, WELLESBOURNE, WARWICKSHIRE

Grid reference: SP 2795 5541 *Survey Date*: 24 Nov. 1988 *By*: D. Miles

Illustrations: *Page*

Reference: Bolton, P. and R. (1991) *A Wellesbourne Guide, Part 2: Wellesbourne Hastings* (publ by authors

Abbreviation: WCRO Warwickshire County Record Office

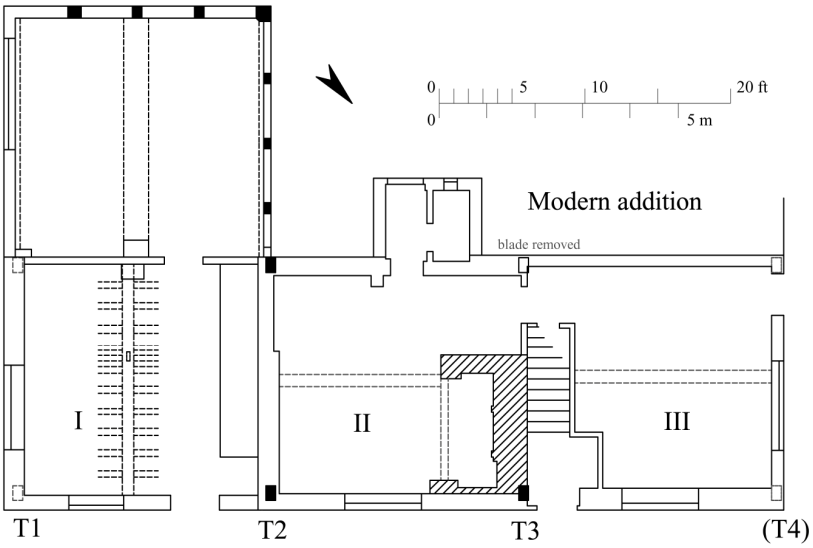

Fig. 2. Plan, showing truss and bay numbering.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

PHASE 1: No. 2 School Road, is a three-bay cruck house facing north-east onto School Road with the south-west gable end fronting on Bridge Road. The two internal cruck trusses survive although the two outer trusses have been replaced with nineteenth-century brickwork. It appears that bays II and III were the open hall, the smoke blackening being heaviest in bay III. Bay I would have been partitioned off as the chamber, and there is only light smoke blackening on this side of truss T2. The open truss (T3) has a saddle apex (type 'C'), while on the closed truss (T2), the saddle carried a short king post (type 'F1'). The primary structure has been dated by dendrochronology to 1430.

LATER PHASES: In the seventeenth century, the front wall of bays I, II and III was raised and the floors inserted. At the same period, a 1½ storey timber-framed wing was built behind bay I. Probably in the eighteenth century, the front of the cruck range was raised by four or five feet, encasing the original wall plates in the thickness of the wall. The nineteenth century saw the re-fronting of the original building in brickwork and finally part of the ground floor was utilised as a shop.

STRUCTURAL FEATURES

PHASE 1: Truss T2 was the most complete part of the structure although the king-post, ridge piece, purlins and rafters have been removed, as has the lower part of the rear cruck, (found in the rear garden). The crucks are boxed heart and measure 12 by 9in thick. They are connected at the top by a saddle which measures 8 by 7in thick and again is boxed heart. Of the 10in wide king-post, only the tenon remains in the mortice in the upper surface of the saddle. The surviving front half of the collar is joint by a barefaced dovetail to the cruck blade and packing piece, the latter being trenched to support the purlin about 3in above the top of the collar. Wind-braces were morticed into the front packing piece, and into the rear cruck blade. The tiebeam (10in wide) is similarly jointed to the crucks and extends to the outside to hold the wall plates (7 by 6in). The lower part of the truss is infilled with well-coursed stone to tiebeam level.

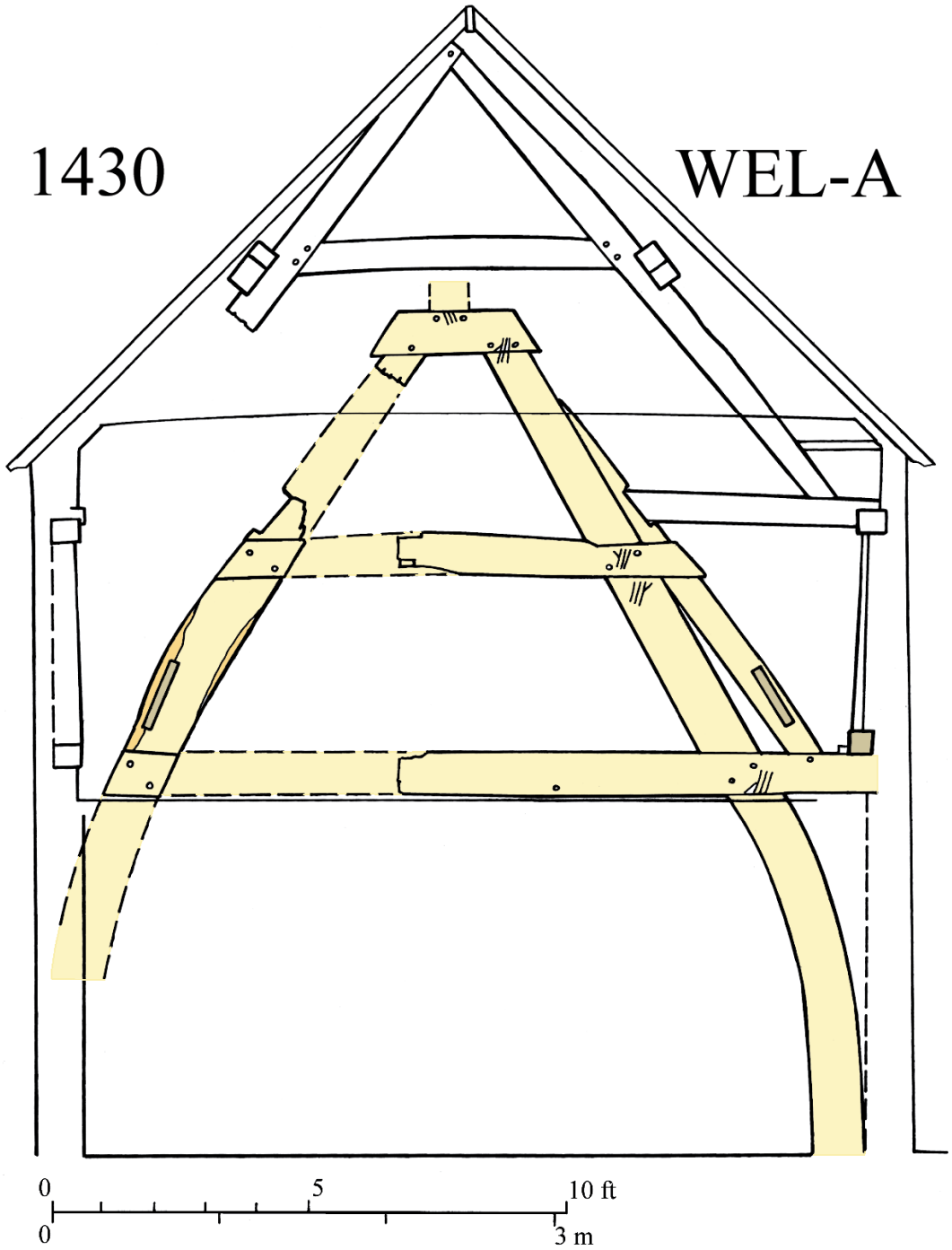

Fig. 3. Section of truss T2.

Truss T3 is similar in style to T2 except there is no king-post, the ridge resting directly on top of the saddle. The rear cruck blade had been removed entirely in the eighteenth century reconstruction along with half of the collar. It was not possible to discover whether there had been any wattle-and-daub infill, as the entire truss has been infilled with modern blockwork. Assembly marks are visible on both trusses, with // and //-tag being used on truss T3 to denote back and front respectively, and a /// and ///-tag on truss T2. At the saddle, the marks are scribed across the joint, while below a separate mark is used on each member. The fair faces of the trusses are towards bay I.

None of the original rafters remain, but two purlins were reused in the eighteenth-century roof. These showed that there were 11 rafters originally between the two cruck trusses and the halvings for the wind-braces are also clearly identifiable. The purlins (6 by 9in) were splayed and lapped where they joined at the crucks.

Some original wall-framing was visible along the front wall in bay I. Wide studs with middle rails divide the wall into two rows of panels. Four studs were used between truss T2 and the position of T1. Part of an original sill-beam also exists along the front wall. On the rear wall of bay II, a partial stud and part of the original wall-plate can be seen.

The floor in bay I is carried on a transverse beam with heavy joists, which is either original or an early insertion. A mortice in the centre of the beam matched with an additional joist suggests that this bay was divided on the ground floor when the floor was constructed.

LATER PHASES: A 1½ storey box-framed extension was built extending backwards from the rear wall-plate of bay I. At the time of the original survey this rear wing was in a dangerous state of repair and it was not possible to gain access through the whole building. On revisiting the site in 1990 and 2004, it was found that it had been extensively reconstructed although some of the framing and most of the roof structure remains. The framing and roof trusses are all typical of seventeenth-century work. Three full height studs were used between the corner posts with two intermediate rails between wall-plate and sill-beam. The rear gable end truss has a collar and three struts above, whereas the truss above the rear wall of bay I has a lighter collar and raking struts. The purlins are butt-jointed to the principals which are not diminished but are notched at the top to receive a small diagonally set ridge. The only 'square' carpenter's mark was a compressed example found on a tiebeam of this wing. The axial ceiling beam is exceptionally massive, some 20in across.

The floor in bay III was probably inserted at about the same time as the wing was built. It has an axial beam 10½ by 11½in with 3in chamfers finished with step stops. The 4in square joists have 1½in chamfers with similar stops. They are set at 13½in centres and are jointed into the axial beam with tenons with diminished haunches. The inserted floor in bay II is plastered beneath the joists but the axial beam protrudes 4in below the plaster and is 10in wide. This has a 3½in flat chamfer, terminating in run-out stops with bar and plaques.

DOCUMENTARY HISTORY

According to Bolton (1991), the house belonged to the Jackson family from the sxteeenth to the early eighteenth century (though no source reference is provided). At enclosure in 1734, it was the property of John Cotterell, who was allocated 64½ ac in lieu of his open field land, representing a holding of 2-3 yardlands.[1] On 30 Sept 1800, the house was sold by John Geers Cotterell to James Hancock, separately from the land which had been bought by Peter Moore.[2] By 1811, the house was divided between three tenants.

DENDROCHRONOLOGY

For dendrochronology abbreviations see page facing Introduction.

Sampling Comments: Nine samples were taken for analysis by Robert Howard on 24th November 1988. Seven of these were cores, including the two front cruck blades, the two collars, the front wall-plate and packing piece as well as the tiebeam to truss T2. In addition, the tenon to the king-post was removed from its mortice, and a section was cut from the discarded cruck blade. Of these samples, only the front packing piece and the king-post did not date. Of the seven dated samples, four had complete sapwood, two with a last ring date of 1429 and two with one of 1428. As all four ofthese samples had spring growth for the following year, they were felled respectively between winter 1429 and spring 1430, and winter 1428 to spring 1429.

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1 WCRO QS9/11, m. 17v.

2 WCRO CR611/349.

TREE-RING SAMPLE RECORD AND SUMMARY OF DATING

Sample Code	Sample Location	Total Rings	Sapwood Rings	FMR Date	LHR Date	LMR Date	Date Cat
WEL-A01	Front cruck blade truss T2	91	26c	1339	1403	1429	1
WEL-A02	Front packing piece truss T2	54	18	—	—	—	—
WEL-A03	Front wall plate bay II	140	21C	1290	1498	1429	1
WEL-A04	Collar truss T2	92	22	1314	1383	1405	1
WEL-A05	Tiebeam truss T2	139	13	1287	1412	1425	1
WEL-A06	Collar truss T3	118	29C	1311	1399	1428	1
WEL-A07	Front cruck blade truss T3	139	23	1289	1404	1427	1
WEL-A08	King post truss T2	NM	—	—	—	—	—
WEL-A09	Rear cruck blade truss T2	123	28C	1306	1400	1428	1

Site sequence: (composed of samples 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9), 143 rings long dated 1287–1429 with *t*-values of 5.6(E.MID), 5.1(S.ENG).

Estimated felling date: **1430** (VA20.45).