

Report for
Alveston Cottage, Coundon, West Midlands

Site Code: COU-A

from

The Medieval Peasant House in Midland England

by

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

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Oxbow Books

COU-A: ALVESTON COTTAGE, COUNDON, WEST MIDLANDS (FORMERLY WARWICKSHIRE)

Grid reference: SP 3131 8171 *Survey Date:* 7 December 1988 *By:* D. Miles

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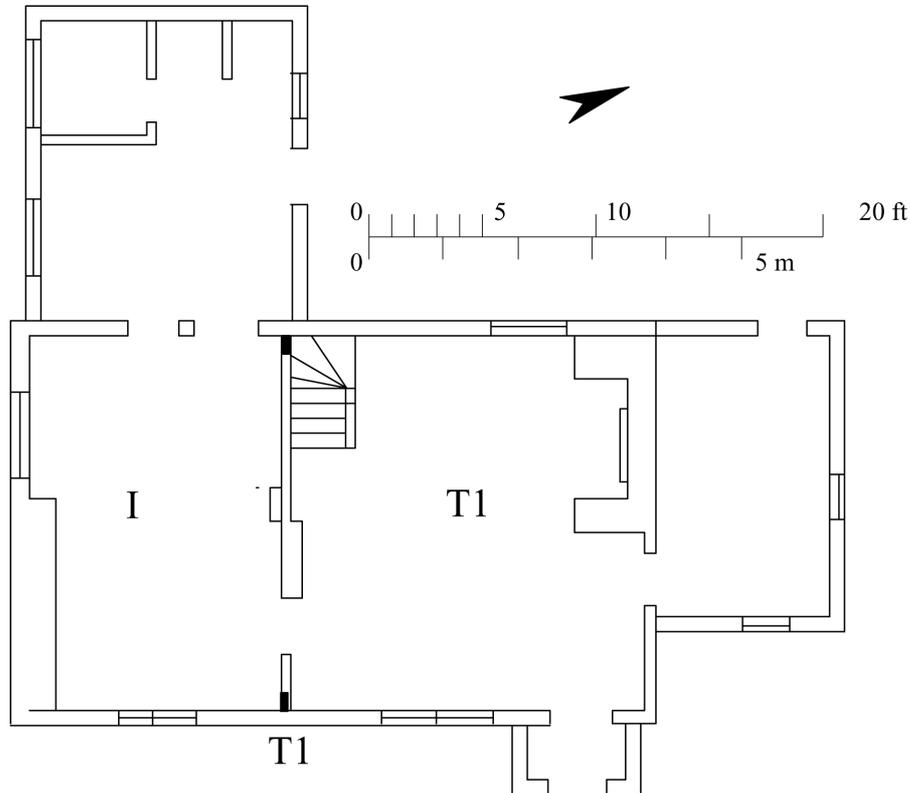


Fig. 2. Plan, showing truss and bay numbering.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

PHASE 1: Alveston Cottage is a small cottage now of two bays, with a central cruck truss, T2. It was thatched until recently when it was reroofed in cedar shingles. Only the central cruck truss is visible, although another one may be hidden in the recently plastered south end wall (T1) and the roof structure over bay I survives, including an in-set king post to support the ridge. No date was obtained by tree-ring dating, because the samples had too few rings to match. A broadly fifteenth-century date is likely, corresponding to that of most dated Warwickshire crucks. The accessible roof (bay I) shows little smoke-blackening, suggesting a relatively late date. However, it is possible that bay II (whose roof is inaccessible) contained an open hall.

PHASE 2: Probably in the late sixteenth or earlier seventeenth century, truss T3 was reconstructed as a conventional principal rafter, tiebeam and collar truss with queen struts. The principal rafters have thickened feet and the tiebeam is cambered. Much of the external framing was probably altered at this time although most of the original wall plates appear to survive.

LATER PHASES: In the twentieth century, two extensions were built, one onto the west side of bay I, and the other onto the north end of bay II.

STRUCTURAL FEATURES

PHASE 1: Only one cruck truss survives although there is a good possibility that T1 remains, embedded in the south end wall. As the roof is half hipped at this end, T1 would have been a type ‘V’ cruck. Truss 2 is fully visible and has the two blades joined at the apex with a saddle on which the ridge piece, diagonally set in this case, is supported (type ‘C’ apex). The crucks are slightly curved but well-shaped and although both are heart-sawn, they do not appear to have been cut from the same tree. They are joined by a tiebeam which half laps over the crucks without any dovetailing, and by a collar which has bare-faced lap joints with slight dovetails. The collar has been severed for a doorway. The most interesting features are the cruck spurs which are jointed in a sophisticated fashion to the wall plates and cruck studs. The inner end of the spur is halved conventionally as with the collar, but the outer end of the spur rests on the top of the cruck stud, which tenons into the underside of the spur. Above this a tenon projects from the spur, and the inside face of the wall plate is morticed to receive this tenon. The plate is also housed over the end of the spur, providing a refined yet strong joint.

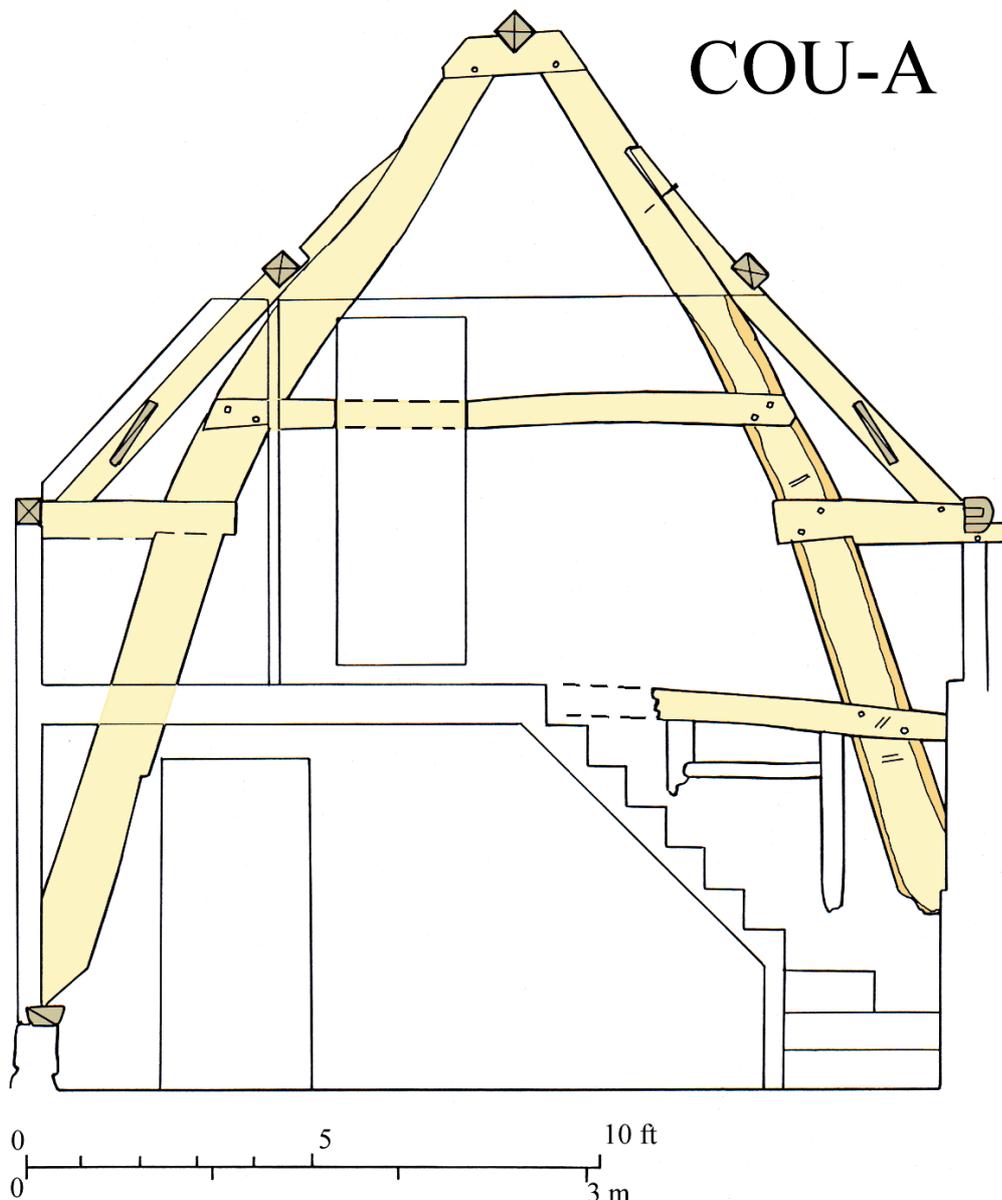


Fig. 3. Section of truss T2 from the north.

The truss also carries a pair of packing pieces which are tenoned into the top of the spurs and are notched into the backs of the cruck blades. The purlins are trenched into the backs of these and carried windbraces each side, one still remaining over the stairs. The bay II side of this truss carries a good set of // scribed assembly marks.

At the south end of bay I, the roof structure is half hipped with the ridge being carried on a king post supported on a beam set over the purlins. This structure appears to be original, as most of this section of the roof survives intact. The purlins measure 6½ by 5in and at the rear are jointed with a through-splayed scarf over the truss. The rafters are halved poles measuring about 2½ by 5in and are laid at 18in centres.

DENDROCHRONOLOGY

For dendrochronology abbreviations see page facing Introduction.

Sampling Comments: Eight samples were taken through coring by Robert Howard on 7 December 1988. Since the largest number of rings found was only 37, the samples could not be matched.

TREE-RING SAMPLE RECORD AND SUMMARY OF DATING

Sample Code	Sample Location	Total Rings	Sapwood Rings	FMR Date	LHR Date	LMR Date	Date Cat
COU-A01	Rear cruck blade truss T2	36 NM	3	—	—	—	—
COU-A02	Collar truss T2	24 NM	1	—	—	—	—
COU-A03	Rear spur of truss T2	23 NM	3	—	—	—	—
COU-A04	Rear post of truss T2	20 NM	1	—	—	—	—
COU-A05	Front cruck blade truss T2	28 NM	5	—	—	—	—
COU-A06	Saddle truss T2	8 NM	—	—	—	—	—
COU-A07	Ridge beam bay I	37 NM	2	—	—	—	—
COU-A08	Front purlin bay I	10 NM	—	—	—	—	—

Not dated