

Report for
Cruck House, 14-16 Hinckley Road, Walsgrave-on-Sowe, West Midlands

Site Code: WOS-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

WOS-A: CRUCK HOUSE, 14-16 HINCKLEY ROAD, WALSGRAVE-ON-SOWE,
WEST MIDLANDS (FORMERLY WARWICKSHIRE)

Grid reference: SP 3798 8099 Survey Date: 19 January 1990 By: D. Miles

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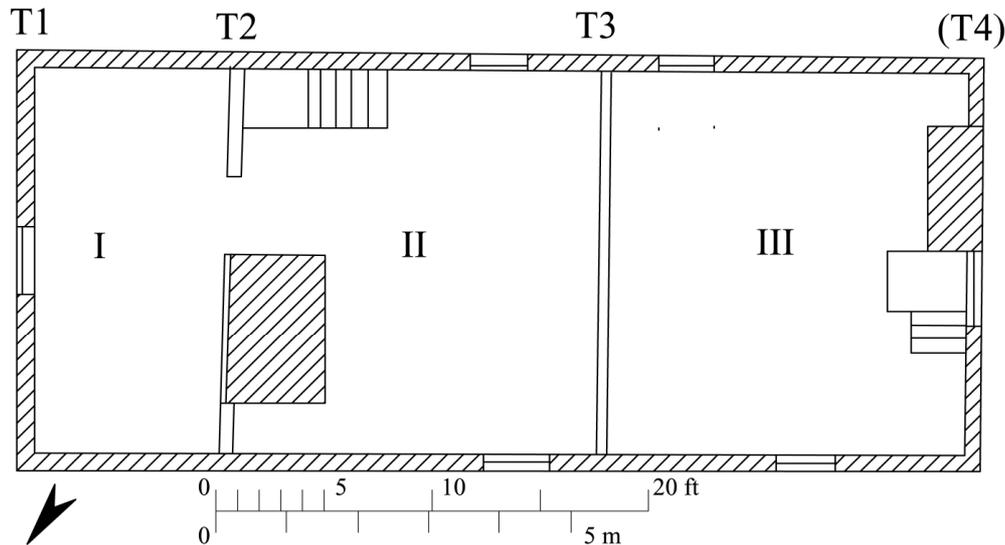


Fig. 2. First-floor plan, showing truss and bay numbering (from drawing by Paul Woodfield).

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The house has been carefully surveyed by P Woodfield and this report draws heavily on his notes and drawings.

SUMMARY AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

PHASE 1: 14-16 Hinckley Road is a cruck framed house aligned with the road and roofed in thatch. It originally consisted of at least three bays, although the north-east bay (I) has been replaced. The presence of this bay is inferred from the windbrace mortices on the north-east side of truss T2. Little of the original exterior wall frame is visible with the exception of the rear cruck blade of truss T4 but most of the roof structure of bays II and III survives. The soot-blackening in bay II indicates that this was certainly an open hall; bay I was probably for service, with bay III as a chamber. However, archbraces in T2 allows for the possibility of a two-bay hall, later subdivided. There is no evidence for an original floor in bay III. Tree-ring dating was unsuccessful, but an early fifteenth-century date has been assigned to pottery found in the foundations;¹ this is consistent with the character of the cruck trusses, compared to other Warwickshire examples.

PHASE 2: In the seventeenth century, the hall and bay III were floored over. The main hall stack is built on the south-west side of truss T2, probably on the site of the phase 1 open hearth, as this truss is particularly heavily sooted.

PHASE 3: The house underwent considerable alterations in about 1844. Bay I may have been rebuilt at this time but most of the structural elements here are concealed.

¹ Information from Paul Woodfield.

STRUCTURAL FEATURES

PHASE 1: The crucks are of oak and appear to be boxed heart. The blades are 9in (T3) or 10in (T2) thick. It was not possible to determine whether the feet rested on a sill beam or on pad stones. Truss T2 is visible above tiebeam level and the rear blade is hidden within the thickness of the wall to within two feet of the ground. The arch braces, the front one of which only survives, are simply let in to the southwest face of the blade and collar, an unusual practice. This truss is infilled with wattle and daub above tie level but may have been open below. The windbraces are morticed into packing pieces which are notched into the blades above collar level and are tenoned into the top of the tiebeam, just touching the wallplates. The crucks terminate in a saddle carrying the square-set ridge (type 'C' apex).

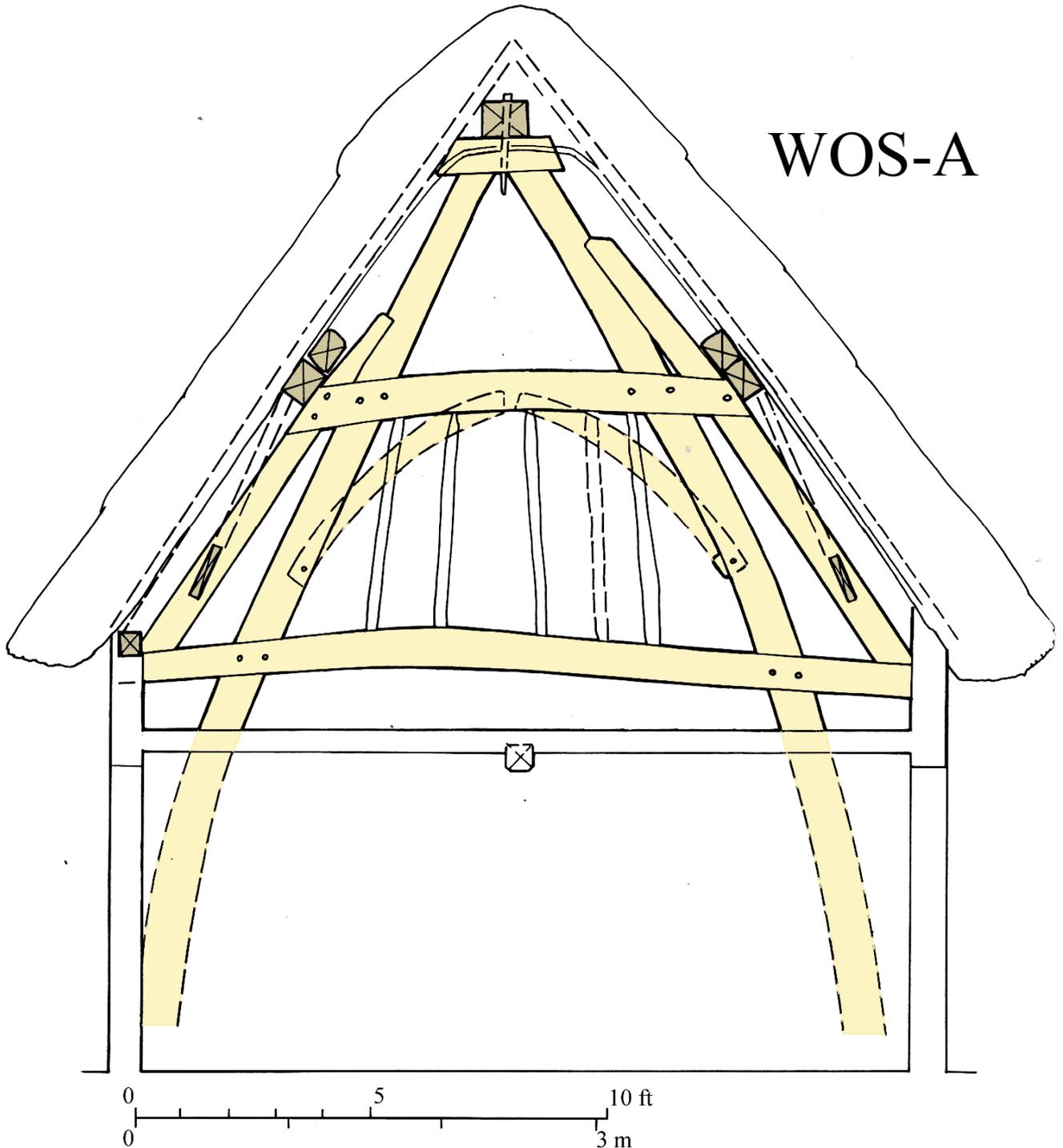


Fig. 3. Section of truss T3 (from drawing by Paul Woodfield).

Truss T3 resembles T2 but both arch braces have been removed. It is smoke blackened on the north-east side, but this only extends to the other side by seepage through cracks in the wattle and daub infill. Both trusses T2 and T3 have their upper faces towards bay II. Truss T4 is mostly hidden within the south-west gable end, or has been largely removed by the insertion of a chimney stack, although part of the rear cruck blade is visible outside at ground floor level.

The tiebeams (section about 9 by 7in) are halved but not dovetailed to the cruck blades. The tiebeam on truss T2 has been severed for the first-floor doorway while the door in truss T3 is above the tiebeam. The collars are jointed to the cruck blades with barefaced dovetails and extend past the cruck blades where they are pegged across the packing pieces. They measure 10-11 by 5in.

Both the front and back wall plates survive in bays II and III. They have stave holes at about 2ft centres, but no major stud mortices were noted for along the back wall plate of bay III.² The purlins measure 7-8½ by 10-12in and are pegged onto the backs of the packing pieces. The rafter size and spacing could not be determined. The windbraces (in section 8-10 by 3in) are moderately curved and spring from morticed joints in the packing pieces with two pegs and are housed into the upper surface of the purlins. Three of the four windbraces survive in bays II and III.

The trusses carry carpenters marks in the form of long scribed marks carried across the joint. The numbering of trusses T2 and T3 is the reverse of that used here. All four blades have square marks below the collar. The wind braces are numbered on the back, in order from the southwest. The one remaining windbrace at the rear did not have a visible carpenters mark.

PHASE 2: The ceiling in bays II and III is carried by axial beams of 9 by 7½in section with 1½in chamfers. The main chimney stack appears to date from the second phase. The fireplace contains a large inglenook on the ground floor with elm lintel and a smaller high-level grate on the first floor, both facing bay II. A later stack has been added to the north-east side of truss 4. A staircase probably dating from phase 2 exists in the east corner of bay II with quarter-turn winders at the top. A later staircase rises on the south-west side of the chimney stack in bay III.

DENDROCHRONOLOGY

For dendrochronology abbreviations see page facing Introduction.

Sampling Comments: Eight samples were obtained through coring by Robert Howard on 5 December 1988. Almost all had fewer than 50 rings making them too short to match, and no date could be obtained.

TREE-RING SAMPLE RECORD AND SUMMARY OF DATING

Sample Code	Sample Location	Total Rings	Sapwood Rings	FMR Date	LHR Date	LMR Date	Date Cat
WOS-A01	Rear cruck blade truss 2	40	04	—	—	—	—
WOS-A02	Rear packing piece truss 2	33 NM	3	—	—	—	—
WOS-A03	Front cruck blade truss 2	45	16	—	—	—	—
WOS-A04	Front packing piece truss 2	21 NM	—	—	—	—	—
WOS-A05	Rear purlin bay II	50	16	—	—	—	—
WOS-A06	Front purlin bay II	40	04	—	—	—	—
WOS-A07	Front cruck blade truss 3	56	13	—	—	—	—
WOS-A08	Rear cruck blade truss 3	45	11	—	—	—	—
Not dated							

² Information from P. Woodfield.