

strap-ends, cannot be dated much later than the middle of the 9th century on the basis of their ornamental technique. Bearing in mind also the derivation of these strap-ends from the 9th-century Anglo-Saxon variety, it is evident that the Celtic group is of 9th-century origin. The duration of the Borre style is seen by Wilson as being of the general period of 840 to 980.²⁷ On these grounds, it seems clear that the Udal strap-end is to be dated within the century 850 to 950, with the likelihood that it cannot be much later than *c.* 900. The admixture of Celtic, Norse and Anglo-Saxon features displayed by this piece does not assist, at this period, in the exact location of its place of manufacture, since the requisite artistic environment existed throughout the west, from the Hebrides to Ireland and the Isle of Man.

JAMES GRAHAM-CAMPBELL

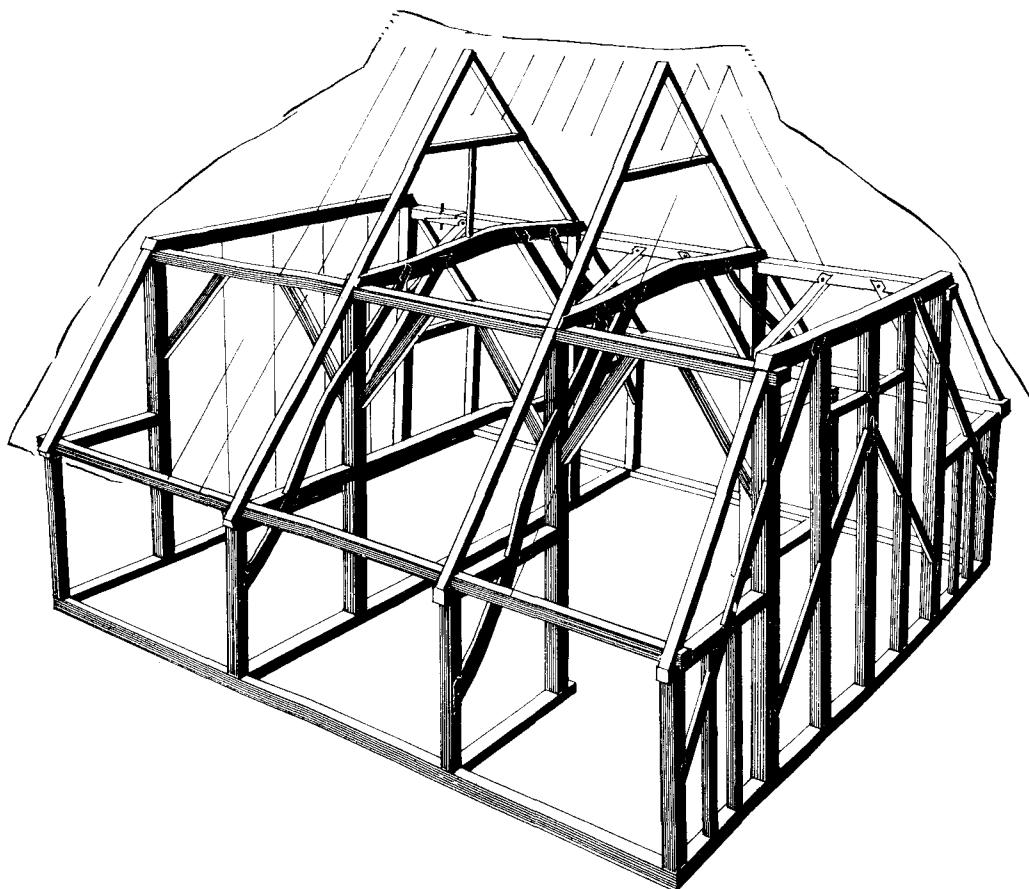


FIG. 52

AISLED HALL CALLED SONGERS, CAGE LANE, BOXTED, ESSEX (p. 131 f.)

SONGERS, CAGE LANE, BOXTED, ESSEX (TM 333007; FIG. 52)

Whatever may be expected or deduced from excavations (and there is little corroborative evidence from deserted medieval villages), the small building at Boxted,

²⁷ P. G. Foote and D. M. Wilson, *The Viking Achievement* (London, 1970), 287.

Essex, known as Songers, is perhaps the first conclusive evidence that humbler, scaled-down versions of the lowland-zone type of aisled hall, as known on a 'manorial' scale, existed in the 13th century, complete in every detail. Very few buildings of any purpose or status that incorporate notch-lapped joints have been recorded,²⁸ and the survival of such a small one as Songers is all the more remarkable, though it is statistically valueless for reckoning how common they once were.

The overall dimensions of the ground plan are 26 by 22 ft. and into this diminutive outline are fitted a two-bay open hall, and a service-end with a lodged floor for a chamber above it. This building was extended by the building of a high-end at the appropriate end of its hall, which was itself laterally divided by a first floor during the second half of the 16th century (diminished haunch-tenons for the floor-joists), and a red brick chimney-stack was also added. The story-posts are 10½ ft. high and are braced to both tie-beams and top-plates with open notched-laps; the aisles have reversed assembly at the eaves, and passing-braces stabilize the whole. The roof has single collars fitted by barefaced lap-dovetails, and it is heavily soot-encrusted, even upon many of the thatching-battens. The top-plates are scarfed at the service-end, with a long splayed scarf having under-squinted butts and a single face-peg. In the one end-wall that is undisturbed two window-openings also survive, set beneath the eaves to light the chamber above the service-rooms, which must therefore have been a sleeping chamber. The total number of notched-lap joints in this tiny building is forty, and its survival in so complete a state is notable. The pattern of the bracing, as shown in the drawing (FIG. 52), is most unusual and is reminiscent of the earliest buildings in Hesse, Germany.

Among the larger hall-houses of East Anglia only one—Abbas Hall at Great Cornard, Suffolk—has two open notched-laps, and these are now disused owing to the later intrusion of service-doors of Early-English style; the house at Purton Green²⁹ has none, despite its other early features. A date at any point in the 13th century is possible for Songers; a date in the 14th century is very unlikely, since no systematic use of this jointing technique is known after c. 1330, and the design of Songers is wholly based on the principles of subsequent bracing which these joints made possible.

CECIL A. HEWETT

A MEDIEVAL TIMBER KITCHEN AT LITTLE BRAXTED, ESSEX (FIG. 53)

The square-planned timber-framed building with pyramidal peg-tiled roof that stands within the moated enclosure of the former hall at Little Braxted, Essex, has for the past twenty-five years been thought to be a dovecote which had been anciently disused because of damage by fire at some unknown date. Such local traditions always merit careful consideration, but in this instance neither of the allegations stands up to scrutiny. The origin of the fire-damage tradition is obviously the presence within the building of thick encrustation by soot on the timbers of the upper walls and rafters, but there is no evidence of burning at any point, nor of structural repairs such as would have replaced burnt components. The view that it was a dovecote seems to be based on its obvious visual resemblance to some dovecotes externally, and the existence of horizontal courses of peg-holes that are ranged around the inner walls at about every eighteen inches of height, which are suggestive of supports for nesting-boxes with which the pigeons were provided. There is no evidence, however, for the former existence of a 'potence' or revolvable ladder such as was normally fitted in dovecotes to enable the cook to take from their boxes at any height or region of the cote the birds that were destined for the table. Moreover, were such a rotary ladder fitted into a square building its operator would have been unable to reach into the corners. But there is evidence for some other

²⁸ C. A. Hewett, 'The notched lap-joint in England', *Vernacular Architecture*, iv (1973), 18–21.

²⁹ G. and S. Colman, 'A thirteenth century aisled house', *Proc. Suffolk Inst. Archaeol.*, xxx, pt. 2 (1965), 150–65.