

Report for

The Old House, The Green, Frampton-on-Severn, Gloucestershire

Site Code: FOS-A

from

The Medieval Peasant House in Midland England

by

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Fig. 1. View from the north

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FOS-A: THE OLD HOUSE, THE GREEN, FRAMPTON-ON-SEVERN,
GLOUCESTERSHIRE (formerly Advowson Farm)

Grid reference: SO 7470 0751 Survey Date: 3rd Dec. 1995 By: N W Alcock; D Miles

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Reference: Marsh, Warren (1989), *The cruck houses of Frampton-on-Severn: Their interpretation and restoration*, Dissertation, Diploma in Architectural Conservation, University of Bristol.

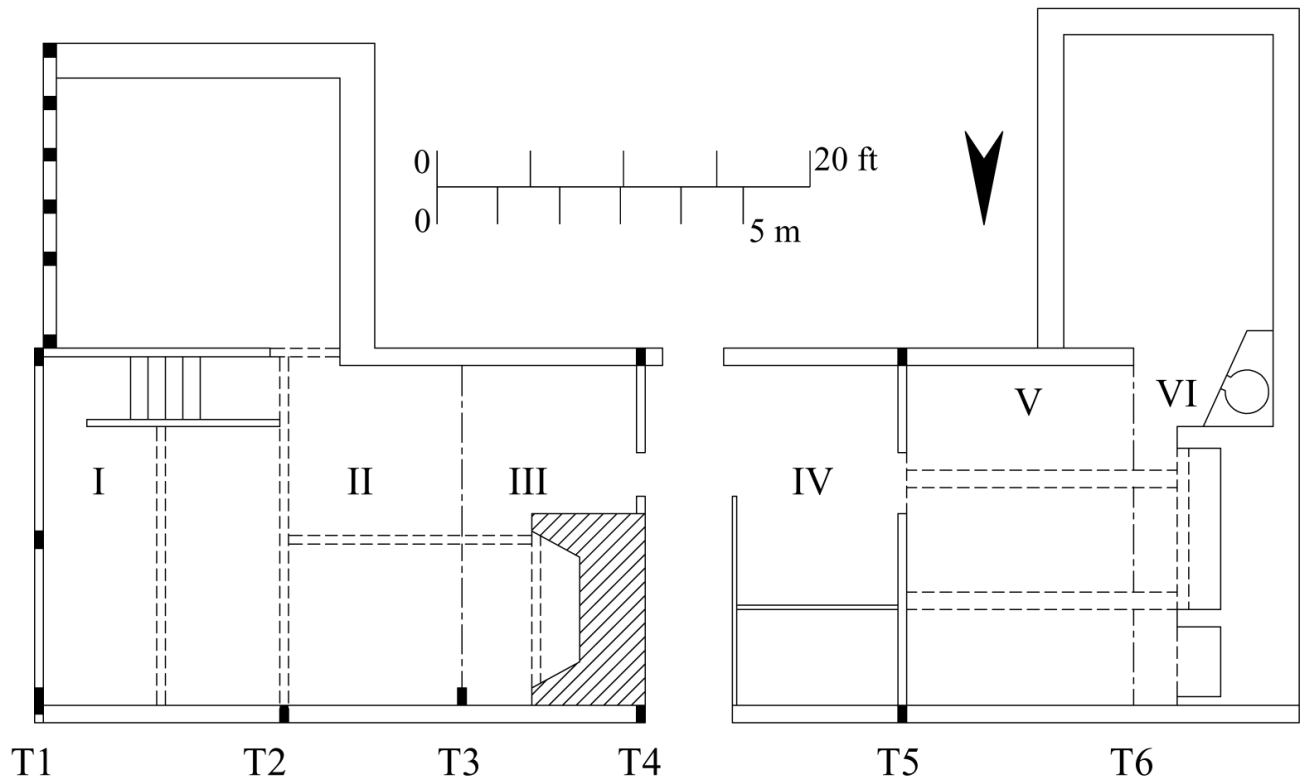


Fig. 2. Plan, showing truss and bay numbering.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The earliest part of this house is a long north-facing cruck-built range, dated to winter 1496/7 by dendrochronology. It is interpreted as having had five original bays with six cruck trusses. From the upper (west) end, these were: the inner room (possibly floored, though evidence for this was destroyed when the 17th century floor was inserted); an open hall of two short bays (II-III) with an arch-braced open truss; a cross-passage and service room (retaining what is probably an original floor), and a long unfloored end bay (V), probably a kitchen. Although the original east end truss has been replaced, the existing structure is exceptionally long, making the presence of any further bays unlikely. At an early date, the end truss was replaced with an upper cruck and the house extended by one bay (VI). This may perhaps have contained a smoke hood, preceding the present kitchen chimney.

PHASE 2: Improvements may have been carried out in the 16th century, particularly at the east end in connection with the addition of bay VI. The flooring of the hall and inner room can be approximately dated to the earlier 17th century; the hall fireplace was inserted either at the same time or perhaps rather earlier. The flooring of the kitchen (Bays V-VI) may also be slightly earlier. At a similar date, a parlour wing was added behind bay I, and the large gables constructed.

LATER PHASES: In the late 17th century, the rear wall was rebuilt in brick and a stair added in bay IV. A service wing was added in the 18th or early 19th century. In about 1830, the front windows were Gothicised.

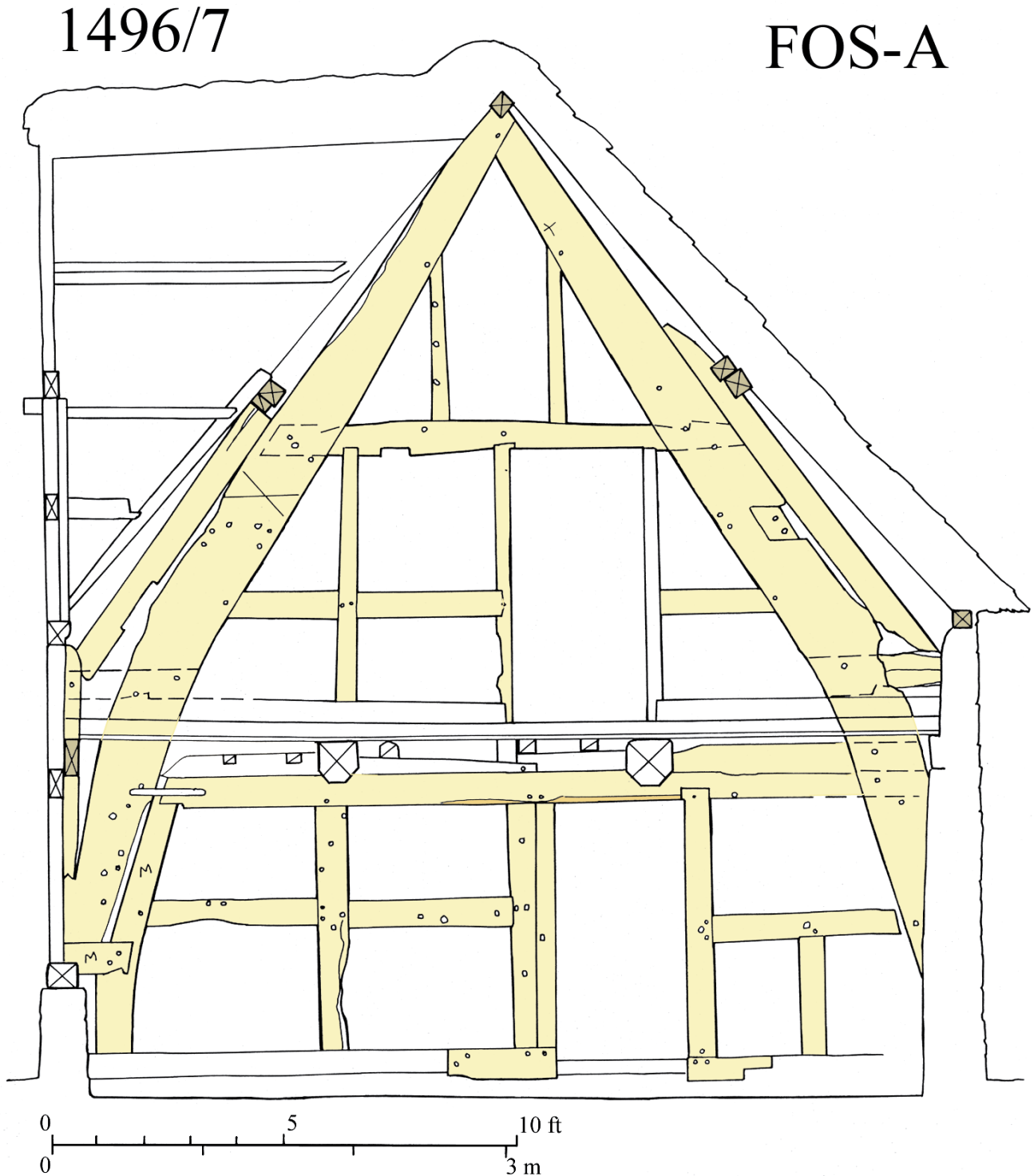


Fig. 3. Section of Truss T5.

STRUCTURAL FEATURES

PHASE 1: The main range of Old House now contains six bays with six cruck trusses. Previous investigators have suggested that it originally had seven bays with eight crucks (L Walrond, unpublished report), but it is now interpreted as having five original bays, soon extended by one bay, involving the replacement of one end cruck by an open upper cruck (T6). At this period, bay V was still unfloored. Smoke-blackening is marked over the hall (bays II-III) and kitchen (Bay V), but the upper parts of the

roof elsewhere also shows traces of sooting, suggesting that the partitioning was not complete between the trusses.

The four closed cruck trusses (T1, 2, T4, T5) (Fig. 3) are of oak, all similar in character, with apexes of type E. Each has a collar, a tiebeam and spurs (all halved across the blades), and packing pieces. The spurs have notched halvings, rather than the normal lap-dovetails. The cruck studs (visible on T5) are set in V-cuts on the blades. The single purlins are halved across the backs of the packing pieces and scarfed at each truss, with bladed scarfs at T5 but simple splayed scarfs at T2 and T4; they extend into bay VI. They carry halvings for pairs of windbraces in each bay, though the insertion of the 17th century dormers has led to the removal of these (possibly present but concealed in bay I, N side); the other ends of the windbraces were pegged to the backs of the cruck blades. The strongest evidence that T1 was the end truss is that the purlin ends projecting beyond it are cut off square with no sign of scarfs for an extension into a further bay. The ground floor section of truss T2, separating the hall and inner room, was recently removed.

The two bays of the open hall (II-III) are very short (9ft 3in each, compared to 13ft for bays I and V, and 14ft 9in for bay IV). The central open hall truss (T3) is very different in form to the other trusses. It appears to be of black poplar, with highly-figured surface graining, and had a tenoned collar and arch braces, all now removed; the blades are chamfered below and above the collar position. The purlins are also tenoned into the blades, and the purlins in bay II (but not bay III) are chamfered with diagonal-cut stops. The blades of T3 have their backs in the plane of the roof, without packing pieces. By implication they were strongly elbowed, but their exact original form is unclear as the lowest parts of both blades at first floor level now have scarfed-in modern replacements, not descending below the inserted floor. It is possible that the blades were of raised cruck form, jointed to the top of the wall studs, and that these joints failed at an early date, with the repairs undertaken to tidy up the broken and irregular ends of the blades. On the south side, an extension timber is side-scarfed to the blade at the level of the arch-brace mortice, running down to the ground floor. This extension carries the original soot-darkened notch-lapped spur, but is itself unsooted. It must date from the 17th century or earlier, as the ceiling joists are fitted around it.

The original end truss appears to have been at T6, as the purlins in bay V are of the same type as in the rest of the house, but those in bay VI are on a different alignment. The bay V purlin on the north has a halving just beyond the line of T6, and extends ca. 1ft beyond the truss, with a slightly curved end. It has three windbrace halvings, two perhaps original and the third relating to the replacement truss. This replacement (T6) is an open upper cruck with a short curved base and narrow foot tenoned into a cambered transverse beam. A free tenon links the back of the blade and the stud, and notched spurs (removed) clasped the top of the wallplates. The transverse beam was later cut back to function as joisting in the inserted ceiling of bays V-VI. (probably spanning across the main ceiling beams, though this joint is concealed). The absence of substantial smoke-blackening in bay VI suggests that it contained a smoke-hood, though it is possible that the existing stone chimney dates from the insertion of T6. On the north side, an adjacent alcove with an opening from the fireplace is interpreted as a former smoking chamber.

Most of the front wall framing is made up of square panels, probably of 17th century date, but some studs may be original, as may be two four-light windows with diamond mullions (in bays III and IV). The sill rests on a relatively high stone plinth, but the arrangement at T5 (section drawing) suggests that this is the result of an alteration, with the foot of the blade having been cut off and a prop inserted. The rear wall is brick, assigned a late 17th century date.

The floor in bay IV is much less highly finished than elsewhere in the house and may well be original. It is carried on a transverse beam with simple step stops, east of the present passage (its south end later cut off), with roughly squared axial joists.

PHASE 2: In the earlier 17th century, floors were inserted in bays I-III, with both beams and joists well-finished with bar-and-runout stops. In bay I the intermediate beam is transverse, and is stopped against the partition beside the present stair, indicating that this dates from the same period. An axial beam spans bays II-III, with matching cornices on each side wall. The hall fireplace was probably inserted as part of

these alterations, though it could be earlier. It has splayed jambs made of limestone slabs but the lintel (which might have dated its insertion) has been replaced.

Also in the 17th century, perhaps at the same date as the hall was floored, large framed dormers were inserted on the front and rear elevations in bays II, IV and V, with out-curved braces in their gables. A two-storey wing was added at the east end, probably as a parlour with chamber over. A first floor passage beside the stair in bay I gives access to the chamber, through a door with angled head; the foot of the T2 cruck blade has been cut off to improve the stair headroom. The chamber roof has an A-frame truss with high collar. Probably at a similar date, a small closet with segmental-headed door was inserted in the hall chamber, framed under the purlin.

In the kitchen, two large axial beams (12in square) span bays V-VI; at one end, they are lodged over the T5 cruck tie, and at the other are supported by the stone chimney-breast. The joists are square in section, unchamfered.

LATER PHASES: A staircase was inserted in the later 17th century in bay IV; it has turned balusters and a square-section hand rail. In the 18th or early 19th century, a service wing was added at the west end. A bread oven in the kitchen chimney has been dated to c. 1690 but, as its masonry surround extends into the service wing, it cannot predate the latter. In c. 1830, the front elevation was given pointed multi-light 'Gothic' casements on the ground floor and in the dormers. In the kitchen, a store cupboard was inserted in the former smoking chamber, with an elegant wooden pierced baluster-pattern ventilation grill above the door.

Until recently, the 'Advowson Stone' was incorporated in the south wall above the cross-passage door. This was a large Renaissance plaque depicting Susannah and the Elders; one of the latter figures was clearly based on the figure of a prophet in a Mantegna painting of 'A Sybil and a Prophet'. The stone had been in the house for a considerable period, but its original provenance is unknown.

DENDROCHRONOLOGY

For dendrochronology abbreviations see page facing Introduction.

Sampling comments: Samples were obtained through coring by Robert Howard on 19 April 1989.

TREE-RING SAMPLE RECORD AND SUMMARY OF DATING

Sample Code	Sample Location	Total Rings	Sapwood Rings	FMR Date	LHR Date	LMR Date	Date Cat
FOS-A01	Front (N) cruck blade truss T2	90	25C	1407	1471	1496	3d
FOS-A02	Tie beam truss T1	70	HS	1418	1487	1487	3d
FOS-A03	Wall stud truss T1	44	HS	1433	1476	1476	3d
FOS-A04	Front cruck blade truss T4	90	27	1405	1467	1494	3d
FOS-A05	Front cruck blade truss T1	85	33	—	—	—	—
FOS-A06	Rear cruck blade truss T4	58	HS	1415	1472	1472	3d
FOS-A07	Rear purlin bay II	28 NM	—	—	—	—	—
FOS-A08	Front purlin bay II	15 NM	—	—	—	—	—

Site sequence: (composed of samples 1, 2, 3, 4, 6), 92 rings long dated 1405–1496 with *t*-values of 6.0(MCI0), 4.9(OXFORD).

Estimated felling date: (sample 1 with last dated ring has complete sapwood), 1496/7 (VA21.90).