Report for

Coates Barn, Main Street, Cosby, Leicestershire

Site Code: COS-B

from

The Medieval Peasant House in Midland England

by

Nat Alcock and Dan Miles

Fig. 1. View from the south.

Oxbow Books

COS-B: COATES BARN, MAIN STREET, COSBY, LEICESTERSHIRE

(known as Church Farm Barn in 1974)

Grid reference: SP547948 *Survey Date*: 1990 *By*: D. Miles (1974 observations by N W Alcock)

Illustrations:

Reference: Webster, V. R. (1954), 'Cruck-framed buildings of Leicestershire', *Leicestershire Archaeol Hist Soc Trans*, **30,** 26-58.

Dating funded by the Conservation Section of the Leicestershire County Council.

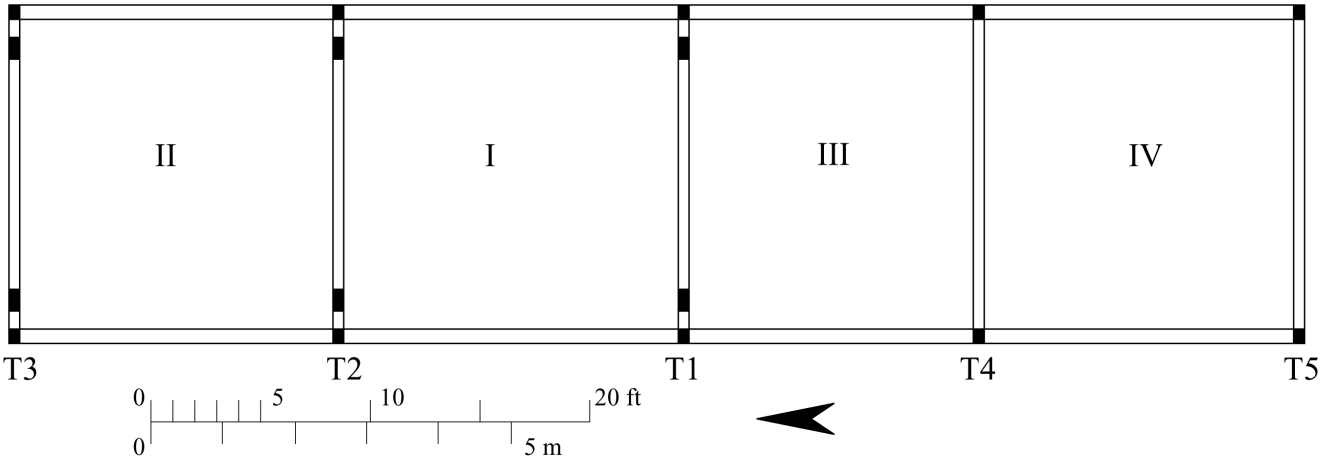

Fig. 2. Block plan, showing truss and bay numbering.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

PHASE 1: Coates Barn contains a two-bay cruck structure (bays I and II) originally built as a house, but later converted to a barn. The two bays are presumed to have been hall and chamber or service, but whether either or both were floored is unknown. The wall-framing (observed in 1974) was of a very simple type, with large panels. Three apex varieties were noted: T1 has an unusual variant of type 'F1', T2 has type 'C', and T3 has type 'H'. This phase has given an estimated felling date range of 1563–1596.

PHASE 2: In the mid-eighteenth century (felling date range 1734–1761) the building was extended to the south with two bays of box-framed construction (bays III and IV). Nothing survives to indicate how this functioned as a domestic dwelling. Sometime after this, the building was converted to a barn, a process which removed all of the internal secondary partitions. It was described as 'mutilated' in Webster (1954). In about 1989 the barn was converted to an office and all the external walls renewed.

STRUCTURAL FEATURES

PHASE 1: All the cruck blades are paired, each set being cut from the same tree. They are slightly curved, with the sawn side to the north. Truss T1 at the south end is unusual, the cruck blades terminating in a low saddle as most 'F' apex types, but it has the unusual feature of a central post which rises from the tiebeam, is halved on the inside of the saddle, and continues to the ridge. Another post extends from below the tiebeam to the ground. There is no sign of a sill beam, and the crucks were reported to have been supported on stones. The wall-plates have been renewed; they are supported on the extended ends of the ties. The purlins which average 7in square are carried on the back of the blades, each supported on a substantial 2in thick peg driven in below the purlin. This is the first example of this feature recorded. Windbraces were originally present and were trenched and pegged to the back of the crucks.

Some lath and daub survives above the saddle. This consists of 2-2½in laths with 2in gaps between them, nailed to the inner (north) side of the centre post, with staves on the inner side of the laths. The daub is plastered on both sides of the laths, leaving the centre post and staves exposed.

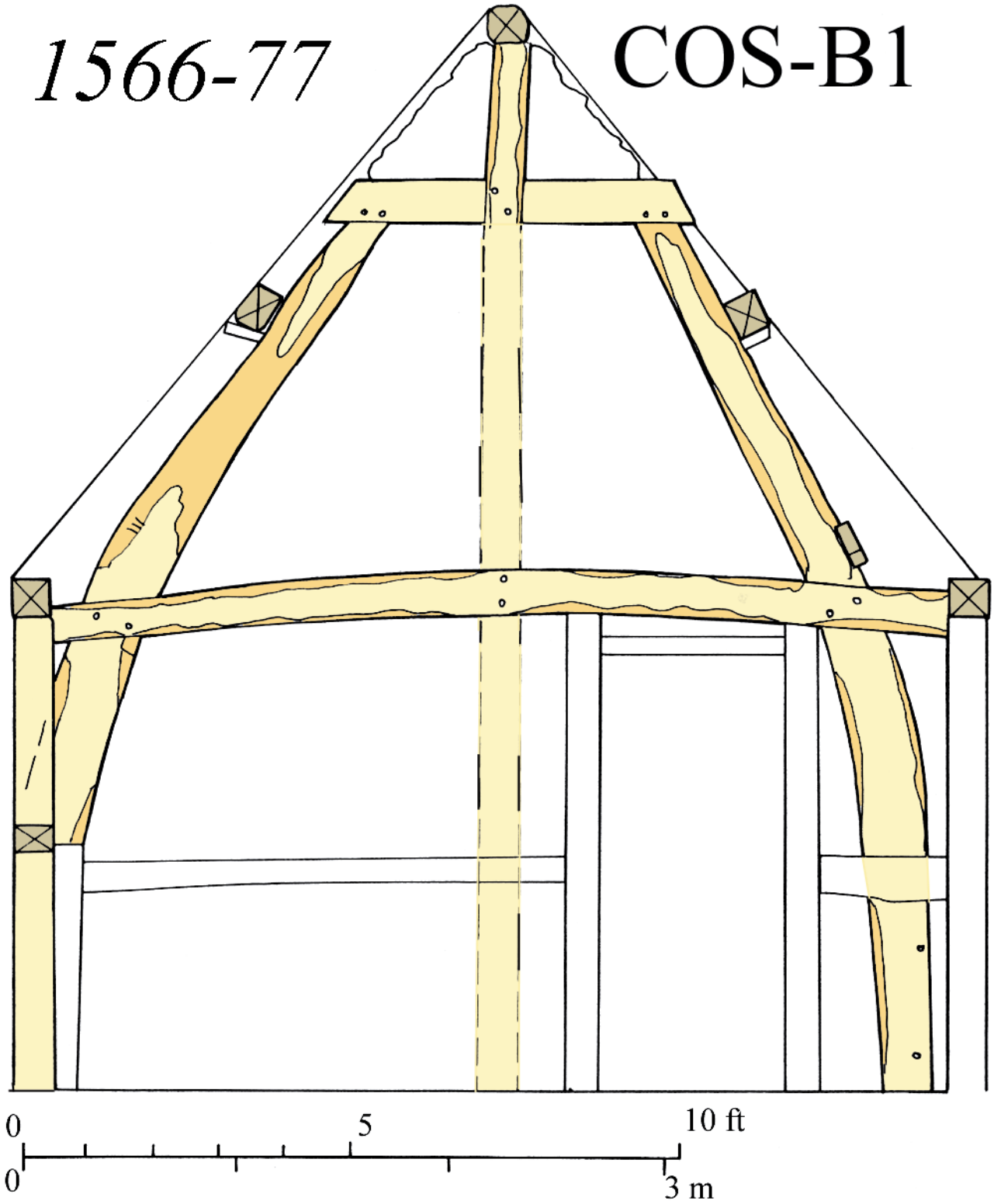

Fig. 3. Section of truss T1, from the north.

Truss T2 is more conventional in design, with a 'C' apex, the saddle supporting a square set ridge. The purlins rest on the extended ends of the collar and on the upper ends of (truncated) packing pieces; the wall-plates are again carried on the tiebeam ends. The tiebeam has been renewed from the western

cruck to the east wall, but a short section still survives from the west cruck to the west wall. This section contains a stave hole and there are also four in the collar and two in the underside of the saddle.

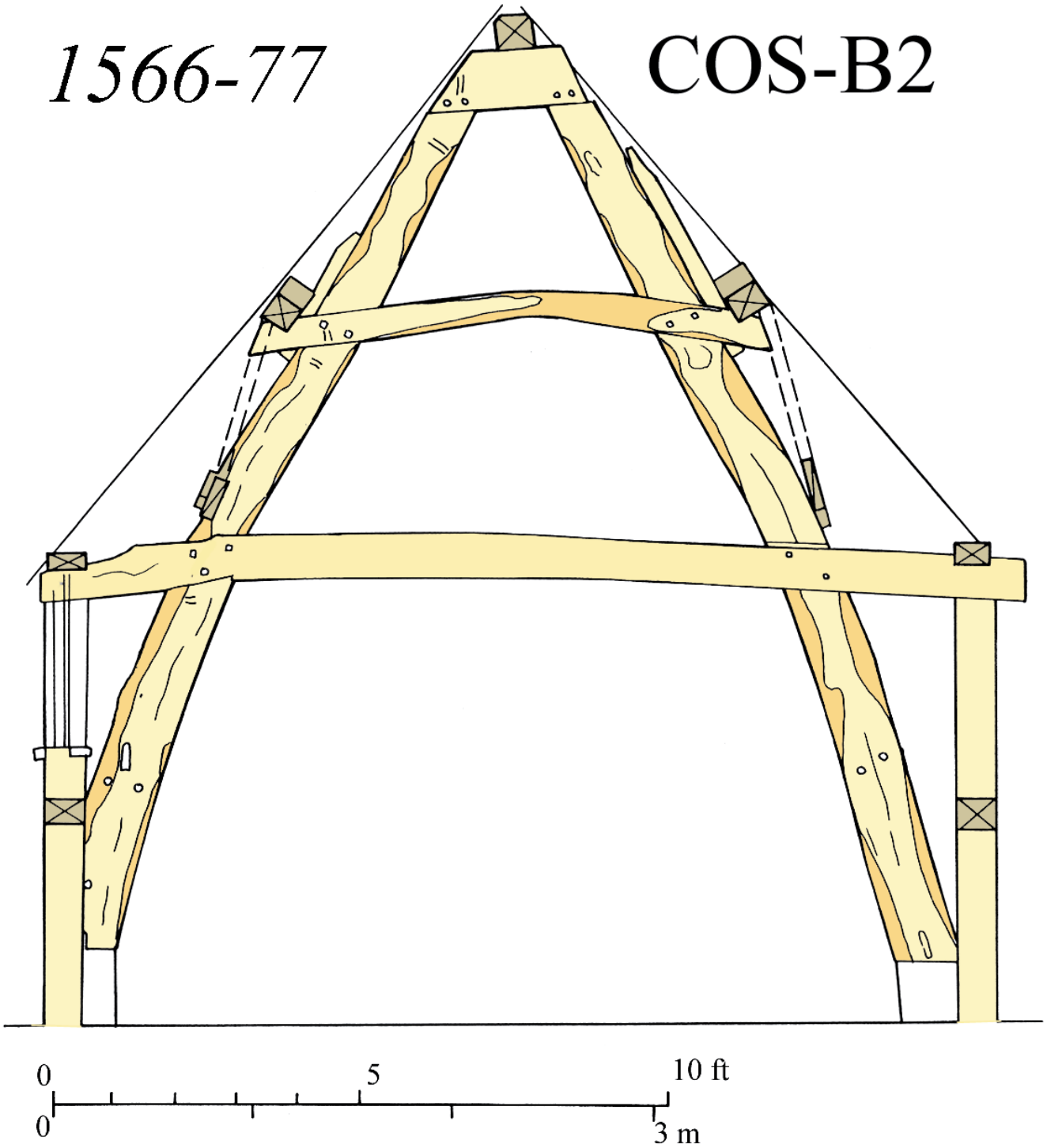

Fig. 4. Section of truss T2 from the north.

Truss 3 (north end) is again different with a type 'H' apex, the blades almost touching to support a square-set ridge which is also clasped by a yoke. The purlin and tiebeam are similar to that of T2, and a centre post extends from the tiebeam to the inserted sill beam, as in T1. Assembly marks are present on all three trusses, chiselled, and about 2in long. The trusses are numbered 1, 2 and 3 in Roman numerals. A scarf joint was noted in the ridge piece in bay II, having a splayed and square abutment type with two pegs. No original rafters survive.

The side wall-framing (observed in 1974) was of a very simple type, identical to that found in Phoenix Cottage, Stoneleigh, Warwickshire (STO-F). It contained large panels formed by the cruck studs

and plank-like studs in the centre of each bay, with one mid-rail in each section. It gave no indication of window positions.

The evidence that this was not originally an agricultural building is based on the stave holes in the end of the tiebeam of truss T2, and in its the collar and saddle, and on the lath and daub still *in situ* above the saddle to T1.

PHASE 2: The added bays used two-panel high square-panel framing, all since renewed. The roof has inset prinicpals crossed at the apex.

DENDROCHRONOLOGY

For dendrochronology abbreviations see page facing Introduction.

Sampling Comments: Nine samples were obtained through coring and a further seven as slices from discarded timbers by Robert Howard on 8 October 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
CODE	SAMPLE LOCATION	RINGS	RINGS	DATE	DATE	DATE	CAT
COS-B01	Cruck blade truss T3 E side	120	12	1442	1549	1561	1
COS-B02	Cruck blade turss T1 W side	119	—	1426	—	1544	1
COS-B03	Cruck blade truss T1 E side	77	—	—	—	—	—
COS-B04	Cruck spur truss T2 E side	48	HS	1509	1556	1556	3a
COS-B05	Windbrace bay T2 E side	77	07	—	—	—	—
COS-B06	Purlin bay T2 E side	49	HS	1505	1553	1553	3a
COS-B07	Saddle truss T2	76	HS	1473	1548	1548	3a
COS-B08	Cruck blade truss T2 W side	132	14	1431	1548	1562	1
COS-B09	Cruck blade truss T2 E side	58	—	—	—	—	—
COS-B10	Structural timber unknown origin	76	11	1659	1723	1734	1
COS-B11	Structural timber unknown origin	67	13	1666	1719	1732	1
COS-B12	Structural timber unknown origin	78	10	1642	1709	1719	1
COS-B13	Structural timber unknown origin	70	17	1664	1716	1733	1
COS-B14	Structural timber unknown origin	73	16	1661	1716	1732	1
COS-B15	Structural timber unknown origin	65	17	1668	1715	1732	1
COS-B16	Structural timber unknown origin	84	07	—	—	—	—
	Average date of last heartwood ring (Seq 1-2)				1551		
	Average date of last heartwood ring (Seq 3)					1716	

Site sequence: SEQ1 (comp of samples 1, 2, 8), 137 rings long dated 1426–1562 with *t*-values 7.4(E.MID), 6.1(OXFORD); SEQ2 (comp of samples 4, 6, 7), 84 rings long dated 1473–1556 with *t*-values 5.1(MC10), 4.7 (KEY-B1, Site sequence of the Barn, Keyworth, VA15.84).

95% felling date range: **1563–1596** (revised from 1566–1601, VA22.91, due to new sapwood estimates).

A further six timbers of unknown origin from the non-cruck part of this building were sampled and dated: SEQ3 (comp of samples 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15), 93 rings long dated 1642–1734 with *t*-values of 6.3 (OXFORD), 5.9(E.MID).

95% felling date range: **1734–1761** (previously 1734-1754).