Report for

91 Town Green Street, Rothley, Leicestershire

Site Code: ROT-D

from

The Medieval Peasant House in Midland England

by

Nat Alcock and Dan Miles

Fig. 1. View from the south-west (Photo: Neil Finn).

Oxbow Books

ROT-D: 91 TOWN GREEN STREET, ROTHLEY, LEICESTERSHIRE

Grid reference: SK 5811 1232 *Survey date*: 14 June 1989 *By*: D. Miles

Illustrations: *Page*

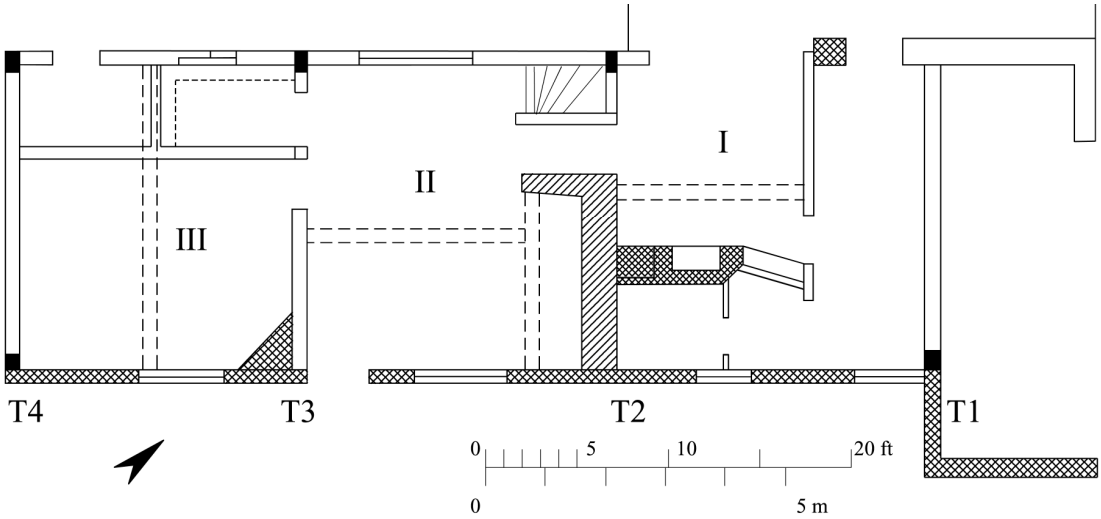

Fig. 2. Plan (prior to 1980s alterations) showing truss and bay numbering.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT[1]

PHASE 1: No. 91 Town Green Street Rothley is a three-bay cruck house of one main constructional phase. In the original house, bay III was probably the chamber, and the middle bay (II) served as the hall, partially divided from the service area in the east bay (I). Further study of the soot distribution is needed to confirm this interpretation. However, it appears that the hall and service bays were open to the roof, whilst the chamber end may have been floored originally; its floor is carried on a heavy transverse beam rather than the axial beams of bays I and II. Two cruck trusses (T2 and T3) are complete to the apex, one carrying a king post with braces on the collar (apex type 'F3') and the other having a saddle apex (type 'C'). Both the other cruck trusses survive but are incomplete. A tree-ring felling date range of ***1492-9*** has been obtained.

LATER PHASES: In the seventeenth/eighteenth century, the hall and service bays were floored over with axial beams and joists, over which a lime-ash floor was constructed. A ceiling was inserted upstairs and the inside of the rafters lined with plaster supported on reeds. In the nineteenth century, the front wall was rebuilt in brick, the level of the eaves raised, and the front wall plate and purlin removed. A dairy with thralls and a coal-hole were cut off from the inner room.

STRUCTURAL FEATURES

PHASE 1: Truss T3 is the best preserved of the internal trusses. The cruck blades are joined by a long saddle with a superstructure comprising a king post and two curving braces carrying a square set ridge piece (removed) (type 'F3' apex). The collar has been cut through by an inserted doorway. Evidence for the tiebeam is hidden behind plaster, but two pegholes by the side of the door to the dairy indicate its probable position. The truss is been infilled with studs or staves and reed lath fixed to the south-west side

[1] The house has previously been described in Webster, V. R. (1954) 'Cruck-framed buildings of Leicestershire', *Leicestershire Archaeol Hist Soc Trans*, **30,** 26-58, p. 40.

and plastered. It was not possible to inspect the underside of the saddle or collar to check for the existence of stave holes.

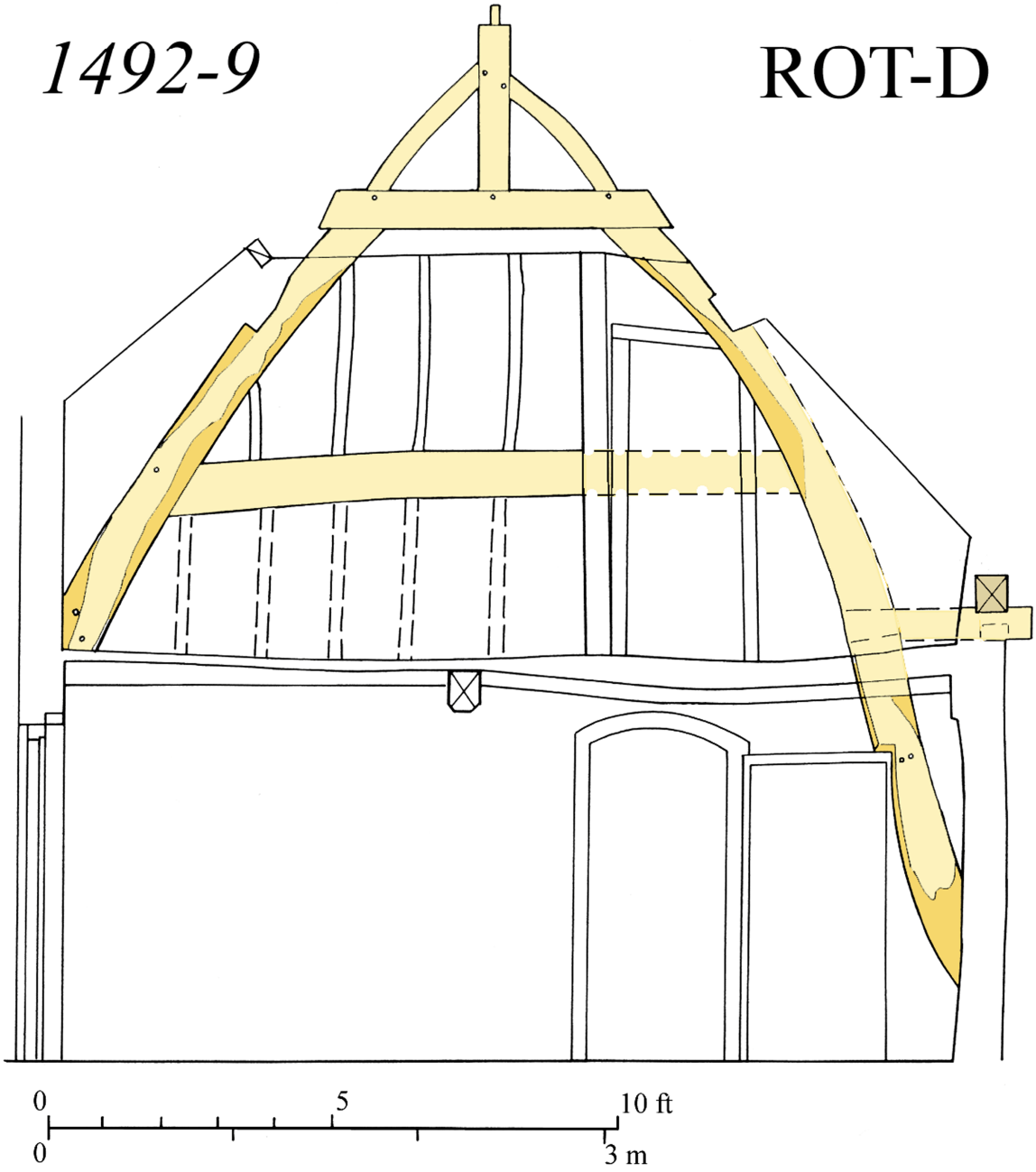

Fig. 3. Section of truss T3.

The purlins are trenched into the back of the cruck blades, and no evidence was visible for windbraces. The front purlin has been removed. The wall plates are carried on cruck spurs which are fixed to the south-west side of the truss with bare-faced dovetail halvings. The outer end of the rear spur was originally supported by a cruck stud, as indicated by an empty mortice just visible under the wall plate; this shows clearly that the outer walls were originally timber-framed. On truss T2, the apex is missing, but it has both a collar and a tiebeam, the latter extending to support the wallplates. The pegs to the joints in this truss are strongly skewed, each being driven in at 45 degrees to the surface of the truss. Relatively little of truss T4 is visible. Its cruck blades are longer and carry a saddle which supported the ridge directly. It has a collar and cruck spurs, set about five feet below the collar. Of truss T1, only the front foot of the cruck remains.

Assembly marks on truss T2 comprise two strokes, with a tag on the front side of the truss. The marks are scribed across the half-dovetail joint with the collar, and below the joint with the tie. A plumb-

and-level mark is also visible on the blade between the tiebeam and collar.It is likely that the trusses were numbered sequentially, with T1 being I and T4 being IIII. All the timbers were converted from whole trees, boxed heart, and were shaped with an axe. The trees were relatively fast growing and were under 100 years old when felled.

The transverse ceiling beam in bay III (Fig. 4) is notable for having one extremely waney end (south), although the north end is neatly squared and chamfered with run-out stops; it is probably of elm. The joists are light, with small chamfers and run-out stops. It is clear that this bay was floored before the others, but the presence of a mortice on the underside of the south end of the beam suggests that it may have been an early insertion rather than a primary feature.

Fig. 4. The ceiling beam in bay III, showing the transition from the regular chamfered part to the waney end (Photo: Neil Finn).

DENDROCHRONOLOGY

For dendrochronology abbreviations and master sequence references, see page facing Introduction.

Sampling Comments: Eight samples were obtained through coring by Robert Howard on 14 June 1989. Six cruck blades, as well as the collar of T3 and the tie of T2 were cored. The two cruck blades from T2 matched together and were combined to form a sequence of 80 rings. A sample from the rear cruck of T4 gave a last measured ring date of 1484.

TREE-RING SAMPLE RECORD AND SUMMARY OF DATING

Sample Code	Sample Location	Total Rings	Sapwood Rings	FMR Date	LHR Date	LMR Date	Date Cat
ROT-D01	Rear cruck blade truss T2	80	27	1412	1464	1491	—
ROT-D02	Front cruck blade truss T2	62	22	1430	1469	1491	—
ROT-D03	Rear cruck truss T3	45	04	—	—	—	—
ROT-D04	Front cruck truss T3	NM	—	—	—	—	—
ROT-D05	Rear cruck blade truss T4	58	08	1427	1476	1484	3a
ROT-D06	Rear cruck spur truss T3	NM	—	—	—	—	—
ROT-D07	Collar truss T3	80	28	—	—	—	—
ROT-D08	Tiebeam truss T2	32 NM	3	—	—	—	—

Sample 5 matched at 1427–1484 with *t*-values 5.0(E.MID), 2.6(OXFORD), 4.8(HAG-C1), 4.7(LEI-C1), 3.9(CADASQ01), 3.6(CASBSQ03). A weaker fit for a site sequence composed of samples 1, 2, 80 rings long at 1412–1491 is consistent with this date and has been confirmed by later analysis.

Estimated 95% felling date reange: 1492-1511 (previously 1492–1508). OxCal refined felling date range ***1492-9***.