Report and Documentary History for

Quaintree House, Braunston, Rutland

Site Code: BRN-H

from

The Medieval Peasant House in Midland England

by

Nat Alcock and Dan Miles

Fig. 1. View of the house (Photo: Nick Hill)

Oxbow Books

BRN-H: QUAINTREE HOUSE, BRAUNSTON, RUTLAND

Grid reference: SK 8328 0676 *Survey Dates*: 1981; 1982; 2011 *By*: A Gibson; C. Hewett; N. Hill

Illustrations:

References: Maurice Barley (1986), *Houses and History*, Faber and Faber, London, 175; Prince Yuri Galitzine (1980) 'The Quaintree Hall House, Braunston, Rutland', *Rutland Record,* **1**, 25-31.

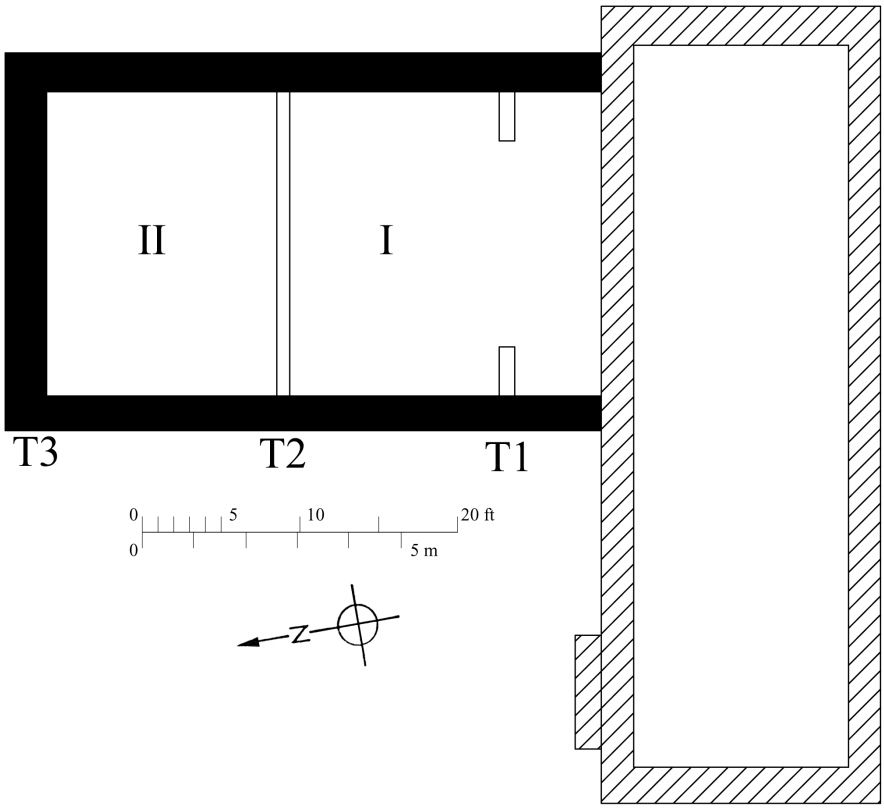

Fig. 2. Outline plan showing truss and bay numbering (after Nick Hill).

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

*Note***:** No full survey of this house has been carried out and the following short report is based on a survey and brief report kindly made available by the late Adrian Gibson. This has been supplemented by extensive additional information provided by Nick Hill in advance of his forthcoming publication of the house, for which we are extremely grateful. Barley (1986) gives an isometric view including the upper parts of the hall. Only the original timber roof structure is described here in detail.

SUMMARY AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

A base-cruck or short-principal hall of 2½ bays, tree-ring dated to1306-1318, forms the stem of a T-plan house. This was originally reported to have had timber-framed walls, replaced in stone in the Tudor period. Re-examination has led to the conclusion that the walls were most probably of stone, following the pattern of other base cruck/short principal roofs in the area, which have stone external walls. However, the lack of a stop to the chamfer on the surviving brace indicates that the wall face must have been further out than at present.

At the high end of the hall, beyond the timber cross-wall formed by truss T3, one would expect to find a principal solar chamber on the first floor. Again, this may have taken the form either of a cross-wing or an in-line end. The fact that the collar purlin does not run through from the hall roof into the high end bay at the same height makes it perhaps a little more likely that there was a cross-wing here, not an

in-line end. The slightly lower-set collar purlin would then act as a linking piece, to support rafter couples in the valley junction where the hall and cross-wing roofs met.

A parlour wing including seventeenth-century fireplaces forms the bar of the T, at the low end of the hall. Both it and a kitchen at the high end of the hall (outside the main house footprint) may be medieval in origin.

STRUCTURAL FEATURES

The whole roof of the hall is heavily smoke-blackened. It originally measured approximately 26ft (between the inner faces of the exterior walls) by approximately 35ft. The main surviving trusses comprise the aisled spere truss and the open base-cruck truss. The jowled spere-truss arcade posts remain to full height, and their aisle ties, braces and cranked passing braces also survive.

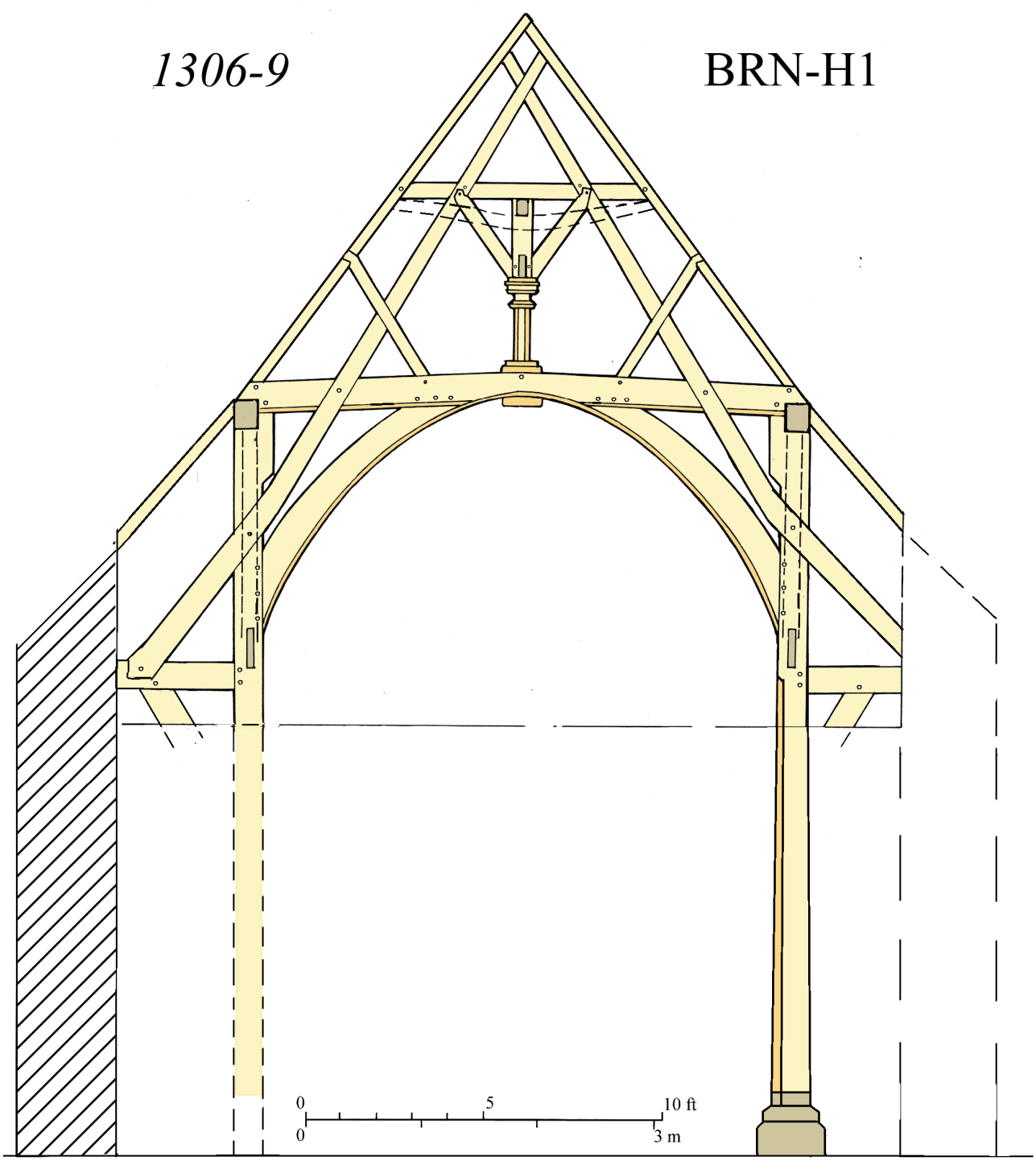

Fig. 3. Section of the spere truss (T1).

OPEN TRUSS: The blades of the open truss extend only to the existing eaves level, where they are carried on wooden pads in the stone walls, and it is not clear how much lower they originally reached, so that it is not possible to decide whether the truss is better described as a raised base-cruck truss (blades extending substantially down the walls) or a short-principal truss (principals terminating at or near the wall head). The latter is now considered more likely. In either case, it is clear that the feet of the principals have been cut off. This truss has a double tiebeam.

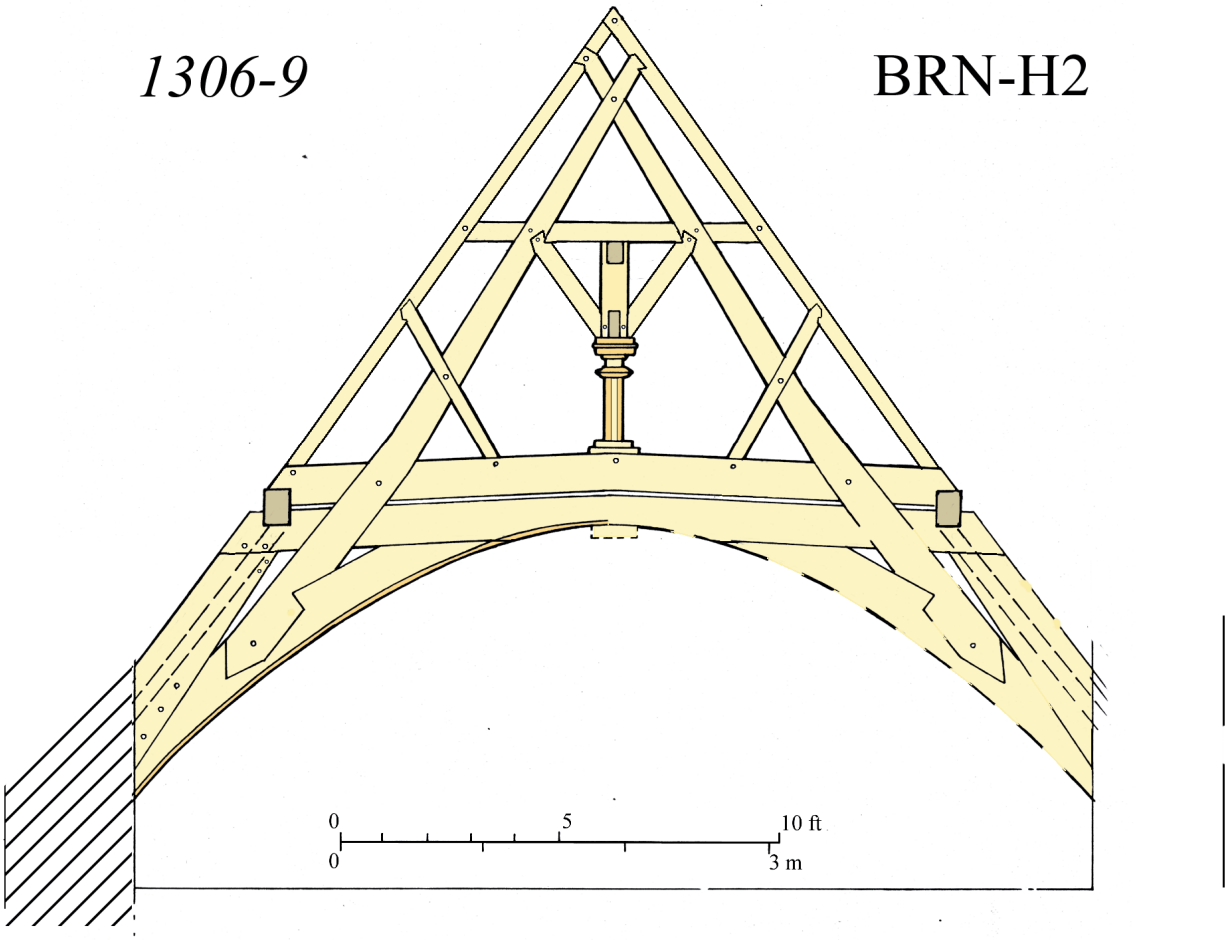

Fig. 4. Section of the base-cruck/short-principal open truss (T2).

The upper roof structures of both trusses are similar, with collars, passing braces and short cross-braces from the tiebeams to the rafters. The underside of the spere-truss tiebeam carries a sharply carved hexagonal rosette boss (Fig. 5), and it seems highly likely that the base-cruck tiebeam also had one, though this part of the truss is concealed.

Fig.5. Daisywheel decoration on truss T1 (Photo Nick Hill).

Octagonal crown posts with four-way up-braces carry a series of roll mouldings at head and foot. On the base cruck, the passing braces cross both tiebeams and the visible joint to the arch-braces is an unrefined notched lap.

Most of the roof joints are of mortice-and-tenon form, but the long braces use notch-lap joints with refined entries. Very unusually, where the short scissor braces intersect the rafters, the joints are not pegged from the side, but horizontally from the exterior in the plane of the trusses. One arcade plate scarf is visible, of splayed and tabled form.

The common rafters survive over the whole roof. A unique feature is that the central couple in each bay has the collar sagging and passing *under* the collar purlin, to hold it firmly in place against the other collars (shown dotted on the truss 1 drawing). The collar purlin is not continuous, but is in sections, each length tenoned into the head of the crown post which is itself tenoned into the collar.

At the north end of the hall the upper part of a third truss (T3) remains. Only the east principal rafter, the upper two-thirds of the west principal and both collars survive. The best, 'face' sides of trusses T1 and T2 are to the north, facing the high end of the hall; the 'face' side of truss T3 also faces into the hall, so is on the south side. Both collars of T3 are tenoned to the principal rafters, as elsewhere. The lower collar has the empty matrices of four refined-entry notch-lap joints, for four raking braces, with face pegs. The principal rafters also have empty lap-joint matrices for raking braces, which seem to have formed an 'X' pattern. Soot blackening to the south side, but not the underside or the rear north side of the timbers shows that this was a closed truss. No evidence of fixings for wattling can be seen, so it appears that there may have been laths fixed to the north side, with mud infill between the timbers. The outer braces might have carried on past the tiebeam as passing braces, but unlike those to T1 and T2 the braces here terminate at the collar. This may indicate that these were not passing braces. The location of the missing crown post can be seen from a shallow (c.3mm) trench cut across the underside of the collar. On the rear north face of the collar is a pegged mortice, which must have received a further section of collar purlin. This is clear evidence that there was a further bay beyond the high end of the hall, though it is odd that the collar purlin to the north was tenoned into the collar, rather than the crown post, as elsewhere.

DOCUMENTARY HISTORY

Galitzine (1980) gives the evidence identifying Quaintree House as the manor house of one of three manors in Braunston, known as the Hall Manor, whose descent can be traced from the thirteenth century (*VCH Rutland*, 2, 34 (1935)).

DENDROCHRONOLOGY

For dendrochronology abbreviations see page facing Introduction.

Sampling Comments: Sampling took place in two stages, prior to the original date publication in *VA*, 15, 1984 and the revisions in *VA*, 22, 1991. No fuller record of the timbers sampled and their locations has been retained than that given below. From on-site observation, it appears that BRN-H08, identified as taken from the wall plate, must in fact come from the pad inserted under the north base-cruck blade.

TREE-RING SAMPLE RECORD AND SUMMARY OF DATING

Sample Code	Sample Location	Total Rings	Sapwood Rings	FMR Date	LHR Date	LMR Date	Date Cat
BRN-H01	Rafter	57	04	—	—	—	—
BRN-H02	Rafter	81	—	1165	—	1245	1
BRN-H03	Not recorded	NM	—	—	—	—	—
BRN-H04	Rafter	86	—	1166	—	1251	1
BRN-H05	Not recorded	NM	—	—	—	—	—
BRN-H06	Not recorded	NM	—	—	—	—	—
BRN-H07	Brace	53	—	1195	—	1247	1

BRN-H08	Wall plate	100		28C	—	—	—	—
BRN-H09	Lower collar	98		—	1175	—	1272	1
BRN-H10	Lower collar	94	+15NM	04+15	1171	1260	1264	1
BRN-H11	Tiebeam spere truss	100		02	1176	1273	1275	1
BRN-H12	Rear (N) inner principal rafter spere truss	107		16	1195	1285	1301	1
BRN-H13	Crown post spere truss	108		34	1198	1271	1305	1
BRN-H14	Front (S) principal post spere truss		NM	—	—	—	—	—
BRN-H15	Upper tiebeam base cruck truss		NM	—	—	—	—	—
BRN-H16	Crown post base cruck truss	104		HS	1171	1274	1274	1
BRN-H17	Rear (N) base cruck cruck blade	55		—	1189	—	1243	1
	Average last heartwood ring					1273		

Site sequence: (composed of samples 2, 4, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17), 141 rings long dated to 1165–1305 with *t*-values 8.9 (S.ENG), 7.9 (OXFORD). 95% felling date range: 1306-1318 (previously 1306–1311) (VA15.84, 22.91). OxCal refined felling date range: ***1306-9***.