

Report and Documentary History for
The Old Post Office, Oxhill, Warwickshire

Site Code: OXH-A

from

The Medieval Peasant House in Midland England

by

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Fig. 1. View of the house from the south.

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Oxbow Books

OXH-A: THE OLD POST OFFICE, OXHILL, WARWICKSHIRE

Grid reference: SP 3153 4591 Survey Date: 1980

By: M. J. Heard; N W Alcock

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Reference: Wood-Jones, R. B. (1963) *Traditional Domestic Architecture in the Banbury Region*, Manchester University Press.

Abbreviations:

NMR National Monuments Record, English Heritage, Swindon

SCLA Shakespeare Centre Library and Archives

WCRO Warwickshire County Record Office

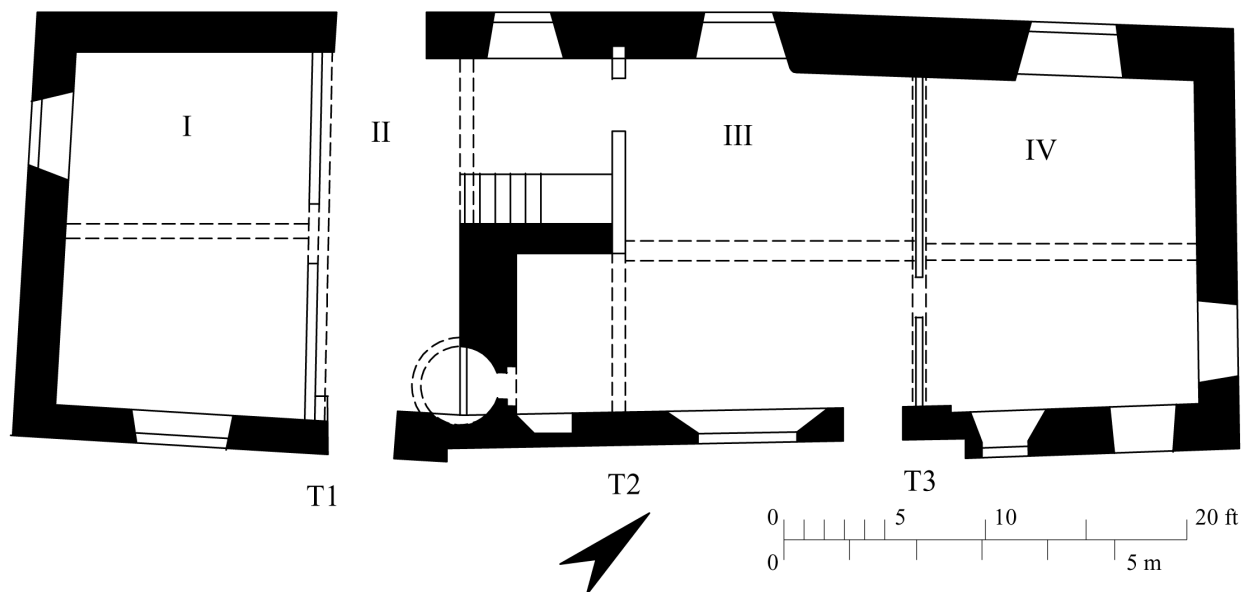


Fig. 2. Plan, showing truss and bay numbering (from a drawing by M. J. Heard).

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

PHASE 1: The house is oriented with its gable to the village street (south-west, described here as south). The original four-bay house with stone walls and internal cruck trusses is remarkably unaltered; it has been tree-ring dated with a felling date range of 1450–6. From the street end, the first bay was probably for service, followed by a two-bay open hall including a cross-entry, with a chamber bay to the north.

LATER PHASES: These involved the insertion of a smoke hood in the hall, followed by its replacement by a stone chimney, and by the flooring of the house. By 1980, the house was occupied as two cottages.

STRUCTURAL FEATURES

PHASE 1: The three original cruck trusses survive, within stone walls, principally of roughly coursed brown marlstone, with an admixture of grey Lias limestone. These have been much patched, but are in part original, relatively thick and with an internal batter; the rear wall of the hall shows possible quoins for a large hall window. Trusses T1 and T3 were closed with halved collars but T3 has a tenoned tiebeam (faced up to the hall side); truss T1 has a tenoned collar and its tiebeam is tenoned on the south side, halved on the north side. Both have lap-dovetail spurs, curiously angled in opposite directions on the two trusses. The C-type apexes have exceptionally deep saddles. Although a series of studs are visible on the upper floor in T3, these appear to be later insertions, relating to a door from the inserted floor over the hall. Double purlins, each with windbraces, are carried on packing pieces; they have simple splayed scarfs at the trusses.

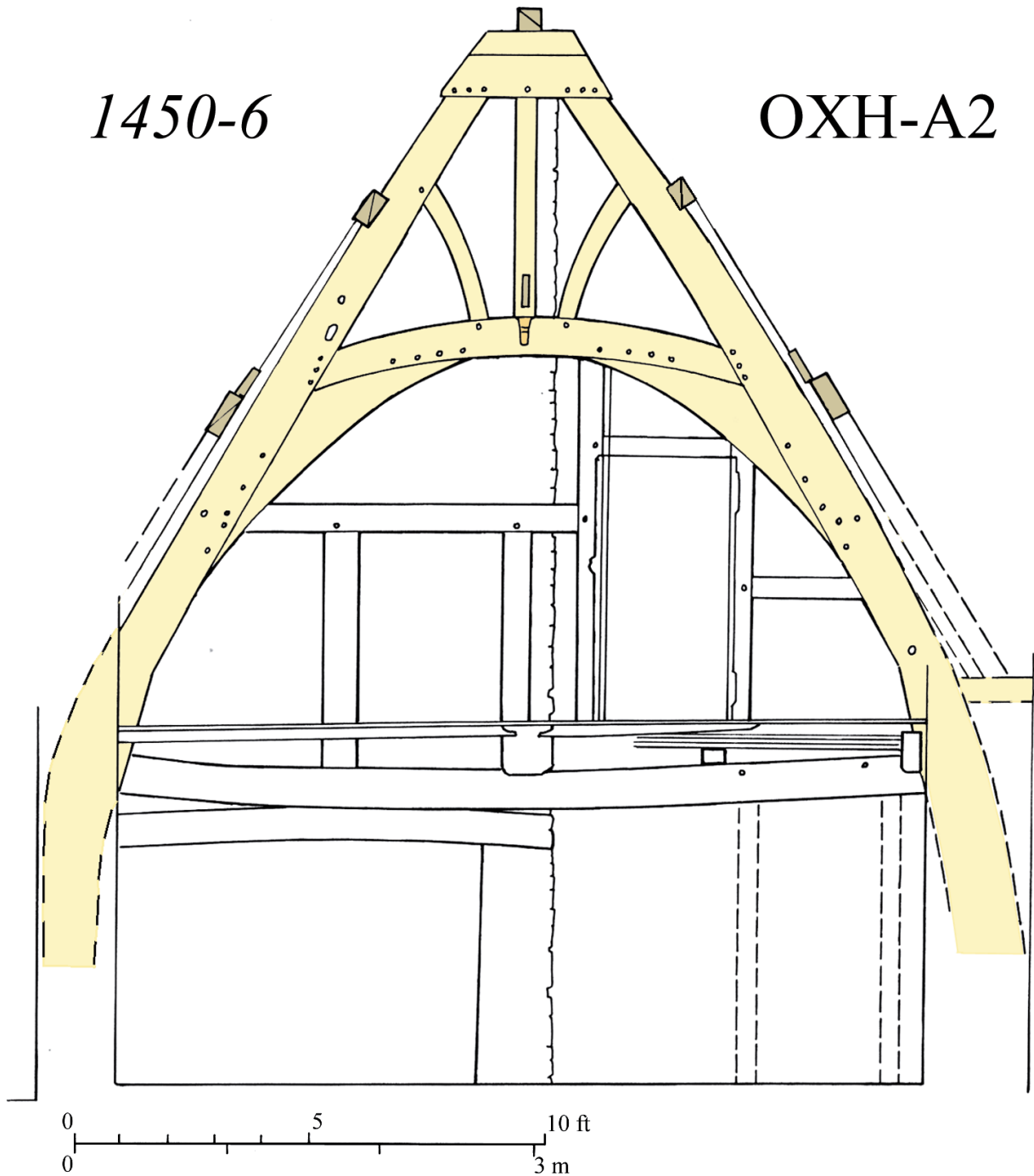


Fig. 3(a). Section of truss T2.

Truss 2 is an open truss, with well-shaped blades and a tenoned collar and arch-braces. It has two curved struts above the collar and a king strut; the latter rises to a large composite saddle carrying the square-set ridge. The centre of the collar has a decorated moulded block pegged on each side. Very unusually, the king strut is braced to the ridge (originally on both sides). Such a feature is only recorded elsewhere at Leadenporch House, Deddington, Oxon (Wood-Jones (1963), 32), at a house in Bozeat, Northamptonshire and at Grange Farm, Little Linford, Bucks (NMR). Halvings are cut on the west faces of the blades, just above the springing of the arch-braces, perhaps to secure the packing pieces. Bays II and III are heavily smoke-blackened.

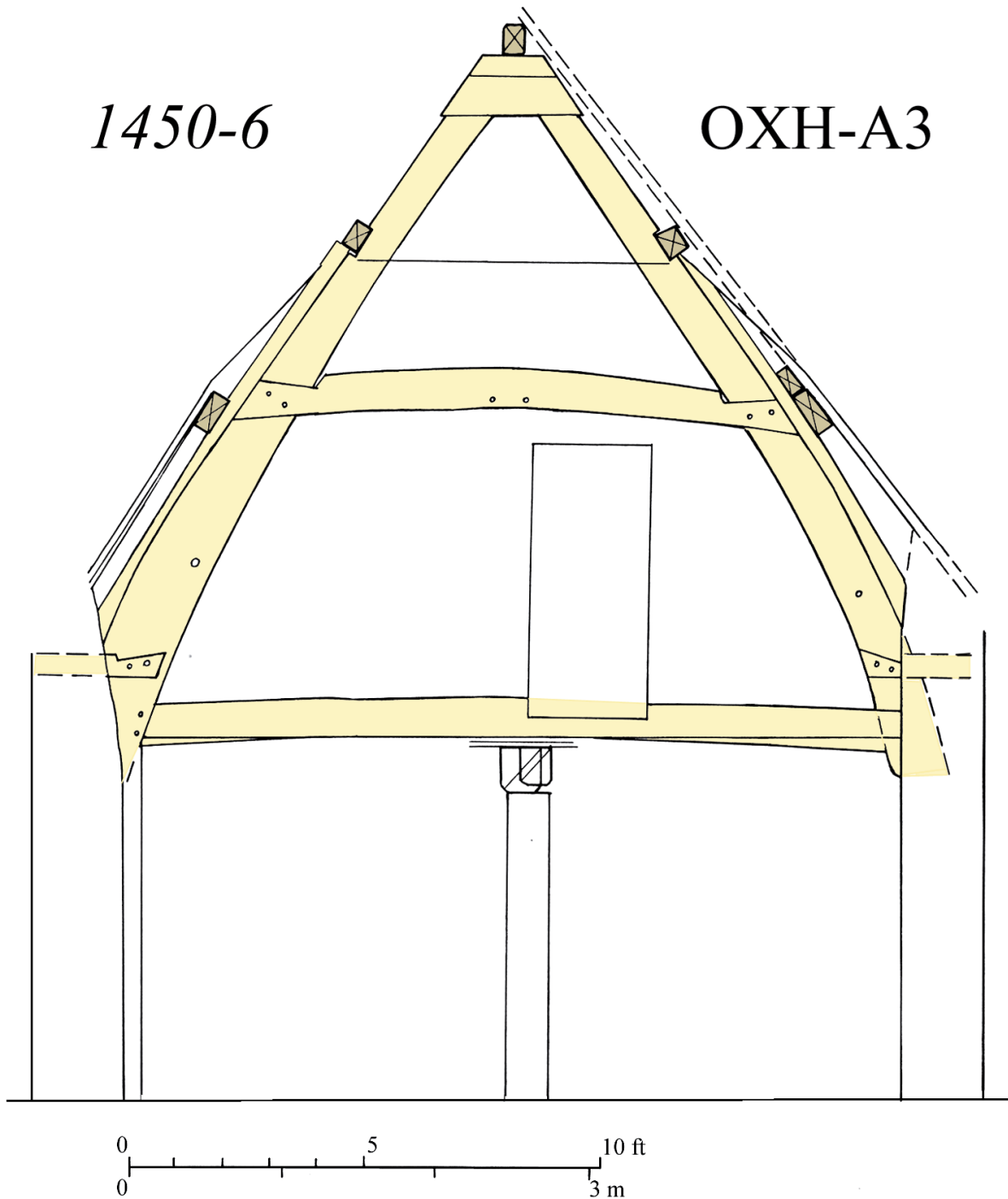


Fig. 3(b). Section of truss T3.

LATER PHASES: Probably in the mid-sixteenth century, the open hearth was superseded by a smoke hood with a bressumer spanning the entire width of the hall. Around 1600, the house was floored throughout, with axial ceiling beams. At this period or somewhat later, the smoke hood was replaced by a stone chimney; a bread oven was later added to it (since removed).

DOCUMENTARY HISTORY

The house is identifiable on the enclosure award map of 1798 (WCRO, CR1134/1) as plot 90, belonging to William Parker. He was the owner of 4 acres of enclosed land and 4½ yardlands in the open fields, for which he received allotments totalling 77 acres. The property can be followed through an extensive series of deeds (SCLA, ER3/4491-4536; 5388-5400). The core property was probably a three-yardland farm, the property of George Underhill in the late seventeenth century (SCLA, ER3/4528-9).

DENDROCHRONOLOGY

For dendrochronology abbreviations see page facing Introduction.

Sampling Comments: nine samples obtained through coring by Robert Howard on 7th November 1988.

TREE-RING SAMPLE RECORD AND SUMMARY OF DATING

Sample Code	Sample Location	Total Rings	Sapwood Rings	FMR Date	LHR Date	LMR Date	Date Cat
OXH-A01	Cruck blade truss T1 east side	120	11	1323	1431	1442	1
OXH-A02	Cruck blade truss T1 west side	115	08	1322	1428	1436	1
OXH-A03	Cruck blade truss T2 west side	60	13	1385	1431	1444	1
OXH-A04	Cruck blade truss T2 east side	36 NM	—	—	—	—	—
OXH-A05	Cruck blade truss T3 east side	45	05	1388	1428	1432	1
OXH-A06	Cruck blade truss T3 west side	73	—	1342	—	1414	1
OXH-A07	Purlin bay IV west side	109	18	1339	1429	1447	1
OXH-A08	Purlin bay III west side	78	22	1369	1424	1446	1
OXH-A09	As A02, second core	69	14	1374	1428	1442	1
Average date of last heartwood ring						1428	

Site sequences: (composed of samples 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9), 126 rings long dated 1322–1447 with *t*-values of 9.9(E.MID), 7.6(MC10). 95% felling date range (sample A07 has a few rings beyond the last one measured) 1450–1469 (revised from 1448–1479, VA20.91, due to new sapwood estimates). OxCal estimated felling date range: **1450-6**.