

Old Thatches, Preston St Mary, Suffolk

PSM 036

Archaeological Record



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(TL 9410 5133)

An Archaeological Record

This report provides a written and photographic record at English Heritage (2006) Level 3 of a grade II listed building that was damaged by fire in February 2006. It has been prepared to a brief designed by the Archaeological Service of Suffolk County Council (Dr Jess Tipper, 24 July 2007) and is intended to fulfil a condition of planning permission for demolition (Babergh District Council application B/06/00745).

Introduction

The following written report is accompanied by a CD containing a full photographic record in the form of 8.2 megapixel digital images (Appendix 1) but also includes monochrome prints of key features (Appendix 2). Each image is separately described in the written report, and the CD also includes the report in MS Word format. The building was surveyed before and during demolition over a period of two weeks commencing on August 8th 2007, when the accompanying photographs were taken (wherever practical a white metre rod with centimetre subdivisions has been included for scale purposes).

Summary

Old Thatches lies on the northern edge of Rookwood Lane in open arable countryside and on the crest of a hill which overlooks the valley of the River Brett. The building had been derelict since

its roof and sections of its roof-plate were destroyed in February 2006 by a thatch fire caused by the inadequate flue of a wood-burning stove. It is understood that the previous roof, of which no trace

remained, had been replaced in softwood following a similar thatch fire during the early 1980s. Despite these fires the original timber-framed walls and ceilings of the listed property remained largely intact and were fully recorded and drawn during the present survey.

The historic building was found to consist of two separate structures which adjoined each other at right-angles to form an L-shaped house, although its north-western corner had been filled by an extension of the 1980s. The eastern wing was aligned approximately north-south and extended to 10.5 metres in length by 4.9 in width; it contained two ground-floor rooms separated by an apparently original brick chimney which heated only the larger room to the south. This larger room originally possessed a pair of opposing external doors which flanked the fireplace, while the smaller room was reached only from within. The western wing extended to 6.9 metres in length by an unusually narrow 3.8 metres in width and appears to have contained a single room entered by an external door adjacent to that of the eastern wing. A small window with a single 'diamond' mullion remained intact in its northern elevation. Both wings rose to approximately 3 metres at their eaves, with low upper storeys contained partly in their roofs, but differed in construction and date. The framing of the narrow eastern wing reflected the 16th century tradition, with heavy-sectioned studs divided by mid-rails and infilled with wattle-and-daub secured by horizontal staves set between the studs; the oak studs of the front, southern elevation were initially exposed externally, although those of the rear wall were rendered and consisted chiefly of elm. The studs of the western wing, in contrast, were smaller in section and not interrupted by mid-rails; their wattle-and-daub was secured by horizontal coppice poles that were

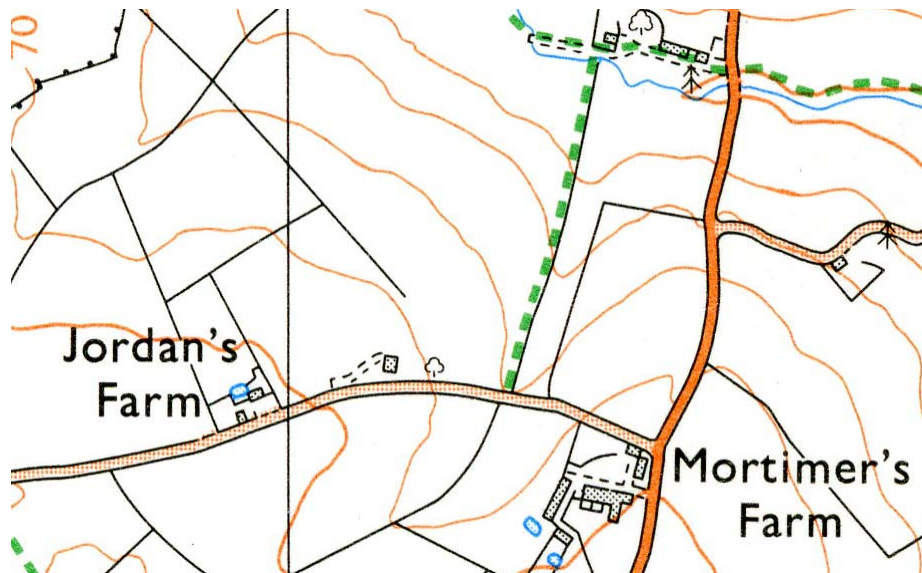
trenched and nailed to their external surfaces in the manner of the 17th century, although the studs of the southern gable, which had been replaced in the 1980s, may well have been exposed to match the western wing. The ceiling joists, which bear distinctive 'lamb's tongue' chamfer stops in the 17th century fashion, were supported on pegged clamps.

The two wings can be interpreted as a single domestic house of the early-17th century which consisted of a 'new' hall with a contemporary parlour to the north and a service or dairy range to the west that had been retained from the earlier house on the site. Many individual timbers in the eastern wing had been re-used from an older structure. The layout of the 17th century house, with an apparent cross-passage passing immediately in front of the hall fireplace, was highly unusual and of great historic interest. It illustrates a rare transitional form in the development of the English house between the standard cross-passage form of the 16th century and the lobby entrance of the 17th, and was one of only four or five known examples in East Anglia.

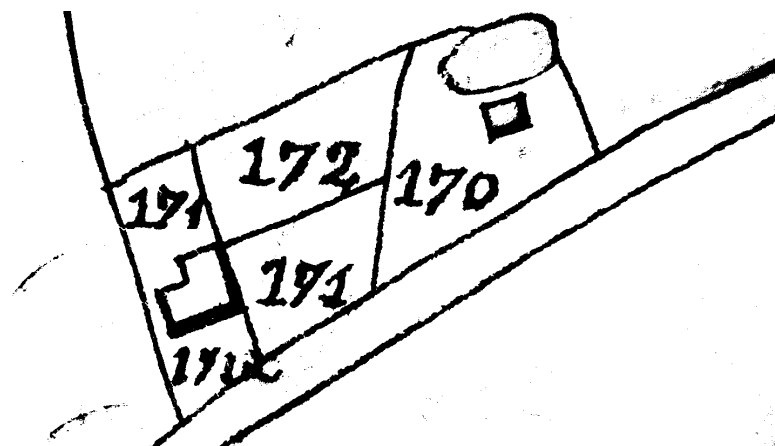
The house was subsequently divided into three small cottages as shown on the Ordnance Survey of 1904, and contained two secondary chimneys in addition to its 17th century original (the latter altered by the insertion of a bread oven in the 19th century). This sub-division was corroborated by evidence of at least four secondary external doors, all of which had been blocked during the 20th century. The Ordnance Survey and the Preston title map of 1838 show two further detached cottages in the present garden to the east of the house, but no trace of these survives above ground.

Historic Context of Site

Old Thatches occupies a site in open arable countryside on the northern edge of the parish of Preston St Mary, within 300 metres of its boundary with Thorpe Morieux and 1.3 kilometres north-west of the church of St Mary. It lies on the upper slope of a hill spur overlooking the valley of the River Brett and adjoins the northern edge of a minor lane known as Rookwood Lane which leads eastwards from Mortimer's Farm towards Jordan's Farm and Rooksey Green. These local place names combine with the site's commanding position in the landscape to suggest a medieval origin: Sir William de Mortimer held the manor house that still bears his name on his death in 1297, and his descendants sold it to Robert Rookwood in 1565 (Rooksey Green was still known as Rookwood Green in the 19th century). Between 1805 and 1811 the manor passed from the Rookwoods to the Makin family, which owned much of the surrounding land and the property now known as Old Thatches at the time of the tithe survey in 1838 (Henry Copinger's *Manors of Suffolk*, 1904). Although no relevant pre-19th century documentation has been traced, it seems likely that its site formed part of the medieval manor.



Plan of Site as Existing (from 1:25,000 Ordnance Survey), showing Old Thatches to the north of Rookwood Lane between Jordan's Farm and Mortimer's Farm. The boundary with Thorpe Morieux is shown top left and the River Brett top right.

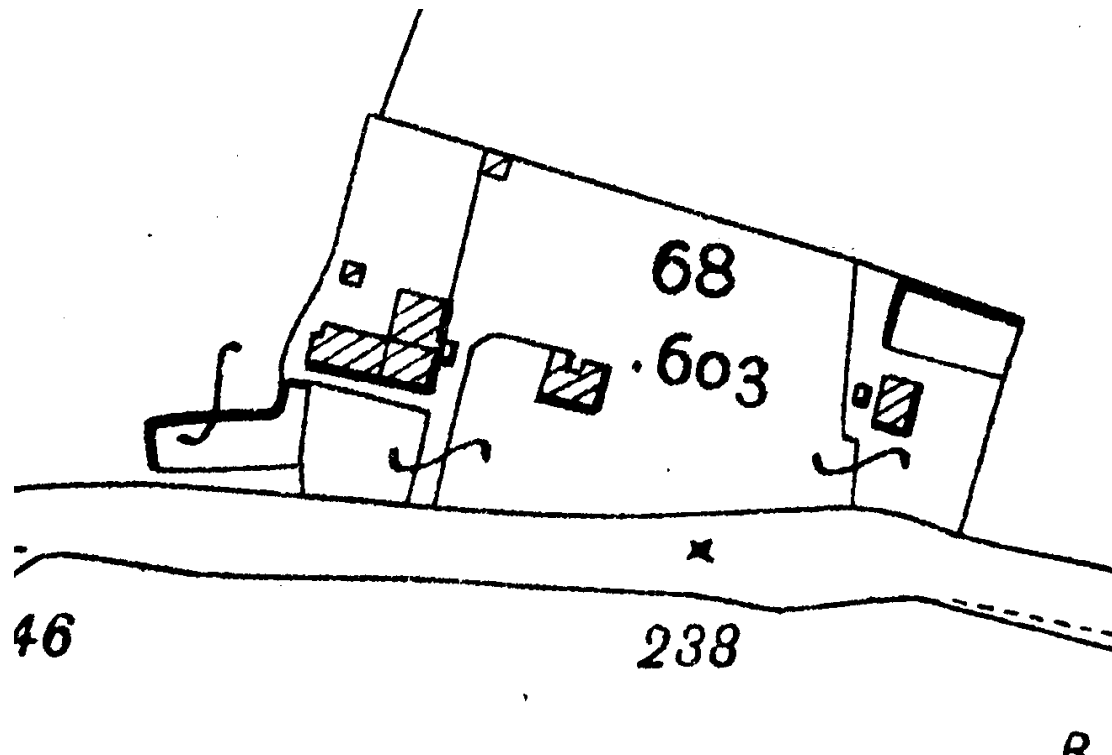


Old Thatches as depicted on the Preston St Mary tithe map of 1838 (SRO), with the house to the left and a further cottage with an oval pond to right. The pond remains.

The tithe map of 1838 shows the L-shaped profile of the house prior to its extension in the 1980s, but includes the western half of the present garden in the adjacent Barn Field belonging to Jordan's Farm, and shows an additional cottage adjacent to the dry pond at its eastern end. The numbers on the map are identified in the accompanying apportionment as follows:

- 170 House & Garden (31 perches, owned by Ebenezer Osborn, tenanted by George Rasbrook)
- 171 House & Garden (30 perches, owned by William Makin, tenanted by Pater Bower)
- 171a House & Garden (9 perches, owned by William Makin, tenanted by John Hollocks)
- 172 House & Garden (25 perches, owned by William Makin, tenanted by John Blumb)

The house or cottage at the eastern end of the present garden was owned by Ebenezer Osborn, who also owned Down Hall in the valley bottom and the field to the east (known as Upper Warwicks Field). The remaining three houses were let to different tenants but all belonged to William Makin of Mortimer's Farm. The double appearance of the number '171' is unusual and potentially confusing given the presence of a third building on the Ordnance Survey, but probably indicates only that both the house and garden were divided into three units.



The Second Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1904, clearly showing the three original rooms of the Old Thatches separated into three cottages. The bread oven is shown as a projection from the eastern wall, and the two small outbuildings were probably privies. The second cottage to the east, as shown on the tithe map, possesses its own privy, but a fourth cottage has appeared between the two. No trace of either this or the easternmost cottage now survives above ground.

The Ordnance Survey of 1904 shows an additional building between the houses depicted on the tithe map, and it is possible that '171' was included twice in error and a different number should have related to this fourth cottage. Whatever the case it would appear that by 1904 the site of Old Thatches was occupied by no fewer than five separate properties, of which two disappeared during the 20th century without obvious trace.

Old Thatches, Preston St Mary
Reconstruction of Original Ground Plan
(showing all ceiling joists)

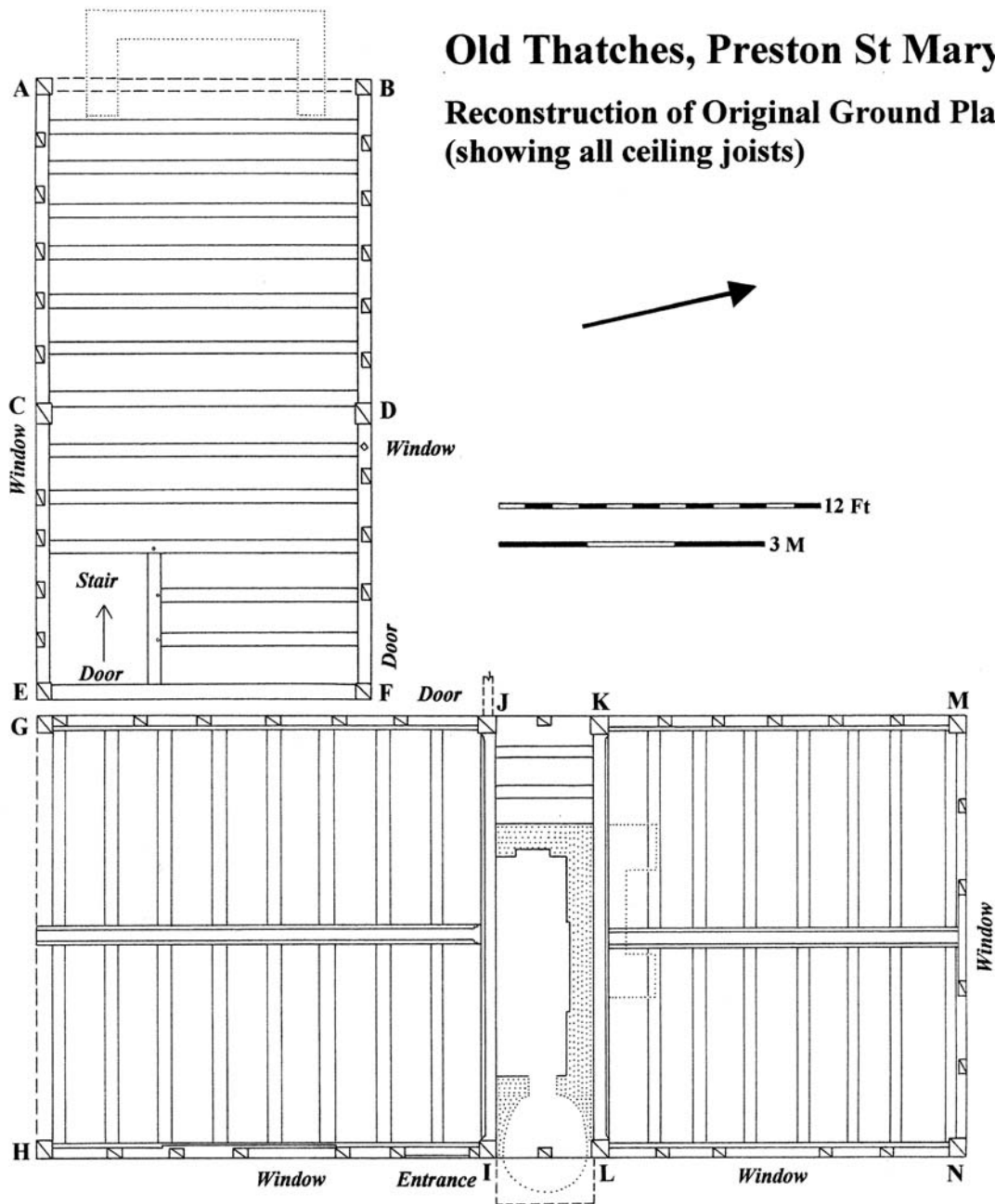


Figure 1

Descriptive Record

The two wings of the building are separately described with reference to the plan shown in figure 1, which associates each storey post with an individual letter. The relationship of the two wings and the nature of the original house are considered in the following section of the report. The accompanying figures, which are fully measured and include scales in feet (top) and metres, indicate surviving timbers with solid lines and reconstruct missing timbers with broken lines where evidence of their positions exists. All structural pegs are included.

Western Wing (Structure A-B-E-F)

The westernmost of the two wings that form the historic part of the house is indicated by the letters A-B-E-F on figure 1, which reconstructs the original wall timbers and ceiling joists.

Proportions & Framing

The wing extends to 6.9 metres in overall length by 3.8 metres in width (22 feet 6 inches by 12 feet 6 inches) and assuming a normal plinth of 15 cm (6 inches) beneath its ground sill would have risen originally to 3.3 metres at its eaves (10 feet 9 inches). There is no trace of the original roof structure, although some bird's-mouth rafter housings remain visible in the charred upper surface of the front roof plate.

The original timber-framed walls are fully framed (rather than nailed) and consist chiefly of oak studs that are tenoned and pegged to the surviving ground sills, mid-rails and roof-plates. The studs between the sill and mid-rail are 162 cm in height (64 inches) and those between the mid-rail and roof-plate are 92 cm (37 inches). The studs of the front wall are approximately 15 cm by 10 in section (6 inches by 4), but the only three studs which remain in the rear are significantly larger at 19 cm by 10 (7½ inches by 4) and appear to be of elm rather than oak. The 15 cm by 10 cm oak joists of the original ceiling span the width of the structure and rest on the mid-rails of 18 cm by 13 (7 inches by 5) to which they are secured by vertical pegs. A framed aperture of 158 cm by 110 (64 inches by 43) lies in the southern corner of this ceiling but its trimmer is attached to an open-framed mid-rail (E-F) which contains bird's-mouth rafter housings and was apparently a secondary, re-used component; the aperture may therefore represent an alteration to the original structure and relate to the construction of the eastern wing. This re-used rail is the only remaining timber of the eastern gable (truss E-F), but the tie-beam of its western counterpart survives and contains evidence of a solid wall as shown in figure 4. The structure contains two unequal bays divided by a pair of jowled storey posts (C-D) but there is no evidence of an original partition – although the ceiling joists have been considerably altered during the 20th century and the existence of such a partition remains possible if unlikely. There is no evidence of wall bracing.

Infill

The external surfaces of the wall studs and rails to the south (elevation A-B, shown in figure 2) are weathered and set flush in a manner that indicates they were exposed to view when the structure was first built. The sides of each vertical timber contain notches to secure the horizontal staves of wattle-and-daub set between the timbers. The few studs of the rear wall, in contrast, are externally rough-hewn with fragments of bark adhering and, along with the oak posts and rails, show no sign of weathering. A single panel of original wattle-and-daub survives beneath the window sill, and consists of clay, chalk and straw on a framework of vertical laths and coppice poles tied to horizontal staves by twisted withies and strips of bark. These staves are set in notches like those of the front wall, but the missing outer surface of the daub may be presumed to have extended across the entire surface of the wall to conceal its

timbers. A panel of similar daub in a 20th century glazed frame in elevation B-D may also be original but is not *in situ* as the studs of this area have been replaced.

Original Layout

The posts, mid-rails and part of the ground sill in elevation B-F remain intact, along with three studs and a window, and the original wall can be entirely reconstructed as shown in figure 2. The position of an external door against post F is indicated by the lack of any stud mortise in the lower surface of the mid-rail. The sill and single diamond mullion (6 cm or 2.5 inches square) of an original unglazed window are complete, but lack any evidence of a shutter. Gable A-B preserves only its posts and tie-beam with evidence of studs above ceiling level but there is no evidence of its ground-floor arrangement as its mid-rail has been removed to accommodate a secondary chimney (figure 4). The southern elevation A-E, which faces the nearby road, has been considerably altered in numerous phases but its probable original appearance is reconstructed in figure 3. With the exception of its externally exposed timber frame, its pattern is similar to that of its northern counterpart with evidence of a narrow window adjoining post C. The mid-rail above this window contains no mortise for a mullion, however, and it presumably possessed a separate frame or perhaps projected from the plane of the wall as a shallow oriel.

Alterations

The structure has undergone many alterations, including the insertion of several windows, a gable chimney and at least three external doors in addition to the original. The mid-rail in elevation A-C has been cut and its western section lowered to form the sill of a large window while the eastern section was raised to accommodate a new door against post C. A door has also been inserted against post E in the southern wall and the lower edge of the mid-rail removed accordingly; it is possible that this door is an original feature but if so would later have been obstructed by the stair discussed below. Both inserted southern doors had been blocked before or during the 1980s. The interior has been divided into two rooms by a solid partition of re-used studs that appear to date only from the extensive renovation that followed the first fire of the 1980s, and a new access door has been cut into the northern wall against post D. A large brick chimney of late-18th century appearance was built against the western gable and its wide fireplace narrowed and provided with a new timber lintel during the 20th century. The north-western quarter of the property appears to date entirely from the 1980s, as do its external windows and cement cladding.

Date

The date of the original structure is difficult to determine with precision given the complete lack of decorative features and the absence of its roof. The ‘diamond’ mullion of the window in elevation D-F is of relatively small section compared to similar features of the medieval and early Tudor periods, and suggests a date in the second half of the 16th century. The very narrow chamfers to the mid-rails indicate a similar period, but a slightly earlier origin cannot be ruled out.

Eastern Wing (Structure G-H-M-N)

Proportions & Framing

The eastern wing abuts the western wing at right-angles as shown in figure 1 and extends to 10.5 metres in overall length by 4.9 metres in width (34 feet 6 inches by 16 feet 3 inches). At the southern end of the structure, where the apparently original brick plinth beneath the

ground sill is 20 cm (8 inches) high, the structure would have risen originally to 3.2 metres at its eaves (10 feet 4 inches), but this increases to 3.9 metres (11 feet 6 inches) at its northern end where the plinth is 66 cm (26 inches) high. This reflects the natural slope of the ground. There is no trace of any original roof structure, but the absence of mortises in the tie-beam of the open truss (J-I) suggests that it was of side-purlin type. A number of bird's-mouth rafter housings are visible in the charred upper surfaces of the roof plates.

The original timber-framed walls are fully framed and consist of oak studs that are tenoned and pegged to the surviving ground sills and roof-plates. There are no mid-rails in the structure, and the studs rise 2.6 metres (8 feet 6 inches) between the sills and plates. The external corners at posts H, M and N are provided with two externally trenched braces as shown in the figures, but post G was braced only in the direction of the southern gable as an original doorway adjoined its northern edge (figure 6); the brace in elevation G-J rose to the final stud in consequence. The wing consists of three unequal bays including a narrow bay of 1.1 metres (42 inches) which contains a chimney (J-K-I-L); the southern bay (G-J-H-I) is the largest, with 4.8 metres (15 feet 10 inches) between its storey posts, while the northern bay contains 3.8 metres (12 feet 4 inches). The southern and northern bays preserve ceilings of largely original flat-sectioned common joists, each measuring 14 cm by 9 (5.5 inches by 3.5); these joists are secured by soffit tenons with diminished shoulders to axial joists of 24 cm square in section (9.5 inches), and their outer ends are lodged on clamps (rails) that are pegged to the wall studs. The rails, axial and binding joists are deeply chamfered, and those of the binding joists and the southern axial joist terminate in neatly curled stops known as 'lamb's tongues'.

The eastern roof-plate contains a face-halved-and-bladed scarf joint between posts I and L, but, unusually, the southern blade is 'housed' (i.e. it does not penetrate to the soffit). The joint appears to be similar to a rare Essex example illustrated by Cecil Hewett (*English Historic Carpentry*, 1980, fig.269, shown here as figure 8), although each blade is secured by a single peg instead of three, and the northern blade at Old Thatches may have been similarly housed – it is unfortunately too badly damaged by fire to be certain. Many individual timbers in the building were re-used from earlier structures, and contain various mortises, brace trenches and mullion housings that have no relevance to their present positions. This evidence of re-use is most apparent in their external surfaces, but in the smaller, northern bay can be seen from within; in addition to several wall studs the axial joist of this bay has been re-cycled and contains an additional sequence of pegged joist mortises but lacks chamfer stops. Corner posts G, M and N contain mortises for mid-rails that would have interrupted the original studs and are either carpentry errors or evidence that these too have been re-used. The scantlings of the re-used studs vary considerably, but those which appear to be primary to the existing structure measure 12.5 cm by 8 cm (5 inches by 3) in section.

The brick chimney which occupies the narrow central bay is offset to the east as shown in the figures, and contains a single fireplace facing the larger, southern bay. This fireplace is 2.5 metres (8 feet 2 inches) in width and 1 metre (38 inches) in depth but was originally wider as its eastern pier has been rebuilt to incorporate an oven and its chamfered timber lintel truncated. Much of the brickwork beneath the lintel has been renewed or heavily re-pointed in the 20th century, but the lintel and brick superstructure may be original to the building. The binding joists which frame the narrow bay bear chamfers only to their outer edges, suggesting they were designed to flank the brickwork of a chimney. The lintel bears traces of 'daisy wheel' apotropaic marks but these have been almost completely eroded by sand-blasting.

Infill

Like its timber frame, the infill of the eastern wing differs considerably from that of the western. The daub of clay, chalk and straw is secured by vertical poles and split laths set between the studs, like those of the western structure, but these are tied by withies to

horizontal battens of split poles that are nailed and trenched to the external surfaces of the timbers (shown on figure 5). Large areas of original infill survive, particularly at the southern end of elevation H-I, together with numerous battens, but the batten trenches are found on all surviving external walls. The southern gable, G-H, was completely rebuilt in the 1980s to leave only its corner posts, G and H, *in situ*, but these posts do not bear batten trenches to their southern surfaces (unlike their eastern and western) and it is possible that the timbers of this road-facing gable were externally exposed to match those of the western wing.

Original Layout

With the exception of its southern gable and roof the timber frame of the eastern wing remained largely intact and its original layout can be reconstructed with confidence. The rooms on each side of the chimney were lit by central windows in their eastern elevations, and the northern gable also contained a central window. There were no windows in the western elevation. These windows were 84 cm wide by 58 cm deep (33 inches by 23) and were framed by sills and lintels that were pegged and tenoned to the adjacent studs; each sill and lintel mortise is approximately 10 cm deep (4 inches) but unfortunately no examples survive to indicate the type of mullion they contained. The ceiling clamp of the southern room is rebated where it adjoins the wall to form a groove for a sliding shutter, but there is no such evidence in the northern room.

An original external door opened into the north-eastern corner of the larger, southern room, as indicated by its remaining lintel and southern jamb. This lintel contains an empty mortise for a missing northern jamb which would have abutted post I, and bears a neat chamfer to its lower external edge that continued down both jambs with mason's mitres at its two corners. There is no evidence of an arched head, and the door was originally 75 cm wide by 165 cm high between the ground sill and lintel (2 feet 6 inches by 5 feet 5 inches). A door of similar proportions lay immediately opposite in the western wall, of which only the pegged mortise of its lintel in post J now remains, while a third door lay at the southern end of the same wall and coincided with the ceiling trap in the western wing. The tenoned and pegged lintel and both jambs of this third doorway survive intact (figure 6). The presence of the original door against post J, which was the only one of the three to remain in use (leading to a passage between the western wing and the extension of the 1980s) is also indicated by the irregular spacing of the wall studs.

Alterations

Like the western wing, the eastern contains evidence of numerous alterations that are consistent with its sub-division into separate tenements as shown on 19th century maps. Three secondary doors had been cut into the eastern elevation to the right and left of the window in the northern room and in the same position as the original window in the southern (as shown by the interruptions to the ground sill in figure 5). All three doors had been blocked prior to the recent fire. A brick chimney has been built against the rear, northern wall of the earlier chimney in order to heat the northern room; this is of early-19th century appearance but possesses a brick fireplace of the late-20th century. A brick bread oven of similar period with an iron internal door has been built into the eastern side of the chimney. The oven formerly projected beyond the plane of the wall and was probably sheltered by a lean-to or shed as indicated on the Ordnance Survey of 1904, but had been truncated prior to the fire.

Date

The distinctively curled 'lamb's tongue' chamfer stops found on the principal ceiling joists and storey posts of the eastern wing became fashionable during the final years of the 16th century and the first quarter of the 17th. The relatively small size of the primary wall studs and ceiling compared to earlier buildings also suggests a date in the 17th century, as does the

method of securing the wattle-and-daub to externally nailed and trenched battens. The extensive re-use of timber and the straight, thin wall braces of the northern gable and western wall indicate a date towards the end of the appropriate range, but the absence of primary bracing and other features of the mid-17th century provides a *terminus ante quem*. A date of c. 1620-40 can be advanced with some confidence.

Historic Analysis and Significance

Although containing two distinct phases of construction and latterly forming three cottages, Old Thatches can be interpreted as a single domestic house of the early-17th century. It contains the standard tripartite layout of its period, with a 'central' hall lying between a parlour to the north and a service room to the west, albeit in the form of an 'L' rather than in-line. The relative importance of the hall as a general living, cooking and entertaining area is emphasised by its proportions as the largest room in the house (at 4.9 metres by 4.7 internally, or 16 feet by 15.5), by its well-framed ceiling with fashionable 'lamb's tongue' chamfer stops, and by its possession of a wide cooking fireplace. The smaller parlour (at 4.1 metres by 4.7, or 13.5 feet by 15.5) was not heated, except by radiated warmth from the back of the hall chimney, and contained obviously second-hand timbers in both its ceiling and walls. The service area was an exceptionally long 7 metres in internal length (from the wall of the hall) by an exceptionally narrow 3.5 metres (23 feet by 11.5 feet), but may have been sub-divided; it was very poorly lit with only a single narrow window in each of its long walls (and probably another in its western gable) and would have been ideally suited as a cool dairy or buttery. The upper storey was reached by a stair rising from the south-western corner of the hall, as shown by the ceiling trap and framed door in this position, while the service room was entered by an external door in its north-eastern corner. It seems likely that this external door was linked to the adjacent hall doorway by a porch-like structure, and an un-pegged mortise in the western face of post J may have secured its roof-plate (shown to the left in figure 7). The lack of fenestration to the western wall of the parlour (K-M) may have been due to the presence of a contemporary lean-to, but there was no obvious structural evidence of this.

A house of these proportions in a rural location probably formed the residence of a husbandman farming a respectable thirty or forty acres of land, and in most respects is typical of hundreds of such buildings that survive across East Anglia. Expectations of domestic comfort increased rapidly during the 16th and early-17th centuries, fuelled by rising disposable incomes, and houses were often rebuilt or altered piecemeal to keep pace with the process of change. The 16th century service structure probably belonged to an earlier house on the site, and may have been a relatively recent addition to a medieval open hall when the latter was replaced in turn during the early-17th century. It is possible, however, particularly given its unusual proportions and lack of fenestration, that it was designed as a free-standing non-domestic building such as stable. The relationship of the structure to any previous house on the site may be established by below-ground archaeology.

The most unusual and historically interesting aspect of the present house is the position of its original entrance passage. The standard Tudor house was entered by a screened cross-passage between opposing front and rear doors at the 'low' end of its hall, i.e. the end opposite that which adjoined the parlour. By the mid-17th century this arrangement had become outmoded and most new houses were built with lobby entrances, where the principal entrance opened into a small lobby in front the chimney which now divided the hall and parlour. Old Thatches is a rare half-way-house between these forms, and illustrates the process of transition between the two. It is likely that other examples exist but have not yet been recognised, particularly as the type remains unpublished. The opposing external doors lie not at the low end of the hall but at the high end immediately in front of the fireplace which backs onto the parlour. Figure 9 shows an identical pattern in a rural house of similar period and status approximately 10 miles to the south in Lamarsh, Essex, although in that case the service bay is of more usual

alignment and scale. The advantage of a 'high-end cross-passage' which passes directly in front of the fireplace is at first difficult to appreciate; visitors and draughts would surely have disturbed anyone attempting to cook or warm themselves at the fire. For these reasons the layout was no-doubt short-lived and experimental, and examples are undoubtedly few, but it does possess a certain logic.

The explanation probably relates to the inability of smaller buildings to accommodate the new lobby entrances. Where new 17th century houses of Yeoman status contained back-to-back fireplaces in wide chimneys to heat both their halls and parlours, poorer individuals could afford only one fireplace in a narrow chimney; the roofs of the same Yeoman houses would normally range between 18 and 22 feet in width, while those of husbandmen languished at 16 feet or less. The Yeoman builder could therefore readily adopt the new gentry fashion of the lobby entrance, which allowed him to enter either his hall or his parlour directly without disturbing the occupants of the other. At 7 or 8 feet in width by at least 4 or 5 feet in depth his lobby was ample for the purpose, and often contained a newel stair in addition. The husbandman, however, was unable to imitate his betters as both his house and his chimney bay were too narrow for the purpose. In attempting to achieve an entrance as close to the ideal as possible, with 'almost direct' access to both hall and parlour, he was forced to place his door at the high end of his hall. With the installation of an internal porch or screen, similar to the modern example which survives in the north-western corner at Old Thatches, he was able to create a reasonably spacious entrance lobby in the corner of his hall that aped those in the chimney bays of larger houses. The internal screen, for which original evidence survives in Lamarsh, would also have shielded the adjacent fireplace from unwanted draughts. The logic of this analysis is less clear at Preston than Lamarsh, as here the eastern door appears to be the principal entrance, yet there was no room for an internal porch in this corner of the fireplace. Why was the door not placed in the opposite, south-eastern corner of the hall? The reason probably relates to the builder's desire for a fashionably symmetrical front wall, with its door placed almost central to the rendered and pargeaded elevation and between its two identical windows (in contrast to the window-less back wall); as in most East Anglian farmhouses even today, the fashionable front door remains securely locked except on rare special occasions and for most intents and purposes the back door serves as the principal entrance. On this basis, the ostensibly inexplicable 'high-end cross-passage' at Old Thatches would have neatly respected the dictates of both comfort and fashion.

Dendrochronology

Old Thatches was inspected during demolition on 13th August 2007 by Dr Ian Tyers of Dendrochronological Consultancy Ltd. He was unable to find timbers worthy of sampling and reports as follows:

I visited Old Thatches on 13/08/2007 in the company of Leigh Alston. I examined timbers in the surviving walls, the ceiling and the fireplace. Leigh provided interpretative discussion in response to my queries about individual timbers in the building.

The building does not meet the minimal criteria for sampling on two separate grounds: Firstly, none of the oak timbers appear to contain sufficient annual growth rings and secondly there are only three or four timbers that even approached the minimum and at least one pair of these were two parts of the same tree. It should also be noted that some of the timbers, particularly on the internal wall framing, were of a type other than oak – probably elm, although I did not formally interpret their wood type.

Suffolk has proved particularly difficult for dendrochronology as the majority of surviving vernacular buildings contain the same mix and quality of timber as Old Thatches.

Figures 2-9

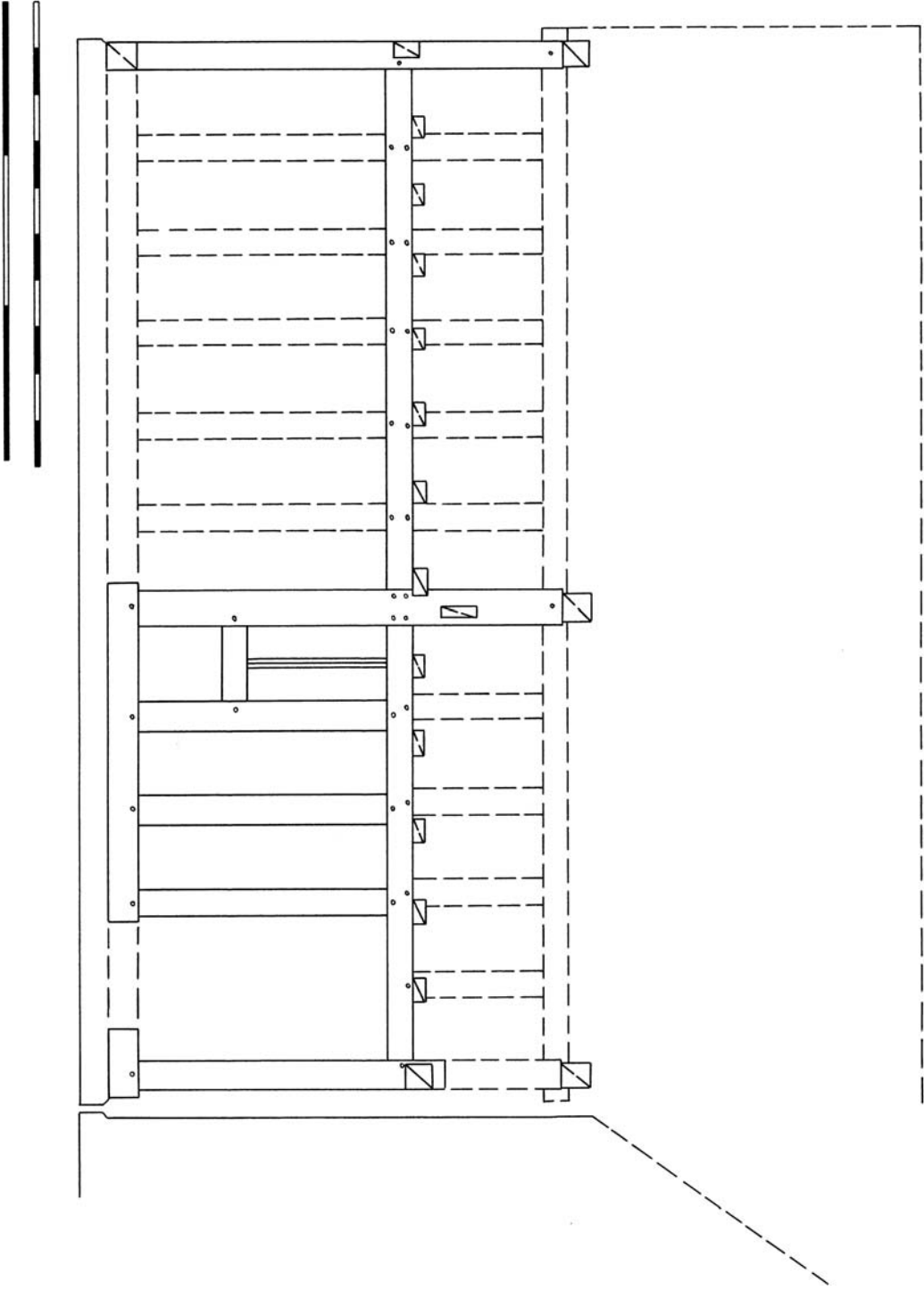


Figure 2
Internal Elevation B-F

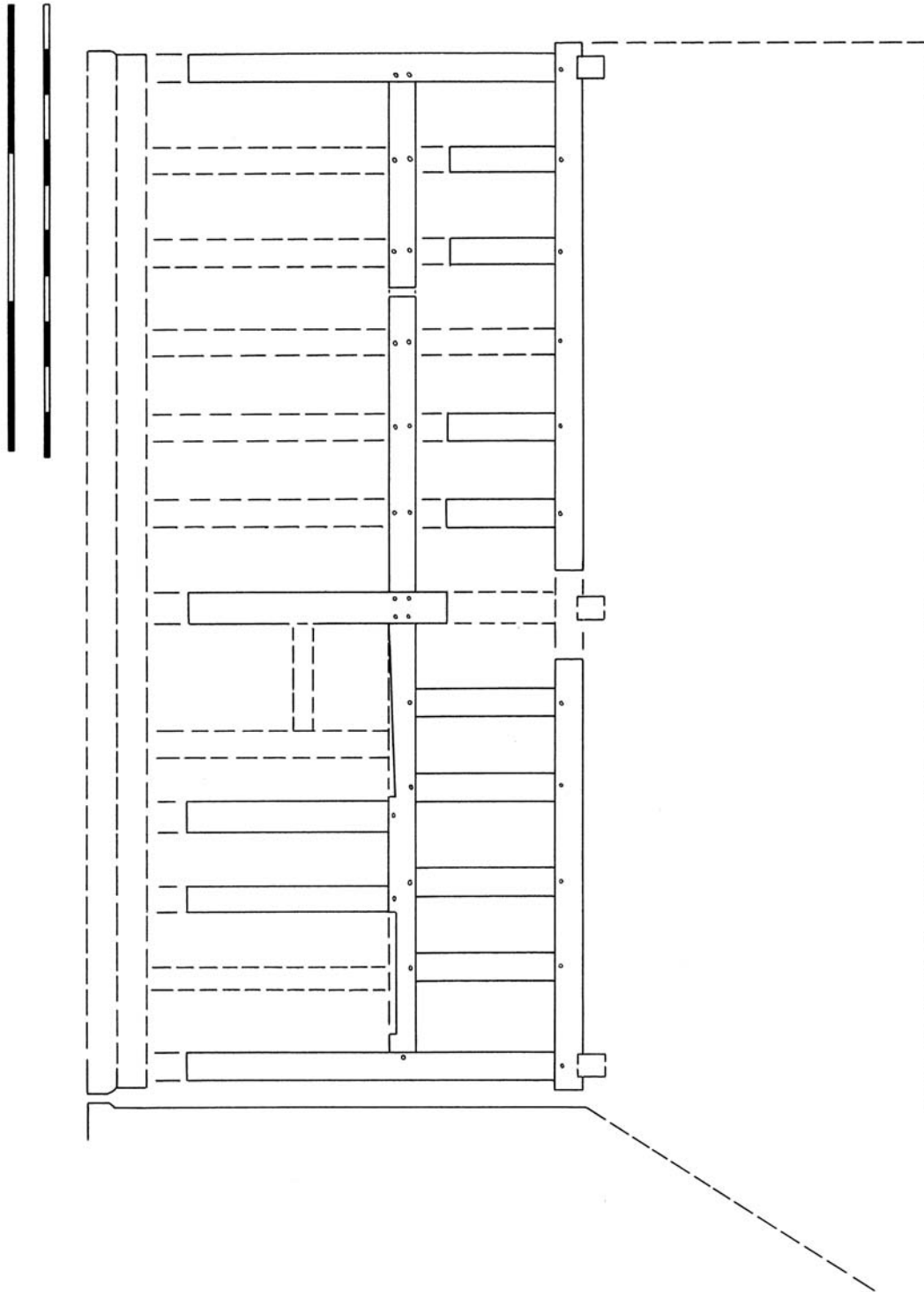


Figure 3
External Elevation A-E

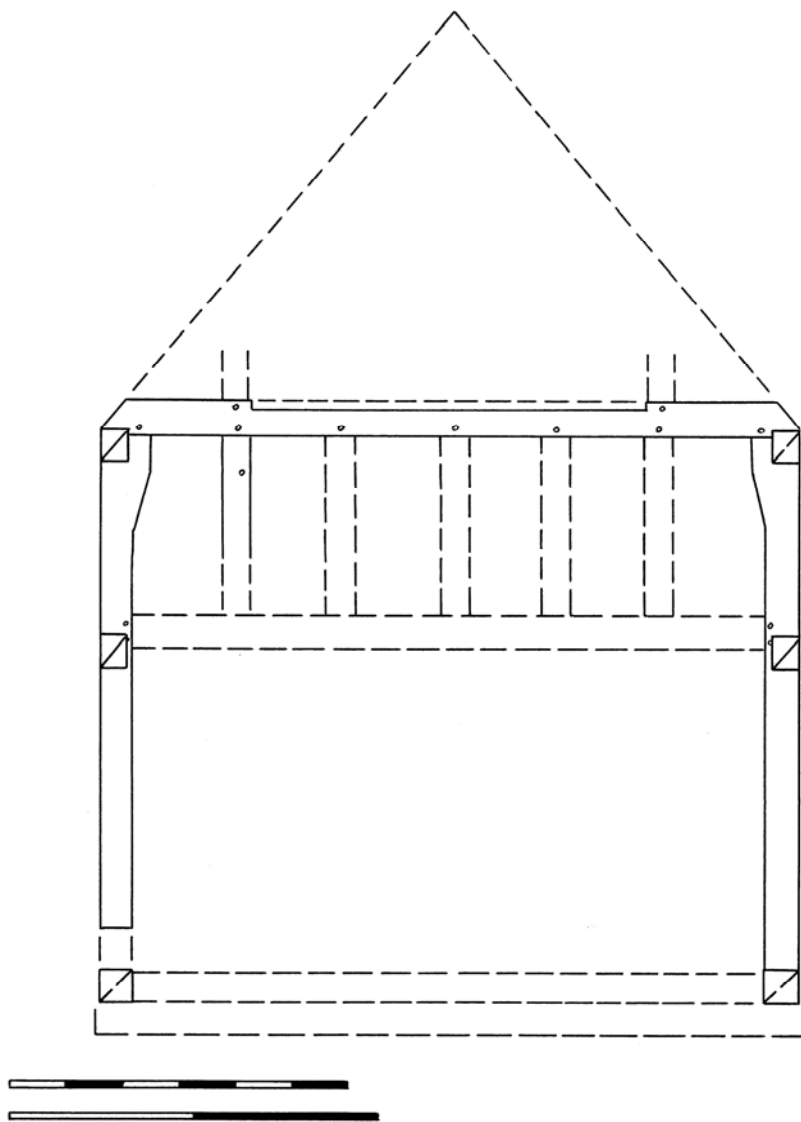


Figure 4
Internal Elevation A-B

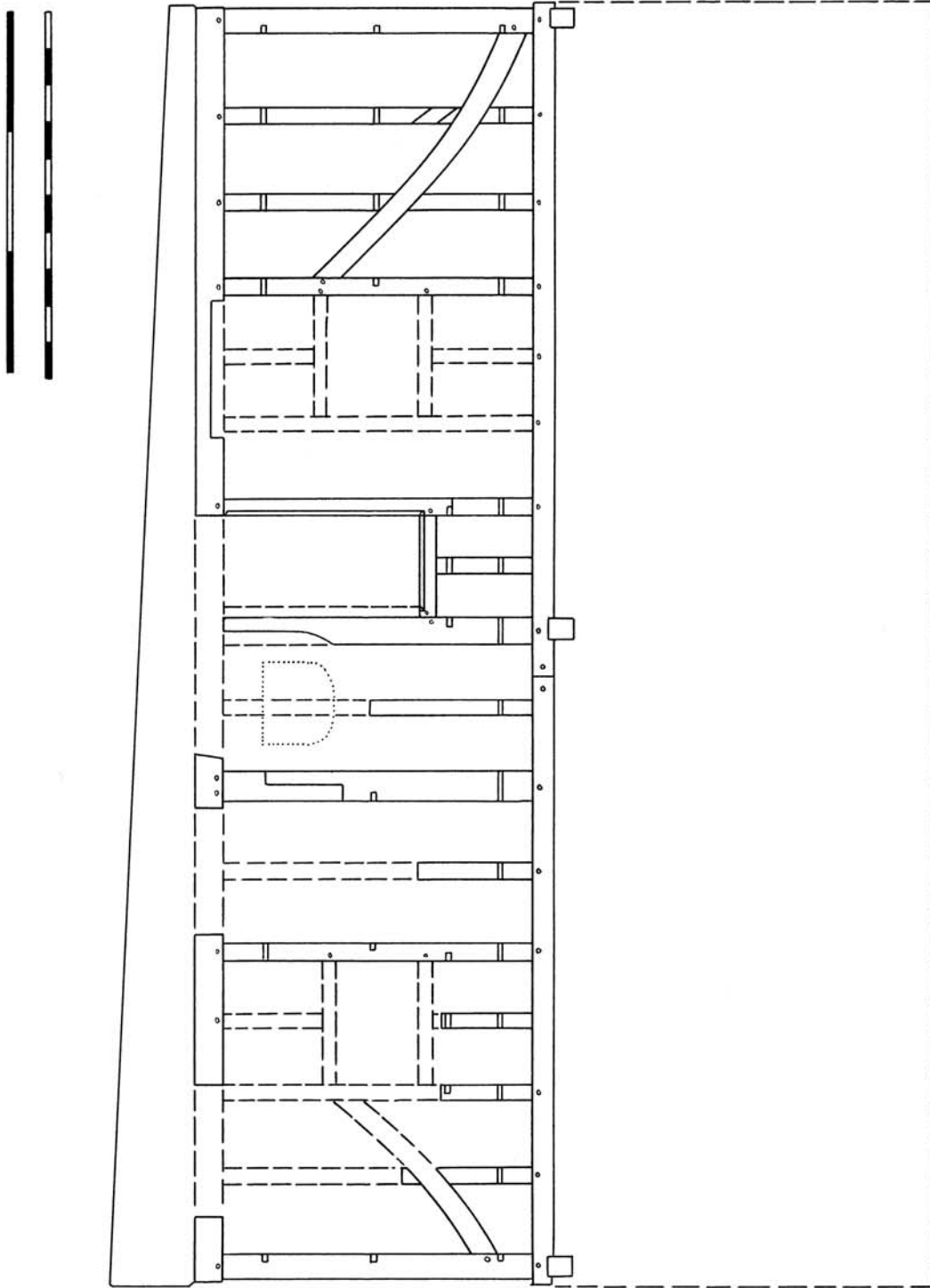


Figure 5
External Elevation H-N

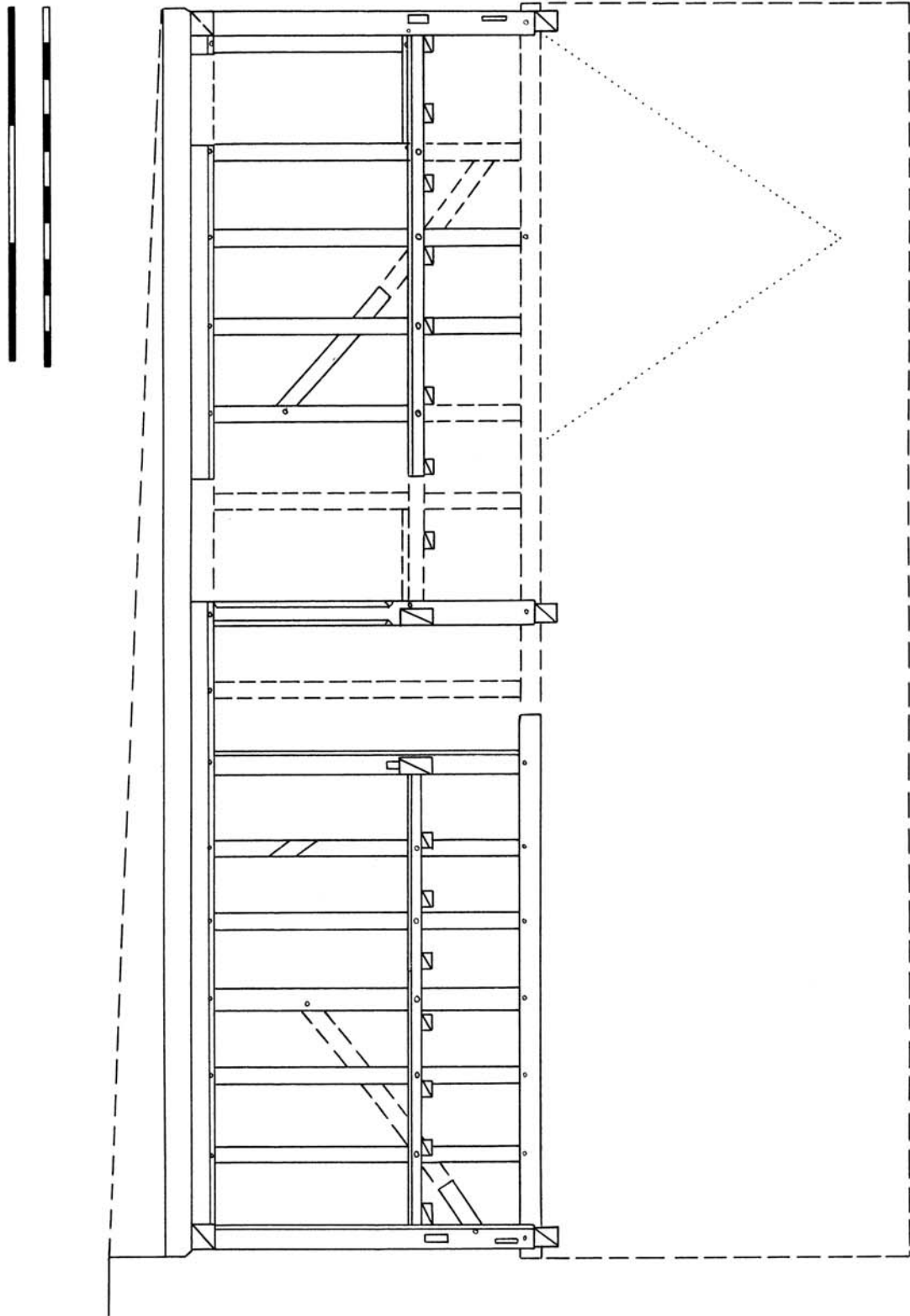


Figure 6
Internal Elevation G-M

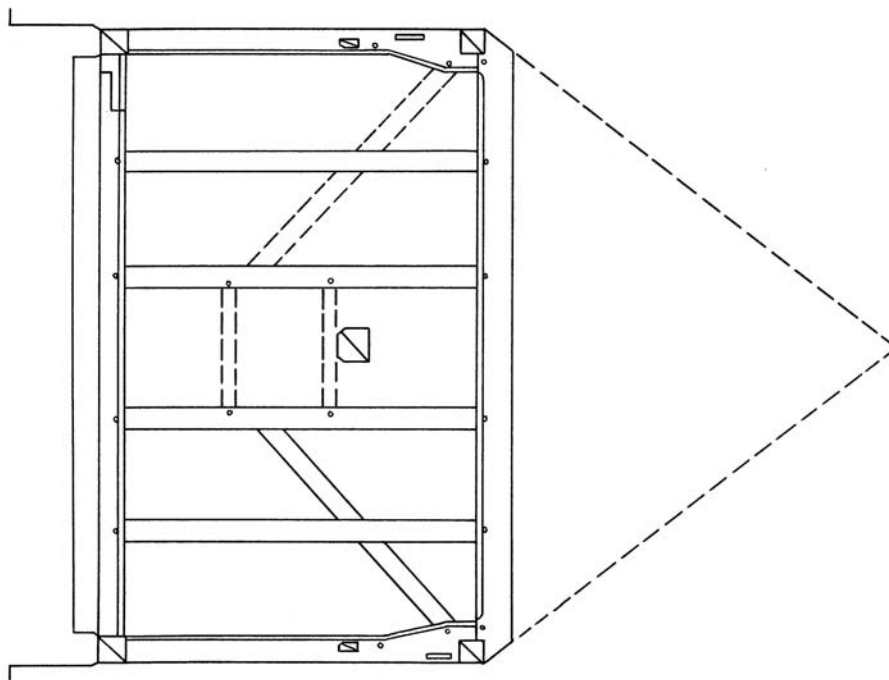
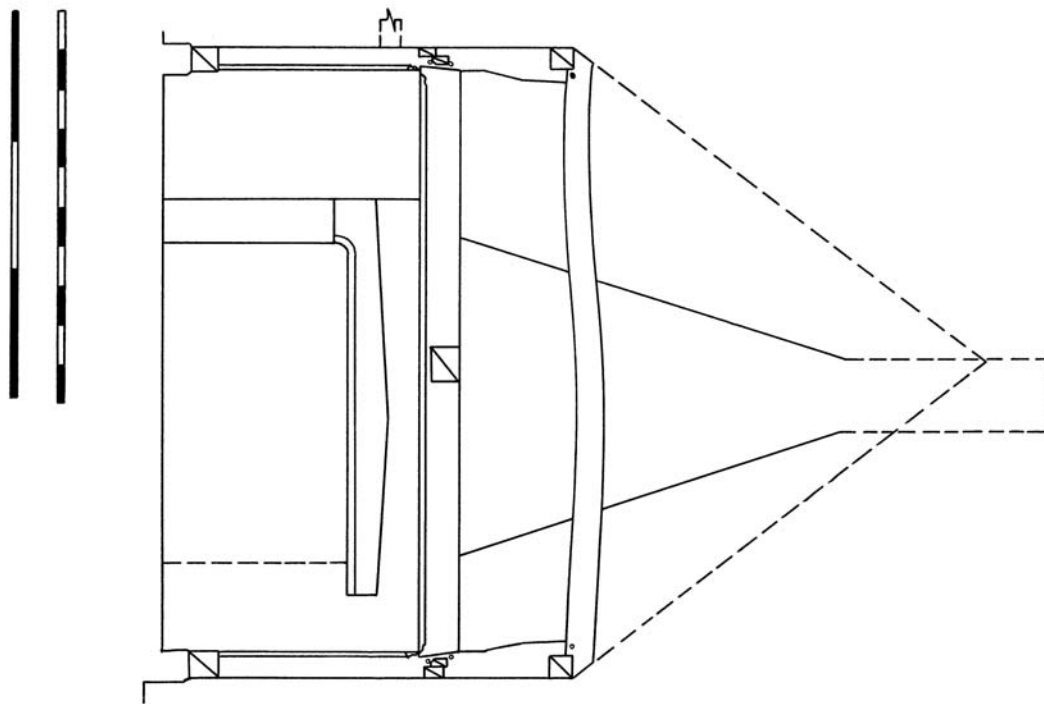


Figure 7
Internal Elevations J-I (top) and M-N

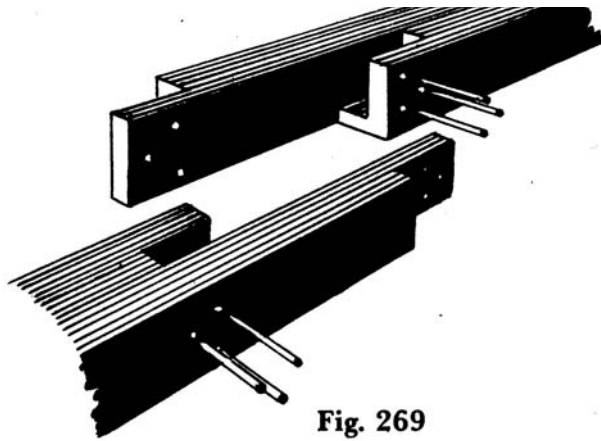


Fig. 269

Figure 8

The unusual scarf joint illustrated by Hewett as figure 269 of English Historic Carpentry and apparently identical to the charred example at Old Thatches. The external blade of the joint is 'housed', i.e. does not penetrate to the soffit as in the normal form of face-halved-and-bladed scarf.

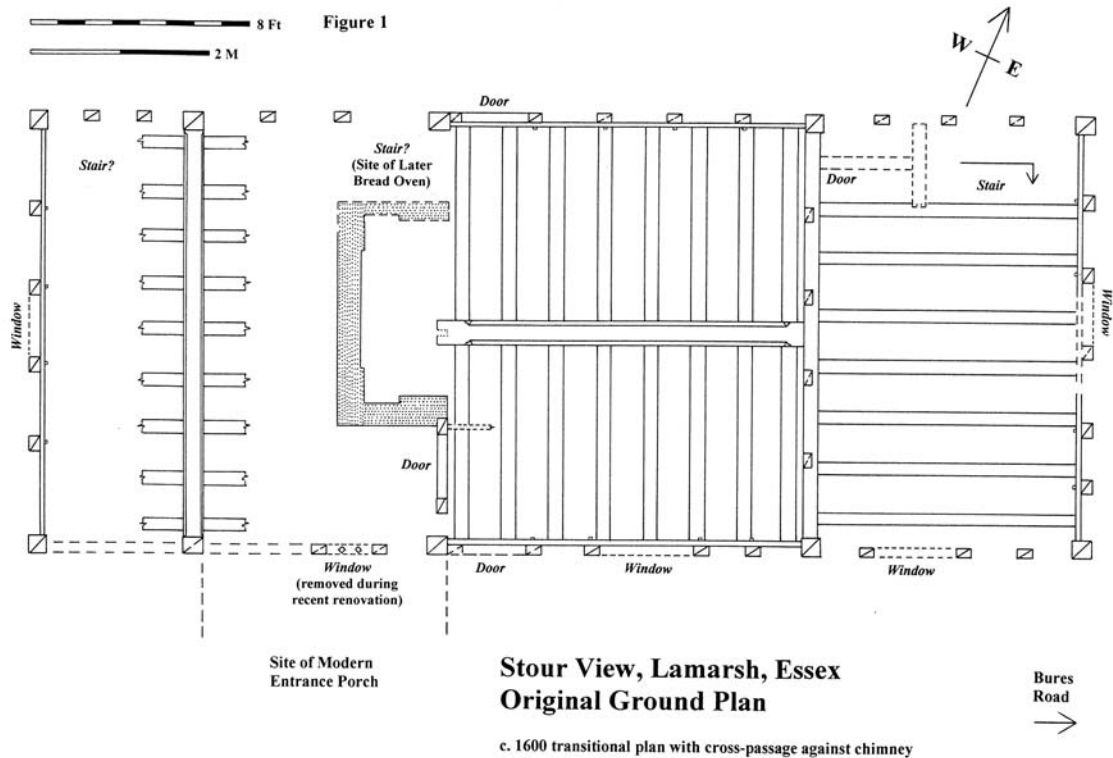


Figure 9

Original plan of 'Stour View' Lamarsh, showing a similar 'high-end cross-passage' of similar period and type to Old Thatches

Appendix 1 (on accompanying CD): Full Photographic Record

Description of Photographs in Appendix 1

Photograph no.

1. General view of site from south.
2. External Elevation A-E from south.
3. External Elevation G-H from south.
4. General view of site from east.
5. External elevation H-N from east.
6. General view of site from north.
7. External elevation N-M from north.
8. General view from site looking north (showing hill top location).
9. General view of site from west.
10. External elevation B-A from west.
11. Detail of external brickwork to chimney of gable A-B.
12. Later chimney at truss L-K with rear of chimney to left.
13. Detail of brickwork to rear of chimney at truss L-K.
14. Internal view of elevation M-N.
15. Internal view of elevation N-L.
16. Internal view of elevation K-M.
17. Detail of axial joist looking towards elevation N-L showing re-use mortise.
18. Detail of ceiling clamp at elevation K-M.
19. Detail of chamfer stop to binding joist at post L from north.
20. Detail of chamfer stop to binding joist at post K from north with re-use mortise in post.
21. Internal view of elevation G-J.
22. Internal view of truss J-I showing fireplace.
23. Detail of chamfer stops to axial joist at binding joist of truss J-I.

24. Detail of fireplace looking towards post I showing later oven.
25. Detail of fireplace looking towards post J.
26. Internal view of elevation I-H.
27. Internal view of elevation H-G.
28. Exterior of elevation F-B from east.
29. Detail of window from east (post D to right).
30. Detail of original infill beneath window in elevation F-D.
31. Detail of window with original infill panel beneath sill.
32. Detail of infill in elevation F-D showing withy ties.
33. Interior of elevation A-B showing later fireplace.
34. Interior of elevation B-D.
35. Interior of truss D-C showing recent partition.
36. Interior of elevation C-A.
37. Interior of elevation E-C.
38. Detail of blocked stair trap in ceiling looking towards post E.
39. Interior of post D showing original window to right.
40. Interior of elevation A-B on upper storey.
41. Interior of elevation C-A on upper storey.
42. Interior of elevation E-C on upper storey.
43. Upper storey of structure A-B-E-F from north-east.
44. Upper storey of structure A-B-E-F from east.
45. Upper storey of structure G-H-M-N from west.
46. Truss J-I on upper storey.
47. Truss I-J on upper storey showing later chimney to right.
48. Interior of elevation M-N on upper storey.
49. Interior of elevation H-G on upper storey (all but posts renewed).
50. Detail of stair from upper storey looking towards post L.
51. Detail of original brick plinth in external elevation L-N.

52. External elevation H-N from south-east.
53. External elevation H-I showing original brace and infill.
54. External elevation H-I showing detail of brace and infill.
55. Detail of brace showing re-use trench in elevation H-I.
56. Detail of infill construction in elevation H-I.
57. Detail of infill construction above lintel in elevation H-I.
58. Detail of original entrance lintel in elevation H-I.
59. Truncated oven in external elevation I-L.
60. Detail of truncated oven in elevation I-L.
61. Interior of oven in elevation I-L.
62. Detail of oven cutting post I.
63. Detail of scarf joint in elevation I-L.
64. Elevation J-G from west.
65. External elevation A-E from south.
66. Detail of elevation J-G showing re-use evidence.
67. External elevation A-C from south.
68. External elevation C-E from south.
69. External elevation F-D from north-west showing later stair.
70. Detail of external elevation C-E showing weathered studs.
71. External elevation M-K from west.
72. External elevation N-M from north.
73. Detail of joist mortises in axial joist between trusses J-I and G-H.
74. General view of site from south-east.

Appendix 2 (pp.23-28): Selected Printed Photographs



A2.1 External elevation H-N from east prior to demolition



A2.2 External elevation H-N from south-east after commencement of demolition, showing original brace to left and infill of wattle-and-daub attached to externally trenched laths. A secondary bread oven against the eastern side of the chimney formerly projected beyond the plane of the wall.



A2.3 Internal view of truss J-I from south, showing partly collapsed fireplace and largely original 17th century ceiling in room G-J-H-I.



A2.4 Upper storey of structure G-H-M-N from west showing 17th century chimney to right with secondary chimney to left.



A2.5 Detail of external elevation H-I from east showing neatly chamfered original entrance lintel (bottom) with mason's mitres and original infill above (post I to right).



A2.6 Detail of external elevation H-I from east showing entrance door lintel (right-hand jamb lacking) and infill construction: Withy ties secure horizontal half-poles that are trenced and nailed against the exterior to vertical poles and half-poles between the studs.



A2.7 Detail of external elevation H-I from east showing truncated brick oven between posts I and J in centre



A2.8 Interior of brick oven between posts I and J



A2.9 Elevation J-G from west showing infill trenches and a window sill or lintel re-used as a stud to left (with original brace attached). Former door and stair trap to right.



A2.10 External elevation A-E from south



A2.11 Detail of external elevation A-E from south-east showing externally weathered studs with notches for infill staves (in contrast to infill of structure G-M-H-N).



A2.12 General view of site from south-east showing demolition nearing completion (chimneys to remain *in situ*).