

Cruck-Frame Buildings in Bedfordshire

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Bedfordshire lies at the extreme eastern fringe of the area in which crucks were used (fig 1),¹ and an examination of its few recorded cruck buildings is therefore of particular interest in relation to the distribution of crucks in Britain as a whole. In this paper, the two principal cruck-trussed houses are described in detail and their significance assessed.

These two houses are at Marston Moretaine and Husborne Crawley. They are contrasted in their quality and social level, but yet are similar in their craftsmanship and in technical idiosyncracies.

MOAT FARM, MARSTON MORETAINE

(SP 993413; Beds C.C./S.M.R. 4800;² Plates 1-4; Figures 2-8)

The house stands on an isolated site 0.5km, from the centre of Marston Moretaine village, within a 80m by 60m rectangular moat. Although there were doubtless ancillary buildings around it at one period, all trace of them has vanished. The house is of strikingly high quality in its construction and decoration. It is of 'hall, cross-passage and cross-wings' plan, with the hall cruck built and with both cross-wings added later.

An investigation of its documentation has traced the ownership back to 1674 when it was the property of William Fairey of Toddington, gentleman.³ Its earlier history can only be inferred, but it seems likely that it was the manor-house of Marston Moreteyne (that one of the six manors in the parish which covers the area where the house stands). This manor was owned in the seventeenth century by the Snagge family, and it seems likely that at some point in this period they built a new house and sold the old one. If this is correct, there is one significant aspect of its medieval descent. It was held by the Morteyne family from before 1284 to 1428 when it passed to Reynes. From 1380 to 1428 its profits were enjoyed by Elizabeth Morteyne, widow of the last male Morteyne; it is perhaps less likely that major building work occurred during this period than at other times.

HALL

The hall is unusually wide (6.2 metres internally) and its most important features are the central open cruck truss and the spere truss (fig 3). The roof is heavily smoke-blackened, and the plank-like common rafters, (5 by 20cm) are supported on a square-set ridge-piece and two purlins. The latter are chamfered with step stops and have simple splayed scarfs. The central truss has a saddle apex, a cranked collar, arch braces and wide wind-braces. There is also a cross beam only 2m above the present floor, which is clearly original because the blade moulding is returned on the beam (pl 2); the beam has birds-mouth joints around the blades.

The truss is highly decorated (fig 6). There are heavy quarter-round mouldings separated by a fillet on the lower parts of the blades, the cross-beam and the arch-braces. They are thinned out (though not properly stopped) on the blades below the braces, some 1.5m above the beam. This curious gap could have been occupied by a capital or similar feature, but any evidence on the face of the blades is obscured by a partition wall. A heavy hollow-moulded strip (8cm in projection and thickness) is applied to the side of the truss in an arch outside the quarter-round moulding, held on with infrequent pegs. It now only exists on the west side at first floor level, and partly buried in the wall on the ground floor, but its shadow and its peg-holes show that it did reach the centre of the collar, and was present on both sides of the truss. It almost certainly formed a complete arch, interrupted only by the cross-beam. The latter carries this same hollow-moulding (but carved in the solid above the quarter-round), and above this, the beam is battlemented.

Externally, the truss shows a very curious feature (pl 3; fig 6). Each of its 32cm wide studs carries the wall plate, and below this has the outlines of two tenons from spurs (otherwise concealed). Slightly lower down, the stud is thickened to form a heavy projecting buttress (20cm square). Superficially, the buttress appears to be part of the cruck blade, but this is definitely not so, because it is one piece of wood with the upper part of the

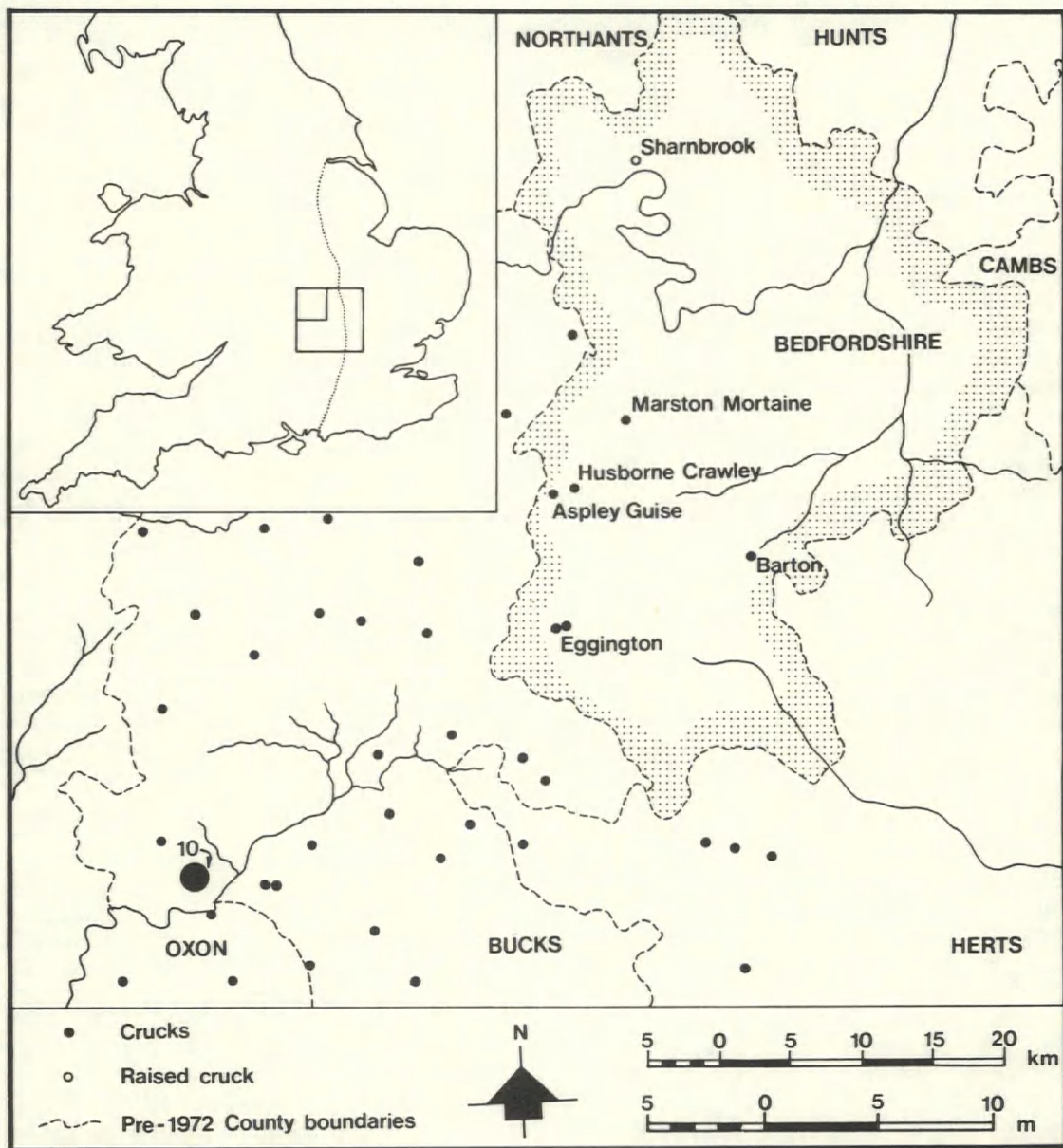


Fig 1 Cruck buildings in Bedfordshire and adjacent counties, with inset map of England and Wales showing approximate eastern limit of crucks.

stud, which is clearly separated from the cruck. The jointing between the two is now concealed, but the most likely method is a long tenon on the back of the blade, let into the stud (with side pegs hidden in the wall). The function of the buttress can best be understood as increasing the depth at the base of the blade, which projects less than 10cm from the original wall face.

The spare truss is unusual, because its main posts are canted inwards; there are spurs at wall-plate level and at about head height. The arch-braces have quarter-round mouldings which are carried right down the posts. The principal rafters are slightly cranked.

The external walls of the hall range have been renewed in recent brick and timber,⁴ apart from

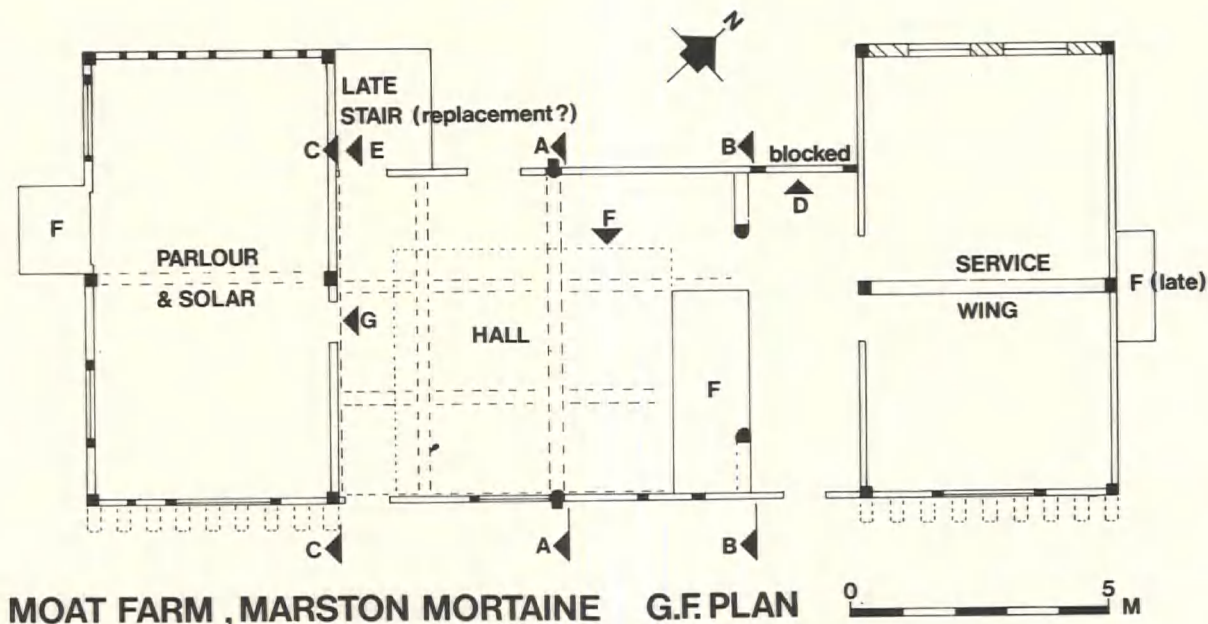


Fig 2 Moat Farm, Marston Mortaine. Ground Floor Plan. The modern partitions in the hall are shown by short dash lines. Existing wall studs are shown, but apart from the principal posts, most are not original. A-C refer to sections. D-F refer to door head elevations.

the cruck blades and spurs, and the original North doorway of the cross-passage. This is two-centred, composed of two heavy curved jambs and a lintel (fig 7). Both ends of the hall are now formed by the side walls of the cross-wings, but this is not the original arrangement. At the east end the wall is concealed; the hall purlins and ridge piece are only connected to the wing roof with rough props, and the ridge extends several feet beyond the side-wall. At the west end (fig 4), a pair of irregular rafters stands on the wall-plate of the wing, crossed at the apex for the ridge and supporting the purlins on blocks. This truss is filled with wattle-and-daub, and all of the hall side is smoke-blackened.

Superficially from this evidence, the hall and wing are contemporary, but (apart from the contrast with the east end) close examination shows that the wing is later. The principal evidence comes from the ridge-piece. This continues past the truss and, although the rear of the truss is entirely clean, the ridge is heavily smoked. Also, the first truss east of the end wall has common rafters above the purlins, but below this the rafters are heavy (20cm square) and carry a pair of wind-braces. These rafters have the appearance of an intermediate truss, but this is unlikely because it would imply a hall of enormous

length. It is more probable that they are the relics of the end truss of the hall, and that this was of tie-beam construction, as the rafters are not consistent with either a cruck or an aisled truss.

Of the original form of the house apart from the hall, we have no direct evidence but the most likely hypothesis is that it was a straight range, only acquiring cross-wings in modernisation. It also appears from the smoke-blackened ridge-pieces at each end, that at roof level there was no partitioning between the hall and the end bays.⁵

The date for the hall can be suggested from the truss moulding (fig 6). The heavy quarter-round is characteristically fourteenth century,⁶ although the use of battlementing is normally later. Taken together, a date of *circa* 1400 may be correct; the cross-passage doorway is also consistent with this.⁷

CROSS-WINGS

The two cross-wings are extremely similar. On the south side both are flush with the hall range on the ground floor and jettied above, while on north side they run back 2m and are un-jettied. The wings are much narrower than the hall range, and it is noticeable that their first floors are significantly taller than their ground floors.



Pl 1 Exterior from south of Moat Farm, Marston Moretaine.

[Photograph: Royal Commission on Historical Monuments: Crown Copyright reserved.]

The framing has been largely replaced but seems to have had studs at about 60cm spacing, and there is now a rail half way up each storey. However, in the part exposed at the west end of the hall, the studs are at 1.5m intervals with long upward braces (fig 4), and this is an alternative possibility for the original wall framing.

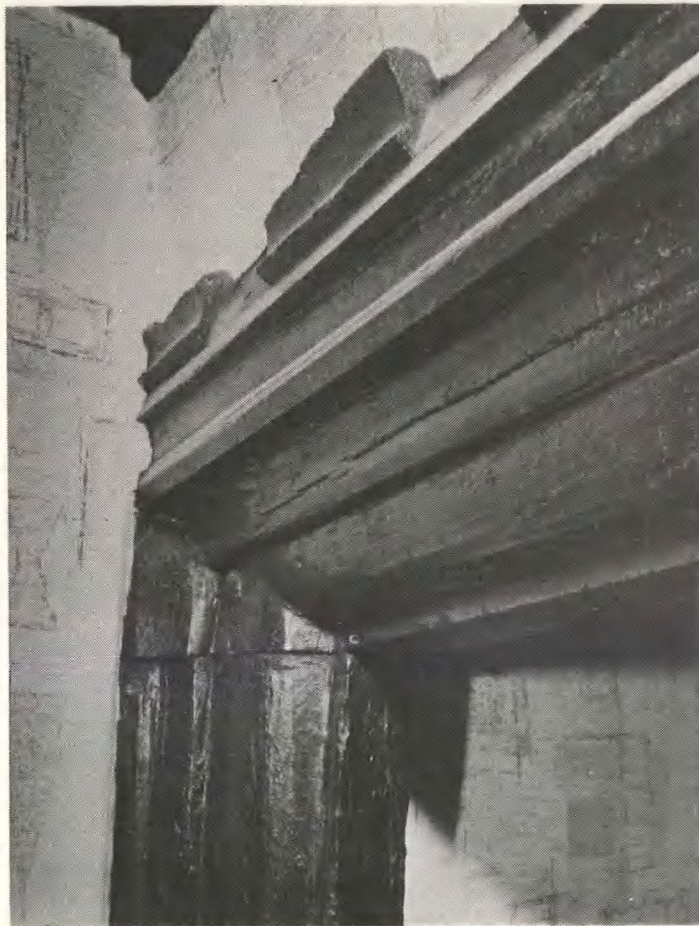
Each wing has a central truss with principal rafters, a collar, queen-posts and braces from the posts to the collar. Each roof has two purlins and slender irregular wind-braces, but no ridge-piece.

The west wing was clearly the 'solar' end of the house. The central beam on the ground floor has arch-braces, and a heavy clunch chimney serves fireplaces on each floor. Both fireplaces have battlemented stone lintels, and that on the first floor is decorated with blind tracery combining trefoil-headed lancets and symmetrical quatrefoils. The chimney is clearly original, but the

perfection of the fireplace decoration is rather suspicious, and we are forced to discount it as possibly a 'Romantic' improvement to the house. The east wing was presumably for service. It is now divided into two main rooms on each floor, but there are no features visible to confirm whether this is original. It has a nineteenth century chimney on the east side.

Dating for the wing can be based on the queen-posts, in combination with the fact that the open hearth of the hall was still in use. This suggests a date of around 1500 or somewhat later.

There is one major stage of improvement evident in the house, dateable to the later sixteenth century. The hall was ceiled over with intersecting moulded beams (fig 5) and with a cornice around the walls; there are bosses carved with roses at their intersections. A large chimney was inserted against the spere truss, probably intended to serve both floors (although this is uncertain as



Pl 2 Detail of cross-beam of hall crucks, Moat Farm, Marston Moretaine.



Pl 3 Detail of external buttress, Moat Farm, Marston Moretaine.

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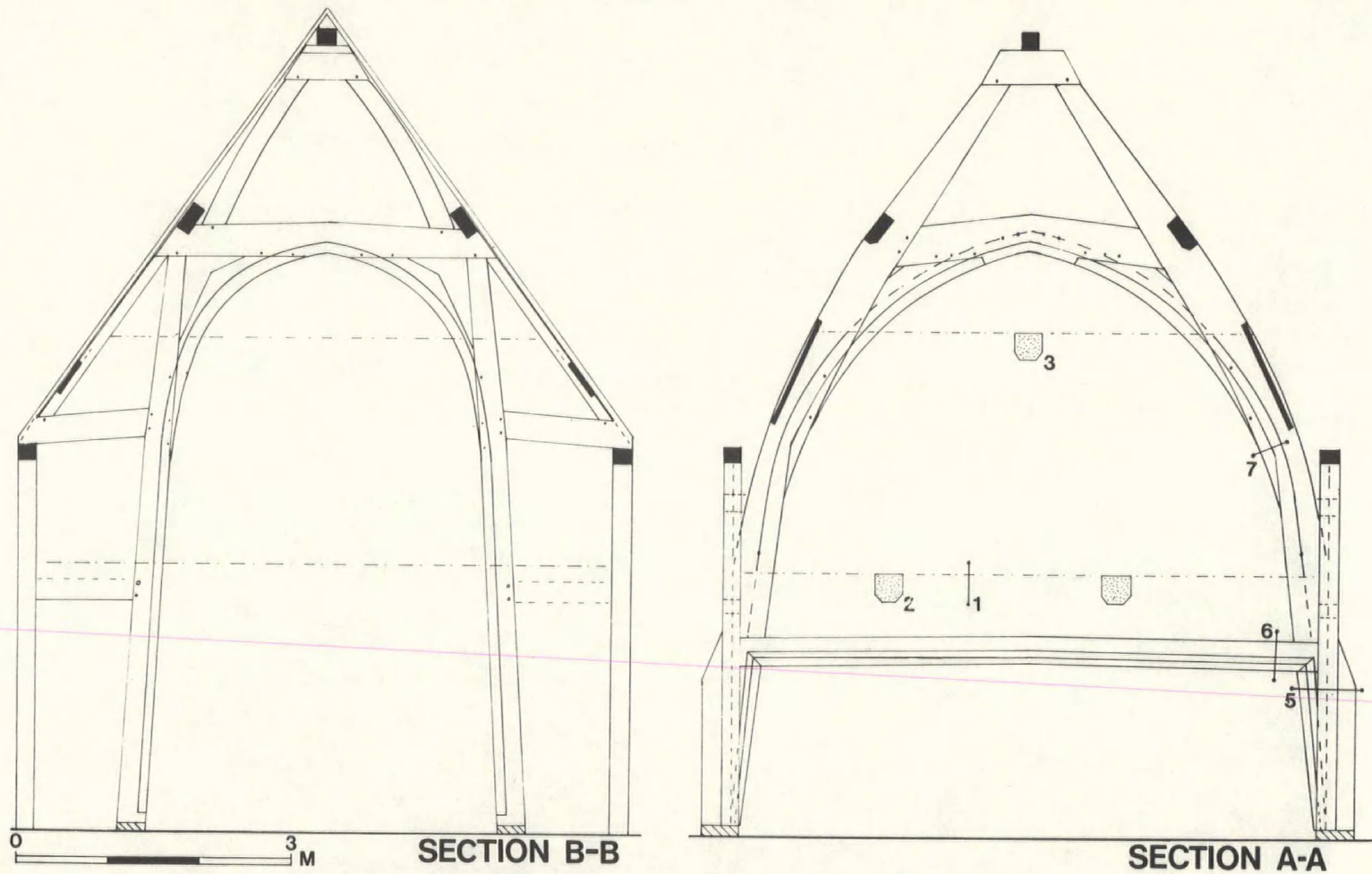


Fig 3 Moat Farm, Marston Mortaine. Section A-A, cruck truss; and B-B spere truss. Numerals refer to moulding details.

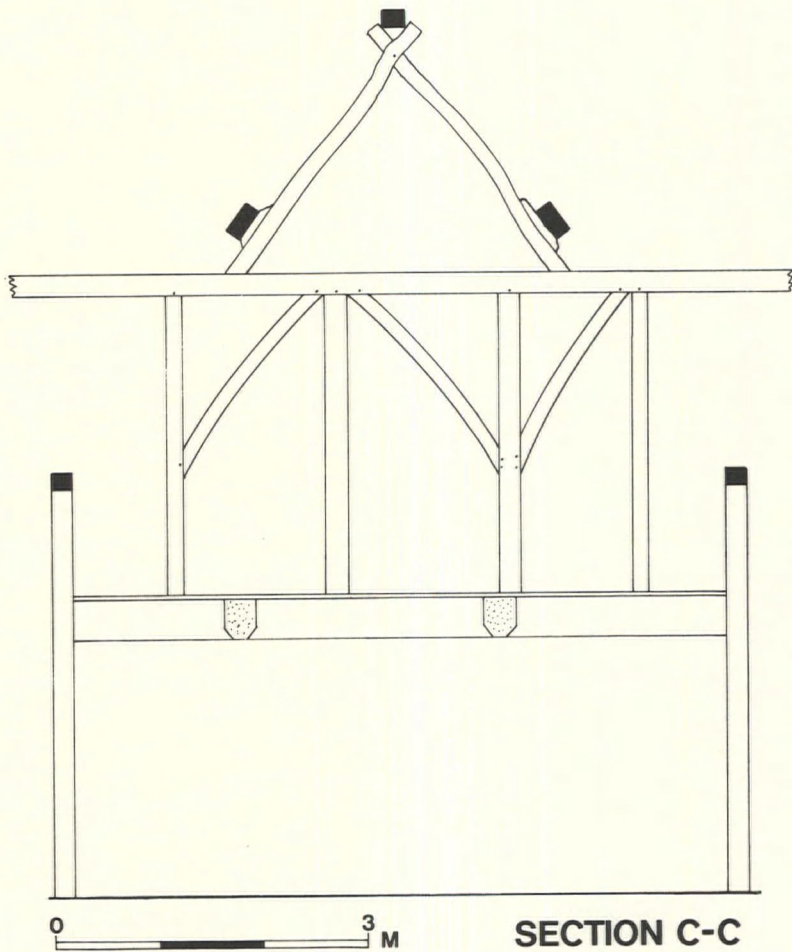


Fig 4 Moat Farm, Marston Mortaine. Section C-C, end of hall.

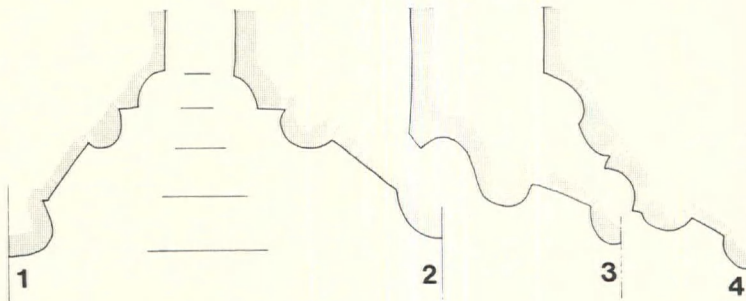


Fig 5 Moat Farm, Marston Mortaine. Beam Mouldings 1-4. Nos 1-3 are as marked in Fig 3. No. 4 is the upper floor ceiling beam in the East wing. Scale: $\frac{1}{4}$ full size.

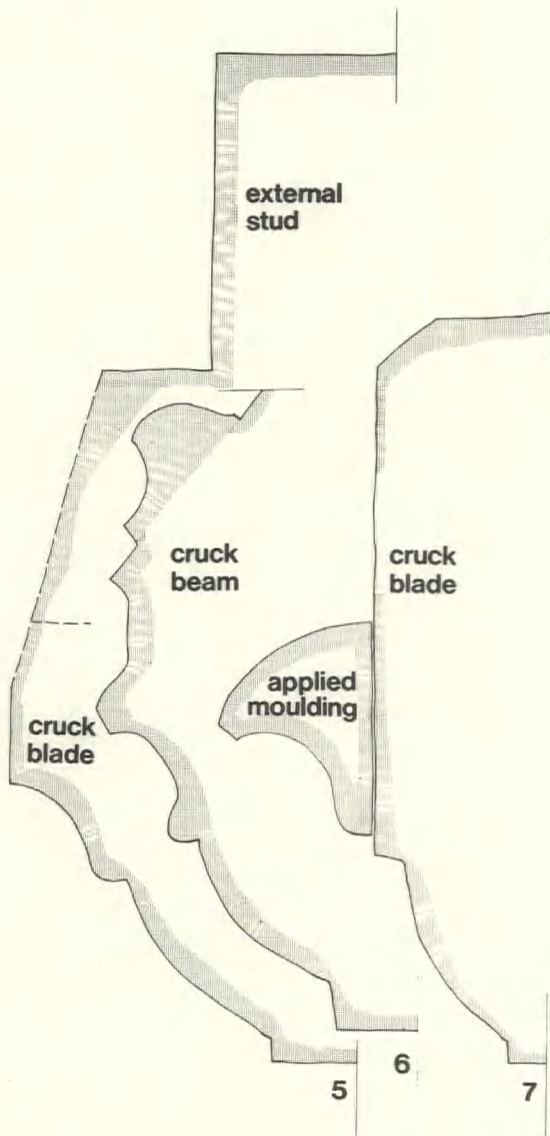


Fig 6 Moat Farm, Marston Moretaine. Cruck truss mouldings 5-7. Scale $\frac{1}{4}$ full size

the fireplaces are completely blocked). The room or rooms over the hall were also ceiled, with a spine beam using almost the same moulding as the floor beams (fig 5).

Moulded axial ceiling and cornice beams are also present above the first floor rooms of the east wing, and similar ones are probably concealed in the west wing. These may also be of the later sixteenth century, but the moulding is much more complex, (fig 5, moulding 4) and they may well be an original part of the wing.

A doorhead of depressed ogee form (fig 7) poses the same problems of date as these beams. It is located in the west wing, at first floor level, leading into the stair in the north-west corner between wing and hall. The lean-to projection housing this stair is entirely modern but the door-head may be *in situ*. If this is correct, then there was presumably an earlier stair in the same place as the present one:

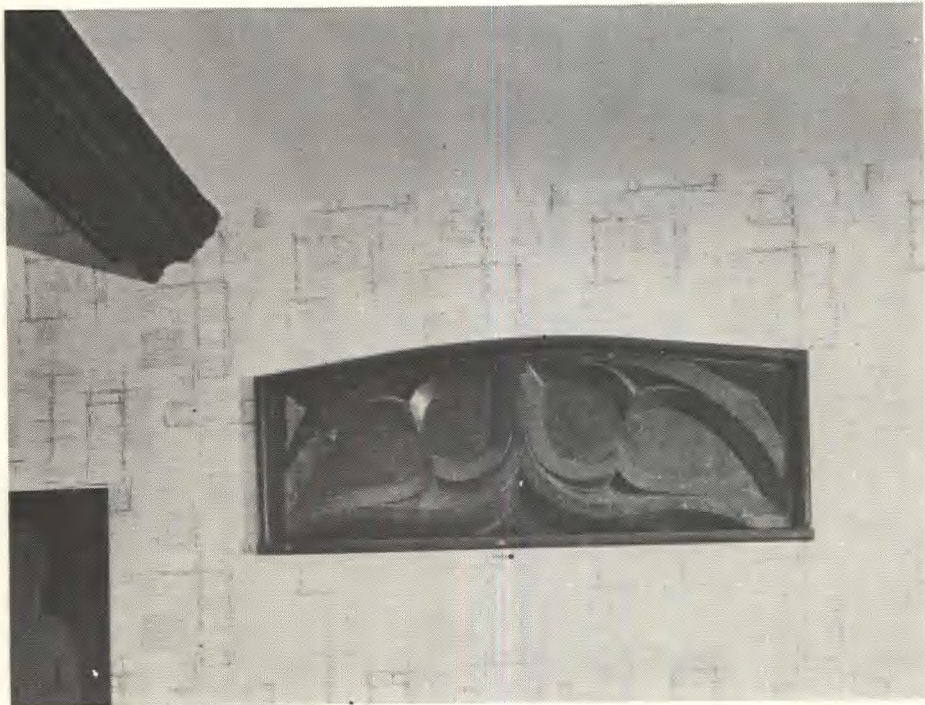
One other early feature should be noted: a set of three wooden panels of blind cusped tracery (pl 4; fig 8). Two are identical (pl 4), and the third is very similar. Their original function is not certain, but the general shape and ogee lower moulding suggests that they were probably door-heads. Two are clearly not *in situ*, being incorporated in modern partitioning of the hall; the third (fig 8,G) is over the ground-floor door from the hall to the west wing, but also appears to have been built in recently. A wooden lintel with battlementing is also reset, over the present outer door on the north side of the hall.

275 BEDFORD ROAD, HUSBORNE CRAWLEY
(SP 953363; Beds. C.C./S.M.R. 3737; Plates 5-8; Figure 9)

The house is set back from the main Bedford to Woburn Sands road, overlooking the village centre at Church End, Husborne Crawley.

On an estate map of 1760 of the Duke of Bedford,⁸ the house stands on part of a close known as Home Field, owned by a Mr Edmonds. The house and land were subsequently purchased by the Duke of Bedford. Earlier ownership has not been investigated because, even if the fifteenth century owner could be found, it is not likely to throw much light on the building. Although the status of the building has not been directly established, comparison of structure and situation show it is of a lesser significance than the building at Marston Mortaine. Nevertheless it is a fairly large building (four bays) and of generous proportions. Each cruck truss has been carefully designed relative to the functional spaces desired within the building, and although the jointing techniques are not complex, the design of each cruck truss has reached quite a high level of sophistication.

Until a few years ago the building was single storeyed with lofts. The roof space was reached by a ladder from the south bay, and was apparently used for storage. Recent conversion to a full two storey building, by raising the level of the eaves and the insertion of a staircase has enabled us to



Pl 4 Blind tracery, detail, opposite G on figure 2.

[Photograph: Royal Commission on Historical Monuments: Crown Copyright reserved]

examine the structure of the building fully, identifying it as a 4-bay cruck structure with a central open 2-bay hall of probable fifteenth century date. The ceiling over of the building probably took place in the seventeenth century when the brick chimney was inserted to the north of the central hall truss.

Figure 9 is both a representation of the surviving cruck timbers and an interpretation of the functional arrangement of the building. There are four cruck trusses enclosing three bays; beyond them, the southern-most bay has a stud end-wall which is constructed of reused timbers. The two centre trusses, 2 and 3, have saddle apexes and a slight cranking to the collar. Trusses 4 and 1 have long cranked collars and the latter has empty half lap joints, two on the collar and one on the upper half of each blade (fig 9). The proportions of the two centre trusses and trusses 1 and 4 are also very different. The centre trusses have larger timbers and blades only slightly curved, whilst the other two have thinner timbers which do not meet, and a more curved form; if extended, they would meet at a very oblique angle, and this suggests that 1 and 4 have not been truncated at a later date although the ends of the blades may

have been slightly trimmed. The dissimilarity between these two pairs suggests that the original roof was of a half hipped form, but it is difficult to understand exactly how the ridge piece originally continued from the two centre trusses. At the north end, truss 4 is completed with a brick gable, but was certainly of half-hip form until the recent conversion (pl 5).

The structure at the southern end is very remarkable. The purlins, extending 1.4m beyond truss 1, are supported by wind-braces but are otherwise 'flying' (pl 7). They carry a cross-beam (omitted from fig 9) at their ends, and the beam, the wind-braces and the purlins (including their free ends) are heavily smoke-blackened.⁹ The cross-beam is puzzlingly different in character from the rest of the structure, as it is very straight with a regular square section; it is not jointed to the purlins, but must be pegged in place. This end of the house was presumably fully hipped from an early date (as it still remains).

A further complexity of truss 1 is the presence of lap joints on the collar and blades. Those on the collar might have carried some form of support for the ridge, but it is difficult to see what was the function of those on the blades, unless the

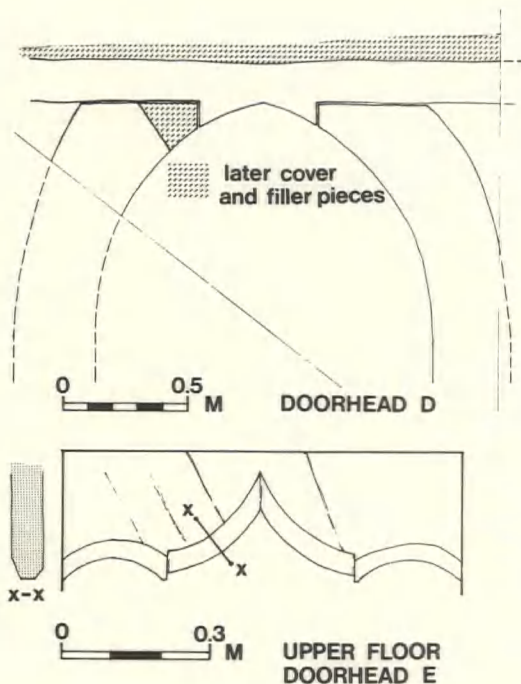


Fig 7 Moat Farm, Marston Moretaine. Door head details D and E.

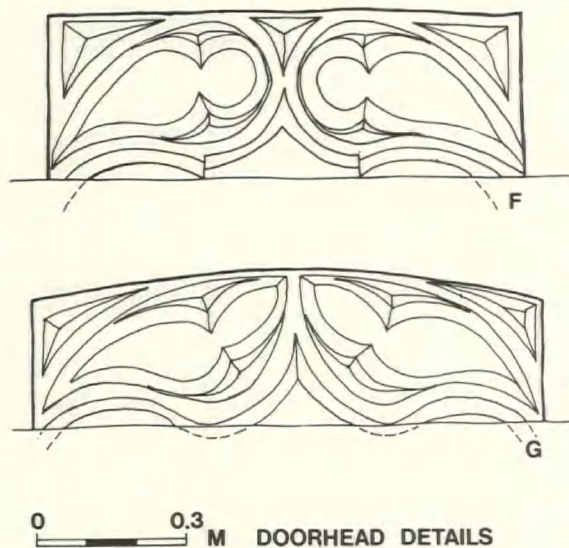


Fig 8 Moat Farm, Marston Moretaine. Blind Cusped Tracery, door head details F and G.

partitioning between hall and end bay required an extra cambered collar. This collar would then provide a housing for the ends of the timbers halved across the surviving collar. It is noticeable that these collar halvings each have three irregularly spaced peg-holes, possibly suggesting repair work.

On the ground-floor there are opposed mortices, apparently for the head-beam of the partition that would be expected at this point, dividing the hall from what was presumably a small service bay.

The main hall cruck truss 2 (fig 9; pl 6) has a saddle apex, a slightly cranked collar, arch braces and a low tie-beam. This tie-beam has in the main been removed, but was undoubtedly continuous because it has a straight lap joint and no stop unlike the notched lap of, for example, the spur in truss 3.¹⁰ All these timbers are chamfered on their interior edges. Daub on boards and wattle fills the upper triangle of this truss but is not smoke-blackened like the surrounding structure, and is therefore a later infilling. The evidence of the chamfers, the arch braces and smoke blackening of all upper timbers in the two bays on either side of 2, shows undoubtedly that truss 2 was the open central cruck truss for a two-bay hall.

Cruck truss 3 has a similar apex to 2, but was obviously closed. There is smoke-blackening on the surviving wattle and daub in the apex only on the hall face, and wattle holes remain for further infill on the outer side of the cruck blades. This truss has also a slightly lower tie-beam with spurs to support the wall plate. This lower tie-beam is repeated in the end truss 4 and with the deliberate insertion of spurs is clearly indicative of the formation of a two storey bay. Access to the upper storey may have been from within the end bay or possibly from the hall.

Mortices in the studs above the tie-beam of truss 3 indicate a rail at this point. Access to the lower room is under a chamfered doorhead. The studs on either side of this door are not chamfered and are set back, suggesting that the actual door frame was inside them. All the studs on this truss are probably in their original positions, and each has a smoke blackened face towards the hall. The sill beam is probably a replacement; it has mortices for a suspended floor.

Cruck truss 4 has two cross-beams, one to take the floor of the two storey bay and the other the wall plate. This extra strengthening and the presence of wattle holes down the upper side of



Pl 5 Exterior from south-east of Husbourne Crawley before conversion.
 [Photograph: Bedfordshire County Council]

the cruck blade tell us that this was always the end truss of the building. The surviving studs, from an examination of the peg holes, are probably contemporary (pl 8).

Wind braces occur at each cruck truss and are sawn in pairs although not necessarily used opposite one another. Each has a mortice and tenon joint singly pegged at the blade and a double pegged lap joint at the purlin. The rafters were pegged to the purlins at about 0.5m intervals, and the purlins have simple splay scarfs. Curiously, these are staggered, one being on either side of truss 2. There is no direct evidence for the roof material, but thatch was presumably used.

All four cruck-trusses are grounded on a sill around the building. This appears to have simple lap joints at the corners like the cross sills at trusses 1 and 3. It is laid on a raised foundation of

local sandstone (in places replaced by brick) and at the base of each cruck blade large roughly squared sandstone blocks have been used to spread the localised pressure. There is a similar block at the south-east corner of the house, and this has led us to consider the possibility of a fifth cruck truss, at the southern end. It seems, however, more likely that the present arrangement is original, with a hipped bay, because the bay is very short, and because truss 1 seems to have been designed to carry a full hip. It is also certain from the smoke-blackening that the present arrangement was in existence while the open hall was still in use.

The other external features that must be noted are the wall studs supporting the now missing wall plate, at each cruck truss. It was not possible to examine fully their joints to the cruck blades, but each appears to have a simple lap joint with



Pl 6 Detail of hall cruck, Husbourne Crawley.
[Photograph: Bedfordshire County Council.]

the end of the tie-beam or spur, (with a side peg concealed in the wall) and to be pegged to the outer face of the cruck blade at its base. There would probably be a notch in the blade of the cruck to support the stud but this is nowhere visible. There does, however, seem to be a variant of this on cruck 2 on the eastern side where the stud is no longer extant, but the outer face of the cruck blade has obviously been shaved off. Also, since there is no peg-hole to be seen at the base of the blade, there was presumably a side peg. In either case the cruck must have projected beyond the face of the building. This feature of artificially deepening the hall cruck by means of the attached stud to form a buttress was also noticed at Marston Moretaine. This feature cannot be seen on the other blade of the hall cruck as there is a later cover strip, but is possibly indicated by two side pegs and the apparent remains of a long mortice in the west blade of cruck 4. A long cut on the other blade of 4 may indicate this also.

It is difficult to find out where the original wall studs were positioned since the wall plate has gone and not all the peg holes can be found in the ground sill. However, one wall between 2 and 3 on the western side does have indications of their placing. There is no evidence for the original entry.

There is no specific evidence of date for this house, but the elaborate hall truss places it firmly in the medieval period, and could suggest the earlier fifteenth century. Its plan is also characteristically medieval, with two bay open hall with inner room and solar over at one end and a small lean-to bay, presumably for service use at the other.

COMPARISONS BETWEEN BEDFORDSHIRE CRUCKS

There are striking similarities between Husbourne Crawley and Marston Moretaine in their details despite their different status. One of these is the pro-



Pl 7 Detail of 'flying purlins', Husbourne Crawley.
[Photograph: Bedfordshire County Council.]

jection from the exterior of the cruck blade, as a buttress (Marston Mortaine) or an apparently decorative feature (Husbourne Crawley). Another is the use of a low tie-beam on the central open truss of the hall. This also occurs in the tie-beam truss of a house of about 1500 at Eaton Socon.¹¹ The function of these beams is incomprehensible; they are decorated with mouldings or chamfers and did not carry any structure beneath them, nor apparently above, and they would seem to obscure the decorative arch-braces. However, they do clearly indicate a local tradition of carpentry.

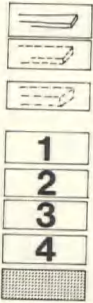
Five other crucks or near-crucks have been discovered in Bedfordshire, at Sharnbrook, Aspley Guise, Barton-in-the-Clay, and two at Eggington (Clipstone).

The one at 30/32 High Street, Sharnbrook (SP 996595; Beds. C.C./S.M.R. 5923) apparently has short curved feet raised well up the side walls of a stone-built house. It is similar to a number of Northamptonshire examples, also lying within the

Jurassic belt. Their development seems to have been from (probable) full crucks encased in stone via raised crucks set in stone walls to short (raised) crucks.¹² The Sharnbrook example, belonging to the last group, has little direct relationship with the timber-framed buildings further south.

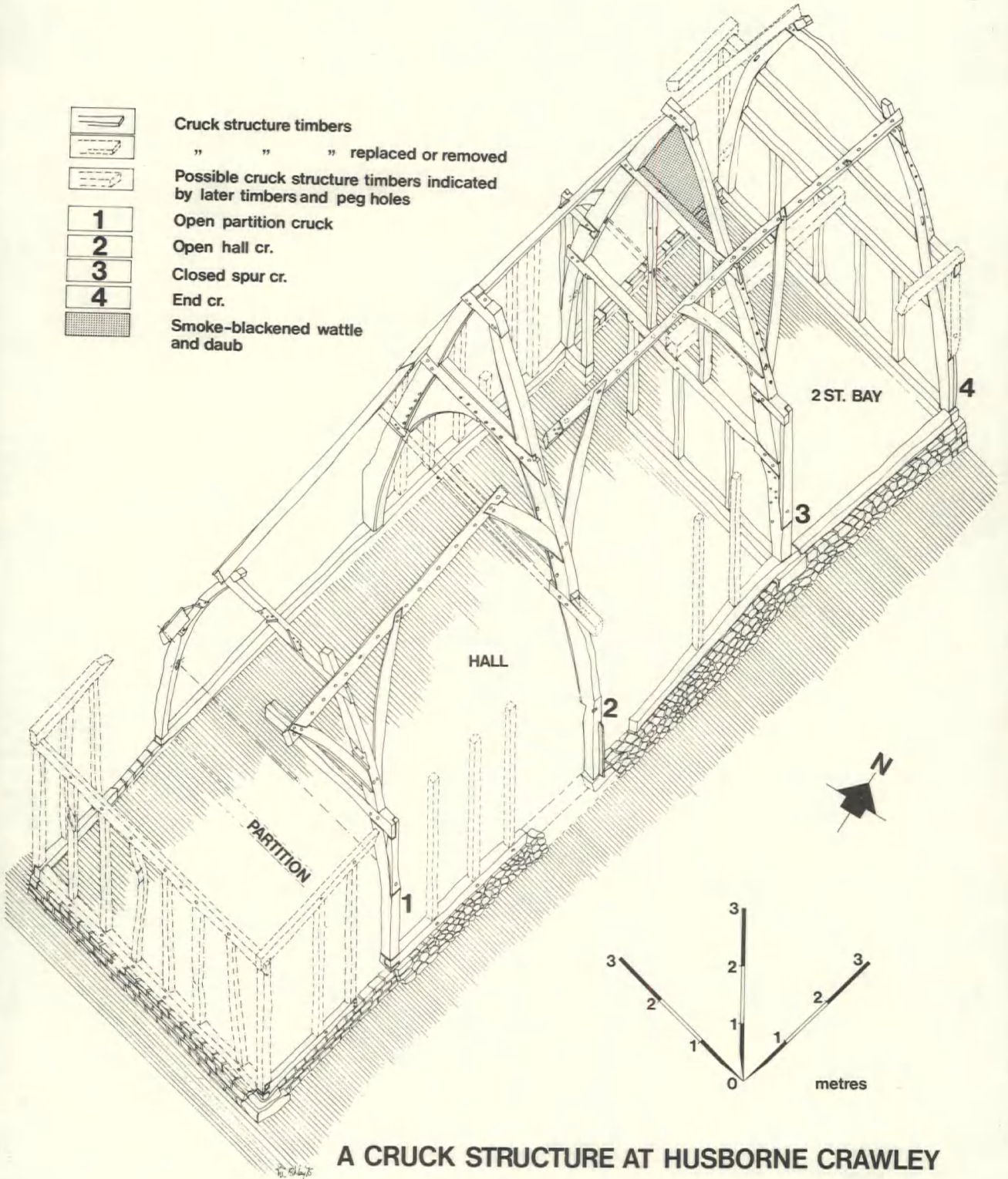
The cruck at 10-12 West Hill, Aspley Guise (SP 942359; Beds C.C./S.M.R. 3681 Figure 10) is very fragmentary, but shows similarities with Husbourne Crawley. One truss survives in part (fig 10), and has the doubled tie-beam as truss 4 of Husbourne Crawley, suggesting that it is the end truss of a two-storeyed bay. The next truss has been removed apart from its tie-beam, but the purlins remain and show smoke-blackening over what would be the hall; beyond this nothing remains.

At 32 Sharpenhoe Road, Barton-in-the-Clay (TL 079308; Beds. C.C./S.M.R. 242), one cruck truss survives, apparently an internal truss from



Cruck structure timbers
 " " " replaced or removed
 Possible cruck structure timbers indicated by later timbers and peg holes

1 Open partition cruck
 2 Open hall cr.
 3 Closed spur cr.
 4 End cr.
 Smoke-blackened wattle and daub



A CRUCK STRUCTURE AT HUSBORNE CRAWLEY



Pl 8 Exterior from north-east after conversion, Husbourne Crawley.
[Photograph: Bedfordshire County Council]

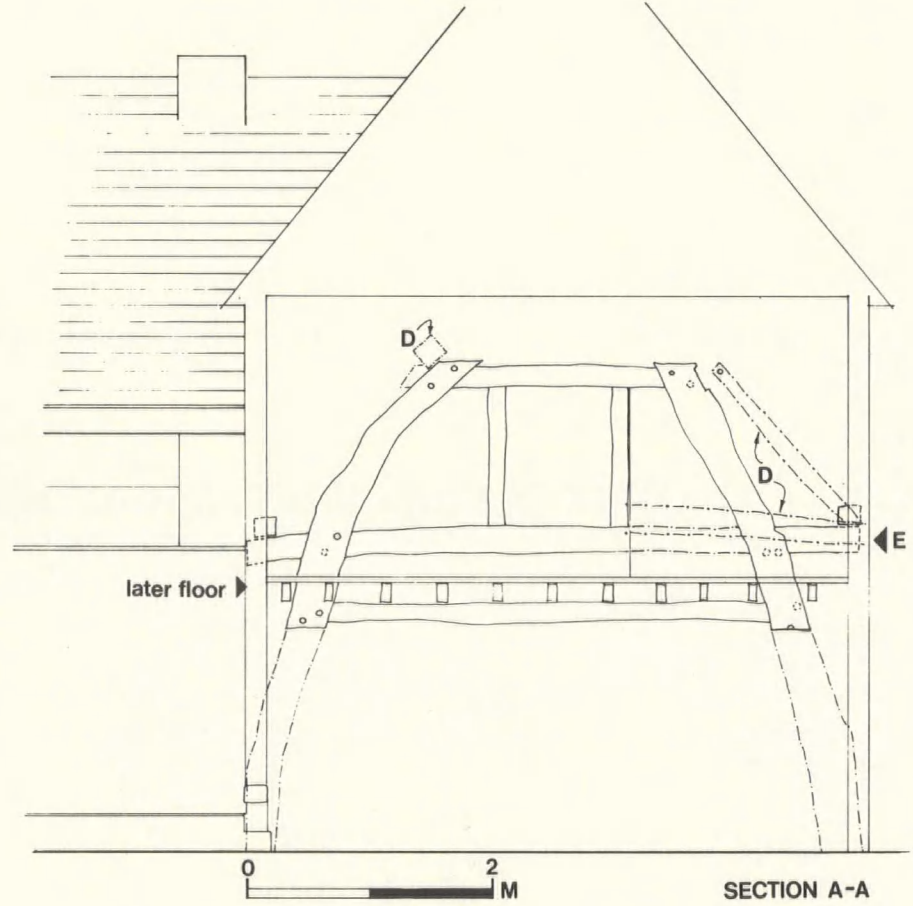
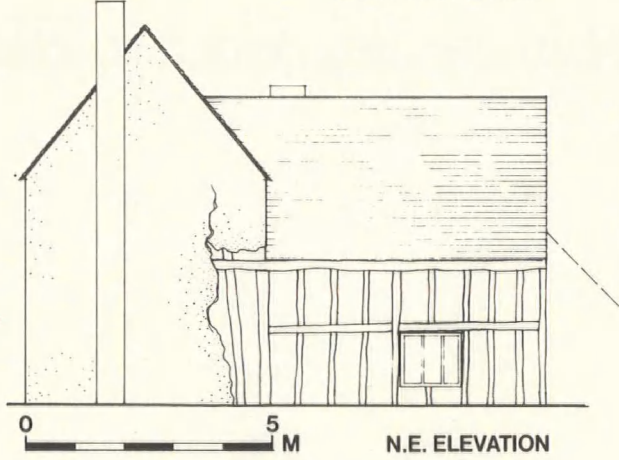
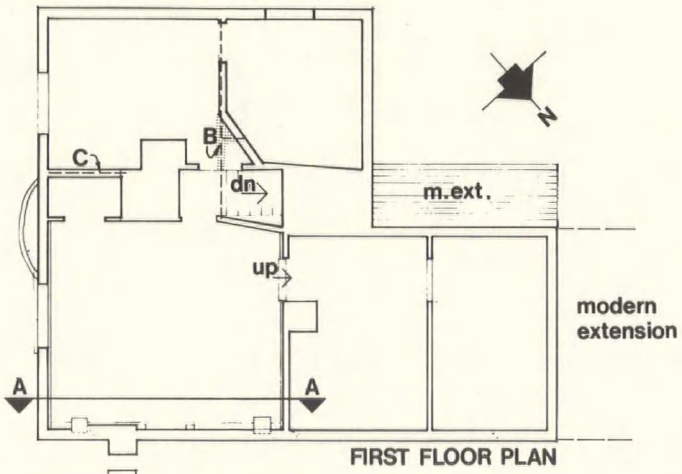
a two- or three-bay house. The blades are smooth and curved but show no features that might suggest a house of any quality.

Of the two at Clipstone, Eggington Parish, one survives, Clipstone Cottage (SP 94782631; Beds C.C./S.M.R. 4415); and the other, a barn opposite this cottage at Manor Farm (SP 94802633; Beds C.C./S.M.R. 6760) was demolished in 1970.¹³ The crucks at Clipstone Cottage (fig 11), define the only surviving bay of what must have been a longer building. Unfortunately, not all of the two cruck trusses are visible, but what could be examined suggests contrasts rather than similarities to the other cruck structures of Bedfordshire. The wind braces are not fixed directly to the cruck blades, but are pegged to packing piece between the wall plate and the through purlin. The spurs seem to be introduced in the internal

truss to raise the tie-beam (rather than to lower it as at Husborne Crawley) to produce an open truss form. There is only a single cross beam in what must be the end cruck truss, which has a long collar at purlin level forming a half hip.¹⁴ The latter point is one similarity to the Husborne Crawley example. Unfortunately, the apex of neither truss is visible. The purlins continue with attached wind braces to the North West end of the building where a modern brick wall probably replaces another cruck truss. All the visible timbers have been cleaned and creosoted, so that no smoke blackening can be seen. It is clear that this was the end of at least a two-bay building, but until the upper roof structure can be examined, it cannot be more closely defined.

The building to which Clipstone Cottage bears most resemblance is the Manor Farm barn on the opposite side of the road. From surviving photographs it was a complete four-bay cruck-truss building with half-hipped ends. The size and pro-

Fig 9 (opposite) Husbourne Crawley. Axonometric record and suggested reconstruction.



- B - smoke-blackened purlin and rafter
- C - probable cross-beam of second cruck at level E and reused rafter, s-b
- D - line of purlin from B, rafter and cross-beam from C

10-12 WEST HILL ASPLEY GUISE

Fig 10 Aspley Guise cruck frame building.

CLIPSTONE COTTAGE, EGGINGTON

O.S. ref.: SP 94782631

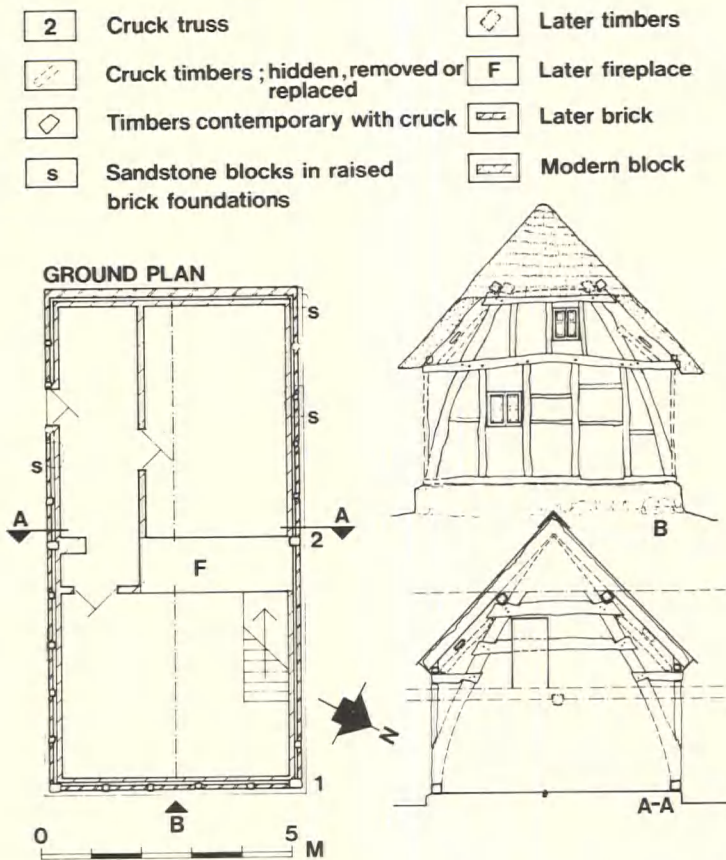


Fig 11 Eggington, Clipstone Cottage cruck frame building. Existing wall studs shown on plan and elevation, are probably not all original but seem to indicate original placings.

portion of the bays were similar to that at Clipstone cottage. The central cruck truss had a crossed apex, collar to support the through purlins, spurs to support the wall plate and a raised tie-beam. On the other two internal trusses, the blades extended somewhat above the collar, but did not meet; they also carried tie-beams and spurs. The tie-beams were set high, above the spurs, on all the internal trusses, no doubt to keep the interior unobstructed; they make it clear that the building had always been a barn. On the end trusses, the blades also terminated just above the collars, presumably for half-hips, while the tie-beams were at wall-plate level. There were wind braces between the purlins and packing pieces fixed outside the cruck blades.

The characteristics of these two buildings at Clipstone contrast with those further north at

Husborne Crawley, Aspley Guise and Marston Moretaine. These contrasts suggest a distinct group which has a slightly different design tradition to those further north in the county.

THE USE OF CRUCKS IN BEDFORDSHIRE

Bedfordshire lies on the extreme east of the area where cruck-construction survives (fig 1). Although further field-work may add examples in the south west, to give a density closer to that in Buckinghamshire, it is clear in our present state of knowledge that there is a well-defined frontier between 'crucks' and 'non-crucks' in existing buildings.¹⁵ Evidence from excavations also suggests that this is not the result of crucks having disappeared from the area to the east; an example is the eleventh century post-hole house at Eaton Socon, Cambs., (formerly Beds.).¹⁶ The two poss-

ible explanations for the use of crucks in west Bedfordshire are then:

- (i) that they were in use for a long period (several or many centuries) in the area where they occur, or
- (ii) that their use spread (clearly from the west) into this area superseding less permanent house-types, at the same time as other permanent forms of construction were appearing, which proved to be more dominant.

In our view, the first alternative is unlikely because it must surely imply some cultural frontier preventing further migration of crucks, and there seems to be no evidence at all in other aspects of building construction for such a frontier; we would also expect *either* a greater density of crucks, *or* for surviving examples to be notably early.

A spread from the west, in contrast, appears to offer a satisfactory explanation in general; crucks were used by those carpenters or for those clients who had particular links with areas further west, where cruck construction was standard. Most of the crucks in this area are of simple construction in houses of modest quality. It is significant that in the one exception, Marston Mortaine, there is one other major structural feature, the spere truss, that derives directly from western traditions. There are no more than two or three other examples in the whole of East Anglia.¹⁷ However, we do not suggest that the carpenter of this building was himself from western England; on the contrary, his work carries the distinctive traits of a local carpentry school.^{18, 19}

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NOTES

- 1 N.W. Alcock, *A Catalogue of Cruck Buildings*, Phillimore, 1973.
- 2 Beds. C.C. S.M.R. - Bedfordshire County Council Sites and Monuments Record; These records are accessible in the Conservation Section of the Planning Department.
- 3 This documentary evidence was kindly provided by J.F.J. Collett-White, of the Bedfordshire County Record Office. The title deeds are: Bedfordshire County Record Office (henceforth B.C.R.O.), Russell Deeds Box 135/6, Bundle 5/1-40 (Calendar Vol. V, p 379).
- 4 This may well be the work of 1880 by the Duke of Bedford noted in *Victoria History of Bedfordshire III* (1912), 308.
- 5 cf. N.W. Alcock and M. Laithwaite, 'Medieval Houses in Devon and their Modernisation', *Med. Arch.*, 13 (1973), 100-125.
- 6 M.W. Barley, A. Rogers and P. Strange, 'The Medieval Parsonage House, Congingsby, Lincolnshire', *Ant J.*, 49 (1969), 346-366.
- 7 If the identification as Marston Morteyne manor house is correct, and the unlikelihood of construction during Elizabeth Morteyne's widowhood is accepted, then a date of *circa* 1375 seems most likely, as post 1428 is probably too late.
- 8 Estate map of Duke of Bedford 1767, compiled 1760, B.C.R.O. R1/42.
- 9 There are now two short vertical smoke-blackened timbers, one standing on each end of the cross-beam; this could have carried the original hip rafters but may have been reset during the alterations.
- 10 This joint contrasts with the birds mouth joints on the corresponding beam at Marston Moretaine.
- 11 N.W. Alcock, 'Timber Framed Buildings in North Bedfordshire', *Beds. Arch J.* 4 (1969), 27-29.
- 12 R.B. Wood-Jones, *Traditional Domestic Architecture of the Banbury Region*, (1958).
- 13 The only surviving evidence comes from colour slides taken by the owner Mr Batchelor, on demolition; a set of these is now in the Bedfordshire County Council's Sites and Monuments Record (S.M.R. 6760). A portion of the cruck blade with spur has been preserved by and is in the possession of Mr Batchelor.
- 14 This is not at present visible, the old thatch being 'tinned' over, but is clear from an earlier photograph of the building from which the elevation drawing in Fig 11 has been partly produced.
- 15 The only claimed cruck lying significantly further east, at Knebworth, Hertfordshire (TL 2520) (Alcock 1974) is now considered to be spurious. (Information from J.T. Smith).
- 16 P.V. Addyman, *Proc. Camb. Ant. Soc.*, 58 (1965), 38-73, esp. 43-52.
- 17 Information provided by W.S. Phillips and Mrs S. Colman.
- 18 For a contrasting view of cruck development, see J.T. Smith, 'Cruck Distributions: An Interpretation of Some Recent Maps', *Vernacular Architecture*, 6 (1975), 3-18.
- 19 Paper received December, 1975.