

# A CROWN POST ROOF IN KIRK GATE, NEWARK-ON-TRENT

by

DAVID L. ROBERTS

Two box-framed houses, now a shop, numbers 37 and 39 Kirkgate, Newark (O.S. reference SK 7988.5399), stand side by side on the north side of the street. The western building is a 16th-century house with moulded timbering.<sup>1</sup> It is now thrown together with the eastern building to form one unit. The roof structure over the western house has recently been renewed, but the roof over the other is almost intact, except that the covering is of modern pantiles.

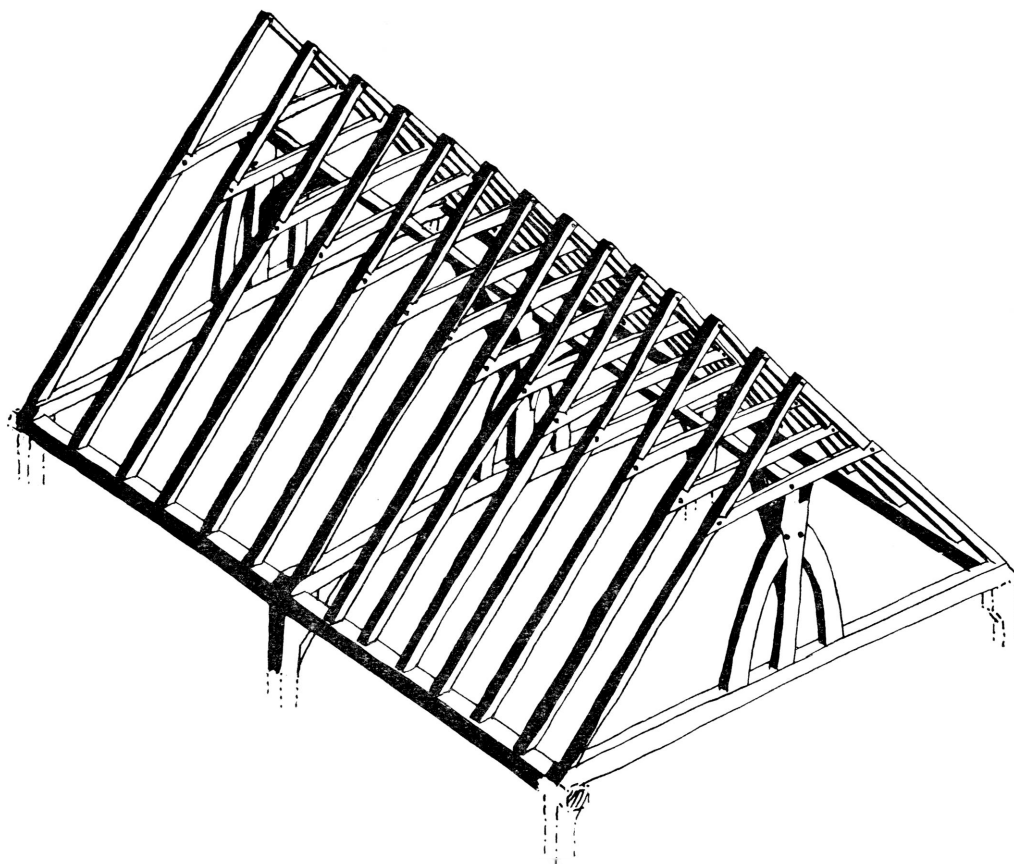


FIGURE 1 View of roof framing from the north-west, seen from above

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<sup>1</sup>Maurice Barley, 'Newark in the sixteenth century', *Trans. Thoroton Soc.*, LIII (1949) 18, observes that 'Among buildings erected in the sixteenth century, Kirk Gate House is perhaps the most interesting (see frontispiece). Its plan, in spite of alterations, is discernible; a door on the street opened on a passage which ran alongside a chamber fronting the street and past the spiral staircase to the hall, which was the main room, and was lit by a six-light window in the side wall. Whether there was a kitchen is doubtful; it has not survived. Upstairs a small chamber has still a fragment of wall painting'. These observations mostly concern number 37, Kirkgate.

The framing of the eastern house, number 39, is rather light and of somewhat coarse workmanship. The extensively altered ground floor supports a jettied storey approximately 22 feet by 16 feet. The interior of the roof is approached from the adjacent house, number 37. The roof was originally open, but is now ceiled off from the rooms below. The first floor has been extended to the east to form a small wedge-shaped closet over a footway.

Where visible, the framing has headed and jowled posts supporting a substantial wallplate over which are three tie beams dividing this front part of the building into two roof bays. Light vertical studding extends downwards to the jetty plate and is left exposed on the front. From the tie beams rise crown posts downbraced to mortices in the tie beam. From the crown posts rise braces which are tenoned into the collar purlin. These braces are arched at the outer posts, but the centre pair is cranked. The collar purlin supports 14 pairs of rafters, jointed and pegged at the apex, which each have a collar secured by a dovetail halved joint to the rafter sides. There is no sign of any sub collars or of a ridge purlin, thus there are no longitudinal roof timbers excepting the two wall plates and the collar purlin. The crown posts are tenoned into the underside of the three truss collars and have a recess cut out of the side, away from this tenon, to allow the collar purlin to pass. The western post is headed and jowled with a mortice in the canted face of the jowl to house the brace from the tie beam. The centre post, however, has the mortice for the downbrace in the post face below the jowl. The eastern post has no head and the brace here, as at the other end of the roof, meets the canted face of the jowl. The braces to the southern faces of the crown posts are morticed into vertical faces, the jowled and headed sides facing north.

There are six common rafters over the western bay and five over the other. It is possible that there were originally six over each bay and that one pair has been removed, possibly to accommodate a modern brick stub wall. As the rafter feet are nowhere visible the position of the birdsmouth housings in the wall plate cannot be used to confirm this.

The roughness of construction and the relative lightness of scantling would suggest, when taken together with the overall design, a date in the later 16th century.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>It is so dated in C. Brown, *History of Newark*, ii (1907), 28, illustration of exterior 26, and in Notts. County Council, *Newark: Action for Conservation*, pp. 45, 83, illustration of exterior p. 44.