

**The Thatched Cottage,
Bradfield,
Essex**

Historic Building Record



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The Thatched Cottage, Wix Road, Bradfield, Essex

Heritage Asset Assessment

This report provides an historic analysis and record at Historic England (2016) Level 3 of a fire-damaged grade II-listed thatched cottage at TM 14289 30176. It is intended to inform and accompany an application for Listed Building Consent to Tendring District Council. The site was inspected on 19th April 2021.

Summary

The Thatched Cottage was built as a small Tudor farmhouse and appears to have formed part of an isolated medieval green-side hamlet approximately 0.5 km south of the main village of Bradfield but now lies on the edge of its late-20th century conurbation. At the time of the parish tithe survey it was known as Wilby's Farm after an early-18th century tenant and extended to a little more than 23 acres. The timber-framed building dates from the late-16th century or possibly the very beginning of the 17th, and contains evidence of a rare three-cell layout that illustrates the transition between the open-hall houses of the Middle Ages and the fully floored dwellings of the early-modern period. Its central hall was open to its roof in the traditional manner but was heated by a chimney from the outset instead of a bonfire-like open hearth. The property is accordingly of considerable historic interest. The present brick chimney is likely to have replaced a timber-framed predecessor that ostensibly adjoined a single service room at the 'low' end of the hall instead of the usual parlour. Unfortunately any precise analysis is hampered by the rebuilding of the front wall in brick in the 19th century and by the renewal of the hall's roof-plates in recent years, removing all firm evidence of its external doors. Complete Tudor farmhouses of this small scale are far less common than their larger counterparts and the building is also of historic significance for this reason. The damage caused by the thatch fire in February 2021 was confined largely to the clasped-purlin roof structure and substantial areas of original wall and ceiling fabric remain intact along with evidence of two diamond-mullion windows.

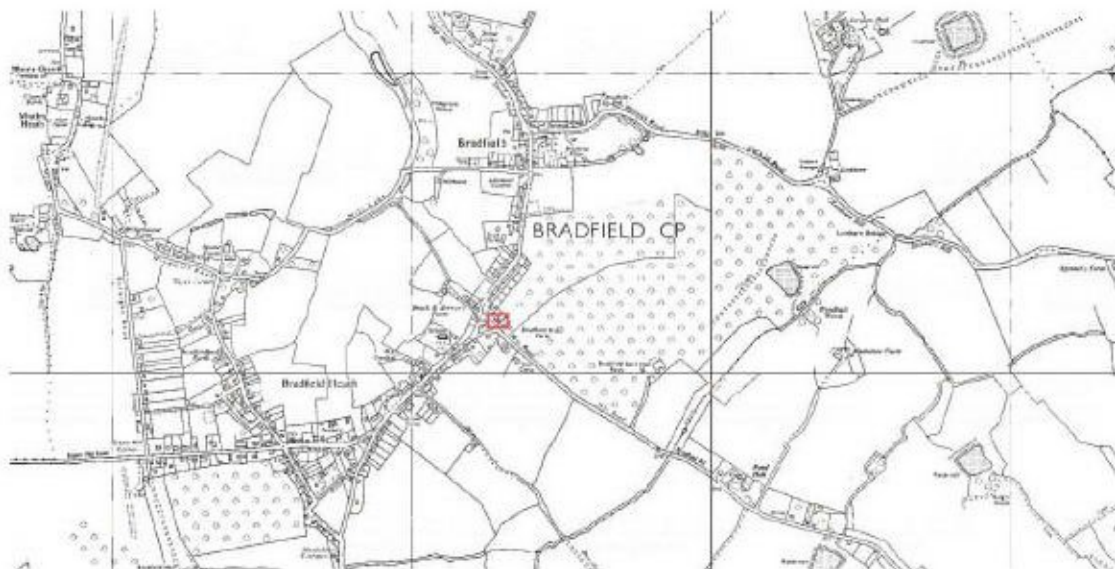


Figure 1. Site location plan based on the 1992 Ordnance Survey.

Documentary Evidence and Map Regression

The Thatched Cottage lies on the edge of Bradfield village to the north of Wix Road, facing what appears to have been a small, triangular medieval green now largely occupied by the Village Maid Public House and its car park. At the time of the parish tithe survey in 1838 it formed part of a detached hamlet approximately 0.5 km south-west of the main settlement around St Lawrence's church. Medieval hamlets were often focused on small common greens in this way, and the site remained isolated until a programme of ribbon development in the late-20th century saw it absorbed by the village conurbation. The timber-framed building originated in the late-16th century as a farmhouse and in 1838 remained a tenanted holding of just over 23 acres owned by Joseph Page and occupied by James English. Only 50% of the land was arable and the rest pasture, which accords with the description of James English in White's Essex Directory for 1848 as both a farmer and butcher. The 1841 census records him as a butcher aged 45 living with a wife, a 15-year-old female servant, and 7 children ranging in age from 4 to 15. The property was named as Wilbys Farm on the tithe map (figure 3), which probably derives from its occupant in the early 18th century, Thomas Wilby, who in 1718 leased a farm in the parish for £10 per annum from Joseph Fox of The Rookery (formerly Battlesea Hall), in Stradbroke, Suffolk (Essex Record Office Q/RRp 1/26). The Foxes were wealthy Catholics, hence the State's interest in their possessions, and Joseph appears to have acquired Wilby's Farm from his wife along with an estate of several others in North-East Essex including one in neighbouring Wix. The farmhouse was adjoined on the south-east by a complex of farm buildings that included a T-shaped barn on the site of the surviving red-brick barn shown in illustration 3, although the present building appears to be a replacement of the mid-19th century. By 1875 the house had been divided into three small cottages, as indicated by internal partitions on the Ordnance Survey (figure 4), and its land presumably acquired by a neighbouring farm. Between 1921 and 1959 the house was restored to a single dwelling and soon afterwards a new house known as Barn Farm was built to the south-east of the farm yard. The Ordnance Survey of 1992 shows the adjoining land planted with orchards and names the site as Bradfield Fruit Farm. On 26 February 2021 the cottage was damaged by a thatch fire presumably caused by the wood burning stove.

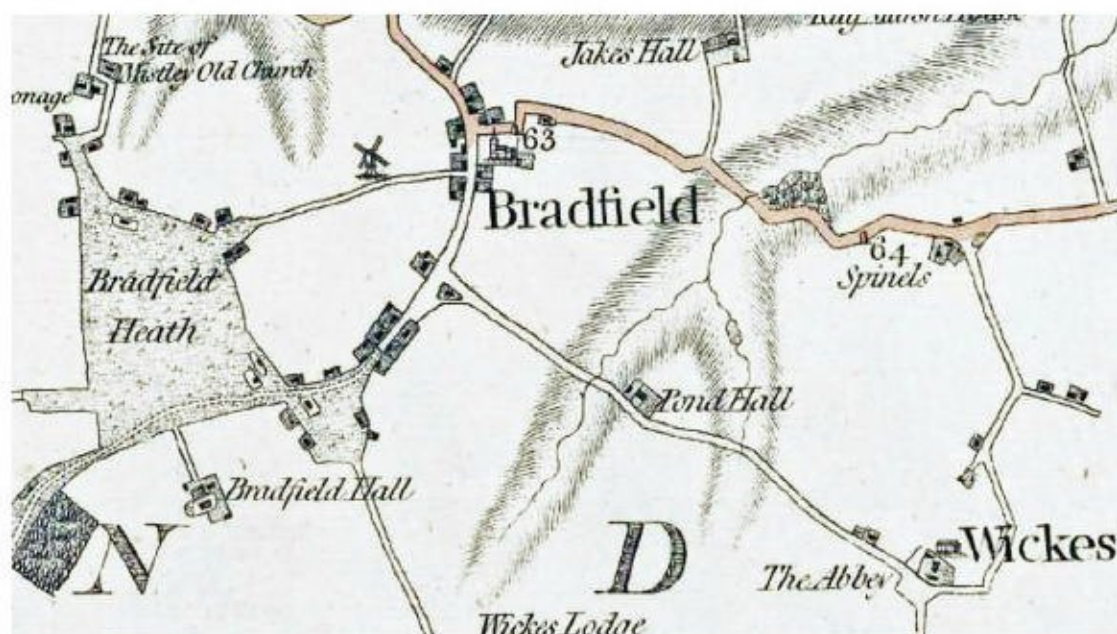


Figure 2. Chapman & André's map of Essex published in 1777. The Thatched Cottage lies to the north of the small triangular green at the junction of Bradfield Street and the road leading south-east to 'Wickes' – but is not shown. The one-inch Ordnance Survey of 1805 also omits the 16th century building, demonstrating that these early maps cannot be relied upon to depict even small farmsteads.

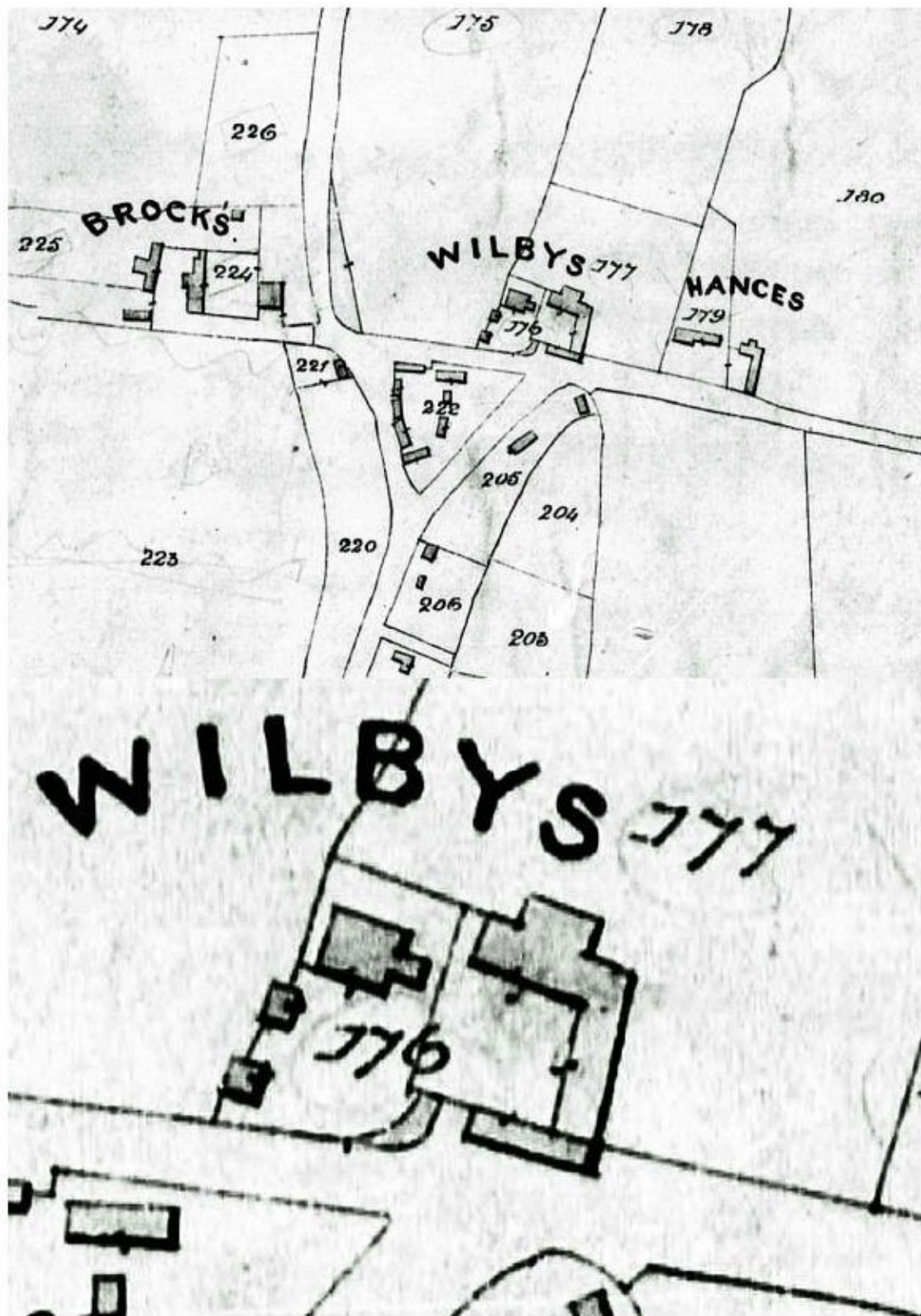


Figure 3. The tithe map of Bradfield with detail below, 'copied from a survey taken in 1818 and corrected to 1838' (Public Record Office). North lies towards the top left-hand corner. The Thatched Cottage is named as Wilbys Farm and is shown as a rectangular building with a small projection from its south-eastern gable. A T-shaped barn and farm yard adjoined in the same direction. The farm's 23 acres and 29 perches included the 'homestead' (176) with 'Five acres' (175), 'Three Acres' (178) and 'Pasture' (177) to the north and east. Plot 222 formed 'cottages and gardens' in separate ownership.

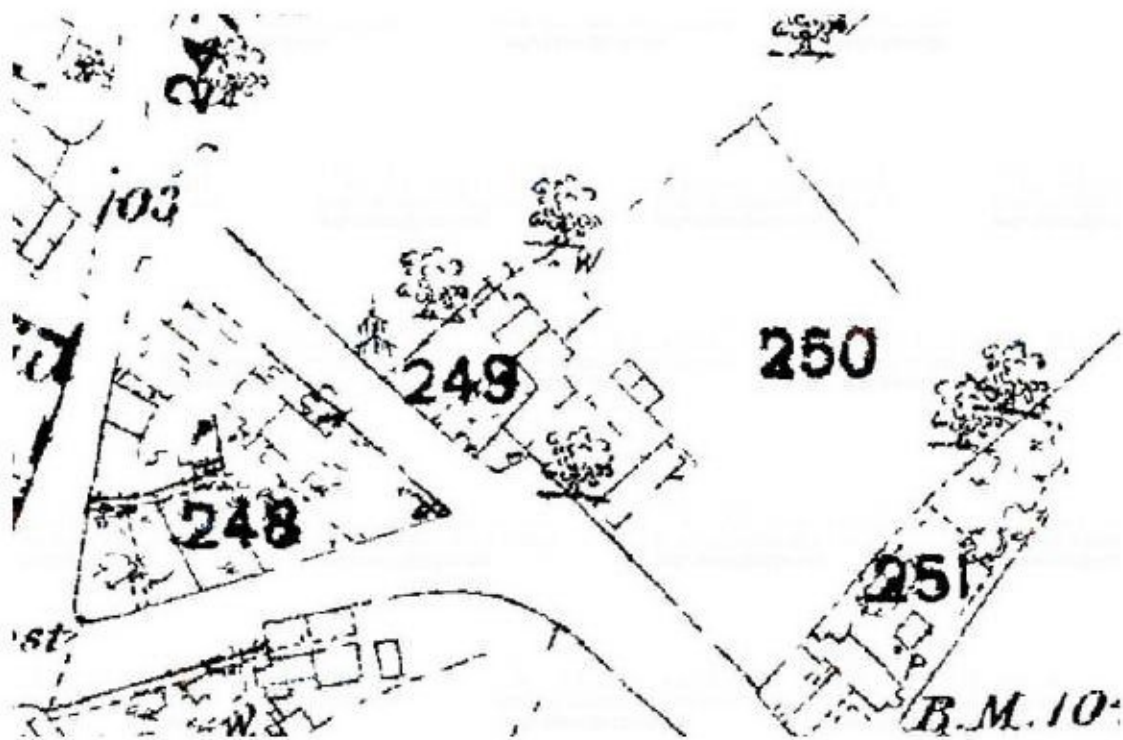


Figure 4. The First Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1875. Although faintly drawn the building is shown divided into three cottages as in figure 5 below.

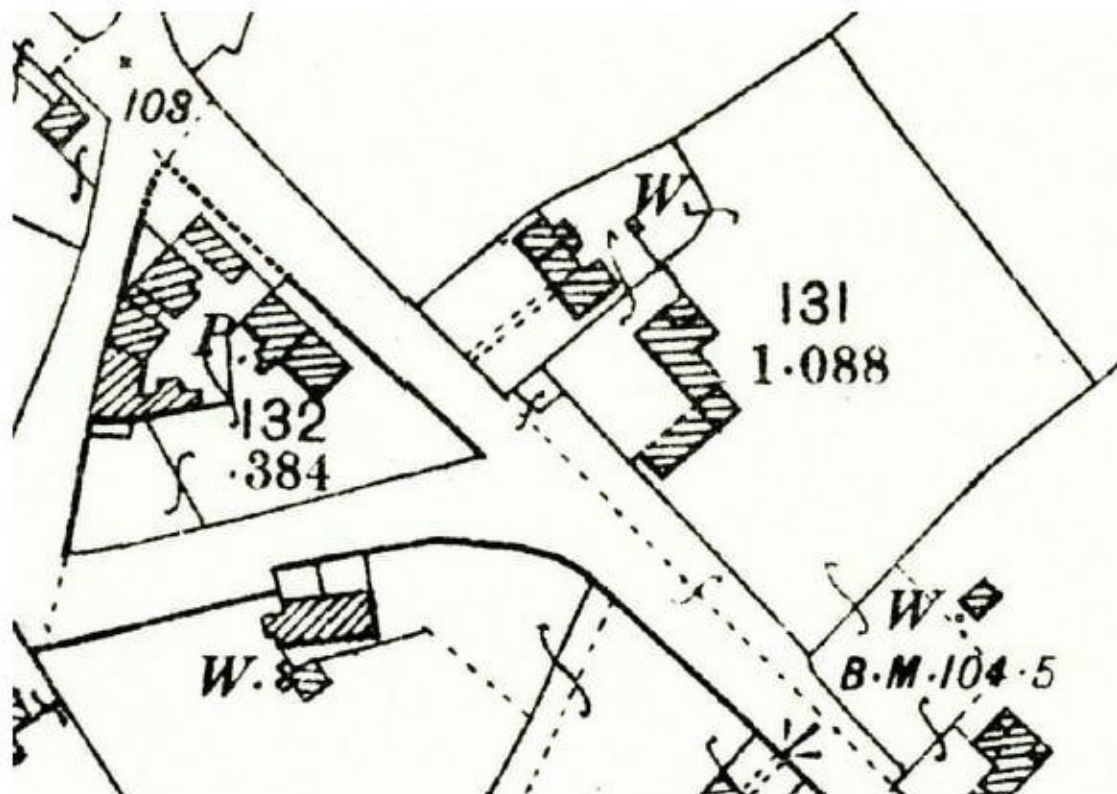


Figure 5. The Second Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1896. A path leads to the southern corner of the central hall which may indicate the position of the original entrance, and the two internal partitions correspond to the three ground and first-floor rooms of the original house - suggesting each cottage consisted of a single ground and first-floor room with rear lean-tos at both ends. Small farmhouses were often divided into labourers' tenements in this way as farms were amalgamated in the 19th century.

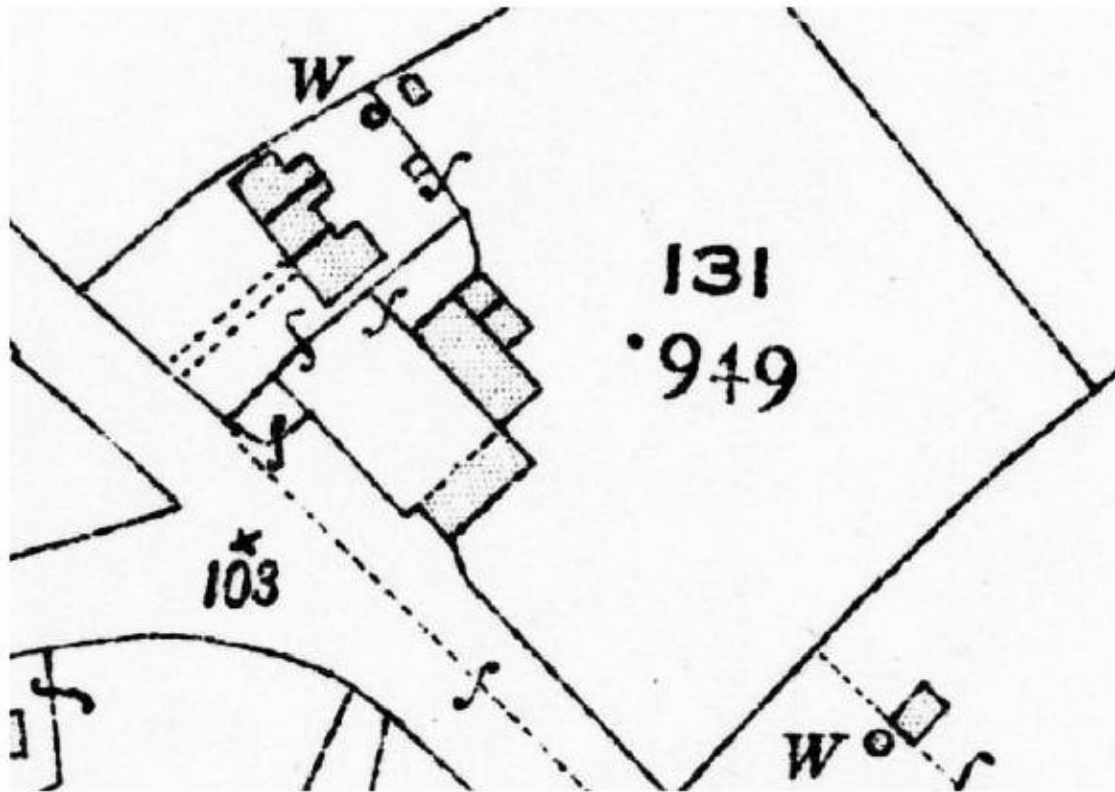


Figure 6

The 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1921, showing the former farmhouse still divided into three cottages. Its late-19th century outline, with lean-to additions at both ends of its rear wall, remains much the same today.

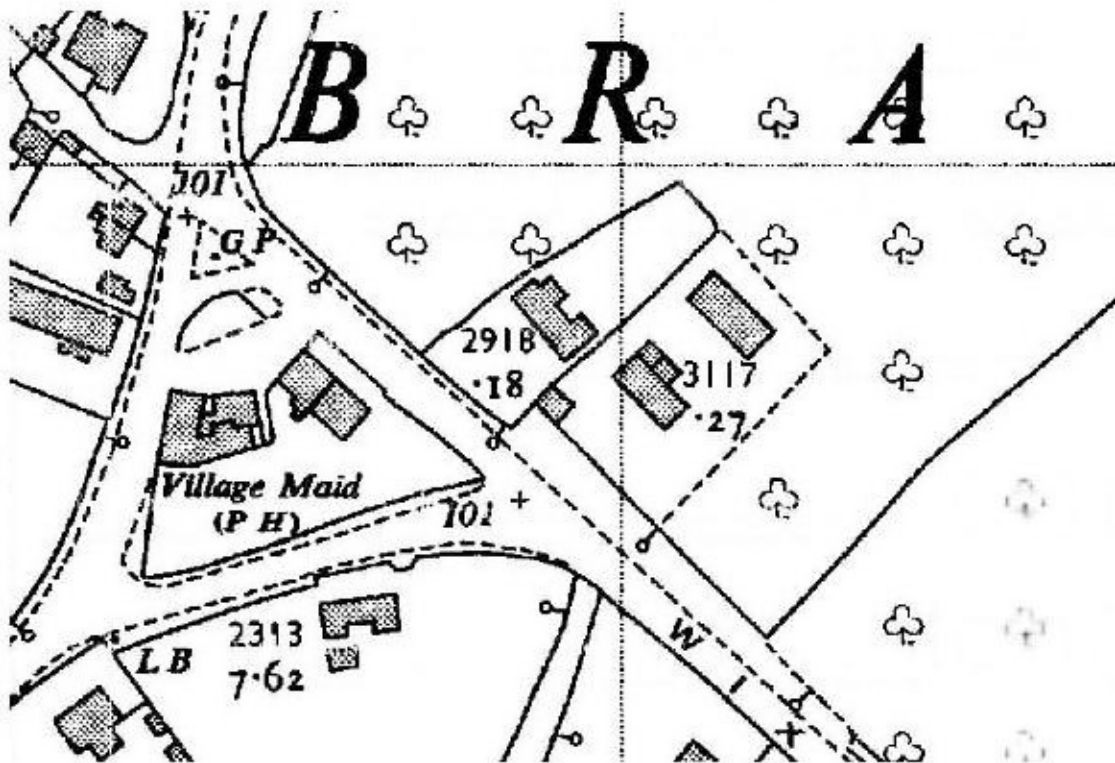


Figure 7

The 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1959, by which time the cottages had been reunited into a single house and orchards planted on the former farm land.



Figure 8
The south-western facade before the fire, taken in 2004 (top) and from Fine & Country's sales particulars of 2016.



Figure 9a

The central lounge, as labelled in figure 12, showing the modern fireplace in the original chimney to the south-east. From the sales particulars of 2016. Compare illustration 7. The lower storey survived the fire largely undamaged.



Figure 9b

The two adjoining chimney stacks exposed in the south-eastern bedroom (bedroom 3 in figure 12) from the sales particulars of 2016. Compare illustration 31.



Figure 10a.

The central bedroom from the south-western facade (bedroom 2 in figure 12), showing the rear dormer window. From the particulars of 2016. The substantial flat-sectioned rafters appear to survive from the original structure but the purlins and collars are hidden above what appears to be a plasterboard ceiling. Compare illustration 29.



Figure 10b. The north-eastern bedroom with the original gable on the right and the 19th century stair to the left (bedroom 1 in figure 12). From the sales particulars of 2016. Compare illustration 22.

Building Analysis



Figure 11
A current site plan highlighting the cottage in red and illustrating the proliferation of new housing since 1959.

The following account is intended to be read in conjunction with the captions to illustrations 1-36 which form part of the description.

Listing Entry

The Thatched Cottage is listed as grade II with the following entry in Historic England's schedule, which was last revised in 1987 (no. 1254113):

THE THATCHED COTTAGE, WIX ROAD, BRADFIELD (East Side)

Cottage. C17 or earlier. Timber framed, brick faced, weather boarded returns. Hipped thatched roof. Off centre right and left external red brick chimney stacks. Outshot to left return. One storey and attics, one eyebrow dormer. 4 window range of small paned vertically sliding sashes, moulded surrounds. Left C20 boarded door. Garage doors to outshot. Internal substantial frame with stop chamfered bridging joists and flat section ceiling beams, top-plate visible. Side purlin roof. Back to back fireplace now blocked with C20 fireplace. Vertically boarded doors.

This limited description is generally accurate and mentions the modern fireplace in illustration 7 which had evidently been installed by 1987. The reference to visible top-plates (i.e. roof-plates beneath the rafters) suggests they had yet to be replaced with new oak, and that the most recent and extensive renovation which included the new floorboards had yet to occur.

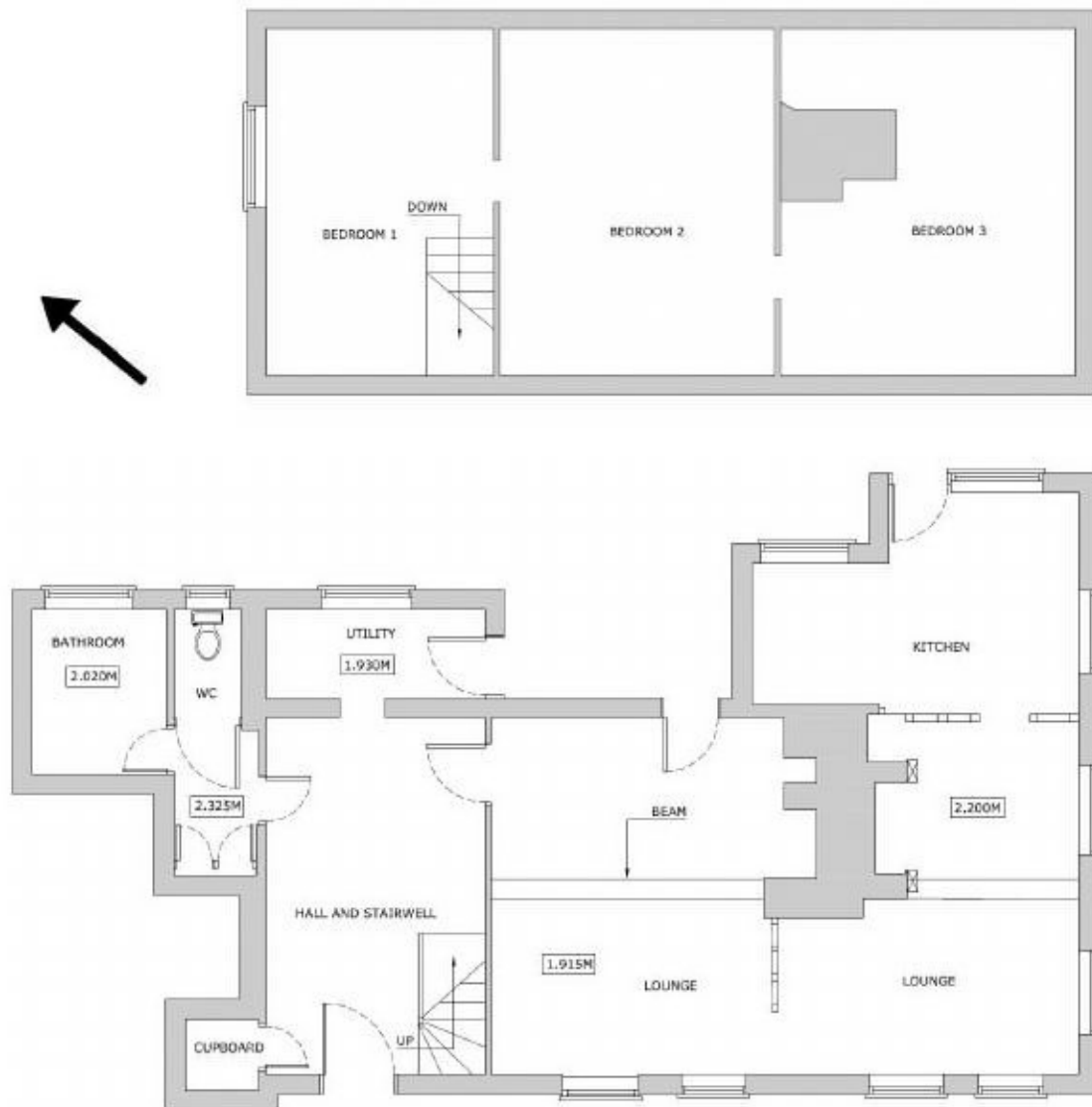


Figure 12
Existing ground (top) and first-floor plans by Richard Jackson Building Consultants.
The garage to the left of the house is omitted.

The Original House

Proportions, structure and date

The original timber-framed and thatched house extends to 11.75 m in length on a north-west/south-east axis (respecting the road) by a total of 5 m in width (38.5 ft by 16.5). Its walls rise to 2.4 m in height at their roof-plates (8 ft) and were initially fully framed in oak with jowled storey posts and externally trenched braces in the medieval tradition which remained in use until the mid-17th century. The roof structure was largely destroyed by the recent thatch fire but a single ostensibly original principal truss survives to the front of the axial chimney as shown in illustration 32. This truss consists of clasped-purlins with pegged collars and undiminished principals with no evidence of wind-bracing. Roof structures of this kind first appeared locally in the second half of the 16th century and are consistent with the late-16th or very early 17th century date indicated by the building's original layout and wall fabric. The absence of the wind-bracing usually found prior to the mid-17th century is equally consistent

with an 18th century replacement, but wind-braces were often omitted from relatively narrow buildings of modest status and in my view the roof was probably contemporary with the walls. There is evidence of re-used timber in the exposed section of external wall (illustration 19) but no original scarf joints are preserved in the roof-plates to assist in dating the frame.

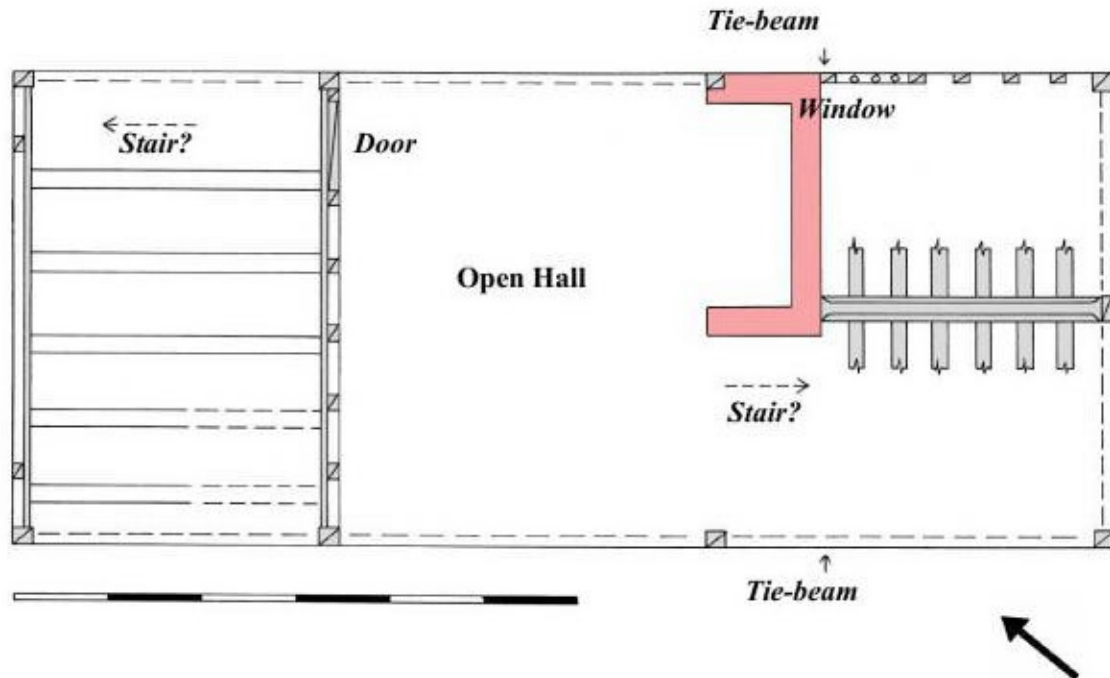


Figure 13

Original ground plan. The brick chimney is an original feature (or possibly an early replacement of a timber-framed predecessor in the same position), respected by the ceiling of the room to its right and defined by an additional tie-beam (arrowed), but the central hall was open to its roof in the medieval tradition. The framing of the front and rear walls is either concealed or rebuilt and the position of the original entrance is unclear. Scale in metres.

Layout

The layout of the original building was unusual and represents a transitional phase in the development of English housing between the medieval open hall and the standard early-modern arrangement of the 17th century. It is accordingly of special historic interest. The house contained three ground floor rooms reflecting the usual medieval and Tudor pattern described and illustrated in the Appendix, with a central hall-come-kitchen of just 3.8 m in length (12.5 ft). This single-bay hall was open to its roof but instead of the bonfire-like open hearth found in most such spaces it was heated from the outset by a chimney against its right-hand (south-eastern) wall. The present ceiling of the lounge (as named in figure 12) is an early insertion supported by a nailed bracket at one end and a short rail nailed between two original wall studs at the other (illustrations 8 and 11 respectively). The internal partitions reconstructed in figures 14 and 15 confirm the presence of an open hall as their existing narrow first-floor doors are also later insertions, one of which cuts a tie-beam, and the existing brick chimney is respected by original chamfer stops on the axial joist of the ceiling in the south-eastern bay – which it supports (illustration 17). The chimney was also respected by a missing original tie-beam indicated by corresponding dovetail joints in the roof-plates 1.1 m or 3.75 ft south-east of the hall's partition (illustrations 33 and 36). This tie-beam effectively formed a narrow dedicated chimney bay, but does not lie immediately above the wall studs and there is nothing to suggest it formed part of a complete partition, although it

may have belonged to a timber-framed flue that was later rebuilt in brick. Timber-framed chimneys with brick fireplaces were common in lower-status houses of the Tudor period, and this would also explain the presence of studwork in front of the chimney breast as shown in figure 14. Many were quickly rebuilt in brick and the existing brick chimney is no later than the 17th century, but its single fireplace is either obscured by the modern replacement in illustration 7 or has been rebuilt. The combination of open halls and chimneys might seem counter-intuitive, but the impressive, lofty interiors of such halls were designed for display as well as to disperse the smoke from open hearths and they were often found together in the 16th century – although most were created by inserting chimneys into older halls and original examples such as this are not common.

Chimneys were usually placed at the upper ends of halls in this part of Essex, allowing parlours to be warmed by radiated heat from their brickwork even in small houses which lacked space for back-to-back fireplaces. The neatly chamfered and stopped axial joist of the adjoining room in this instance also suggests it formed a parlour, as opposed to the large but plain joists of the room to the left (north-west) which are lodged on rails attached to the gable and internal partition. Both rooms are approximately the same length, with 3 m between the chimney and right-hand gable and 3.2 m between the partition studs of the left-hand room (9.75 ft and 10.5 ft). Instead of the central service door or doors that might be expected opposite the fireplace, however, the hall's left-hand partition contained only a single door against the back wall in the manner of a 'high end' wall adjoining a parlour (figure 15 and illustration 10). The exact nature of the door or doors in front of the chimney is a matter for speculation as the fabric has been replaced and the wide spacing of the stud mortices in the tie-beam above are open to different interpretations. The most likely scenario is that two doors lay side-by-side, with a stair against the chimney and a connecting door abutting the front wall. The stair to the left-hand chamber probably lay in the rear corner given the wide gap between the first ceiling joist and the back wall together with the offset position of the first-floor window (figure 16). The respective functions of the two outer rooms could be established with reference to the entrance arrangements, but unfortunately the front wall was entirely rebuilt in brick during the 19th century thereby destroying any evidence of the original front door. The roof-plates of the hall bay were also completely renewed during a recent renovation, and the framing of its back wall is obscured by plaster and may well have been similarly rebuilt. In consequence the exact original layout and the purposes of the outer rooms remain uncertain. Of the several possibilities it seems most likely that the entrance lay in the right-hand corner of the hall where there is evidence of a door in the 19th century brick facade (illustration 2), and that the chimney effectively backed onto the service room – despite its ceiling chamfer - with a parlour beyond the standard 'high-end' wall to the left. A 'lobby entrance' immediately opposite the front of the chimney is also possible. The small proportions of the hall coupled with the location of the chimney suggest that a cross-passage is unlikely and that the rear door lay to the left of the back wall.

Later Alterations

Apart from the insertion of its hall ceiling and perhaps the rebuilding of its original chimney in brick within a generation of its construction the house seems to have remained largely unaltered until the 19th century. It remained a single farmhouse at the time of the 1838 tithe survey but had been divided into three cottages by 1875. This subdivision may have coincided with the rebuilding of the front wall in Flemish Bond brickwork with sash windows, but the present front door in the left-hand bay appears to occupy the position of a window as only its upper half is respected by closers and the facade may slightly pre-date the change. The new chimney added to the back of the 17th century example to heat the right-hand room also probably pre-dates the conversion, albeit narrowly, but the addition of a now blocked chimney to the left-hand gable is more likely to be contemporary with the creation of the cottages. The brick and pantiled lean-to projections from the rear elevation were not shown in

1838 (although tithe maps are less accurate in such details than Ordnance Surveys) and were presumably part of the same process. The building is likely to have undergone further alterations when it reverted to a single dwelling before 1959, but there is evidence of a heavy restoration in the late-20th or early-20th century that involved the extensive sand-blasting of the exposed timbers along with the replacement of old internal plaster with plasterboard (particularly between the ceiling joists) and the renewal of the floorboards with modern softwood. The lean-to behind the right-hand room was also extended to accommodate the modern kitchen and a garage was added to the left-hand gable, possibly converting an earlier extension to the original gable as the building appears to have filled its plot in much the same way in the 19th century. The roof-plates of the hall bay have been renewed recently in oak, removing any evidence of scarf joints and the mortice pattern that would have identified the hall's original layout. The remaining roof-plates suffered varying degrees of damage in the thatch fire but remain *in situ* along with the fabric of the half-hipped north-western gable, but the similarly half-hipped south-eastern gable to the right was rebuilt in brick in the 19th century and any remaining roof timbers were lost to the fire. With the exception of the charred roof-plates and first-floor framing the losses to the original fabric was confined to the rafters which at the time of inspection survived only to the front of the chimney as noted above and shown in illustration 32.

Historic Significance

The Thatched Cottage is a complete three-cell timber-framed and thatched farmhouse of relatively modest proportions dating from the late-16th or possibly the early-17th century. Complete Tudor farmhouses of this small scale are far less common than their larger counterparts. Its original layout is also of considerable historic interest, illustrating a rare transitional arrangement between the open-halls of the Middle Ages and the fully-floored houses of the early modern period. Its layout was abnormal, with the chimney apparently at its 'low' end adjoining a service room instead of the usual parlour, but unfortunately any precise interpretation is hampered by a lack of evidence for its original door positions. This evidence was lost in the 19th century when the facade was rebuilt in brick, and more recently when the hall roof-plates were renewed, but the damage caused by the thatch fire was confined largely to the roof structure and the property continues to merit its listed status.

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Leigh Alston is a building archaeologist and architectural historian who for 20 years lectured on the understanding and recording of timber-framed structures in the Departments of Archaeology and Continuing Education at Cambridge University. He worked as the in-house building archaeologist for Suffolk County Council's Archaeological Service for 10 years and still fulfils this role for its successor, Suffolk Archaeology CIC. He also undertakes commissions on a freelance basis for the National Trust, private clients and various county archaeological units. Leigh co-founded the Suffolk Historic Buildings Group in 1993, serving as Chairman for 13 years, and has been involved in several television programmes including 'Grand Designs' and David Dimbleby's 'How We Built Britain'. Publications include 'Late Medieval Workshops in East Anglia' in 'The Vernacular Workshop' edited by Paul Barnwell & Malcolm Airs (CBA and English Heritage, 2004) and the National Trust guidebook to Lavenham Guildhall.

Elevations

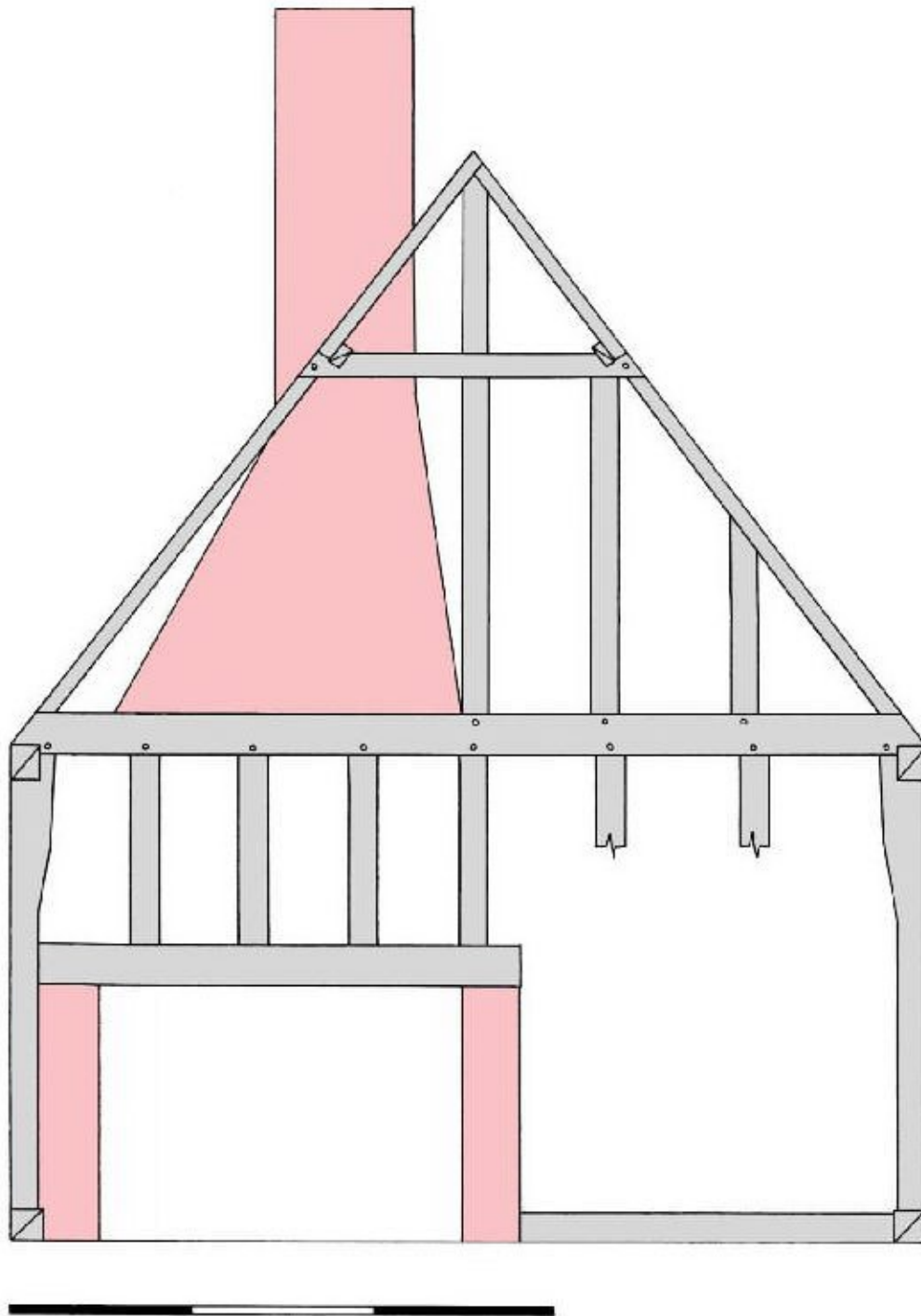


Figure 14

Reconstruction of the south-eastern wall of the central hall with framed studs concealing the chimney below the tie-beam. The wider spacing of the two studs to its right relate to the door of the room beyond and possibly another opening onto a stair but their precise configuration is speculative and therefore omitted from the reconstruction. The studwork below the tie-beam in front of the present chimney breast is either lacking or hidden and may have belonged to a timber-framed predecessor. Scale in metres.

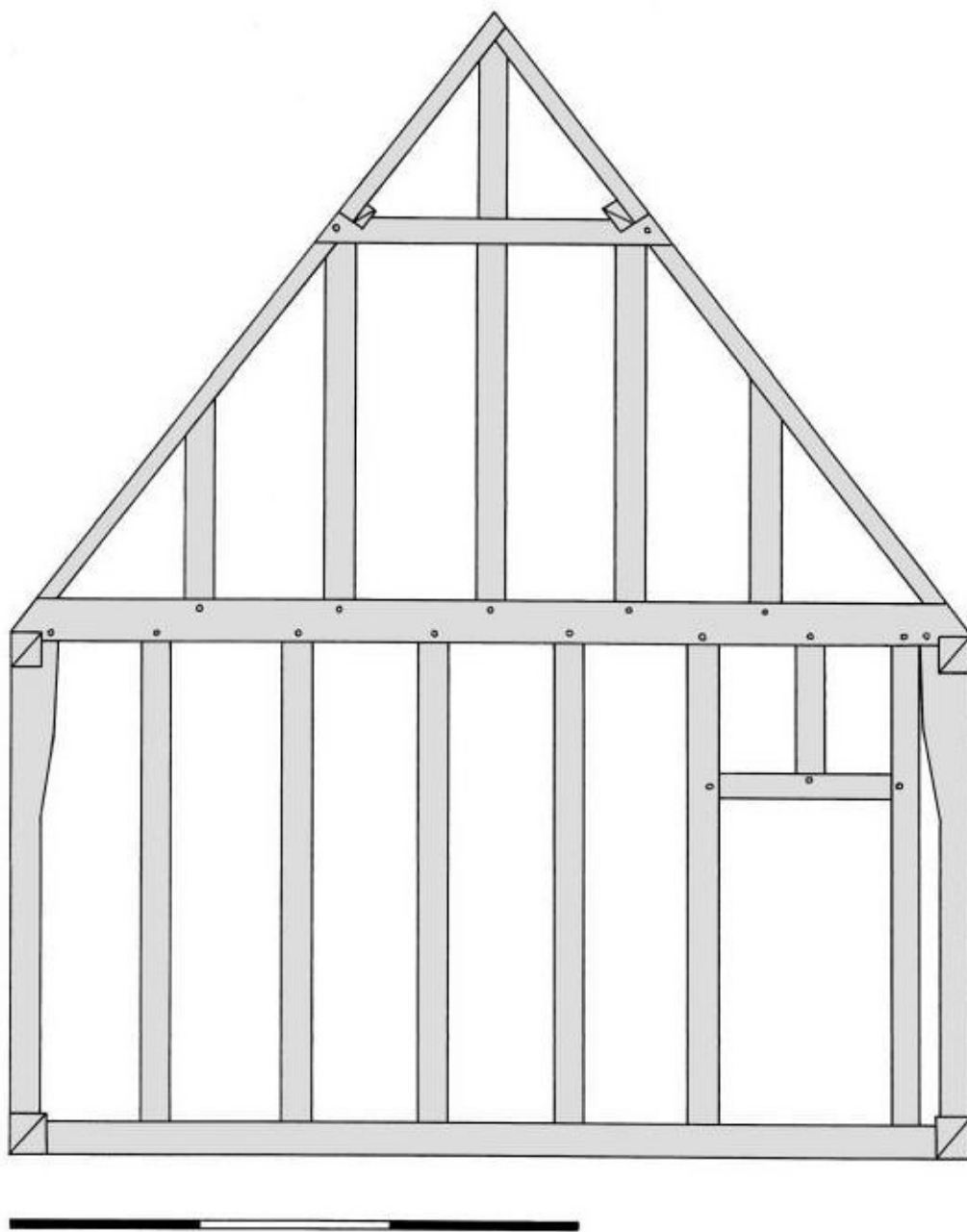


Figure 15

Reconstruction of the north-western wall of the central hall which contained a single door against the back wall in the manner of a 'high' end – yet the position of the chimney suggests this formed the 'low' end of the hall with the service bay beyond. Given its similarity to standard high end this is the most likely interpretation, and the north-western room was probably the parlour.

Scale in metres.

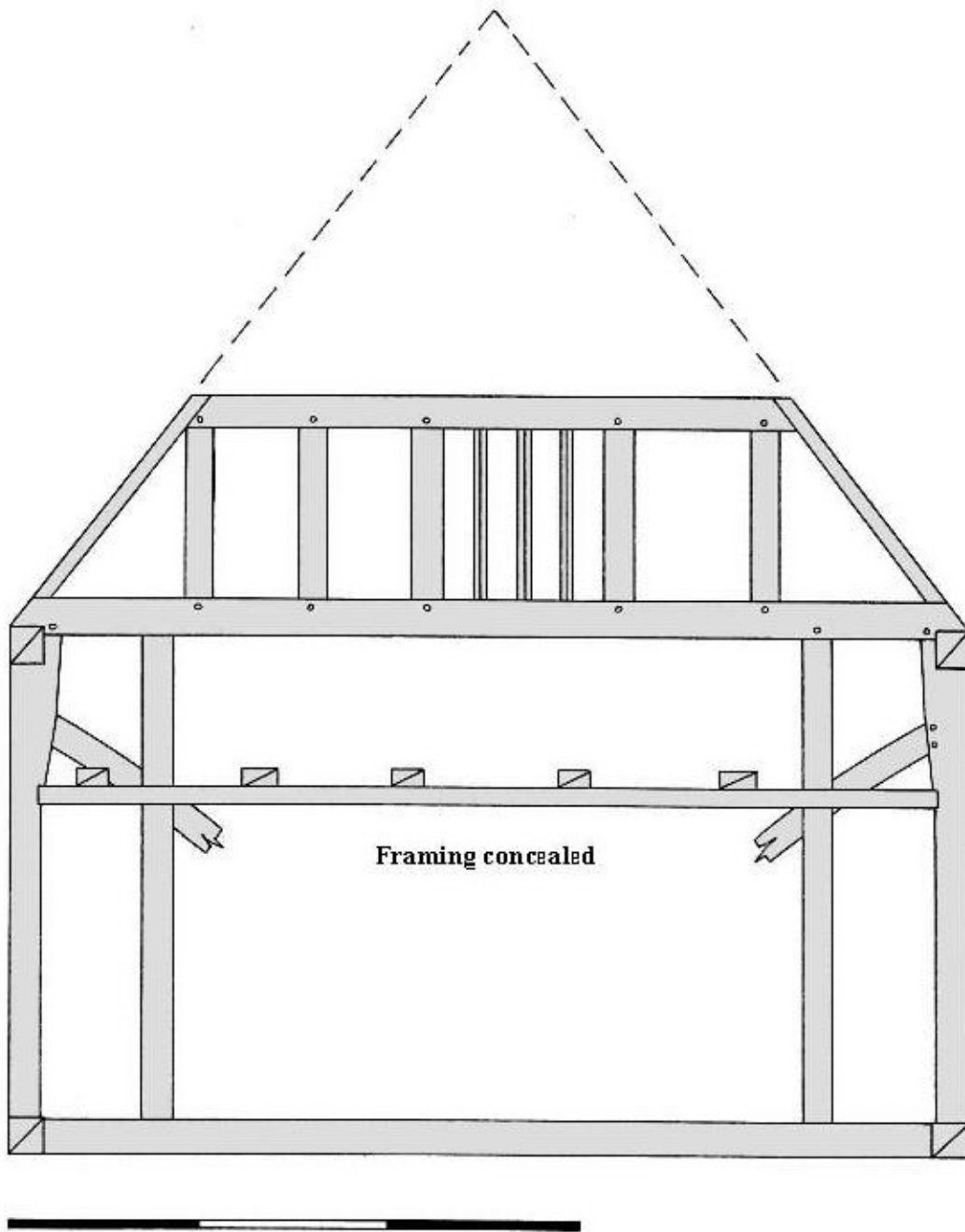


Figure 16
Reconstruction of the internal half-hipped north-western gable showing a diamond-mullion first-floor window to the right of its centre. This asymmetry was probably designed to light a stair in the right-hand corner. The upper tie-beam contains a groove for a sliding internal shutter.
Scale in metres.

Illustrations



Illus. 1. The south-western facade with the 20th century garage and the 19th century chimney against the original north-western gable to the left.



Illus. 2. A detail of the south-western facade showing its painted Flemish Bond 19th century brickwork and sash windows. The closers (quarter bricks) respecting the central window in this image continue to the ground alongside a vertical joint in the bonding, suggesting it occupies the position of an entrance that opened into the corner of the central door – corresponding to the path on the historic Ordnance Surveys and possibly indicating the location of the original entrance.



Illus. 3. The cottage from its former farm yard to the south-east showing the late-20th century horizontal windows of its 19th century gable of painted brick with the mid-19th century threshing barn on the right. The latter's doors are respected by the bonding.



Illus. 4. The north-eastern elevation from the rear garden showing the two pantiled lean-to additions behind the modern kitchen in the parlour bay on the left and the original service bay to the right – much as shown on the 1875 Ordnance Survey. Most if not all of the garage to the extreme right is a 20th century extension.



Illus. 5. The central hall from the south-west showing the rendered rear (north-eastern) wall with the modern fireplace in the original chimney on the right and the ostensible 'high end' wall to the left. The complete 16th or early-17th century ceiling has been inserted into a former open hall.



Illus. 6. The front (south-western) wall of the central hall showing its rendered brickwork and sash windows with the modern fireplace to the left. The hall extends to only 3.8 m in length (12.5 ft), but the original fabric of its external walls is either lost or hidden.



Illus. 7. The south-eastern wall of the central hall showing the 20th century brick fireplace and wood-burning stove in the original chimney with a gap in the later studwork for a connecting door to the parlour on the extreme right. The recess on the left appears to represent part of the original fireplace.



Illus. 8. A detail of the neatly curved chamfer stop to the south-eastern end of the hall's axial joist in the style of the late-16th and early-17th centuries. The joist is supported by a shaped and chip-carved bracket attached to the rendered brickwork of the chimney.



Illus. 9. The north-western wall of the central hall showing an original doorway with a pegged lintel to the right and a nailed rail supporting the axial joist of the inserted ceiling. The nailed lintel of a blocked inserted door is visible to the left of the rail but there is nothing to suggest this wall contained a second door initially.



Illus. 10. A detail of the original door lintel in the north-western wall of the central hall showing the pegged joints in both jambs. The two jambs are also tenoned and pegged to the tie-beam above.



Illus. 11. A detail of the neatly chamfered axial joist of the hall ceiling supported by a short rail nailed to the original central studs of the north-western wall. This method of attachment, coupled with the lack of original first-floor doors to the hall chamber, indicates that the ceiling is a later insertion into an open hall.



Illus. 12. The service room showing the modern entrance door in its south-western facade with the hidden fabric of the north-western gable to the right and the 19th century staircase of pine boards to the left. The substantial ceiling joists of 18 cm by 13 (7 inches by 5) are original features lodged on pegged clamps but the vertical timbers beneath the stair are re-used 20th century insertions.



Illus. 13. The service bay from its rendered north-western gable showing the framed original door to the central hall on the left with an external door alongside. The wide spacing of the ceiling joists in front of the hall door indicates the position of a former stair but there is no firm evidence of an original stair trap.



Illus. 14. The northern corner post of the original structure from its later extension showing the ceiling rail or clamp of the service gable from which the lower studs have been removed. The jowled post contained a double-pegged mortice for a descending externally trenched wall brace.



Illus. 15. The right-hand (south-eastern) bay seen from its gable with the 19th century fireplace against the back of the rendered 16th or 17th century chimney in the centre. The ceiling joists adjoining the front of the earlier chimney have been renewed, suggesting that a stair may have existed here. The open studs and brickwork dividing this space from the central hall in the rear are not original.



Illus. 16. The ostensibly original ceiling of the probable service bay showing its south-eastern gable on the right and the 19th century chimney to the left. The chamfered and stopped axial joist respects the original chimney to the extreme left and appears to be tenoned to the remains of a central post in the gable on the right.



Illus. 17. A detail of the axial joist in the south-eastern bay showing the run-out chamfer stop which respects the ostensibly original chimney on the left (but not the 19th century chimney in the centre). The joists appear to consist of elm but have been cleaned.



Illus. 18. The rear (north-eastern) internal wall of the parlour showing the lintel and sill of an original window on the left. This is the only section of original external wall framing exposed on the ground floor and adjoins the later lean-to containing the modern kitchen. The original ceiling joists are cut by the 19th century chimney on the left and a modern ladder stair adjoins its brickwork.



Illus. 19. The rear internal wall of the parlour with an original window lintel and sill tenoned between two studs on the left and an externally trenched brace rising from the stud on the right which is weathered internally and clearly re-used.



Illus. 20. A detail of the original window lintel in the rear wall of the parlour showing one of three empty mortices for diamond mullions. The nailed stud in the centre is a later insertion that blocks the window. Each mullion was 5.75 cm square (2.25 inches).



Illus. 21. The exterior of the parlour's rear wall from the lean-to kitchen extension showing two original truncated studs above the modern false studs on the left and a truncated original externally trenched wall brace against the central stud. The original window jamb and lintel are visible on the right.



Illus. 22. The 19th century stair landing in the service chamber looking south-west with the half-hipped gable on the right. The right-hand half of the roof-plate is original but is hidden by later boarding and has been replaced with a new oak timber on the left.



Illus. 23. The half-hipped north-western internal gable with evidence of an original window to the right of its centre in the underside of the upper tie-beam. The principal tie-beam is intact but largely hidden and any original studwork beneath is concealed by modern plasterboard. This gable is reconstructed in figure 16.



Illus. 24. A detail of the upper tie-beam of the north-western internal gable (illus. 23) showing empty mortices for three diamond window mullions with a groove for an internally sliding shutter.



Illus. 25. The chamber above the probable parlour from its gable to the north-west showing the fully framed partition adjoining the central hall chamber. The jamb of the original ground-floor door lies close to the storey post on the left with a pegged short stud above the lintel and the first-floor door is an insertion between to original studs. The floorboards consist of recent softwood throughout the upper storey with no evidence of earlier boards beneath.



Illus. 26. The north-western chamber from the south-west showing the charred but intact rear roof-plate hidden by plasterboard and modern iron straps.



Illus. 27. The partition to the north-west of the hall chamber with an ostensibly inserted doorway to the chamber beyond between two intact studs tenoned and pegged to the tie-beam. The stud pegs in the same tie-beam are evenly spaced with no evidence of ground-floor doors apart from the example shown in illustration 10. See figure 15.



Illus. 28. The central hall chamber showing the largely intact, fully framed partitions of the probable parlour bay and service bays to the right and left respectively. The modern softwood floorboards are laid directly onto the ground-floor ceiling joists with plasterboard infill. The south-western roof-plate in the rear has been entirely renewed in modern oak.



Illus. 29. The central hall chamber from the south-west showing the rear roof-plate which, like its front counterpart, has been completely renewed in modern oak.



Illus. 30. The partition against the chimney at the south-eastern end of the hall chamber with an inserted door to the parlour chamber cutting the tie-beam on the right. The tie-beam contains pegged mortices for original studs with wider gaps for an original ground-floor door or doors to the right. The present studs above the tie are later insertions but it contains pegged mortices for original framing at least in the centre. See figure 14.



Illus. 31. The probable service chamber from its south-eastern gable showing the 19th century brick chimney against its late-16th or early-17th century predecessor. Part of the probably original roof structure survives to the left of the chimney as shown in illustration 32.



Illus. 32. A detail of the single remaining truss of the probably original clasped-purlin roof structure with pegged collars but no evidence of wind-braces (to the left of the chimney in illustration 31). Despite the lack of wind-braces this roof is consistent with the late-16th century date indicated by the wall framing, particularly as the collar is dovetailed rather than simply lapped. The nailed lower collars held the later ceiling.



Illus. 33. The south-western roof-plate of the south-eastern bay with the gable to the left. This timber contains some pegged mortices for original studwork, albeit charred and difficult to identify, but now rests on 19th century brickwork. A dovetail joint for a missing tie-beam that flanked the original chimney is visible to the left of the modern cupboard on the right.



Illus. 34. The south-eastern gable of 19th century brickwork with the farm yard and mid-19th century brick threshing barn beyond. The gable and south-western wall may have been rebuilt in brick as part of the same site refurbishment that included the barn. Most farm yards in the region adjoined service rather than parlour gables.



Illus. 35. The exposed original framing of the rear, north-eastern wall of the probable service chamber, immediately above the ground-floor window shown in illustration 19. The chamber would have been lit by a window in its missing gable matching that of the north-western chamber. A dovetail joint for a missing tie-beam that defined a narrow bay for the original chimney is visible on the left (illustration 36).



Illus. 36. A detail of the rear roof-plate in the south-eastern chamber showing a plaster-filled original dovetail joint for a missing tie-beam that formed a 1.1 m wide bay for the original chimney and corresponds with another in the front plate.

Appendix

The Standard Room Plan of Medieval and Tudor Houses

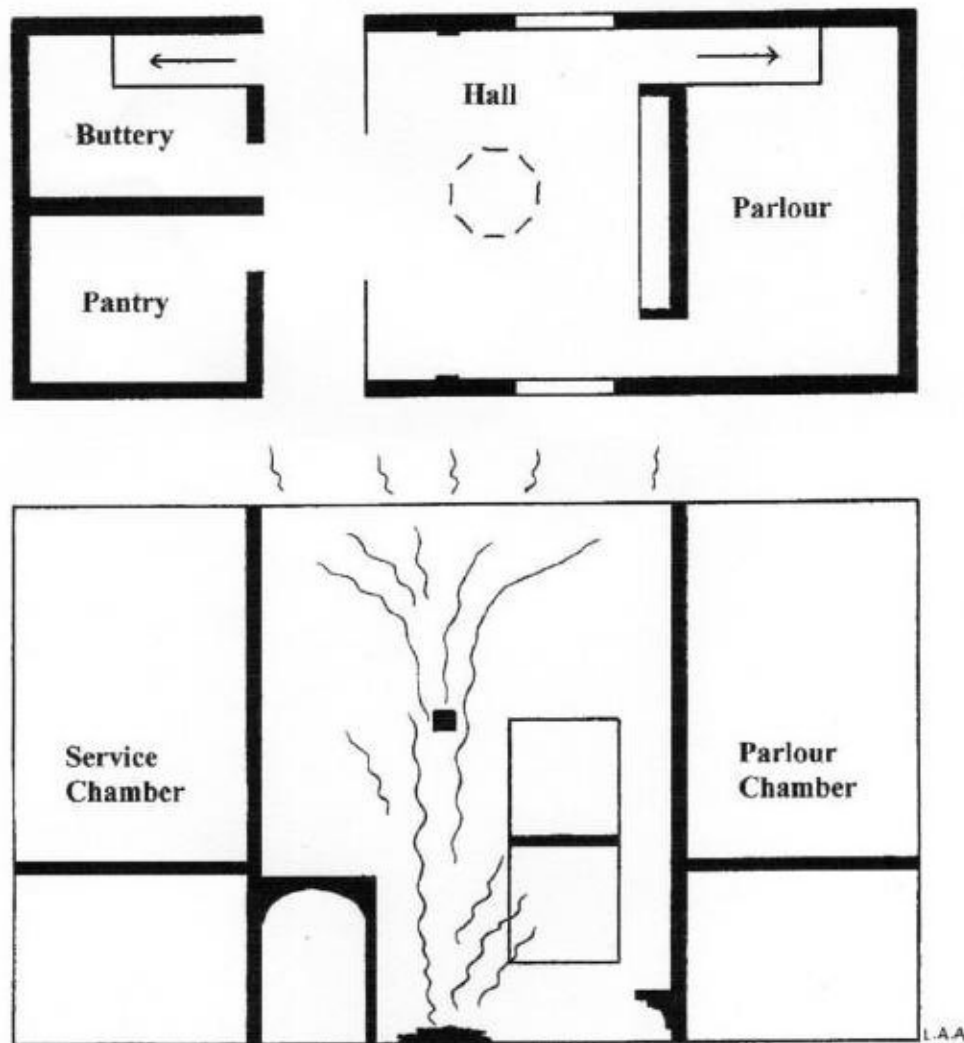
Although identical houses are rare, almost all domestic buildings constructed between the mid-13th and the early-17th centuries reflect the same room layout (see accompanying diagram). Until the opening decades of the 16th century the only heated space in a typical house comprised an open hall with an open hearth akin to a bonfire burning on its floor. In the absence of a chimney the hall, as its name suggests, was open to its roof in the manner of a barn to allow smoke to escape through the roof covering and through tall, unglazed windows which rose from normal sill height to eaves level. The hall was a communal space with little or no fixed furniture, and was used as a dining room, a dormitory for household servants and apprentices, and as a kitchen and general purpose working area at varying times of the day. The hall was also designed to display the wealth and status of its owner, and at meal times was arranged like a modern college dining hall, with the head of the household sitting with his immediate family behind the 'high table' at one end, while his servants and employees were arranged in order of precedence at secondary tables along the side walls. The lower an individual's status in the household, the further he sat from the 'high' end of the hall. The high table was often raised on a platform or dais, but contemporary references to the high and low ends of houses relate rather to social than physical hierarchy. Halls were usually divided into two structural bays, separated by a pair of principal posts carrying a tie-beam that spanned the walls at eaves level, with the great windows in the high-end bay towards the dais. Fixing pegs for the high-end bench, which was often attached to the wall, can sometimes be seen in surviving examples. The front and back doors of the house (which often stood open for ventilation purposes) lay opposite each other at the low end of the hall, forming a cross-passage that was partly screened by boarded partitions to exclude the weather.

The open hall in the middle of the typical medieval house was flanked by additional rooms that were usually floored over. Beyond the high end of the hall lay a single room known as a parlour, that served as the main bedroom for family members and guests and contained at least one bed (perhaps consisting of nothing more than a straw mattress) and perhaps a few pieces of furniture that normally included a storage chest. The parlour was entered by a door to one side of the high-end bench, and sometimes a second door on the opposite side of the bench opened onto a stair to the solar (upper room) above. Medieval living took place primarily on the relatively warm ground-floor, and the two solars of the house were used chiefly for storage purposes. An increasing demand for domestic privacy during the later 16th century saw the provision of additional bedrooms on the first floor, and the 'parlour chamber', as the room over the parlour came to be known, was often provided with its own fireplace. Principal bedrooms, used more and more for sitting and entertaining as well as sleeping, remained downstairs until well into the 17th century.

Beyond the low end of the hall lay two service or storage rooms termed butteries and pantries (or collectively as 'spences', i.e. dispensing rooms). As their names suggest, these were used for storing wet and dry goods respectively, and represent the household larder. The front service rooms of town houses often contained shops, and the buttery sometimes served as a dairy in rural contexts. Two doorways lying side by side in the middle of the low-end wall gave access to these rooms, usually in conjunction with a third door against the back wall that opened onto a stair to the service chamber above. Although the original arches of these doorways have frequently been removed, their position may be revealed by the distribution of peg holes used to secure the mortise and tenon joints of the wall timbers.

The tripartite plan described here is found in both large manor houses and small peasant cottages in the countryside, but is sometimes condensed in towns where houses consisting of only a hall and subdivided parlour (or occasionally a hall with service rooms) may be found. Houses of high status might also possess rear courtyards, containing additional

accommodation or perhaps bake-houses and workshops, but rarely add to the tripartite arrangement in their main ranges. Rectangular houses under a single roof are common, but more ostentatious town houses frequently contain their parlour and service rooms in relatively expensive cross-wings with jettied gables built at right-angles to their halls. From the beginning of the 16th century chimney stacks were inserted into open halls, and new houses built with ceilings throughout, but the standard layout endured. By the end of the same century fireplaces were typically provided in parlours as well as halls, and often the parlour chamber was also heated (but rarely the hall chamber). Not until the second quarter of the 17th century did the cross-passage plan begin to disappear from new houses, to be gradually replaced by a number of different layouts of which the 'lobby-entrance', where the main door opens into a narrow 'lobby' in front of a chimney stack between the hall and parlour, was the most common.



The Standard Medieval House Plan

The Thatched Cottage reflected this layout, with a central open hall, but was built with a chimney to the right. The opposite wall resembles a standard 'high' end, suggesting the left-hand room operated as a parlour with a service room behind the chimney, but any precise interpretation is hampered by the concealment and reconstruction of the front and rear walls of the hall and the consequent lack of evidence for the position of its main entrance.