

THE CHRONOLOGY OF CRUCKS

By E. A. Gee

Recently the study of crucks and kindred forms has advanced remarkably, and as nomenclature is now being studied by Sir Robert Hall I shall use only terms which by cross-reference seem to be fairly authentic. Likewise the various forms have been analysed very fully but it is worth noticing that as the cruck is a relatively small unit, two methods of giving it greater width and height occur quite early. One is the base cruck form in which the blades are separated for a greater distance than normal and connected by a collar, making possible a superstructure; and the second is to raise the blades in a stone structure. Both these types occur early and can be combined as in the great barns. In the discussion I shall tend to avoid scarfed crucks, some of which are on the very fringe of the subject, and upper crucks which are so often reused.

The scope of dating criteria has been suggested by N. W. Alcock as "those few buildings which show at least some objectively dateable features, such as mouldings, doorways or decorative carving, or which can be dated from documents or by scientific means".¹

It is strange to remember that T. W. French initiated a campaign to get crucks more fully recorded as late as 1951-2,² and that J. W. Bloe in the R.C.H.M. Essex Survey, 1921-4, was one of the first to recognise fourteenth-century timber-framed structures. Because crucks were an early form they were also considered to be of fourteenth-century date, and my suggestion at the 1959 conference of the Vernacular Architecture Group that they could also be quite late, was derided except by Professor Cordingley who informed me that in the north-west, crucks continued to be used well into the eighteenth-century, and that one of his students had proved quite conclusively upper crucks were used in the Lake District until about 1800.³ R. W. Watson has mentioned a house in the Fylde with contemporary crucks dated 1636 and R. W. Brnnskill had crucks associated, in Westmorland, with clay walls and

early nineteenth-century doors and windows. F. Lloyd has informed me of a house in Caernarvonshire dated 1626, built by one of the Bulkeley family and with contemporary crucks.

Crucks were always considered to be an early type of timber-framing but the danger of dating by typological sequences can be illustrated by reference to timber roofs erected by New College Oxford between 1380 and 1420. The same group of craftsmen produced a full cruck barn (Drayton, 1411-12), a raised cruck barn (Swalcliffe, 1421-3), a tie-beam roof (College hall, finished 1383) and a hammer beam roof (College chapel, finished 1383, replaced 1793). The original distribution of timber buildings has been considerably modified by survival factors, and it is perhaps a little strange to assert that the aisled hall began in the south-east when the oldest, such as that at Hereford (*c.* 1160), are in the west, and likewise the western distribution of crucks, while admitted, does not allow for the earliest known reference to a cruck being in Essex (1225).

DOCUMENTARY DATING

The earliest documentary references to crucks are from state archives, as the Crown was one of the first institutions to keep systematic records. The first so far discovered is in a grant of 1225 of 4 twisted posts (*postes tortos*) to William de Mandeville, Earl of Essex for his house at Plessey.⁴ The inference is that some building in the castle was of one bay, if timber-framed, and of three bays if the walls were of stone. (It is shown below that the "twisted posts" were crucks.) Henry III obtained Kempton in Middlesex from Hubert de Burgh the Justiciar and in 1233 Peter de Rivallis was ordered to provide 6 "postes tortos" from the Forest of Windsor to build an almonry there.⁵ This could be the same entry quoted by Innocent (p. 30) from *Select Pleas of the Forest* (Seldon Society) in which 6 bent posts, 120 rafters 20 feet long, and 6 wall plates are mentioned. In 1236 the Warden of Windsor Forest was to permit Symon the carpenter to take 2 "tortos postes" for the kitchen at Windsor.⁶ In another royal house at Brill in Buckinghamshire, a new garderobe 18 feet by 25 feet was built for the Queen in 1245-6 on the west side of the courtyard. It was timber-framed and had 6 forks or crucks.⁷ In *c.* 1250 the men of Blackwell

were to find forks or crucks and other wood to build a hall for the Prior of Worcester.⁸ The custodian of the King's forest of Clarendon was ordered by the King in 1251 to allow Robert de Shotenda to have 4 oaks to make crucks (*tortos postes*) out of the King's wood at Graveling.⁹ It does not specifically mention Windsor and is more likely to refer to a private house. The great castle of Harlech in Wales was begun in 1283, and in 1306-7 great crucks (*duobus grossis lignis tortis dictis crokkes*), each 25 feet long, were bought for £4 6s. 5d. for a new bake-house.¹⁰

The earliest reference to crucks in a small house may be 15 February 1311-12 quoted R. K. Field,¹¹ and this is also the earliest note of crucks in Worcestershire. Thomas de Tocceley is to build a house with 4 crucks (*furcas*) in Warley, with the help of Roger le Per. On 2 December 1321 Thomas le Fysshre granted to Roger son of Ralph of Oldbury his tenement at Oldbury in Worcestershire on condition that Roger built a house of 6 crucks there (probably 2 bays).¹² In 1325 in a lease, William Gamul of Knutton, Staffordshire was to add 2 crucks (*furcas videlicet crokus*) to the tenement.¹³ A cowhouse of timber including 5 pairs of crucks was erected in 1341 at Swineshurst in Bowland Chase, Yorkshire.¹⁴ At Leicester the Guild of Corpus Christi was founded in 1347 and the Guild Hall, which still exists, was built soon afterwards.¹⁵ On 30 June 1389, at Broadwas in Worcestershire, Thomas Brown agreed to build a 3 bay house in a year at his own cost, but the lord would give him 4 crucks (*furcae*) from his old sheepfold.¹⁶ A lease of property at Nun Stainton in County Durham in 1392 referred to the fire house with 2 gables and 5 pairs of crucks (*syles*), a grange with 2 pairs of crucks and 2 gables, another grange with one couple of forks and 2 gables, and a little building on the west of the fire house with 2 pairs of crucks and 2 gables.¹⁷ At Moor in Worcestershire on 6 July 1403 William Walker was to build a 3-bay house and the Lord of the Manor would provide the crucks.¹⁸ In Leicestershire a lessee was required on 31 December 1405 to build a house with 3 pairs of "forkes" in his tenement,¹⁹ and in 1408 grain was collected from a tithe barn which belonged to Leicester Abbey, a barn still existing at Church Farm, Crosby.²⁰

New College Oxford was not only well endowed but it had

sufficient capital to build with a good work force. A cruck barn at Drayton in Oxfordshire was constructed, almost certainly in 1411-12, by John Jylkes carpenter for he was then working there. He also built a house and was otherwise concerned with the erection of most of the famous barns belonging to the College.²¹ The Drayton barn was drawn by J. C. Buckler.²²

On 1 May 1416 Thomas Kingyet was to build a 3-bay cruck house at Cleeve in Worcestershire²³. On 4 May 1416 at Tibberton in the same county Richard Wode had died and John Onwyn, who took over, was to build a similar house "spacia furcarum".²⁴ In a contract for building Catterick Bridge in Yorkshire in 1421-2, there is a reference to a masons' lodge with 4 "romes of syelles", i.e. a cruck building of 5 bays.²⁵

New College rebuilt the hall and solar of their capital house at Swalcliffe in 1397-1423, and the great barn of 10 bays would be part of the same operation. Richard Winchcombe, master mason, was employed there in 1405-6, and John Gylkes, carpenter, was working on the hall and stable in 1397-8, on farm buildings in 1408-9 and 1412-13, and on a chamber and a chapel in 1423-33.²⁶ The porch doorway has a four-centred head and it is significant that the masons connected with New College, William Wynford and Richard Winchcombe, were perhaps the first to use this feature. On 5 March 1422-3 carters were paid 14s. 8d. for taking timber from Swalcliffe to Adderbury. Richard Winchcombe rebuilt the chancel of the church at Adderbury for New College in 1408-18.²⁷ A considerable amount of money was spent on other new buildings on the manor in 1421-3 and there are two accounts which are almost certainly for the erection of the great tithe barn. The accounts were kept by the bailiff Simon Vesey. Stone was dug in the quarry, and Nicholas Box with others dug the foundations. William Mason constructed more than 17½ perches of wall including 7 buttresses (£20 5s. 4d.) and John Gylkes was in charge of the carpentry work and supplied wood (£26 19s. 11d.). Some wood carried from Swalcliffe may have been surplus to the building of the barn there. John Badby put stone tiles on the roof (£6) and ridge tiles and "tabilstones" were brought from Teynton quarry. An important lead gutter cost 21s. 9d. A crane was rebuilt for the job and materials bought including lime, sand, red earth, lath nails and hooks for the door.²⁸

There is another barn of the same kind at Upper Heyford, Oxfordshire, and again John Gylkes was working there in 1423-4 for New College.²⁹

At Holdsworth Inge in Ovenden in the West Riding of Yorkshire, William Greenwood of Mixenden was granted a close for 40 years in 1432 on condition that he built a house of 8 crucks with a stone slate roof.³⁰ N. Alcock has printed a full account for the building of a cottage at Bishop's Clyst in Devon in 1438 including 10s. 6d. to carpenters hired for making the crucks.³¹ A contract of 1444-5 between the Warden of Winchester College and two carpenters to build an inn, mentions "a coupel trussid from the groundsile" which Salzman suggested must mean a cruck construction.³² At Kirby Malhamdale in Yorkshire in 1454 the carpenters were given drinks when they put stylobates under the cruck.³³ In 1458, 7 pairs of syles were provided for a barn at Durham and David Forster was paid for making 2 pairs of syles (crucks) and a ridge piece for it.³⁴

There is reference to a habitable house of 8 pair of crucks, another not habitable with 5 pairs, a barn with 6 pairs and a hay house with 10 pairs of crucks at Abney Grange in Derbyshire in 1473.³⁵ A lease for new buildings at Rawmarsh in Yorkshire in 1474 mentions a barn of 10 crucks.³⁶ Salzman notes an agreement by a mason to build a malt house with stone sleeper walls, mud walls thereon and a roof of 3 couples in Exeter, but D. Portman doubts whether the reference is to crucks.³⁷ In 1495 the Abbot of Whitby obtained oaks for 3 pairs of forks (crucks) beams and wall plates for the repair of his house at Goathland, Yorkshire after the manner of the country.³⁸ Thomas Ramsden junior released his right in buildings adjoining a house of 6 crookes in 1537 at High Trees, Greetland, Yorkshire,³⁹ and in 1555 it was reported that the vicar of Wharram Percy had not rebuilt the "barn or laythe of six postes or crokkes" after a fire in 1547.⁴⁰

Cracoe in Craven, West Riding of Yorkshire once belonged to Bolton Abbey and after the Dissolution was granted to the 1st Earl of Cumberland. In a survey made for him, every house and barn stood upon crucks and was thatched.⁴¹ In 1557 Nicholas Ricroft had built a fireplace and a laith (barn) of 3 pairs of crucks and Richard Cockson had built a fireplace of 4 pairs of oak crucks and he had a barn and hayhouse each of

2 pairs of crucks.⁴² Six houses of cruck type are mentioned also in another survey of 1586.⁴³ In 1578 at Great Canfield in Essex, Francis Forger had put a carthouse on the waste, built on 4 "postes vocatis crotches".⁴⁴ At Hornby in Lancashire a survey in 1581 noted 3 tenements with a large number of crucks which must have included outbuildings.⁴⁵ One of the most remarkable surveys is that of Settrington in Yorkshire made by John Mansfield the Queen's surveyor in *c.* 1600 which lists all the tenements and their outbuildings and the number of crucks in each building. Mercer has analysed the list for social significance of the holdings and there are in farms, cottages, barns, stables and separate kitchens over 440 pairs of crucks.⁴⁶ There is an element of doubt in various references to a crocke in Lincolnshire glebe terriers in 1611-12 but crocks in Nidderdale in 1635 are valid.⁴⁷

Dunbar has drawn attention to some eighteenth-century crucks in Scotland⁴⁸ but the first author to suggest that crucks could be late was William Dickinson who gave extracts from a report by Mr. Brown,⁴⁹ steward to the Netherby Estate, suggesting that the change from cruck buildings with clay and mud walls to the modern type took place in about 1819. Dickinson later gave an interesting description of the construction of the typical house. Brunskill has recorded nineteenth-century clay walled cottages at Causewayhead near Silloth in Holme Law Parish, and at North End in Burgh by Sands with crucks.

The cruck tradition persisted and in an interior at Glenfeshie with the Duchess of Bedford and Lady Rachel Russell, painted by Sir Edwin Landseer in 1860, there are the most magnificent crucks.⁵⁰ The building was demolished by 1954.

DATING BY ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

Decorative Elements

In general crucks have very little decoration and are thus less easily dated by the usual criteria, but a few have ornamentation that can narrow the period. Dog-tooth at Moor Hall, Middlesex, which belonged to the Hospitallers, would suggest an early thirteenth-century date,⁵¹ and similarly an enrichment like dog-tooth which occurs on a doorway at Lower Norchard cottages at Peleton, Worcestershire.⁵²

West Bromwich Old Hall, Staffordshire (c. 1210–1310) has base crucks and scalloped decoration on the wall-post capitals similar to that at Halesowen Abbots Lodging (late thirteenth century).⁵³ Jones and Smith⁵⁴ have shown that the similar base crucks at Wasperton Manor Farm in Warwickshire (c. 1300) have the same decoration and could have been made by the same carpenter.⁵⁵ From c. 1257 Wasperton belonged to Coventry Priory.⁵⁶ Pilliven in Devon has moulded capitals like those at Wasperton and West Bromwich, and could be of early fourteenth-century date.⁵⁷

The great barn at Glastonbury was probably built by Adam de Sodbury in 1322–35⁵⁸ and its features, recorded by Pugin,⁵⁹ bear out this date. The signs of the 4 Evangelists associated with a four-centred headed doorway could be fourteenth century; a window in the porch cable has 2 ogee-headed trefoiled lights and fourteenth-century mouldings. The doors in the sides of the porch have 2-centred heads and continuous reveals that are usually of fourteenth-century date, but the most helpful details are in a small window in the gable which resemble those in the clerestory of Lichfield Cathedral nave (second half of the thirteenth century) and has soffit cusps. Another gable window resembles those of the back-lighting to the triforium of Westminster Abbey (c. 1260) and some in Hereford cathedral north transept clerestory (c. 1285). Soffit cusps can extend into the early fourteenth century.

Pilton Barn in Somerset also belonged to Glastonbury and has the 4 Evangelists and windbraces like Glastonbury barn.⁶⁰ Doutling Barn in Somerset belongs to the same group.⁶¹ The roof in Bradford-on-Avon Barn in Wiltshire, which belonged to the Abbess of Shaftesbury, is so similar as to suggest an early fourteenth-century date likewise.⁶²

Upper crucks in a conventual building of Bradenstoke Priory Wiltshire had ballflower, which is usually of early fourteenth-century date.⁶³ The Abbey at Sutton Courtney in Berkshire, which was a grange of Abingdon Abbey, has one great cruck truss in the hall associated with a large window with fourteenth-century flowing tracery, and doorways with contemporary mouldings.⁶⁴ Lower Brockhampton Hall Herefordshire, has mouldings, small battlemented capitals and cusped struts which suggest an early fifteenth-century date.⁶⁵ A moulded cruck truss

in Neadon, Manaton, Devon⁶⁶ is associated with features of the late fifteenth century, and Spout House in Bilsdale Midcable, Yorkshire has crucks related to good mullioned stone windows of *c.* 1520.⁶⁷

Mouldings

Mouldings on crucks are rare, and mouldings in wood are always difficult to date, but perhaps the quarter-round, which can be related to the fourteenth century wave-mould is most valuable.

The Hyde, Stoke Bliss in Worcestershire, which belonged to Limebrook Nunnery, has the quarter-round on foils above the collar. The main truss has a quarter-round, hollow and filleted roll which will be of the fourteenth century.⁶⁸ Eaton Hall, Leominster, Herefordshire, (*c.* 1390) said by Leland to have been built by Leonard Hakluyt, Knight of the shire 1385, Sheriff 1400 and at Agincourt, has the same mouldings. The family were there in 1360–85 and one is tempted to date it earlier.⁶⁹ Swanstone Court Dilwyn, Herefordshire with quarter-round mouldings and filleted rolls is another fourteenth-century house and was inhabited by Sweynston, M.P. for Weobley.⁷⁰ At least 2 great Welsh houses fall into this group. Plas Ucha at Llangar, Merioneth has a cruck-framed central truss and quarter-round mouldings on the spere truss.⁷¹ Plas Cadwgan, Esclusham Below, in Denbighshire had a great cruck truss in the hall and quarter round mouldings.⁷²

Mouldings could also be useful in dating the following buildings; Ty Draw, Llanarmon, Mynydd Mawr in Denbighshire has hollow chamfers and other features that could be of the mid-fourteenth century.⁷³ Handsacre Hall, Armitage, Staffordshire, has mouldings of the second half of the fourteenth century and its open truss is of base crucks.⁷⁴ Tabley Old Hall in Cheshire is said to have been built by Sir John Leycester in 1380 and had mouldings of the time of Richard II.⁷⁵ Hinton Waldrist Rectory in Berkshire has moulded trusses of *c.* 1400 and was noted as a "verie faire house" in 1591.⁷⁶ Amberley Court Marden, Herefordshire, has mouldings of the first half of the fifteenth century. The Lingen family built it and in 1433 Phillip Lingen was noted amongst the gentry.⁷⁷ Bryndraenog, Bugeildy, in Radnorshire has base crucks, a window and other

features above the collar, all trefoiled, some mouldings and a battlemented bressumer at the lower end, all of the fifteenth century.⁷⁸ Lower Tal-y-van Dingestow in Monmouthshire is noted as having mouldings of *c.* 1480.⁷⁹

Ultimately crucks with upper parts of the roofs cusped should give a date bracket. Houses noted by J. Tonkin and otherwise dated 1360–1400 with cusped features are the Hyde, Worcestershire and Lower Brockhampton Hall, Eaton Hall, and Amberley Court in Herefordshire.

Some interesting correlations can be made in the lists given by Smith of crucks (pp. 395–9 and map 20) and of cusping (pp. 417–18 and map 20). Crucks with cusping are found in Breconshire (1) Caernarvonshire (2) Denbighshire (7) Flintshire (2) Merioneth (7) Montgomeryshire (8) Radnorshire (7), 31 in all.

INFERENCEAL DATING

Various external conditions can provide an upper dating bracket, and in this group can also be put those buildings where a date on the fabric might indicate the chronology of the crucks. Even now it is often argued that if the walls are not timber-framed the crucks have to be earlier than everything associated with them, but sooner or later it is realised that they could be of the date of the walls and of the date-stone.

All monastic tithe barns would be erected before the Dissolution of 1536–9 and closer dating should be possible. A selection of cruck built barns under their religious houses in alphabetical order, and not mentioned elsewhere, include the barns at Englishcombe in Somerset (Bath Abbey),⁸⁰ Upper Oldfield, Yorkshire (Kirklees);⁸¹ Brockworth Court, Gloucestershire (Llanthony);⁸² Arreton, Wiltshire (Quarr);⁸³ Tisbury Place, fifteenth century and said to be the largest barn in England (Shaftsbury);⁸⁴ Wyke, Bradford Abbas, Dorset (Sherborne);⁸⁵ Stanway, late fourteenth century, Gloucestershire (Tewkesbury);⁸⁶ Bishop's Cleeve, early fifteenth century (Worcester);⁸⁷ Southam, a hamlet of Bishop's Cleeve, late fourteenth century–early fifteenth century (Worcester);⁸⁸ Leigh Court, Worcestershire, early fourteenth century⁸⁹ and the barn at Siddington, Gloucestershire (Knights Hospitallers).⁹⁰

Barns built by secular ecclesiastical authorities will also tend to be of pre-Reformation date, such as that at Bishop's Clyst, Sowton, Devon⁹¹ and at Cargoll Newlyn, East Cornwall, the site for which was acquired by Bishop Bronescombe in 1269.⁹² Both were built for the Bishop of Exeter.

Secular barns with a probable date are at Middle Farm, Harwell, Berkshire, built by Richard Brounz, Sheriff of Berkshire and Oxfordshire 1381–2⁹³ and the barn at Beverstone Castle, Gloucestershire, thought to be of fifteenth-century date.⁹⁴ A barn built in the early fourteenth century and later modified, has been recorded at Cherhill in Wiltshire⁹⁵ (demolished 1956). In general barns tend to survive while the houses to which they were related are demolished or rebuilt. Other buildings with an ecclesiastical connection are Lime Tree House, Harwell, Berkshire, which belonged to the Bishop of Winchester,⁹⁶ St. Katherine's Priory, Polsloe, Devon, which could have been the hall of the prioress,⁹⁷ the Bishop of Bangor's House at Gogarth, Llandudno, Caernarvonshire. The last, not rebuilt after being burnt down by Owen Glyndwr, has evidence of raised crucks.⁹⁸ Another example is the guardroom at Lambeth Palace, perhaps built by Hugh Herland.⁹⁹

Most of the cruck buildings in this section are of pre-Dissolution date, but some can equally be post-Dissolution because of their re-use of monastic material. For example a house at Gretton near Winchcombe in Gloucestershire (noted by P. Styles *et al.*) incorporates part of a screen or pulpitum almost certainly from Hayles Abbey.¹⁰⁰ Swiss Cottage at Rievaulx, Yorkshire, has perhaps 3 pairs of crucks and is built of stone from the abbey.¹⁰¹

Some important houses have an upper bracket provided by the insertion of a floor with dateable architectural features. At Mancetter Manor in Warwickshire, which is usually considered of the late fourteenth century, there is an inserted ceiling in the hall which is of the late fifteenth century.¹⁰² Likewise a fourteenth-century house at Sedgley in Staffordshire, almost certainly the first vicarage, had an inserted floor with a multiplicity of rolls and also a fireplace with a battlemented bressumer, both of which were of *c.* 1500. Thorpeacre at Loughborough in Leicestershire, demolished in 1967, was a grange of Garendon and had a base-cruck associated with a passing-brace

roof of c. 1300, but an inserted floor had beams with ovolo moulds perhaps of c. 1600.¹⁰³ At Harome Manor in Yorkshire, a floor had been inserted in c. 1600, and a partition associated with it had early seventeenth-century painting; a silver spoon of 1510-11 was found in the thatch.¹⁰⁴

Dates on the Fabric

The Upper Hall at Samlesbury in Lancashire, said to have been built by John Southworth, had a screen dated 1532, a music gallery in the hall and a fireplace in the kitchen both dated 1545, but the main fabric could be earlier.¹⁰⁵ On the ridge-beam at Wooldale Hall barn Yorkshire, the date 1593 was found. James Walton distrusted this date but in view of the importance of the rearing of the ridge in Yorkshire it could well be a valid date.¹⁰⁶ Plum Tree farm Glaisdale, Yorkshire, now demolished, had 1659 inscribed on the door lintel;¹⁰⁷ a cottage at Wrelton, Yorkshire, recently sold (*Yorkshire Gazette and Herald*, 29/3/69) is dated 1665 in two places;¹⁰⁸ a cottage at Coniston called Boon Cragg is dated 1683¹⁰⁹ and a cruck cottage of 3 bays called Ivy Cottage at Bispham, recorded by R. C. Watson and dated 1686 is usually considered to be of that date.¹¹⁰ A house at Kirkoswald, Ona Ash, and its byre, have raised crucks and are dated 1693;¹¹¹ Stagend in Danby, Yorkshire was dated 1704;¹¹² Paddock Hole, Burgh by Sands, Cumberland is dated 1707;¹¹³ Delves cottage, Egton Bridge, Yorkshire had 1713 on the chimney;¹¹⁴ White Cottage, Bank Top, Cropton, Yorkshire, is dated 1715¹¹⁵ and White Cottage Pockley, Yorkshire has 1717 on the chimney.¹¹⁶

SCIENTIFIC DATING

There have been great advances in scientific methods of dating both with radio-carbon analysis and dendrochronology, but it should be stressed that an artifact can be used at any time after it is available. Timber above the vault of the eastern arm at Westminster could have provided a pre-Conquest date, for wood from King Edward the Confessor's church would have been reused, and likewise it would not be surprising if timber above the nave of Winchester cathedral (c. 1380) produced a date of c. 1080. Nevertheless, valuable material is already

available and linked with the names of J. M. Fletcher, C. R. J. Currie and F. W. B. Charles.

Middle Littleton Barn in Worcestershire, said to have been built in 1376 by Abbot John Ombersley of Evesham has a carbon date of 1260 (+/- 20 years).¹¹⁷ Wellshead in Harwell in Berkshire is given a felling date of 1275¹¹⁸ and 83-5 The Causeway, Steventon has provided a felling date of 1275-80.¹¹⁹ The felling date for trees making crucks in an out-building at Lockton Farm, Harwell is 1325¹²⁰ and Middle Farm, Harwell, the manor house, had wood with a felling date of 1350.¹²¹ A truss of this house has a battlemented collar which would suggest a late fourteenth-century date, J. Fletcher has said that the house and, as previously noted, an adjacent 6 bay barn were built by Richard Brounz in the third quarter of the fourteenth century.¹²² A great cruck house, Newton Hall, Hyde in Cheshire re-erected under the supervision of T. Marsden has a radio-carbon date of 1390-1420.

Dell Cottage, Church Land, Harwell, Berkshire, has a felling date of 1436, Church Farm at Long Wittenham, Berkshire has a felling date of 1445 and a tractor shed there has one of 1480. The School House, Stenning Lane, Harwell has a felling date of 1530.¹²³ P. Smith reports that attempts to date Welsh crucks by dendrochronology and radio-carbon analysis have produced early sixteenth century dates.¹²⁴ The information recorded is usually much more detailed than that given above, but the felling date provides as a simple way of saying the building was erected at that date or later.

Perhaps the most interesting controversy has arisen over the barn at Frocester in Gloucestershire, usually said to have been erected in 1284-1306. Carbon dates for much of the roof give a late fifteenth-century date, but as one blade has provided an earlier date, it means that the roof was renewed on the old model.¹²⁵

CRUCK BUILDINGS DATED BY A NUMBER OF THE DATING CRITERIA

This essay ends with some buildings dated by two or more of the kinds of evidence already described.

The magnificent study of the Great Coxwell Barn belonging

to the Abbey of Beaulieu¹²⁶ mentions 7 secondary trusses which consist of tapered base crucks, and the authors relate it to other barns and examine its architectural features. A series of zoomorphic corbels, which support aisle wall posts, found quite often in church architecture, suggest a date of 1230–40, and a shouldered-headed doorway in the east wall will be of the same period. The early thirteenth-century date has now been supported by radio-carbon dating.¹²⁷

Stokesay Castle in Shropshire has been the subject of a very detailed examination,¹²⁸ the interest centring on the great raised cruck roof of the hall. Laurence de Ludlow obtained possession of the site in 1281 and much of the present building will be later. It is evident when seen from the moat that the lower parts of the great hall, solar and passage blocks and the south tower are all of one build, for there is a high-set chamfered plinth common to all the buildings and they could all have been started after *c.* 1285. Laurence de Ludlow was granted a licence to crenellate his house of Stokesay on 19 October 1291¹²⁹ and despite the debate on whether one built before or after the licence, the date is close enough. If the hall is of much the same date as the south tower it is necessary to relate the wooden hall roof to its stonework. Before 1958 I said that the crucks were associated with the corbels which supported them and that the corbel mouldings were early fourteenth century, if not earlier.¹³⁰ The original timbers of the roof are all of much the same date and linked by carpenters' marks,¹³¹ and F. W. B. Charles has recently supported this view by his interesting note on framing: "At Stokesay Castle . . . the rearing sequence was from the two inner trusses outwards in both directions. This accounts for the 'aisle posts' at the outer masonry walls . . . these posts were necessary to support the purlins and thereby restrain the cruck trusses before the masonry of the gable walls could be built up to roof height."¹³²

The Stokesay roof follows the basic form of that of the Old Deanery at Salisbury, Wiltshire, dated by N. Drinkwater to 1258–74.¹³³ The base crucks with closing trusses of aisled-hall form are also found in the gate house of Dartington Hall, Devon.¹³⁴

One of the finest papers written about an early house is that on The Parsonage House, Church Close, Coningsby in Lincoln-

shire¹³⁵ for not only are decorative features well recorded, enough in themselves to provide a relatively close date (c. 1350) but there is valuable documentary evidence, and what is even more impressive there are family details, usually ignored by so many antiquaries, which offer most exciting leads. There is a boss on the base cruck truss, set on a quarter-round moulding, of a beast's head with long ears and a man, On the blade is a head of a man in a cowl with a liripipe end hanging over his left ear, and there is a moulded capital on the spere. There are quarter-round mouldings in most places, the crown post of the hall roof has slight cusping and the spere post has quarter-round hollow and filleted roll just like the Herefordshire houses noted by J. Tonkin.

On 6 May 1345 William Hillary, parson of the church of Coningsby (1335-75) bought a messuage for the enlargement of the rectory and the house must have been built soon afterwards. William Hillary was son of Sir Henry Hillary by his wife Joan, daughter and co-heiress of Sir Phillip Marmion of Tamworth and Scrivelsby, the King's Champion, whose wife was Joan daughter and heiress of Hugh de Kilpeck of Herefordshire, which could provide the link with the Herefordshire houses which are so like Coningsby. William's uncle was Sir Roger Hillary, an important person in Staffordshire. William's half-brother, Thomas de Ludlow, son of Thomas de Ludlow, first husband of Joan Marmion, was almost certainly connected with the Ludlows of Stokesay, and Margaret, heiress of Thomas de Ludlow, junior, married Sir John Dymoke of Herefordshire whose family became King's Champions.

A postscript can be provided by the barn at Church Enstone in Oxfordshire, with the inscription stone which says that the grange was built in 1382 at the request of the bailiff Robert Mason, for Walter de Wynferton, Abbot of Winchcombe. Despite my comparisons with Swalcliffe and other New College barns, the date was distrusted, but now Stuart Rigold has reported that dendrochronology has confirmed that the crucks are of the date of the misplaced stone.¹³⁶

Notes and references

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