



JOURNAL OF THE NORFOLK HISTORIC BUILDINGS GROUP

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# THE HISTORIC BUILDINGS OF NEW BUCKENHAM

EDITED BY ADAM LONGCROFT

WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM SUE BROWN, MICHAEL BROWN,  
JENNIFER MAUGHAN, DAVID LUCKHURST, IAN TYERS,  
DAVID DURRANT AND PAUL RUTLEDGE



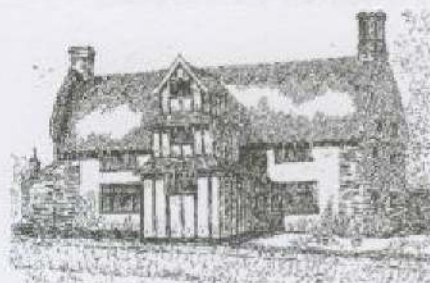
**Journal of the Norfolk Historic Buildings Group**

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# **The Historic Buildings of New Buckenham**

**Edited by Adam Longcroft**

**With contributions from Sue Brown, Michael Brown, Jennifer Maughan,  
David Luckhurst, Ian Tyers, David Durrant and Paul Rutledge**



**Cover illustration by David Luckhurst**

# The Historic Buildings of New Buckenham

## *Chairman's Foreword*

When the Norfolk Historic Buildings Group (NHBG) was formed in December 2000 the committee felt that before tackling the historic buildings of Norfolk it would be a good idea to look at where studies of historic buildings had got to and what should be the principles for future procedure. In the first edition of the NHBG Journal five distinguished contributors were invited to look at these topics and the present publication represents our first step in putting the suggested approach into practice.

A grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund *Awards for All* gave us the benefit of the highly professional skills of Ian Tyers for the dendrochronology, but the bulk of the New Buckenham Project has been the work of Group members whose only motivation is their commitment to the subject of historic buildings. Fieldwork in the fourth largest county in England with a road network most kindly described as 'interesting', involves considerable expense of time and cash for members without whose prodigality of their own resources this research is unlikely to be done.

The Group has a programme of training which is increasing the number of building recorders we have available and we are fortunate in having such members as Paul Rutledge and Adam Longcroft for the key role of putting the individual buildings into their historic, socio-economic and topographical contexts. Adam's essay here fulfils completely the integrated approach formulated in the first edition of the NHBG Journal.

I fully endorse Adam's acknowledgements (below) of those who contributed to the project, particularly the equable householders of New Buckenham who have shown none of the fashionable paranoia about strangers in the home, letting us have their keys and tolerating our invasion of their attics, airing cupboards, coal cellars and even places to which they are themselves normally denied access (e.g. teenagers' bedrooms). Without their generous complaisance this subject would effectively cease to exist.

Michael L. Brown (Chairman, NHBG)  
January 2005



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# The Historic Buildings of New Buckenham

## *Acknowledgements*

This second volume of the journal of the Norfolk Historic Buildings Group (NHBG) represents the culmination of a long-term research project which began in early 2001. It is, in every possible sense, the work of a team. The members of the committee of the NHBG have worked tirelessly in the background to plan and support the activities of the Group and have helped, at every stage, to guide this research project. As former Chair of the NHBG I would like to offer my heart-felt thanks and appreciation to them all.

Although I had no way of knowing it at the time, when the NHBG was established in December 2000 two leading members of the Essex Historic Buildings Group (then in its third decade of existence) had just completed their move to Norfolk. From day one of the New Buckenham project Sue Brown and her husband Michael have been the driving force behind it. All but a few of the drawings and the vast majority of the reports in Appendix 1 are the results of their combined labours and it is Sue and Michael who have maintained contact with the owners of the houses in New Buckenham from beginning to end. Their achievement is an astonishing one and as editor my main concern has been to try to do justice to their remarkably detailed accounts of the buildings of the town. My thanks also go to the small team of experienced building recorders who have ably assisted Sue and Michael in their survey work.

One of the main objectives of the New Buckenham project was to 'marry' together the archaeological evidence of the standing buildings in the town with the available documentary evidence. This has been made possible due to Paul Rutledge whose detailed research into the documentary record over many years was of crucial importance in the Group's decision to focus on New Buckenham in the first place. The fact that Paul was (and still is) resident in the town also greatly facilitated the practical aspects of undertaking the survey work. Without Paul's support and careful liaison with the many house owners in the town the project would never have got off the ground. I hope that readers of this journal feel that the multidisciplinary approach adopted by the Group has enhanced its value as an academic study.

The production process involved in creating the journal drew on the impressive talents of Rosemary Forrest who had the unenviable job of transferring all the drawings and reports in Appendix 1 onto a single CD-R. That Rosemary succeeded in doing so with such speed, efficiency and patience is a remarkable achievement in its own right and her many hours of toil ensured that my task as editor was made much less onerous than it might have been. I would also like to thank Jane Key who did a sterling job of proof-reading the text.

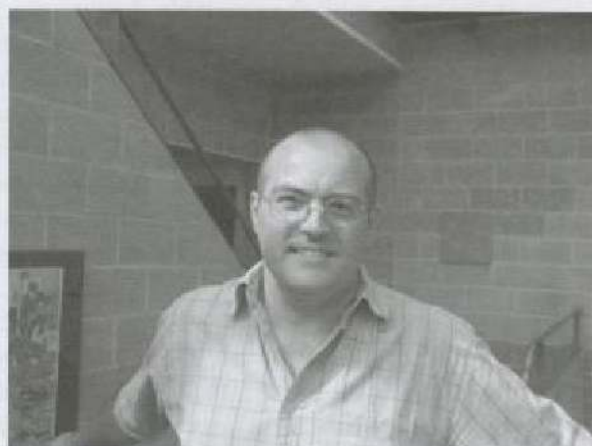
Although one should never, of course, judge a book by its cover — a lesson one learns very early on as a buildings investigator — the success of any publication is partly influenced by its appearance. I am delighted, therefore, that David Luckhurst, who so kindly provided the watercolour for the first volume of the Group's journal, has provided another magnificent image for this volume. David has, I think, done a marvellous job in capturing the original appearance of the Old Vicarage in its fifteenth-century heyday when it served as one of the guildhalls of the town.



Thanks are also due to Ian Tyers from the ARCUS Dendrochronology Laboratory at the University of Sheffield who carried out the dendrochronological sampling in New Buckenham. Ian quite rightly warned us all very early on that the results of the dendrochronology might be largely negative due to the known difficulties of securing reliable tree-ring sequences from East Anglian buildings. Fortunately the results were much better than anyone expected and I think this is due, more than anything else, to the enormous care Ian took in deciding which buildings and which timbers to sample. The dendrochronological survey was funded by a successful bid to *Awards for All* who kindly awarded a grant of £5,000 to support the survey and the publication of this volume of the Group's journal. The Group is enormously grateful to have received this award and we hope that both the managers of the fund and the general public agree that the money was well spent.

I would like, also, to thank perhaps the most important group of all – the owners of the properties in New Buckenham who have been so generous in allowing the NHBG access (often on several occasions) to their homes. It hardly needs to be said that their co-operation and support have been crucial throughout. Thanks must also go to all those other residents of New Buckenham who have offered such warm support to the Group's activities in the town. In an age when 'community spirit' is said by many to be in terminal decline, New Buckenham has shown that it is alive and well. That New Buckenham is still very much a 'community' has been both a pleasant surprise and a vital factor in the success of the project.

My final thanks must go to my partner, Diane, and my children, Lizzie, Emma and Abigail for their support and patience during the editorial process.



Adam Longcroft B.A. (Hons.), M.A., Ph.D.  
Editor, NHBG Journal  
School of Education & Lifelong Learning  
University of East Anglia  
March 2005

# The Historic Buildings of New Buckenham

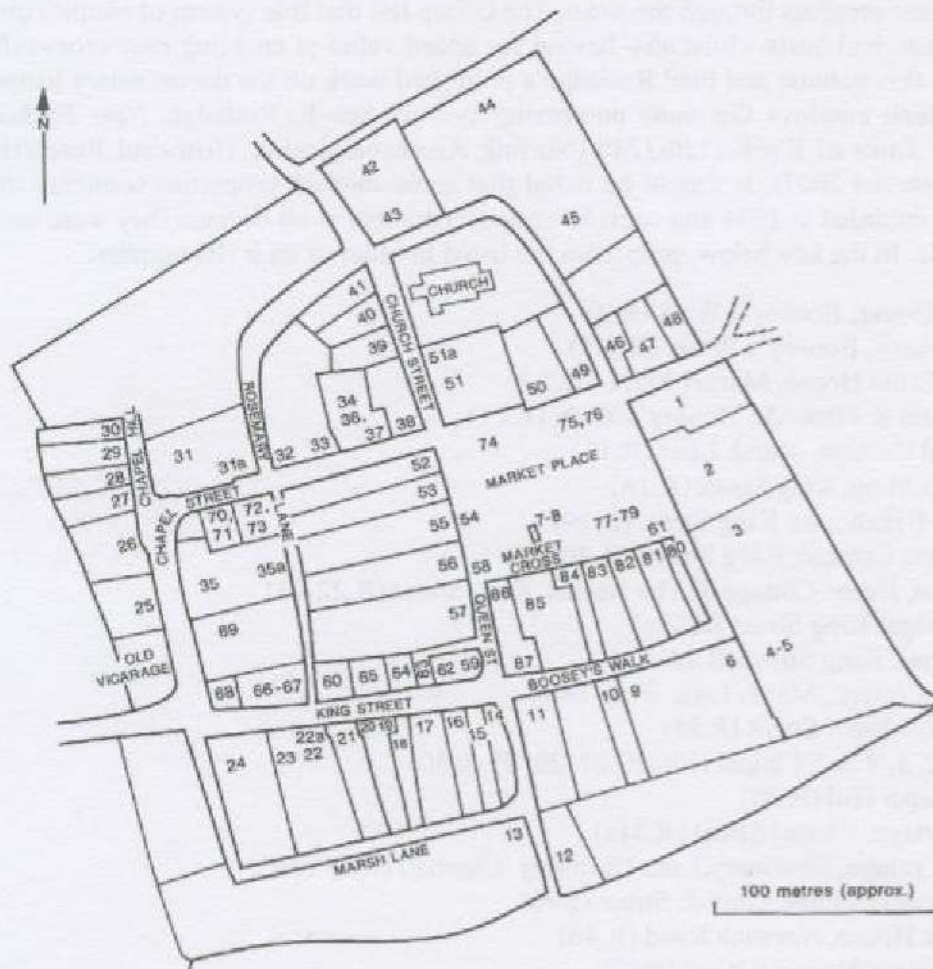
## *Key to properties in New Buckenham*

The properties that feature in this volume have each been given a number. The number is derived from the landgable rental which is dated 1634. This is arranged in the order in which the collectors went around the town and the reconstruction (R) numbers of the properties reflect their progress through the town. The Group felt that this system of identification had a sound historical basis whilst also having the added value of enabling easy cross-referencing between this volume and Paul Rutledge's published work on the documentary history of the town which employs the same numbering system. See P. Rutledge, *New Buckenham. A Planned Town at Work 1530-1780* (Norfolk Archaeological & Historical Research Group, 2000, reissued 2003). It should be noted that some modern properties comprise more than one plot recorded in 1634 and some have no (R) number at all because they were not charged landgable. In the key below, properties are listed in order of their (R) number.

Saffron House, Boosey's Walk (R.2)  
The Rookery, Boosey's Walk (R.4-5)  
Market Cross House, Market Place (R.7-8)  
Lane's End & Flintside, Boosey's Walk (R.11)  
Thatched Cottage, Marsh Lane (R.12)  
Butcher's Shop, King Street (R.16)  
The Old Bakehouse, King Street (R.19)  
Bakehouse Cottage, King Street (R.20)  
Old Swan, Diken Cottage & The Beams, King Street (R.22-23)  
The Cottage, King Street (R.22a)  
Dial House, King Street (R.24)  
Tanyard Cottage, Marsh Lane (R.24 rear)  
Pinchpot, Chapel Street (R.25)  
Nos.1, 2, 3, 4 & 5 Chapel Hill (R. 27, 28, 29 & 30)  
No.6 Chapel Hill (R.30)  
Rose Cottage, Chapel Street (R.31a)  
Thyme Cottage, Rosemary Lane (formerly 'Charliz') (R.35 rear)  
Gingerbread Cottage, Church Street (R.40)  
Pickwick House, Norwich Road (R.46)  
Beech House, Norwich Road (R.47)  
Corner Cottage & Crawford's, Market Place (R.49)  
Lovell's Stores, Market Place (R.51)  
Cosy Cottage, Church Street (R.51 rear)  
Park House, Market Place (R.52)  
Blair House & St Mary's Cottage, Market Place (R.53)  
King's Head Inn, Market Place (R.56)  
The Pleasance, Queen Street (R.57-58)  
The Old Post Office (R.59) & Burrage House (R.62), King Street  
Fairview (R.63), Red Roof and Senton, King Street (R.64)  
White Horse & White Horse Cottage, King Street (R.66-67)  
No.1 Chapel Street (R.69)  
Oak Cottage & Yellow Cottage, Market Place (R.81)  
Wine Cellars, Market Place (R.84a)  
Gable Cottage, Marsh Lane  
Market Cross, Market Place  
The Old Vicarage, Chapel Street/King Street  
Turnpike Lodge, The Common



The layout of New Buckenham, showing R numbers which relate to the landgable rental of 1634. The R number for each property relates to the sequence in which properties are considered in Appendix I.



## The Historic Buildings of New Buckenham

### Editorial Conventions

The List of Figures refers to those within the Introduction and Appendix 2. In Appendix 1 neither photographs nor drawings are separately numbered. Instead, drawings are related to reports on individual properties using an alphabetic system (e.g. Fig.B).



# The Historic Buildings of New Buckenham

## Introduction

by Adam Longcroft

### Part 1: The Historic Context

#### 1. *The landscape of south Norfolk*

New Buckenham is located some 18 miles south-west of the City of Norwich, and some 16 miles east-north-east of Thetford (*see Figure 1*). It sits within an area that was known by the sixteenth century as the 'wood-pasture' region.



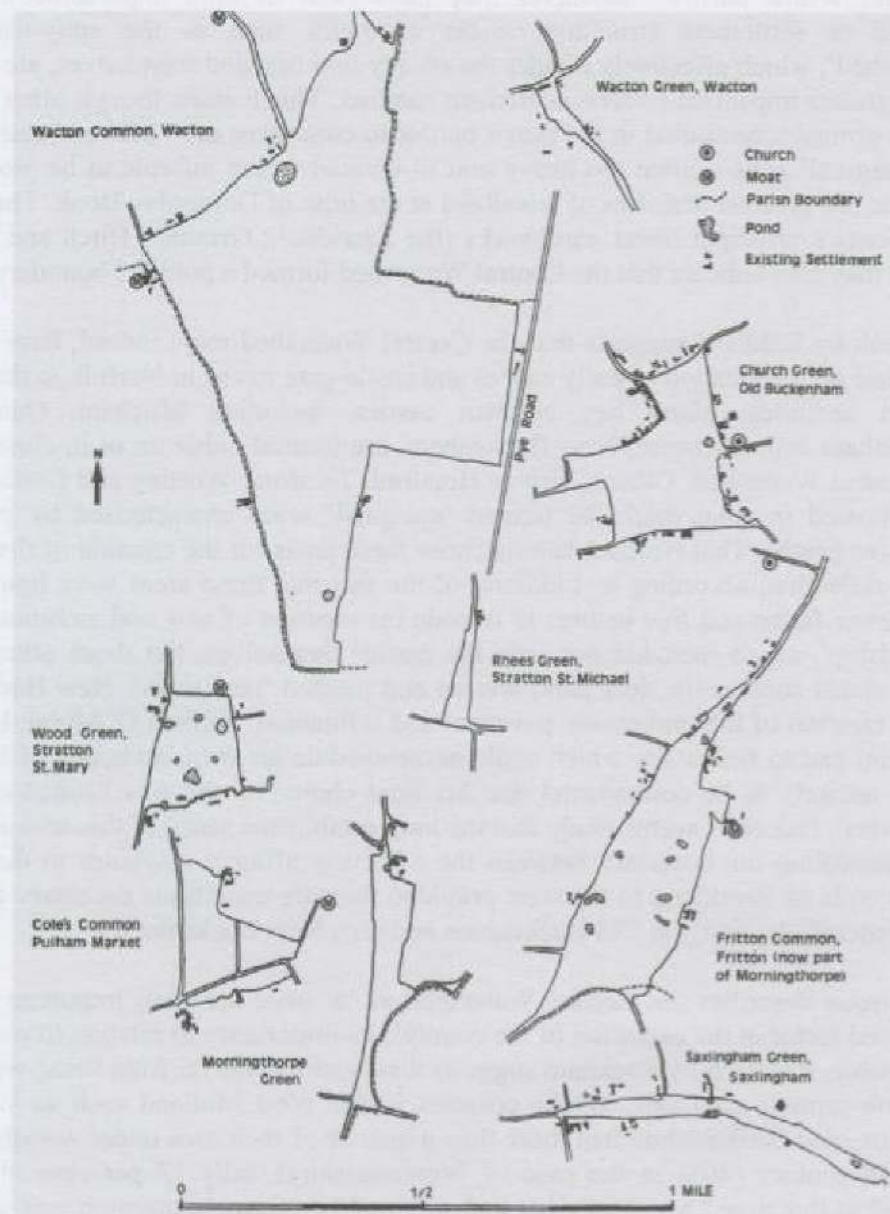
**Figure 1**  
Location map.  
(Illustration by Philip Judge)

The glacial, boulder clay soils of this area of south Norfolk gave rise to a predominantly pastoral economy based on dairying and the breeding of cattle.<sup>1</sup> Arable cultivation, whilst certainly important, appears to have been more loosely organised and sporadic than in the sheep-corn areas of the north of the county; the 'open fields' with their distinctive 'strips' were small, often fragmented and largely limited to the more tractable lighter sandy clays of the valley sides. Weakly manorialised, with a preponderance of free tenures and rural industries such as linen and worsted weaving,<sup>2</sup> wood-turning and tanning,<sup>3</sup> the 'wood-pasture' area of south Norfolk sustained high densities of farms, which, though predominantly small by national standards 'provided their owners with a comfortable standard of living'.<sup>4</sup> It is here that yeomen farmers were thickest on the ground during the late medieval and post-medieval periods and where the highest concentrations of medium-sized farmhouses could be found during the seventeenth century.<sup>5</sup> Although the economy of the claylands of south Norfolk have been transformed by modern farming methods (today the area is better known for growing cereals than cattle), much of the basic historic framework of this pastoral landscape has been preserved. Indeed, this area of south Norfolk and the neighbouring claylands of central Suffolk have been described by Oliver Rackham and others as 'ancient countryside'<sup>6</sup> – areas where field boundaries are mostly the product of



long-term, piecemeal change rather than the handiwork of Parliamentary Enclosure commissioners of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Although the area is served by a number of small market towns (of which New Buckenham is one example) the settlement pattern is essentially dispersed:

in many parishes there is no obvious 'village' at all, and even the church stands isolated in the midst of arable fields. Many of the hamlets have names ending in 'green' or 'common' and indeed, before the last decade of the eighteenth century, most consisted of loose scatters of houses and farms around the periphery of common land.<sup>7</sup> (see Figure 2)



**Figure 2**  
Greens and commons in south Norfolk.  
(Illustration by Adam Longcroft)

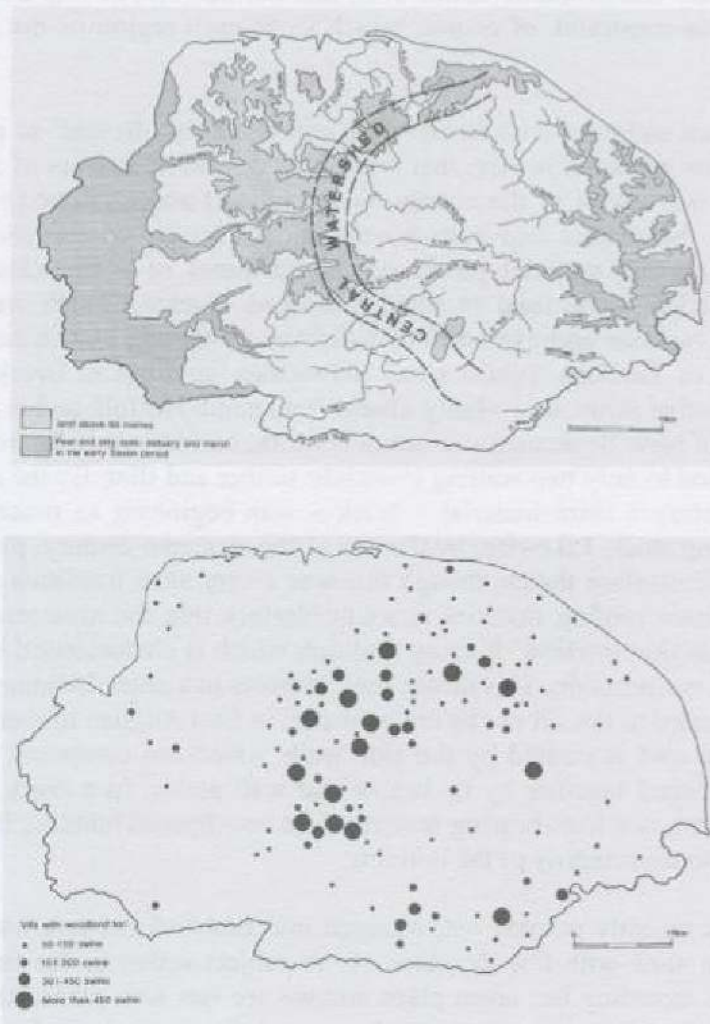


Although to the casual observer Norfolk might appear to be a flat county, in reality it is far from being flat and even the boulder clay plateau of central and southern Norfolk is dissected by numerous streams and rivers that lend the landscape a gently undulating character. In this area, as in others, the configuration of valleys and watersheds provides the underlying framework that often dictates how land was used in the past. The earliest settlements tended to appear in the river valleys where lighter soils suited to primitive ploughs, rich meadows and fresh water were readily available. Whilst population levels remained low, the interfluvies were used largely as a seasonal grazing resource. As population expanded new settlements appeared on the heavier clays in areas which were once heavily wooded. These remained small and scattered, however, and the largest settlements were still to be found in the river valleys (e.g. Hempnall) and along the principal routeways (e.g. Long Stratton). As Williamson has pointed out, there is what might be termed a 'hierarchy of interfluvies' in Norfolk. Whilst narrow interfluvies may have been of little importance in determining land use or settlement structures, wider examples such as the aptly-named 'Central Watershed', which effectively divides the county into east and west halves, are likely to have had a greater impact on historic settlement patterns. This feature, though often imperceptible on the ground, constituted in the past a barrier to communication between east and west and its 'marginal' soils – often too heavy and ill-drained or too infertile to be ploughed – were home to the greatest densities of woodland at the time of Domesday Book. The proximity of the county's principal linear earthworks (the Launditch, Grimm's Ditch and the Panworth Dyke) may also indicate that the Central Watershed formed a political boundary in the past.

Research by Liddiard suggests that the Central Watershed may, indeed, have had a critical influence on the location of early castles and castle-gate towns in Norfolk in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Many key Norman castles, including Mileham, Quidenham, Old Buckenham and, of course, New Buckenham, are located either on or in close proximity to the Central Watershed. Others, such as Horsford, Thetford, Weeting and Castle Rising, were also situated in what might be termed 'marginal' areas characterised by poor soils and extensive heaths. That Norman barons chose these areas for the creation of their new castles was a reflection, according to Liddiard, of the fact that these areas were lightly populated, with fewer farms and free tenures to impede the creation of new and ambitious 'landscapes of lordship' which included not only the castles themselves, but those other signifiers of lordly status such as the deer park, warren and planted 'new town'. New Buckenham itself was a creation of the immensely powerful and influential William D'Albini. Like his peers, D'Albini had to find a site which could accommodate his own landscape of lordship and it seems unlikely to be coincidental that his final choice of site was located on the Central Watershed. Indeed, it seems likely that the long-established status of this area as a 'marginal' zone straddling the boundary between the relatively affluent claylands to the east and the poorer soils of Breckland to the west provided the core conditions necessary for D'Albini's great enterprises, firstly at Old Buckenham and then New Buckenham.

Williamson describes the Central Watershed as 'at once the most important and the most neglected factor in the evolution of the county'. Its importance in relation to woodland seems undeniable. Research by Rackham suggests that Norfolk was far from being well-wooded by eleventh-century standards. Whilst counties in the West Midlands such as Worcestershire, Cheshire, and Staffordshire had more than a quarter of their area under woodland in the late eleventh century (40% in the case of Worcestershire), only 12 per cent of Norfolk was wooded at this time.<sup>8</sup> Much of what had survived late Saxon expansion was to be found on the Central Watershed (*see Figure 3*) in a wide arch which ran through the centre of the county.





**Figure 3**

The 'Central Watershed' and the distribution of woodland in Norfolk in 1066.  
(Taken from T. Williamson, *The Origins of Norfolk* (Manchester, 1993) p.115. Reproduced by kind permission of the author.)

The nearest large wood to New Buckenham was Harling Wood, a mile to the north, in Old Buckenham but originally part of the manor of East Harling some seven miles distant.<sup>9</sup> By the 1580s it had passed to the Knyvett family of Buckenham Castle who in 1581 owned woodland in Old Buckenham and also in the nearby parishes of Carleton Rode and Tibenham.<sup>10</sup> As we shall see, the changing fortunes of the Knyvett family and the management of this surviving block of medieval manorial woodland were to play a pivotal role in the development and characteristics of the vernacular buildings in New Buckenham.

## **2. Medieval and post-medieval building traditions in south Norfolk**

Until the time of the Industrial Revolution when canals, and later still the railways, facilitated the transportation of buildings materials quickly and cheaply across the country, builders in Norfolk were faced with constraints imposed by the availability of building materials. For the grandest, high-status building projects cost was no object and, in the case of castles and monastic foundations, high-quality materials were often imported either from distant regions or from overseas. Hence the builders of Norwich Cathedral could afford to use stone from Caen in Normandy, whilst, much later, Coke of Holkham could use Welsh slate for his new Palladian mansion. For the vast majority of building projects the cost of



importing materials was prohibitive, however, and builders had to rely on what was locally available. It is this constraint, of course, which lends each region its distinctive vernacular 'style'.

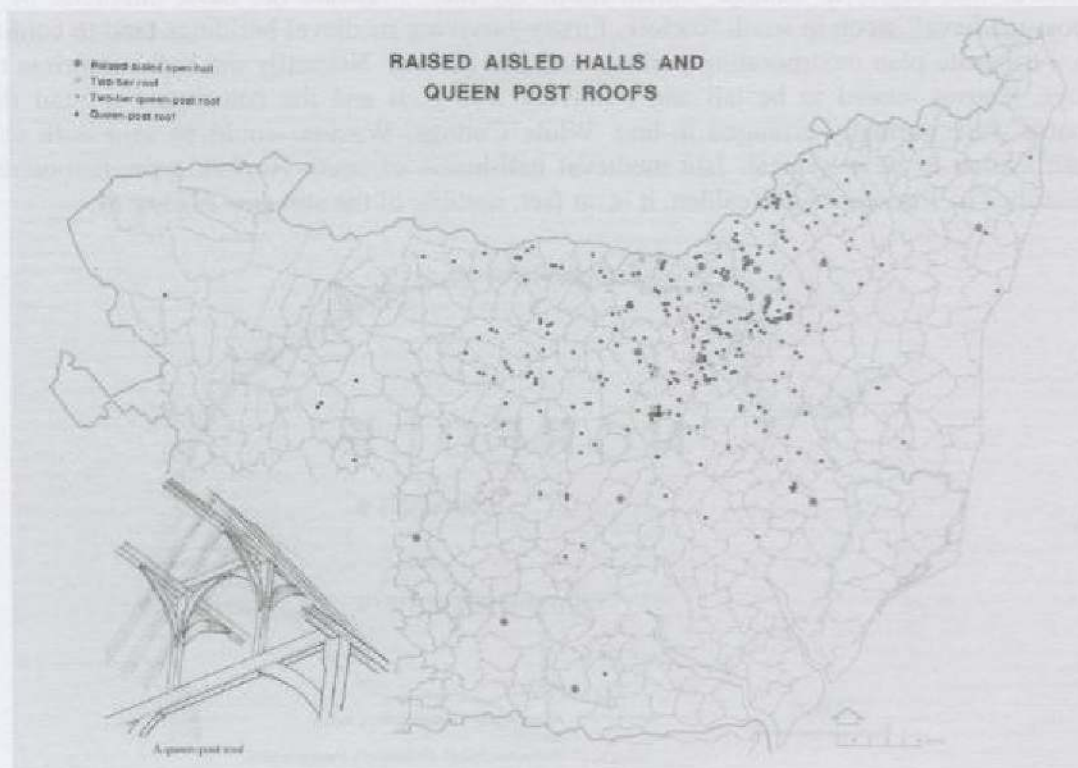
Norfolk is not well endowed with stone which can be easily 'dressed' to provide a uniform surface. This is not to say, however, that Norfolk is devoid of sources of stone for building purposes. In the north-west of the county clunch (chalk) and carstone (a ferric sandstone) outcrop close to the surface and both were used extensively in churches and vernacular buildings alike. Neither material possessed the attributes of a first-class building stone, however, and tended to be used in roughly-worked blocks. Clunch was used far more extensively than carstone and examples of buildings containing clunch can be found as far south (and east) as Thetford. Whilst many vernacular buildings in Breckland employ this rather soft, distinctive stone, it is wholly absent from south Norfolk and is certainly not used in the buildings of New Buckenham. In south Norfolk, builders were limited during much of the medieval period to only two walling materials: timber and flint. By the middle decades of the sixteenth century a third material – brick – was beginning to make inroads into the vernacular building stock. Likewise, by the end of the sixteenth century, pantiles and pantiles were beginning to displace thatch, though this was a very slow transition and thatch was to remain the dominant roofing material in south Norfolk into the nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup> East Anglia falls within the 'lowland' framing tradition which is characterised by box framing as opposed to cruck construction. This means that, whereas in a cruck building the weight of the roof is communicated to the sill by the cruck blades, in East Anglian timber-framed buildings the weight of the roof is carried by the side walls which are composed of rigidly-framed uprights (posts) linked together by tie beams and wall plates. In a cruck building the side walls are peripheral, non load-bearing features. In a box-framed building the integrity of the walls are crucial to the integrity of the building.

As Heywood has recently pointed out, research into timber-framed vernacular buildings in Norfolk has been slow with few devotees of the subject active in the field. Consequently very little proper recording has taken place and we are less well-placed than in some other counties to identify what might be termed county 'characteristics' of our timber-framing tradition.<sup>12</sup> However, we can at least highlight some basic features. As we have already seen, Norfolk was not a well-wooded county in the Middle Ages or, indeed, in the post-medieval period. This had a number of consequences. Firstly, woods were managed in a different way. In areas possessed of large and numerous woods the need for intensive management was less acute and oak 'standards' (large, upright, mature oak trees) were in plentiful supply. In East Anglia, by contrast, woods were intensively managed predominantly within a mixed coppice regime to produce large quantities of fast-grown timbers. Secondly, the scantling (timbers) used in construction in Norfolk were often far smaller than in areas better supplied with local timbers (e.g. the West Midlands). In counties like Worcestershire where timbers were cheap and in ready supply individual roof purlins were often 10-12 inches square in section. In Norfolk, purlins are generally half this size. Thirdly, the emphasis on the production of fast-grown timbers in East Anglia means that even though individual timbers are strong (fast grown timbers have greater structural strength than slow-grown timbers) even the largest timbers in a building (normally the wall posts) were frequently less than 65 years old when felled and therefore possess insufficient growth rings for dating by dendrochronological methods. As we shall see, this fact has significant implications for the study of vernacular buildings in the county.

In terms of recording timber-framed buildings far more progress has been made in Suffolk (and in Essex) than in Norfolk, partly due to the fact that both the latter counties acquired dedicated historic building groups comparatively early-on. In this sense, the NHBG is itself a late arrival on the scene. The research conducted by the likes of Leigh Alston, Mark Barnard,



Philip Aitkens and Sylvia Colman in Suffolk has succeeded in identifying historic 'characteristics' of great interest. For example, it is now clear that surviving medieval aisled halls and barns with raised-aisle and queen-post roofs are located almost without exception on the claylands of central Suffolk.<sup>13</sup> In the case of raised-aisle and queen-post roofs there is a marked concentration in the northern, central claylands on the least dissected areas of the boulder clay plateau (*see Figure 4*).



**Figure 4**

Raised-aisle halls and queen-post roofs in Suffolk.

(Taken from D. Dymond and E. Martin (eds), *An Historical Atlas of Suffolk* (Suffolk County Council, 1999) p.181. Reproduced by kind permission.)

Unfortunately the Rural District of Depwade, which covers much of the southern claylands of Norfolk along the Waveney Valley, was surveyed for listing purposes prior to the Accelerated Resurvey and consequently detailed records of surviving buildings are poor. However, it is now apparent that the Suffolk distribution of queen posts and raised-aisle roofs continues northwards across the Waveney. As Heywood has suggested, given the rarity of buildings of this type outside East Anglia, there may be a common cultural background to this phenomenon.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, this may be the physical evidence of what might be termed a 'Waveney Valley Tradition'. That divergent cultural traditions could emerge within counties during the Middle Ages is illustrated by a dichotomy which appears to exist between the surviving buildings of north and south Suffolk. In the south of the county crown-post roofs appear to have been the standard medieval roof type, whilst to the north of the Gipping Valley queen-post roofs predominate.<sup>15</sup> The Gipping appears to have acted as some kind of cultural barrier in Suffolk that divided two different carpentry traditions, whilst the Waveney appeared to nurture communication and the development of a carpentry tradition which straddled the two counties.

If one considers the distribution of timber-framing in Norfolk (*see Figure 5*), it is apparent that New Buckenham sits squarely within a known concentration within the extreme south of

the county. New Buckenham lies on the boundary between two rural districts: Wayland to the west and Depwade to the east. Both possess a large number of listed buildings, though Depwade has 12.3% of the total number for the entire county – a figure which is twice as high as the next highest district.<sup>16</sup> The density of surviving timber-framed buildings is quite remarkable in this part of the county and, once again, is mirrored across the Waveney in the claylands of central and northern Suffolk.<sup>17</sup> By the end of the sixteenth century a number of features had begun to emerge which, taken together, illustrate the basic character of the 'post-medieval' stock in south Norfolk. Firstly surviving medieval buildings tend to conform to a tripartite plan incorporating parlour, hall and service. Normally the hall comprises two bays. Houses tended to be tall and relatively well-built and the constituent ground floor rooms were normally arranged in-line. White Cottage, Wacton, could be said with some justification to be a 'typical' late medieval hall-house of south Norfolk type. Erroneously described by Pevsner as a Wealden, it is, in fact, nothing of the sort (*see Figure 6*).



**Figure 5**  
The distribution of timber-framing in Norfolk.  
(Illustration by Adam Longcroft)



**Figure 6**  
White Cottage, High Common, Wacton.  
(Photograph by Adam Longcroft)



Cross-wings were a rarity and in all surviving houses the hall has been floored-over, normally in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. Whilst in south Suffolk it was quite normal for a chimney stack to be built within the space formerly occupied by a cross-passage or against the passage partition (at the lower end of the hall), in north Suffolk and in south Norfolk this is quite rare; here the stack tended to be built at the high end of the hall, enabling both the hall and parlour to be independently heated. This must have had significant consequences for the way in which the hall was used as a social space since in the latter scenario it would not have been practical to have a dais or high table at the upper end of the hall in the medieval tradition.

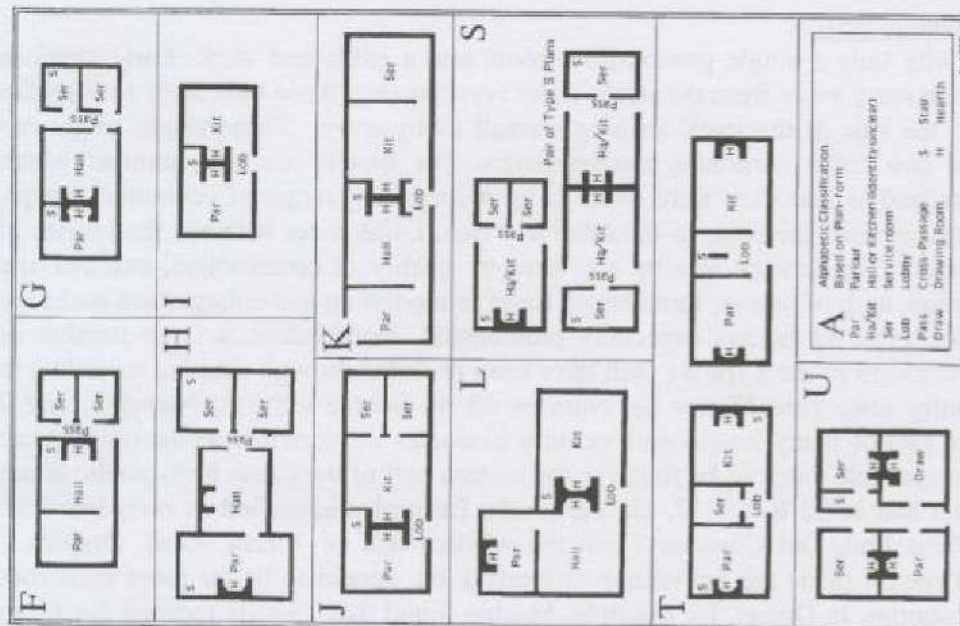
In tall buildings it was often possible to incorporate a hall chamber without any major modifications to the roof, but in buildings with low eaves it was occasionally necessary to raise the height of the wall plate by supporting a new plate on a series of short studs, as at Grove Farm, Shotesham. As it became increasingly common for attics (or 'vance roofs') to be used for domestic purposes (for storage or sleeping) queen-post roofs with their inconvenient posts that intruded into the roof space, were abandoned in favour of clasped-purlin and butt-purlin roofs from the late sixteenth century onwards. In south Norfolk one often finds roofs which combine clasped and butt-purlins – an arrangement that seems to continue beyond the Civil War period. By the end of the seventeenth century the butt-purlin roof was ubiquitous, though there was an increasing tendency for the purlins to be staggered (to allow for dormers) and for the purlin tenons to have elongated chamfers.

### 3. Plan-forms in south Norfolk

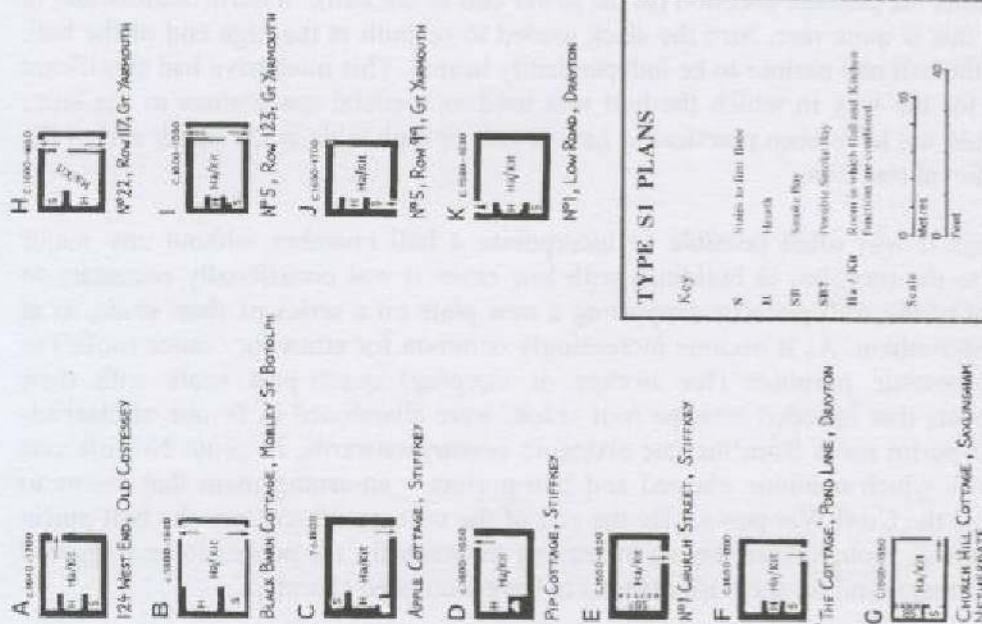
Whilst the vast majority of surviving medieval houses in south Norfolk conform to the 'standard' tri-partite in-line division of parlour, hall and service, the post-medieval houses of the area display a more marked variation in size and plan form. In a recent article in the journal *Vernacular Architecture*, the editor has described the dominant plan types to be found in East Anglia in the post-medieval period (see *Figure 7*).<sup>18</sup>

#### Type S1 plan (single-cell)

Small houses with only a single ground-floor room and a gable-end stack. Early versions normally have an entry away from the stack. Later versions (e.g. those built after 1650) often have a door to the side of the stack forming a small lobby entry. These small, single-cell houses possess two rather surprising characteristics. The first is the large number which survive. The second is that they were lived in by a surprising range of economic groups, from the landless or near landless, to the relatively rich. Differences between the houses of the rich and poor were denoted less by size than by quality of construction, external and interior decoration, and, of course, furnishings. Later re-modelling and enlargement make the identification of Type S1 houses especially problematic. Nonetheless, a large number of houses which conform to the Type S1 plan have been revealed through detailed recording in town and country alike (see *Figure 8*). Number 63 St George's Street, Norwich, and 7 Orford Hill are two of many seventeenth-century examples in Norwich, whilst other urban examples of comparable date can be found in the eastern half of the Cross Keys public house in Wymondham and at 22 Row 117, Gt Yarmouth. Examples identified in rural locations include 124 West End, Old Costessey, and the western half of 1 Low Road, Drayton.<sup>19</sup> Houses with Type S1 plans are not unique to Norfolk but appear to be far more numerous than in other counties. In Dorset, for example, Machin found that: 'Single-roomed dwellings were no doubt built by the majority of the poorer members of society but few have survived: only one example has been discovered so far in the whole county.'<sup>20</sup>



**Figure 7**  
Post-medieval plan-forms in Norfolk.  
(Illustration by Adam Longcroft)



**Figure 8**  
Type S1 (single-cell) plans in Norfolk.  
(Illustration by Adam Longcroft)



### Type S plan (two-cell)

Slightly larger in plan were houses which incorporated a service bay beyond the main cooking room. These normally possessed a cross-passage (or at least opposing entries) prior to 1650 but after this date frequently adopt a lobby-entry with a door placed in front of the stack. Examples can be found all over south Norfolk, such as the cottage behind 'Cluny', Costessey, High Bank Cottages, Old Buckenham and Tudor House, Reymersston (See Figure 9).<sup>21</sup> They appear to be particularly common in nucleated villages and in market towns where houses were closely grouped and space was at a premium. Interestingly, whilst Eden found that houses of this type survived only from the late 1700s onwards, in Norfolk the plan appears to have been adopted much earlier, the earliest surviving examples, such as Tudor House, Reymersston dating from the last quarter of the sixteenth century. It has not been possible to establish with any certainty the longevity of the Type S plan, but the author's observations in the field suggest that it is likely to continue, with a lobby entry as opposed to a cross-passage, into the late 1700s. It is not uncommon in Norfolk for small houses with two-cell, Type S plans to be built in terraces, either back-to-back (i.e. sharing a central stack), as at 5-7 Timberhill, Norwich, or end-on-end, as at 47 and 49 St Martin's Lane, Norwich, where the two front doors are situated either side of a central party wall.<sup>22</sup>

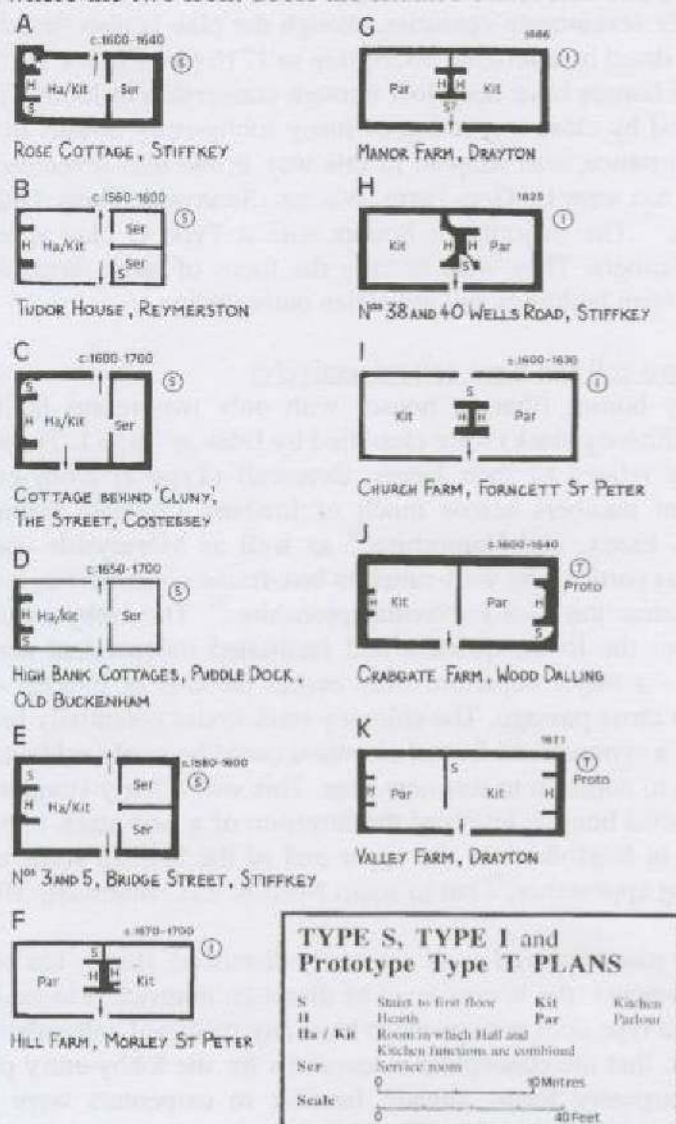


Figure 9

Type S (two-cell) plans and Type I (lobby-entry, two cells) plans in Norfolk.  
(Illustration by Adam Longcroft)



#### Type G plan (three-cell)

The Type G plan incorporates the standard tripartite medieval plan of parlour, hall and service but within a two-storey tradition. Houses built during the second half of the sixteenth century, during what could be termed a 'transitional' phase in the development of vernacular houses, vary from the conservative to the radical. The Type G plan certainly falls into the former category. It appears to embody a conservative response to post-medieval options 'with little violence done to the craft tradition'.<sup>23</sup> In the case of Type G houses, it is, as Johnson suggests, 'plausible to argue that such patterns of partial retention and innovation are partly due to an attempt to keep the old referents in the hall ... but to introduce new elements of comfort and privacy for the master and mistress of the house'.<sup>24</sup> Whilst very few examples of the Type G plan have emerged in Cambridgeshire, the plan appears to have been adopted more widely in Suffolk. Even here, however, Sylvia Colman thought that 'this cross-passage type has a shorter time span than either of the lobby-entry variants and does not occur after about the middle of the seventeenth century'.<sup>25</sup>

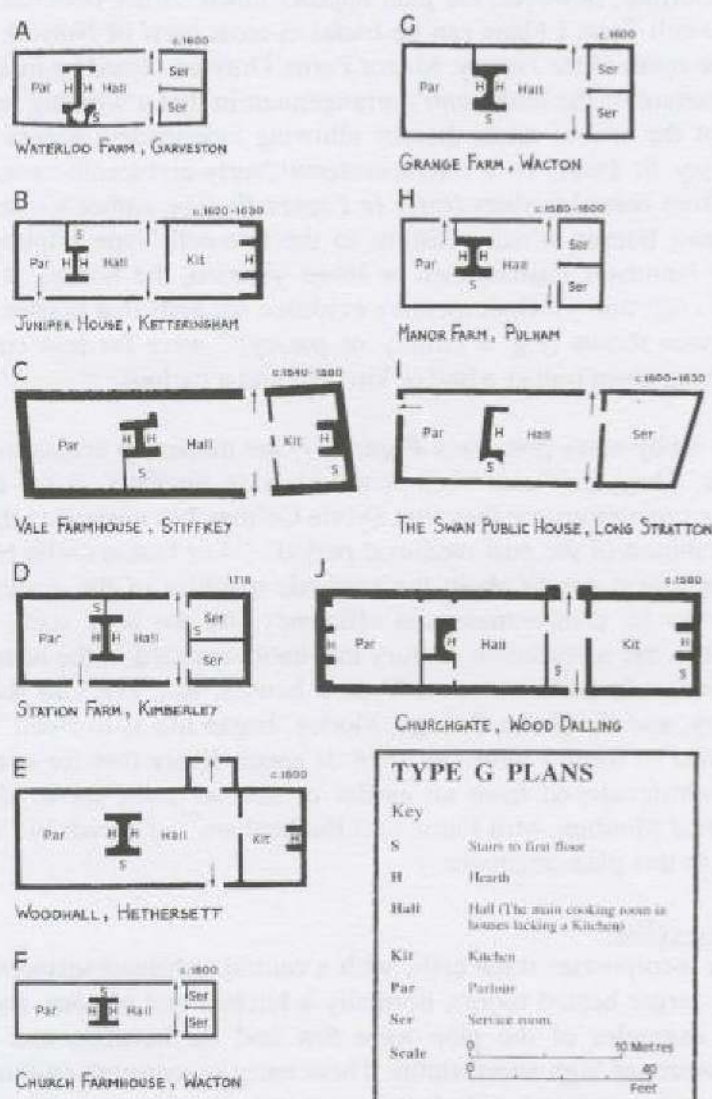
An analysis of Type G houses in Norfolk largely confirms Colman's interpretation. Houses such as Waterloo Farm, Garveston and Grange Farm, Wacton, appear to date to either the late sixteenth or early seventeenth centuries, though the plan is also found at Station Farm, Kimberley, which is dated by a reliable inscription to 1716 (*see Figure 10*).<sup>26</sup> It is likely that a number of Type G houses have been lost through conversion to lobby-entry layouts. This suspicion is supported by close inspection of many lobby-entry houses in Norfolk. Grange Farm, Wacton, for instance, was adapted in this way in the mid-seventeenth century, soon after it was built. So too were Le Grys Farm, Wacton, Sunnyside Farm, Old Buckenham and Prospect Farm, Diss.<sup>27</sup> The majority of houses with a Type G plan appear to have been owned by wealthy farmers. They were usually the focus of large farms and as such were served by a range of farm buildings and utilitarian outbuildings.

#### Type I and J plans (two-cell and three-cell respectively)

Two-cell lobby-entry houses (that is, houses with only two rooms on the ground floor divided by an axial chimney stack) were classified by Eden as Type I. These two-cell houses appear to be closely related to their larger, three-cell (Type J) lobby-entry cousins and survive in significant numbers across much of lowland England. Examples have been identified in Dorset, Essex, and Hampshire,<sup>28</sup> as well as Merseyside and Lincolnshire.<sup>29</sup> Although the plan was particularly well-suited to box-frame construction, it was also adopted in areas of stone construction such as Northamptonshire.<sup>30</sup> The lobby ensured that draughts did not penetrate into the living quarters and facilitated independent access to the main ground-floor rooms – a major departure from earlier patterns of internal circulation based around access from a cross passage. The chimney stack could potentially heat all four rooms and in two-cell plans a symmetrical frontal elevation could be easily achieved. Many existing houses were adapted to conform to this new plan. This was a fairly straightforward exercise which, in most medieval houses, involved the insertion of a new stack into a cross passage, or (as was common in Norfolk) into the upper end of the hall. In some counties the type made at best a fleeting appearance,<sup>31</sup> but in south Norfolk was enthusiastically adopted.

The reasons why the plan appeared at all are rarely discussed. Barley has suggested that the lobby-entry plan represents 'the lowest level of thorough innovation in house design before 1640' and, indeed, the type does not appear to have any medieval antecedents.<sup>32</sup> Johnson has pointed out, however, that the conceptual antecedents for the lobby-entry plan were already in place and that carpentry forms already familiar to carpenters were simply adapted, requiring little technological innovation. The plan was, therefore, 'both an innovation and an element of continuity'.<sup>33</sup>





**Figure 10**  
Type G (three-cell) plans in Norfolk.  
(Illustration by Adam Longcroft)

Why this 'innovation' happened when it did is still a matter for debate. Traditional explanations for the adoption of the lobby-entry plan usually revolve around a desire amongst house-builders for the creature comforts, convenience and enhanced levels of privacy which the new plan could offer. However, if the attractiveness of the plan lay in its ability to deliver these things, this begs the question of why the lobby-entry plan was not adopted earlier. It is theoretical archaeologists like Johnson who have offered the most convincing explanations for the adoption of new types of plan. These look to underlying changes in economic structures and social relationships and see as a root cause of change the move from 'a community based on face-to-face relations and governed by concepts of authority, custom and status to a society based on less personal relations of class and capitalistic, economic relations.'<sup>34</sup> Put simply, gender and status relationships within households changed irrevocably during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the design of houses reflected these changes, by effectively reconciling the need for segregation and centralisation. Stone examples of the lobby-entry plan appeared in the Lancashire Pennines just prior to the Civil War (possibly as early as the 1630s)<sup>35</sup> and in Lincolnshire in

the 1650s.<sup>36</sup> In Norfolk, however, the plan appears much earlier between 1560 and 1580.<sup>37</sup> Houses with two-cell Type I plans can be found in most parts of Norfolk and they are well represented in the south of the county. Manor Farm, Drayton (dated by inscription to 1666) is a sophisticated variant of the lobby-entry arrangement in that a winding newel staircase was placed in front of the central stack, thereby allowing independent access to all four rooms. Hill Farm, Morley St Peter, is a late-seventeenth/early-eighteenth-century example built almost entirely from reused timbers (*refer to Figure 9*). The author's research suggests that in rural areas most houses which conform to the two-cell Type I lobby-entry plan were owned either by better-off husbandmen or lesser yeomen, the houses of the latter usually incorporating two full storeys. Documentary evidence suggests that houses of this type which incorporated service rooms (e.g. a buttery or pantry)<sup>38</sup> were far less common than those which had a cooking room (either a hall or kitchen) and a parlour.

Larger three-cell lobby-entry plans (*see Figure 11*) are numerous across much of central and southern Norfolk. They have also been found in large numbers in the claylands of High Suffolk. Indeed, so numerous are they that Sylvia Colman has suggested that 'one might call it the typical farmhouse of the post-medieval period'.<sup>39</sup> For farmers who built Type J lobby-entry farmhouses, any concerns about the aesthetic qualities of the design were more than compensated for by its compactness and efficiency. As we have seen, the popularity of lobby-entry plans in the seventeenth century inevitably resulted in the adaptation of existing cross-passage houses. In addition, some Type J houses, like The Old Ram Coaching Inn, Tivetshall St Mary, and Fir Grove Cottage, Morley, began life as two-cell Type I houses and were later extended to form a three-cell plan. It seems likely that for every Type J lobby-entry house which developed from an earlier or smaller plan, there will be others, like Laurels Farm, Great Moulton, Mill Farm, Old Buckenham<sup>40</sup> or Picadilly Cottage, Alburgh,<sup>41</sup> which were built to this plan originally.

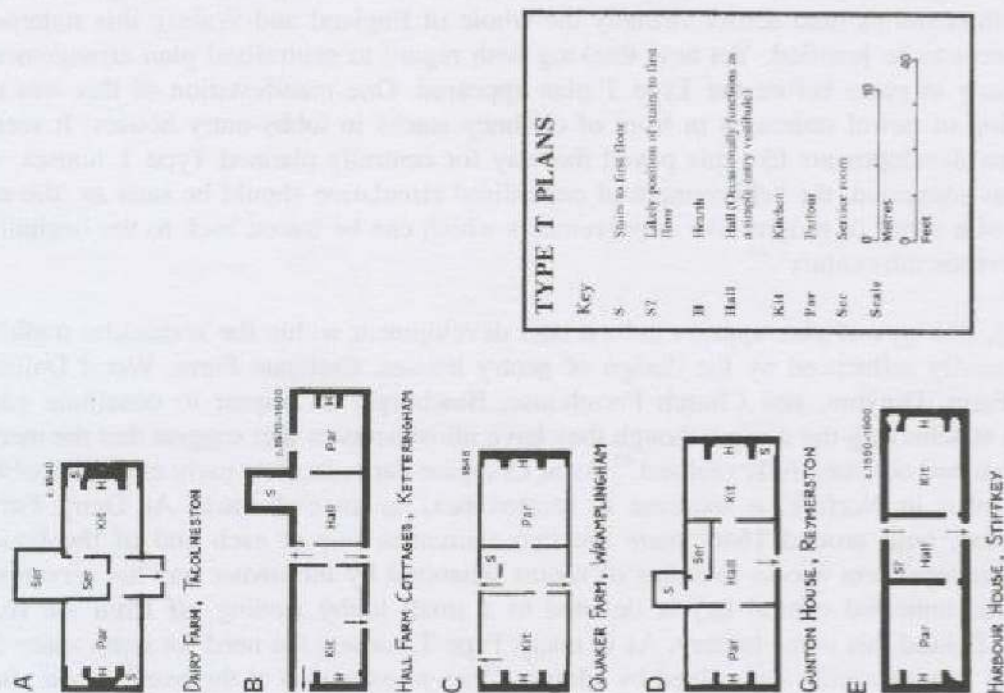
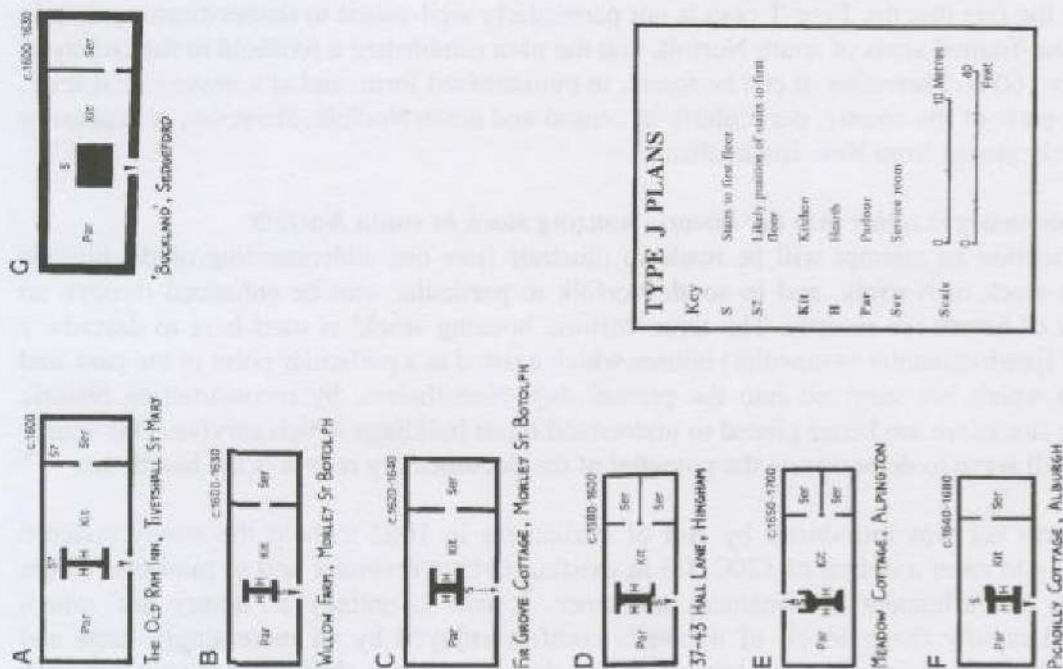
#### Type T plan (three-cells)

The Type T plan incorporates three cells, with a central unheated service/entry bay flanked on both sides by larger heated rooms, normally a kitchen and parlour. By the early 1600s, fully developed examples of the plan were few and far between and were being built exclusively by owners of high social status. These early seventeenth-century houses, such as Gunton's, Reymerstone, were usually large structures occasionally with four as opposed to three ground-floor rooms. Some houses, like Hall Farm Cottages, Ketteringham, were adapted (in this case from a Type G plan) to conform to the new Type T arrangement (*See Figure 12*).<sup>42</sup>



Sue Brown guides members of the Scole Committee for Archaeology in East Anglia around the historic centre of New Buckenham





Peter Smith has suggested that the appearance of the Type T plan was 'the most important contribution the seventeenth century had to make to the development of architecture'.<sup>43</sup> Given the huge number of farmhouses which were built with this plan in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (and across virtually the whole of England and Wales), this statement would seem to be justified. Yet new thinking with regard to centralised plan arrangements was already in place before the Type T plan appeared. One manifestation of this was the positioning of newel staircases in front of chimney stacks in lobby-entry houses. It seems likely that developments like this paved the way for centrally planned Type T houses. As Smith has suggested, the achievement of centralised circulation should be seen as 'the end product of a series of progressive improvements which can be traced back to the beginning of the seventeenth century'.<sup>44</sup>

Certainly, this type of plan appears to be a later development within the vernacular tradition and is heavily influenced by the design of gentry houses. Crabgate Farm, Wood Dalling, Valley Farm, Drayton, and Church Farmhouse, Bawburgh, all appear to constitute early attempts at achieving the design, though they have idiosyncrasies that suggest that the merits of the plan had not been fully realised.<sup>45</sup> As at Crabgate Farm, in most early examples of the Type T plan in Norfolk, a staircase is located next to an end stack. At Dairy Farm, Tacolneston, built around 1640, there are two staircases, one at each end of the house, allowing independent access to suites of rooms inhabited by the owner and his servants.<sup>46</sup> Part of the unheated central bay is devoted to a small lobby leading off from the front entrance. Behind this is the buttery. As in many Type T houses, the need for extra space for additional service rooms was solved by adding a lean-to extension at the rear.<sup>47</sup> Soon after, however, houses like Quaker Farm, Wramplingham (c.1640-60), and Crossways Farm, Chedgrave, dated 1669,<sup>48</sup> began to be built with a grand staircase leading off from the entrance vestibule which allowed independent access to all rooms and created an efficient, fully centralised plan. Most Type T houses built after c.1680 in Norfolk conform to this arrangement.

Despite the fact that the Type T plan is not particularly well-suited to timber-framing, it is in the timber-framed areas of south Norfolk that the plan established a foothold in the county in the early 1600s. Thereafter, it can be found, in miniaturised form, and at a lower social level, in most parts of the county, particularly in central and north Norfolk. However, it appears to be entirely absent from New Buckenham.

#### **4. *Documentary insights into the historic housing stock in south Norfolk***

In this section an attempt will be made to illustrate how our understanding of the historic housing stock in Norfolk, and in south Norfolk in particular, can be enhanced through an analysis of hearth-tax records. The term 'historic housing stock' is used here to describe a body of (predominantly vernacular) houses which existed at a particular point in the past, and not that which has survived into the present day. Nonetheless, by reconstructing historic housing stocks we are better placed to understand those buildings which survive. One source which will serve to demonstrate the potential of the documentary record is the hearth tax.

The hearth tax was introduced by Act of Parliament in 1662 to help the newly restored monarchy to meet a deficit of £200,000 in existing Crown revenues and to minimise future demands to Parliament for financial assistance. It was essentially a 'luxury tax' which exploited rapidly rising levels of domestic comfort enjoyed by an increasingly large and affluent 'middle class'. The tax was levied at the rate of two shillings per year for each hearth, collections being made twice in each year on Lady Day (25 March) and at Michaelmas (29 September). All individuals whose houses were worth more than 20 shillings a year were liable, as were those who contributed to the church and poor rates in their parish.



Those exempted from payment included parishioners who were exempted from contributing to parish rates, and those who inhabited a house worth less than 20 shillings as long as they did not own land, tenements or goods of the value of £10 or more.<sup>49</sup> Charities with endowed annual incomes of less than £100 were exempt as were industrial hearths associated with kilns, furnaces and blowing-houses.<sup>50</sup> Most counties have surviving assessments and some are fortunate enough to have had individual assessments published in one form or another, making them accessible to a wider readership. Norfolk is particularly fortunate in having two published volumes of hearth tax assessments, one for Michaelmas 1664 and one for Lady Day 1666.<sup>51</sup>

Those familiar with hearth tax records will know that using the tax as the basis for an analytical study is not without its problems. Firstly, neither of the two published assessments is complete for the entire county. Secondly, the reliability of the tax is often undermined by the failure to record those households exempted from payment. Thirdly, although the tax was collected twice a year, collections were based on assessments less regularly made. Errors and inaccuracies were, therefore, often perpetuated. Consequently, the number of hearths upon which a person was assessed, may not be completely accurate. Fourthly, it cannot be assumed that the number of hearths recorded is a true reflection of a person's wealth.

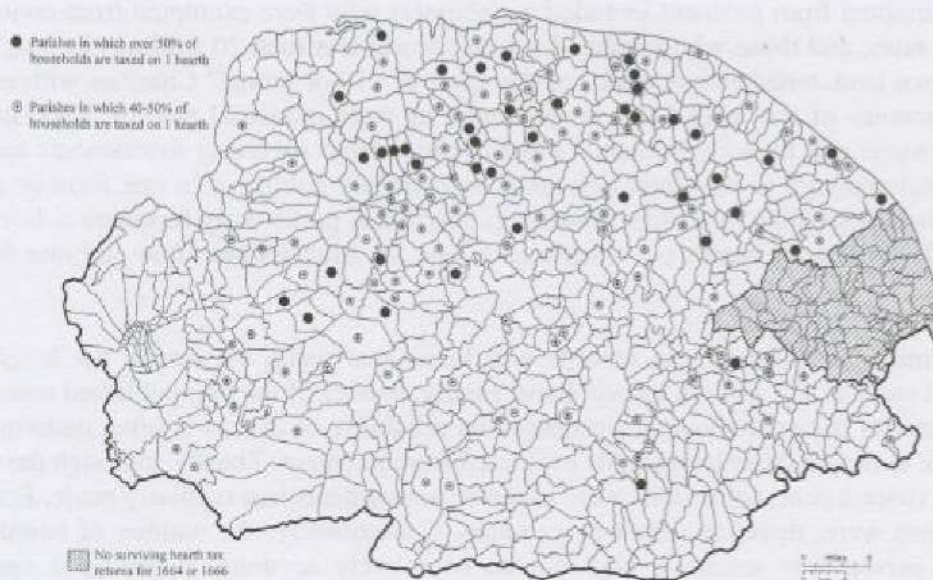
As Spufford points out:

the hearth tax can be used as an economic guide, and also as a social guide in the sense that all persons with three or more hearths are likely to be yeomen, just as labourers are very unlikely to occupy a house with more than one hearth. But the extent of economic and social overlap shown by the inventories, and the blurring of economic and social divisions caused by inheritance and personal preference, mean that although the tax may be used as a guide to status and wealth in general, it may not safely be used in any individual example.<sup>52</sup>

Lastly, evasion is another unknown quantity. We know that it existed in the seventeenth century but we do not know the extent of the phenomenon. William Fenery of Badwell Ash, Suffolk, refused point blank to pay the tax of two shillings on his two hearths in 1662 because it was 'un-concionable high' [*sic*], but we can never be sure how many of his neighbours followed his example.<sup>53</sup> These factors combine to ensure that the true value of the hearth tax assessments lies not in the insights they provide into the houses of individuals or individual communities, but, instead, in the opportunity they provide to investigate historical patterns over a wider area. By examining larger areas and larger quantities of assessments, the impact of any anomalies or inconsistencies in individual parish lists is minimised.

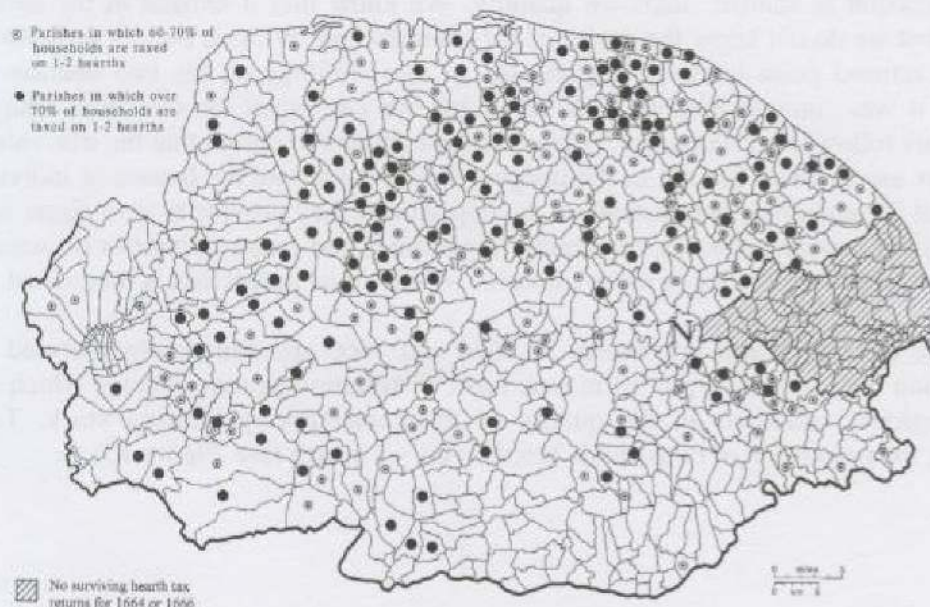
When the Norfolk hearth tax returns of 1664 and 1666 are statistically analysed and the information they contain is plotted in map form, distribution patterns emerge which strongly imply regional variations in the quality of the contemporary housing stock. Take, for example, the proportion of households taxed on only 1 hearth (*see Figure 13*).





**Figure 13**  
Households taxed on 1 hearth 1664/1666.  
(Illustration by Adam Longcroft)

It is evident that these are concentrated in north Norfolk, suggesting that householders living in small cottages formed a greater proportion of the tax-paying population here. If we consider how this distribution relates to soil divisions by looking at a simple soil map of the county it immediately becomes apparent that these smaller houses clustered in areas characterised by light soils – areas associated, in turn, with a ‘sheep-corn’ economy in which open-field agriculture was combined with the grazing of large flocks of sheep. If we combine these two groups and consider households taxed on one or two hearths, the pattern becomes, if anything, even clearer (*See Figure 14*).

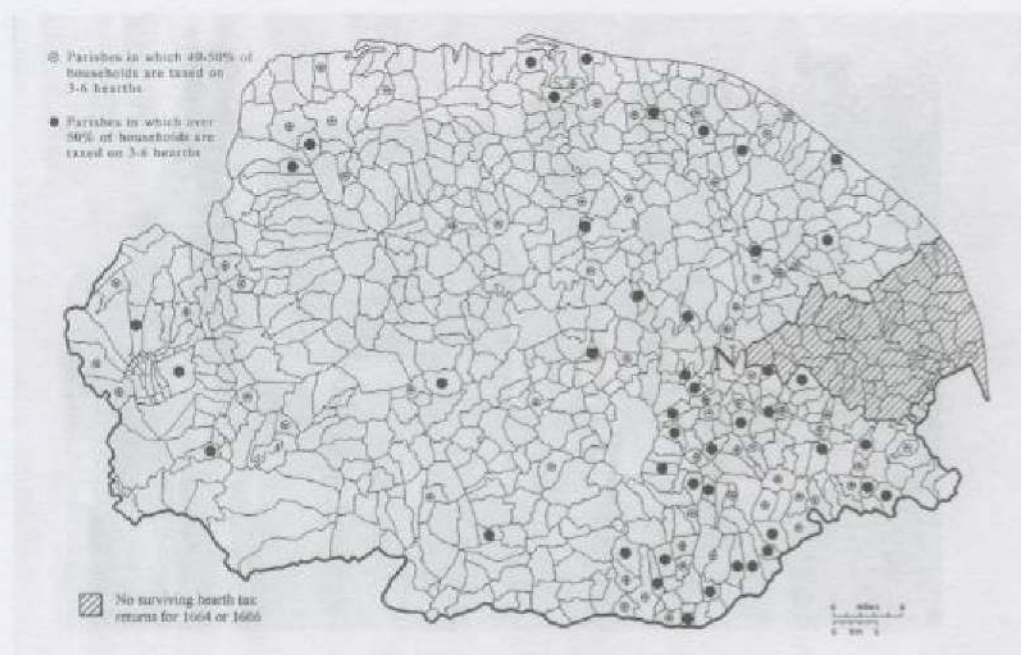


**Figure 14**  
Households taxed on 1-2 hearths 1664/1666.  
(Illustration by Adam Longcroft)



Parishes in which 60 per cent or more of listed households are taxed on one or two hearths are clearly focused in a broad belt across north Norfolk – an area characterised, as has already been noted, by light soils and sheep-corn husbandry. These were areas where large estates were beginning to emerge in the 1600s.<sup>54</sup> The existence of strong lordship here facilitated the creation of vast sheep walks, usually at the expense of the grazing rights of smaller farmers, and occasionally via the deliberate depopulation of village communities.<sup>55</sup> The hearth tax returns strongly suggest that these were also the areas where a process of economic polarisation was most advanced by the middle of the seventeenth century and where communities predominantly comprised cottagers and lesser farmers with small, unsophisticated dwellings.<sup>56</sup>

We are on fairly safe ground, therefore, in saying that the hearth tax assessments indicate that small houses with one or two hearths were numerous in the north of the county. One area notable for not having large numbers of houses with one or two hearths was the clayland area of south Norfolk. Here, the proportion of substantial houses (many presumably inhabited by well-to-do yeomen) with between three and six hearths is correspondingly high — in particular within the Rural District of Depwade (*see Figure 15*). This concentration is the result of economic prosperity based on fertile soils, plentiful river-bottom meadows, and the existence of extensive common grazing rights. The heavy clay soils of this area of south Norfolk gave rise to a pastoral economy based on dairying and rural industries such as linen and worsted weaving,<sup>57</sup> wood-turning and tanning.<sup>58</sup> More importantly still, villages were more egalitarian in their socio-economic make-up, with large numbers of small to middling-sized farms supporting moderately prosperous yeoman farmers living in substantial farmhouses most of which, by the mid 1600s, boasted elaborate brick chimneys and multiple hearths. High population densities and an egalitarian social structure provided ideal conditions for the creation of large numbers of multiple-hearth houses in south Norfolk in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.



**Figure 15**  
Households taxed on 3-6 hearths 1664/1666.  
(Illustration by Adam Longcroft)



High levels of wealth are reflected in significant concentrations of houses with brick-built crow-stepped gables, most of which were erected before 1650.<sup>59</sup> Crucially, brick was also used to construct substantial axial brick chimney stacks, many of which were endowed with multiple flues. This resulted in a proliferation of multiple-hearth houses from the late-sixteenth century most of which, as we have seen, possessed either a cross-passage plan or a lobby-entry plan. It is apparent, therefore, that small cottages appear to have proliferated in the arable area of north Norfolk, whilst larger farmhouses with multiple hearths seem to have been thicker on the ground in the claylands of south Norfolk. As has been suggested, this was almost certainly the product of a more egalitarian social structure and a more even distribution of wealth. But it may also reflect the emergence of divergent vernacular building traditions within the county. Across the north of the county a flint building tradition had emerged by the sixteenth century. This favoured, for reasons of economy, the use of gable-end chimney stacks. In communities where most people could only afford houses with one or two rooms on the ground floor, a single gable stack incorporating one or maybe two hearths at the most usually sufficed. In south Norfolk, by contrast, the large number of sophisticated multi-hearth houses may reflect not just a concentration of wealth within a dominant and very large class of moderately prosperous yeoman farmers, but also a well-established tradition of timber-framed construction which favoured the adoption of multiple-flue axial stacks. In south Norfolk, the plan incorporating an axial stack (within the main body of the house) remained the dominant type until changing architectural tastes in the second half of the seventeenth century dictated the adoption of plans with double gable end chimney stacks which were more aesthetically in tune with the times but less efficient in their use of brick. Early examples of this type of plan, like Dairy Farm, Tacolneston (c.1640) (see *Figure 16*) appear at the time of the Civil War, but are more commonly found after the Restoration, as at Crossways Farm, Chedgrave (c.1669).<sup>60</sup>



**Figure 16**  
Dairy Farm, Tacolneston, Norfolk.  
(Photograph by Adam Longcroft)



### ***5. Studying small towns: problems and possibilities***

Unfortunately, the study of small towns is fraught with difficulties – not least of which is the absence of source material. Documentary sources provide a potentially rich avenue for research – especially for those wishing to study buildings. The practice of combining the study of standing buildings with documentary evidence, which was pioneered by Hoskins, Beresford and Barley in the 1950s and 60s, is now well established and is increasingly reflected in publications on vernacular architecture. Nat Alcock's study of vernacular houses in Warwickshire is a good example.<sup>61</sup> The study of probate inventories has been of particular importance in providing new insights into the nature of early housing.<sup>62</sup> These insights have been complemented by those provided by other documentary sources. The author, for example, has illustrated the potential of what might be termed 'documentary archaeology' in a study of Norfolk hearth tax assessments,<sup>63</sup> whilst others have explored the value of early maps as a means of establishing variations within contemporary housing stocks.<sup>64</sup> While the potential value of documentary sources has long been recognised and exploited, there remain two key problems. The first is that the majority of documentary research carried out in relation to the built environment of towns relates to the post-medieval period. With some notable exceptions,<sup>65</sup> historians have neglected the documentary analysis of medieval buildings, despite the fact that the documentary record has the potential to revolutionise our understanding of them. The second (which is no doubt partly the cause of the first) is that documentary sources associated with small towns often fail to survive from the Middle Ages. New Buckenham illustrates this fact well. As Rutledge has noted, apart from a handful of medieval written sources, the town 'is sparsely recorded before about 1530 and abundantly thereafter'.<sup>66</sup> The post-medieval sources have, however, been of immense usefulness not only in identifying long-term chronologies of ownership, but also in shedding light onto the status of houses, the date of rebuilding projects, the functions of buildings and the wider economy of the town. Much of the documentary material employed in this study is drawn from the New Buckenham borough court books running from about 1559 to 1879,<sup>67</sup> and also landgable rentals of 1542 and 1634.<sup>68</sup> These have been supplemented from other sources including title deeds in the Norfolk Record Office and in private hands. Additional data has been retrieved from surviving wills and probate inventories. Changes of house-ownership are regularly recorded in the borough court books; incidental information such as the decay or reconstruction of a house or the precise nature of the buildings on a site is also occasionally provided. Landgable rents were small, specifically urban rents demanded by the lord of the borough from virtually every house owner. That listed in 1634 is arranged in the order in which the collectors went around the town and the R numbers (e.g. R59) used in this study reflect their progress from property to property.

The second potential source of information for the study of small towns is archaeological excavation. Here again, however, we are faced with a major problem; archaeological excavations have tended to focus either on the sites of deserted medieval villages (essentially rural sites) or on large provincial cities. It is important to remind ourselves that most of what we know about early medieval buildings is based on a biased sample limited almost exclusively to large medieval boroughs on the one hand (mostly cities such as York, Lincoln, Winchester, London and Norwich)<sup>69</sup> or small deserted village settlements such as Wharram Percy, Yorks, West Whelington, Northumberland, and Grenstein, Norfolk, on the other. Between these two extremes of success and failure, there are the numerous small market towns that have, as yet, received little attention from archaeologists despite their obvious importance.<sup>70</sup> In a recent paper Dyer points out that there were at least 600 small towns with populations of less than 2,000 at any one time between 1270 and 1525 and that these contained around 400,000 people or around a tenth of the population.<sup>71</sup> Any attempt, therefore, to reconstruct medieval housing stocks is thus limited by a general lack of surviving sources, a paucity of research into those medieval written records which do survive, by an almost complete failure of medieval historians to communicate their research



to archaeologists (and vice versa), by the small-scale nature of most excavations and by the fact that most excavations have been conducted in failed villages and large cities to the virtual exclusion of other categories of settlement.

Whilst this may seem a rather negative summation, it is important to stress that there are potentially rich avenues of research to be investigated. Perhaps the most important of these is the archaeological recording and analysis of standing buildings – an approach which underpins the NHBG's study of New Buckenham. Buildings are not just of interest for their own sake – they can also tell us much about the make-up of contemporary society. Dyer has pointed out that 'vernacular buildings have a great historical potential'.<sup>72</sup> The structures themselves can be seen as the 'product' of a vibrant craft tradition as well as an indicator of the availability of building materials and levels of urban and rural wealth. They can tell us about the limitations and potential of building technologies and their development over time. The design and layout of buildings can shed light on regional and local economies and also the commercial and domestic priorities of the people who lived in them. Put simply, as an important aspect of material culture, changes in buildings reflect changes in society.<sup>73</sup> As Johnson has suggested, buildings also embody cultural meanings and have potential to reveal past mental attitudes: 'values and meanings will be communicated through the organisation of space, and specifically through the everyday actions that that organisation involves'.<sup>74</sup> The NHBG's study of New Buckenham has therefore been driven by recognition that the surviving buildings of the town may shed new and unexpected light onto the history not only of New Buckenham itself, but wider aspects of urban history.

#### ***6. Datable features in timber-framed buildings in south Norfolk***

Studying historic buildings is a complex process. In order to make sense of the archaeological evidence (the standing structure) it is crucial to determine a basic stratigraphic sequence. Just as in an archaeological excavation the excavator needs to have a clear sense of how the different archaeological 'layers' relate to one another, in a building it is equally important to arrive at an understanding of which bits are earlier than others. This is particularly important in historic buildings since they almost always develop in a piecemeal fashion over time: extensions are added, new windows inserted, roofs raised and replaced, old walls covered up with new ones, new chimneys introduced and old ones destroyed, internal partitions removed or simply moved, and decorative schemes adapted – often several times – to suit changing fashions. Establishing a 'relative' sequence is, therefore, crucial. But this is not enough on its own. We must go one step further. We also need to place the different elements of the developmental sequence into a defined chronology. To put it simply, we need to know not only which bits are earlier or later than others, but also what date or date range applies to each phase of a building's evolution. Unfortunately, whilst dating historic buildings is undoubtedly one of the most important aspects of their study it is also one of the most difficult.

To do so we have three strands or sources of evidence to help us. The first source is the documents. As we shall see in later sections of this introduction, references to owners, the amalgamation or rebuilding of properties and property disputes can shed valuable light onto the history of a building or a group of buildings. The second line of investigation is a scientific one. Although Carbon 14 dating methods are not sufficiently accurate to date buildings of medieval or post-medieval origin accurately, another scientific technique – dendrochronology – has the potential to date buildings very precisely indeed – even to the season of a particular year. More will be said about this exciting technique in section 12 of this introduction and in Appendix 2. The third method of dating buildings is by stylistic (or comparative) analysis. This is a complex term used to describe something very simple: namely, the comparison of specific architectural features in buildings of known date with similar features of in buildings of unknown date. However, as has been noted in a recent



publication 'The knowledge needed to associate particular features with their likely date range can only be acquired through extensive field study of buildings for which dates are known or are at least suggested.'

Given enough time and experience, it is possible to develop an approximate chronology for a range of features which, when taken together and cross-referenced with each other, enable us to place the separate phases of a building into a more or less precise timeline. In this section an attempt has been made to bring together the collected field experience of leading members of the NHBG along with data derived from publications in other areas of the country. The timeline which follows constitutes a crude method of summarising some of the key datable features which have helped members of the Group to date buildings in south Norfolk generally, and those in New Buckenham in particular. This timeline is very much a 'working document' – a first draft as it were. It is not, by any means, intended to provide a definitive chronology and should not be interpreted as such. As more buildings are studied, and more are precision-dated by dendrochronology, it will almost certainly need to be updated and corrected.

One of the key objectives of the NHBG is to facilitate the study of historic buildings in the county by a wider cross-section of society. It is our sincere hope, therefore, that readers will find the timeline a useful and practical tool in support of their own studies of historic buildings, whether they be in Norfolk or elsewhere. Just as historic buildings, and particularly those of vernacular type, often display marked regional styles, it is important to be aware that they also have distinctive regional chronologies. The same feature may, therefore, have a very different date range in two different parts of the country. Those who wish to study datable features in greater detail should consult the following text: L. Hall and N.W. Alcock, *Fixtures and Fittings in Dated Houses 1567-1763*, CBA Technical Handbook No.11(1994).



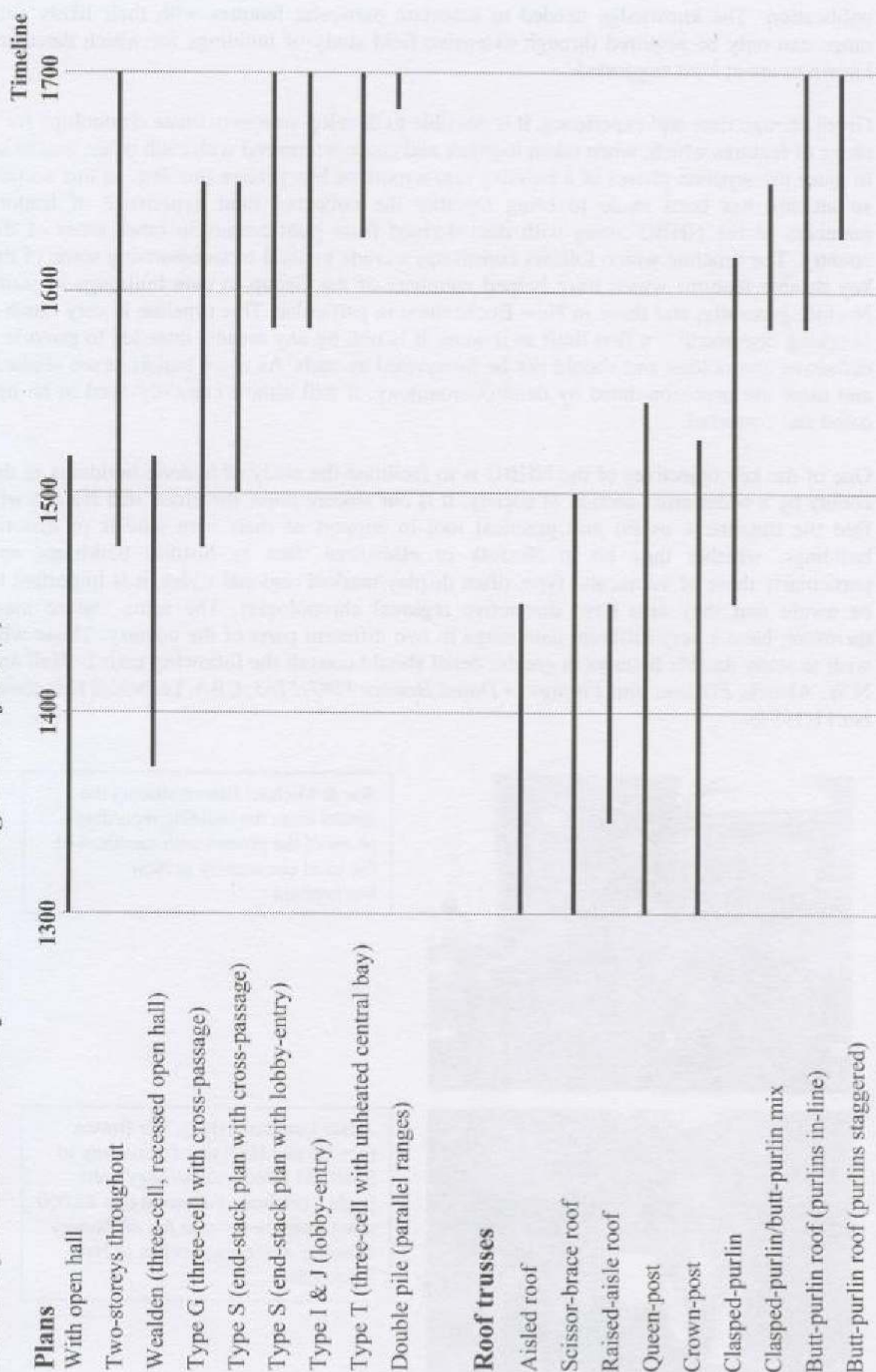
Sue & Michael Brown sharing the results from the building recording phase of the project with members of the local community in New Buckenham



Adam Longcroft (left), Sue Brown (centre) and Ian Tyers (University of Sheffield Dendrochronology Lab) (right), celebrate the award of a £5,000 grant from the *Awards for All Lottery Fund* for a tree-ring project in New Buckenham

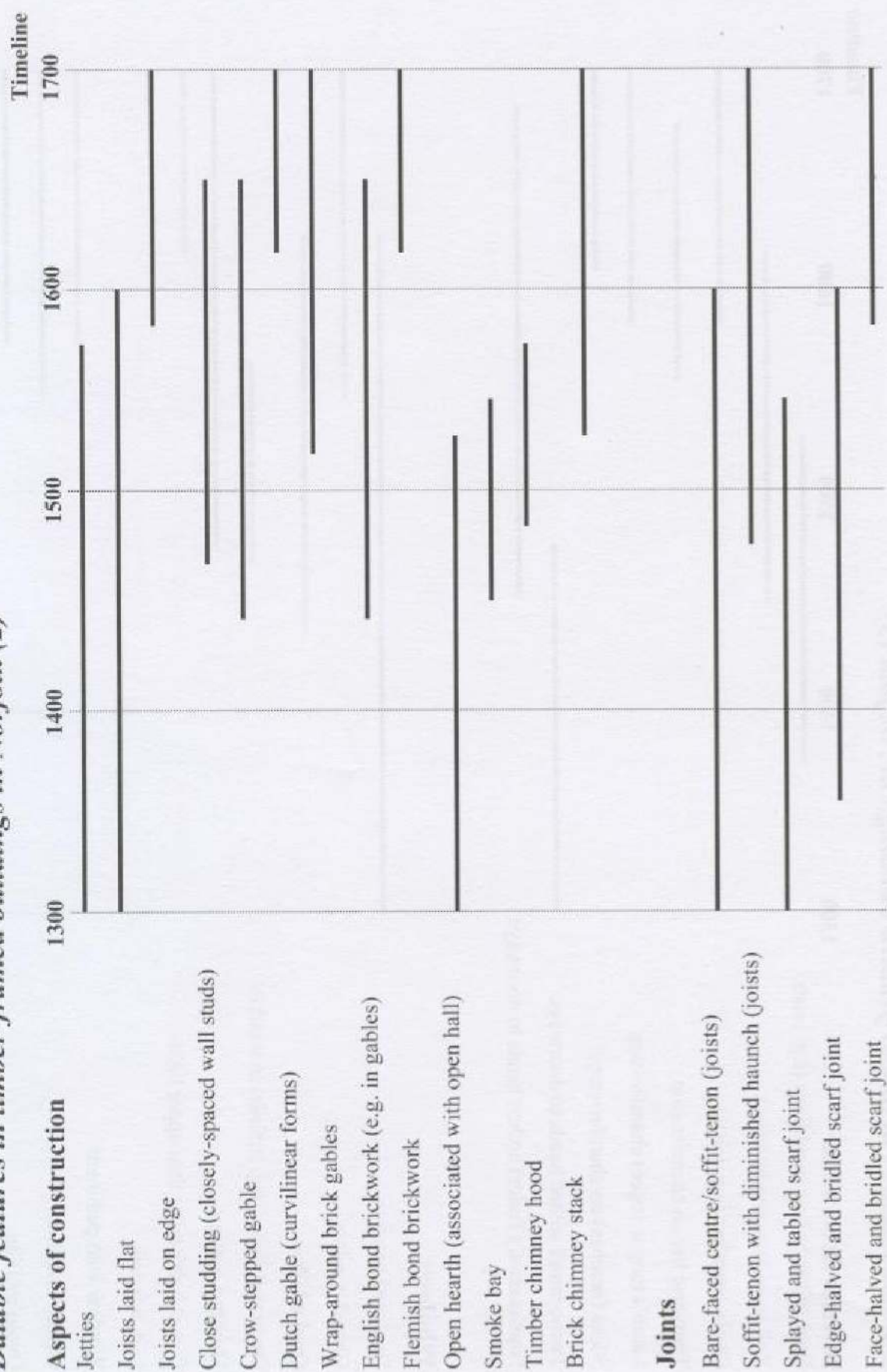


## *Datable features in timber-framed buildings in Norfolk (1)*



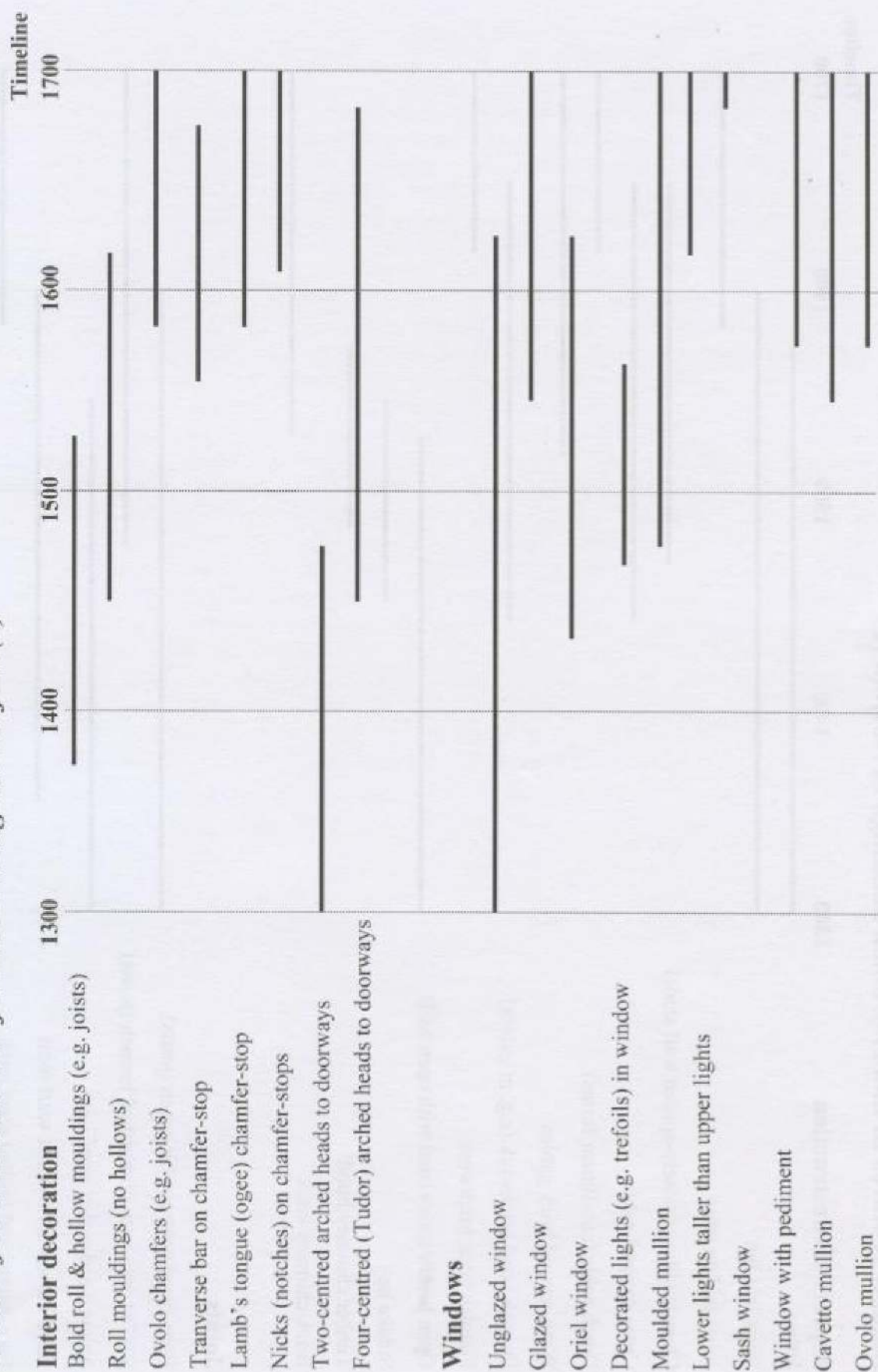


## *Datable features in timber-framed buildings in Norfolk (2)*





### *Datable features in timber-framed buildings in Norfolk (3)*



## Part 2: The Buildings of New Buckenham

### 7. *Why New Buckenham?*

The choice of New Buckenham as the focus of a detailed research project by the NHBG was arrived at via the consideration of a number of separate factors. Firstly, it was felt important that the location of such a long-term project should be fairly central within the county and served by a reasonable road network in order to enable all NHBG members to engage with the project irrespective of where they lived. Secondly, the Group believed that for its first-ever research project the choice of settlement should take into account the limited resources of the Group. It should therefore be sufficiently small to impose a reasonable limit on the number of buildings available for study. Thirdly, the membership of the Group believed that for the project to have maximum value it should seek to 'marry' documentary and archaeological information within the context of a truly interdisciplinary approach. It was agreed, therefore, that the choice of location should be influenced by the availability of documentary sources and, ideally, should take advantage of documentary research which had already been completed. New Buckenham seemed to 'fit the bill' in all respects. It is located roughly within the middle of the county on one of the principal road routes between Thetford and Norwich. Access would therefore present few problems. It is also a small community and historically contained only about 80 households. The boundaries of the settlement were still clearly delineated by the twelfth-century fortifications and the number of pre-c.1800 standing buildings seemed — on initial examination — to present a manageable assemblage for study. Crucially, the town had also benefited from the research of Paul Rutledge — a long serving archivist at the Norfolk Record Office who had only recently published a documentary study of New Buckenham which focused on the period between 1530 and 1780.<sup>75</sup> It was realised early on that the fact that Paul is a resident of New Buckenham would also provide the NHBG with an effective 'liaison' with the community. Although few of us realised the importance of this at the outset, Paul's liaison role was to become pivotal to the entire project in more ways than one.

### 8. *The creation of New Buckenham*

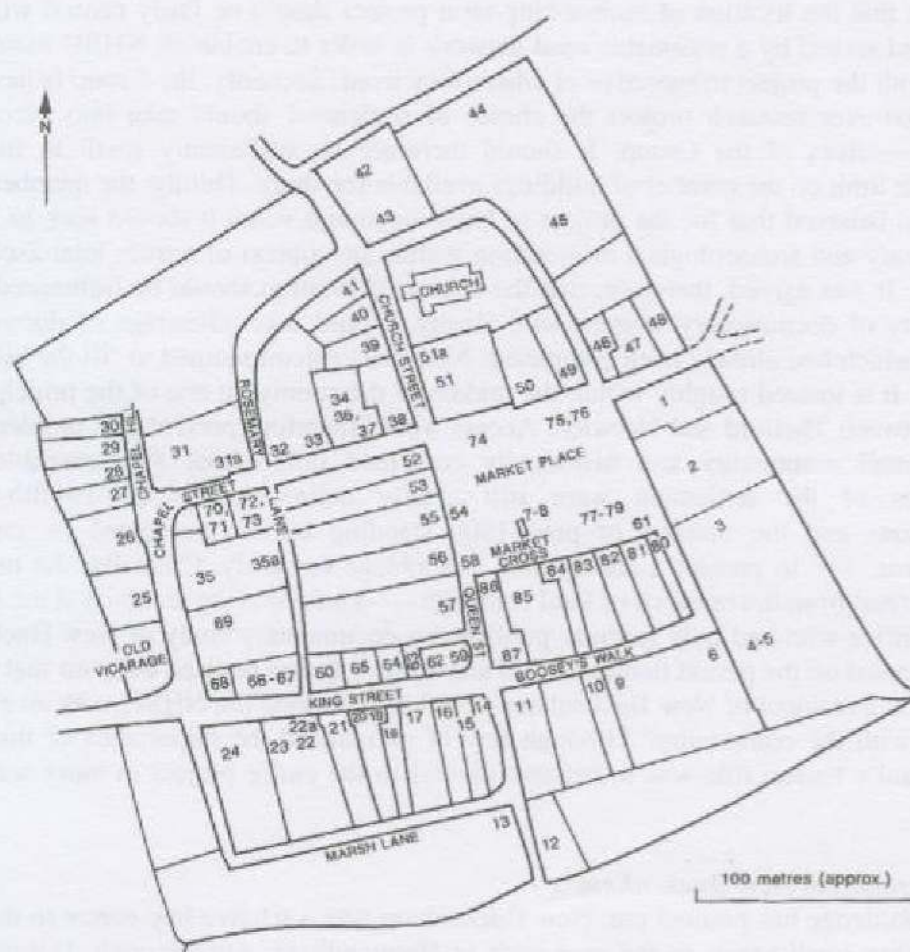
As Paul Rutledge has pointed out, New Buckenham was a relative late-comer to the urban scene. Other small towns in the area such as Wymondham, Attleborough, Hingham and Diss had been growing in a piecemeal, organic fashion and acquiring the trappings of urban society for at least a century before William D'Albini decided, at some point between 1146 and 1176, to link his new castle to a new urban plantation on a virgin, undeveloped site to the south of his existing base at Old Buckenham.<sup>76</sup>

The story of the creation of New Buckenham has been told many times before and there seems little to be gained from re-telling it in detail here. However, for those unfamiliar with the story it will hopefully be useful to recall the salient points, and, perhaps more importantly, to place the creation of New Buckenham into a wider historical context.

New Buckenham was established as a 'new town' or 'plantation' outside the gates of William D'Albini's new castle. William granted it borough status and this was confirmed by his son and his grandson.<sup>77</sup> Like most planted towns New Buckenham was laid out on a strict grid-iron plan (in this case roughly 200 yards square) which reflected the sort of organisation seen in Roman towns a thousand years earlier (*See Figure 17*). Sited deliberately on a shallow spur of land above a small westward flowing stream New Buckenham was composed of bits of land which had been carved out of the neighbouring parishes of Old Buckenham, Banham and Carleton Rode. Indeed, D'Albini's new castle



was located within the parish boundary of Old Buckenham and has never, technically, been part of New Buckenham.



**Figure 17**  
The layout of the town of New Buckenham.  
(Illustration by Philip Judge)

Almost from the start it would seem that William's plans for his new town were subject to constraints. For example, in order to create a decent-sized town field (approximately 180 acres) for the townsfolk to graze their animals or cultivate crops the earl was forced to borrow land from the bishop of Norwich. This was referred to as Bishop's Haugh or Haugh Field and originated as an outlier of the Bishop's manor of Eccles. Another area of land (approximately 190 acres) located to the north of the town in Old Buckenham parish was also effectively 'taken over' by New Buckenham, becoming a second town field. To the east of the town defences was the common, an area of common grazing of some 95 acres (about 39 ha.) to which most New Buckenham residents had rights of access. Though it made an unsuccessful attempt in the late-sixteenth century to claim part of the decayed parish of Old Buckenham St Andrew,<sup>78</sup> New Buckenham remained a very small parish of



only 360 acres (about 146 ha.). This acreage was far too small to support the eighty or so households in the town.<sup>79</sup> This meant that many people looked to non-agricultural trades for an income. It also meant that the residents of New Buckenham were reliant on produce flowing into the market place from the surrounding agricultural 'hinterland' for many of their day-to-day foodstuffs. The defences of the castle baileys continued in the form of a perimeter bank and ditch around the newly planted town. The original route of the Norwich to Thetford road was diverted, using a series of right-angled turns, through the market place. The newly-created town was served not by a church but, instead by a chapel which was located outside of the town itself immediately to the south of D'Albini's castle. The growth of the town population may have been the motivating factor for the creation, in the thirteenth century, of a new church dedicated to St Martin which was 'inserted' into the northern, perhaps still unoccupied, part of the town's grid pattern.

D'Albini must have hoped that New Buckenham would flourish and, when considered in a broader context of urban expansion in Norfolk and beyond, this expectation seems entirely reasonable. The twelfth and thirteenth centuries were, after all, an economic 'boom period' that witnessed the creation of huge numbers of newly planted towns across Europe. In England and Wales alone Beresford has estimated that 120 new urban plantations were created, most of which were built to serve a commercial rather than military purpose.<sup>80</sup> As Platt has pointed out, growth in the power of the crown and urbanisation went hand in hand.

As the king's power spread out along his roads, across his forests and into his boroughs – the sites of his castles and his courts – he found natural allies in the burgesses. It was in the twelfth century that the king, for the first time, recognised the gild merchant as a trading association in the boroughs; it was in that century, too, that he began to grant its members comprehensive exemptions from local tolls on the roads and waterways throughout his kingdom.<sup>81</sup>

Whilst before 1100 one in three new plantations was a royal one, after this date 'there was a change in emphasis from royal foundations on strategic sites to commercial new ones, more dominated by their market than by a castle'.<sup>82</sup> By the end of the twelfth century seigniorial foundations were commonplace and many, such as Boston in Lincolnshire and St Neots in Cambridgeshire, were being built without the protection of a castle.

The one thing that all towns had in common, regardless of their location, was a market place. Many markets had been in existence for decades before they were formally recognised by the crown via the grant of a market charter. All the same, the fact that 1200 charters were awarded by the crown between 1227 and 1350 provides an insight into the speed and widespread nature of urban expansion in England and Wales in the two centuries which followed the Conquest.<sup>83</sup>

It is against this backdrop of urban expansion — an expansion fed by dramatic growth in overseas trade and population increase — that the creation of New Buckenham must be viewed.

The generous size of the market place and the lack of cultivable soil indicate that D'Albini saw New Buckenham primarily as a service town focusing on trades and crafts and so it remained: a place of tradesmen rather than farmers and workshops and warehouses rather than barns. Chief occupations between 1550 and 1800 were cloth finishing and sale, with



some cloth manufacture, butchering, tanning and leather working, brewing, malting and inn-keeping, and the linked trades of grocer and apothecary. Detailed records are largely lacking before the 1540s, but evidence from wills and the grandeur of the church and the larger of the two guildhalls indicate late-medieval prosperity.<sup>84</sup> A good part of the housing stock can in fact be assigned on the basis of the surveys presented here to the late-fifteenth and the early and middle years of the sixteenth centuries.

The market place was reduced late in the fifteenth century to provide sites for houses of high status with oriel windows and brick chimneys (see R.81 which is dated to 1473). Mercantile use encouraged a house form that gave particular emphasis to bulk storage. However, an always narrow economic base and relative decline, especially after the mid-eighteenth century, meant that the effect on the housing stock was repair and adaptation rather than replacement, with a fashion for new brick fronts in the nineteenth century. The fluidity made possible by the continuous frontages of an urban layout even permitted the reallocation of rooms or parts of rooms between neighbouring houses (see R.22-23, R.28-30, and R.62-64).

The final outcome is a village that has retained relatively unaltered its planned shape, its urban character of close settlement, and its timber-framed housing stock. Indeed, one of the things that sets the town apart from many of its peers is its state of preservation. Whilst the majority of new towns outgrew their original twelfth- and thirteenth-century defences and boundaries, New Buckenham failed to do so and, as a consequence, largely conforms today to the layout imposed by D'Albini in the 1140s or soon after. Later in this introduction we shall examine the reasons for this failure to expand, but for now it will suffice to note that anyone wishing to understand the nature of new town creation in the Middle Ages could do worse than consider New Buckenham as a case study.

## **9. New Buckenham: building materials and construction methods**

### Timber-framing

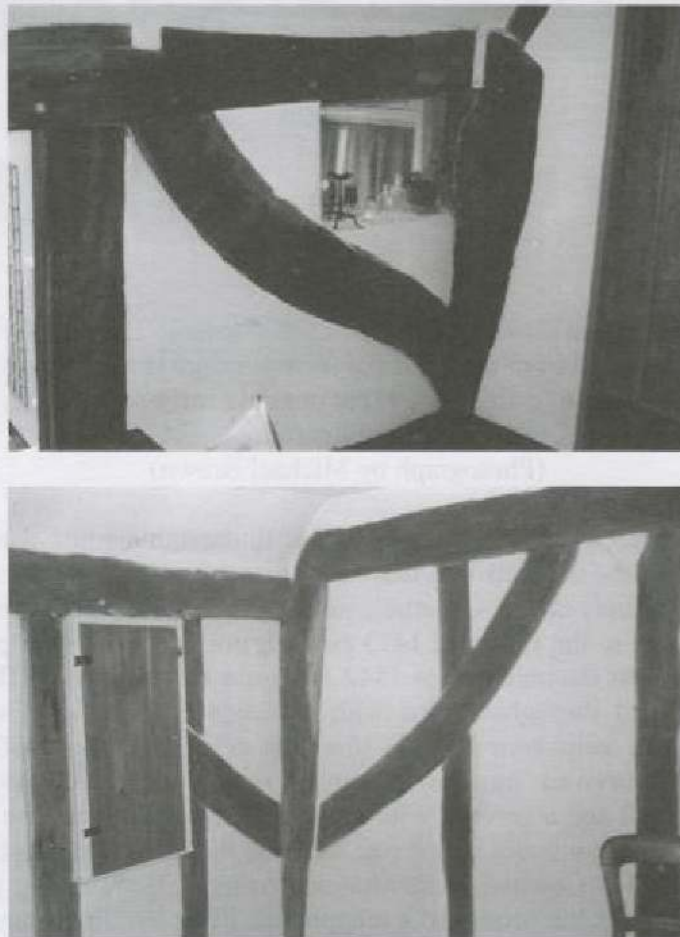
As has already been shown, New Buckenham sits within an area of timber-framed construction. The analysis of the surviving buildings in the town allows us to draw some conclusions about the nature of timber construction.

Timber framing conforms to the normal bay system, with 'bays' normally used to define individual rooms on the ground and first floors. Bay lengths vary between a minimum of approx. 9 ft and a maximum of approx. 18 ft. The width of timber-framed buildings (i.e. from front to back) also exhibits significant variation between a minimum of approx. 11 ft and a maximum of approx. 20 ft.

A variety of bracing techniques were employed to provide triangulation (and hence stiffening) with side and gable walls. Arch braces were employed in nine properties, and straight bracing was used in five properties. Rare ogee bracing was identified in three properties but the most common form of brace was the inverted arch brace which was employed in 14 of the 36 properties (*see Figure 18*).

The nature of infill between studs and posts was often difficult to determine with certainty because this was mostly concealed beneath plaster render – it is reasonable to assume, however, that this is predominantly wattle and daub. However, Saffron House appears to have possessed brick-nogging, not as a later replacement of wattle and daub as is usually the case in Norfolk, but as an original, early-seventeenth-century feature. It is possible,

therefore, that this technique was used more widely in the town. Joists employed in the provision of internal ceilings were generally laid flat in buildings of sixteenth-century date or earlier. Twenty-six of the total of 51 properties inspected possessed this type of ceiling arrangement and in the vast majority of cases these were secured with diminished-haunch soffit-tenons (*see Figure 19*). Joists laid on edge were found exclusively in properties of post-c. 1580 origin.



**Figure 18**

Ogee brace, No.6 Chapel Hill (top), and swag brace, The Old Swan Public House, King Street (bottom), New Buckenham.

(Photographs by Sue & Michael Brown)

Jetties are one of the defining characteristics of the medieval English town. They appear in East Anglia as early as the mid-thirteenth century and were adopted enthusiastically in crowded urban environments where the benefits of acquiring additional floor space at first floor level must have been greatly appreciated. A jetty had the added benefit of advertising the existence of a first floor (when this was an unusual and rare feature) and drawing attention to the status of the owner. By 1300 jetties were a common sight in English towns, and in some of the great provincial cities jettied buildings of exaggerated length were beginning to appear such as Lady Row, Goodramgate, in York, built in 1316 and the somewhat later Dragon Hall in Norwich, erected in 1427. As Quiney has suggested, 'wherever houses were framed in timber, jetties became popular'.<sup>85</sup>





**Figure 19**

Common joists with late diminished-haunch soffit-tenons. The joist furthest from the camera has separated from the principal joist. Burrage House, King Street, New Buckenham. Dendro-date of c. 1694-1729 (but possibly early-seventeenth-century date for the rest of the frame).

(Photograph by Michael Brown)

Unfortunately no jettied buildings of thirteenth- or fourteenth-century date survive in New Buckenham. Though one suspects that they were present in the town by 1400, the earliest surviving — and securely dated — jettied building is Oak Cottage/Yellow Cottage which has been dendro-dated to the spring of 1473 (*see Figure 20*). Built over part of the market place, this range is first documented in 1542 though a former owner, Thomas Wellys, is named. Jettied, floored throughout, and with evidence of oriel windows, it must have resembled its western neighbour-but-one (the former Feathers Inn) of which only the carved sill boards survived nineteenth-century rebuilding.<sup>86</sup> The jettied range once comprised parlour, hall and a service, with an original stack between the parlour and hall. Until the current project got under way it was believed that the range was built in the 1520s. The dendro-date of 1473 (secured, somewhat surprisingly, from ceiling joists in the hall) not only came as a shock but prompted a reappraisal of the building's significance since it is now the earliest securely dated non-manorial, non-monastic fully-floored, jettied building in the county. Given its early date it also demonstrates emphatically that the traditional attachment to the medieval open hall was already under attack in the county's small market towns by the 1470s. People were fast adapting to the new pattern of two-storey living and were prepared to do without open halls and the long-established cultural traditions which they embodied.

Oak Cottage/Yellow Cottage is not the only jettied building in new Buckenham. Another example, though much smaller in scale, is No.1 Chapel Street (*see Figure 21*). This site belonged to William Verdon in 1573 and it may be this house that was charged the landgable rent, high in New Buckenham terms, of 3 ¼ d in 1542. As late as 1696 the site measured one acre which is extremely large by New Buckenham standards.<sup>87</sup> Probably by 1615, and certainly by 1634, it had become a dwelling house. The 25-inch OS map of 1883-4 shows what may be part of an attached front range along Chapel Street, which has now gone.



**Figure 20**

Photograph of Oak Cottage/Yellow Cottage, Market Place, New Buckenham.

(Photograph by Adam Longcroft)

Again, prior to the launch of the NHBG project in New Buckenham, this building was believed to be a small sixteenth-century townhouse or commercial 'lock-up'. However, detailed recording of the building has led to two alternative scenarios. One suggestion is that the jettied western range was a cross-wing with an open hall to the south. All evidence of the hall has gone, but the former 'barn' reported to have occupied the site within living memory may have been the remains of this building. Alternatively the building may have been an independent gatehouse structure open at the front and possibly at the rear and with an elaborate chamber above complete with oriel window. If the structure was a gatehouse – which on current evidence seems most likely – then the site must have been one of considerable status and importance. A fifteenth-century date has been tentatively ascribed to this gatehouse, though the existing stack and rear range appear to have been added in the sixteenth century.



**Figure 21**

Photograph of No.1 Chapel Street, New Buckenham.

(Photograph by Adam Longcroft)



The third and last surviving jettied building in New Buckenham is Corner Cottage/Crawford's (See Figure 22). This is a rare example of a late-fifteenth/early-sixteenth-century Wealden house. It is documented from 1542 when it was owned by John Feke. Tantalising evidence of an earlier building on the site is indicated by large post-holes near the street frontage, found during a recent archaeological evaluation.<sup>88</sup> The chimney was in grave decay in 1579; its repair, or possibly the replacement in brick of a timber-built chimney, could have signalled the sixteenth-century flooring-over of the hall. A craftsman's rather than a merchant's house, its owners in the late sixteenth century were coopers.

Around 1660 the building was sub-divided into two properties. The existence of the former open hall and the open hearth associated with it are betrayed by smoke blackening at first floor level. Though an early-sixteenth-century date for the building remains a possibility, the jetty framing is unusual and may be an early technique. It also occurs nearby at Yew Tree Farm, Fornsett St. Mary. The floor framing of the east end employs central tenons which, again, may indicate a fifteenth-century date for the original building.



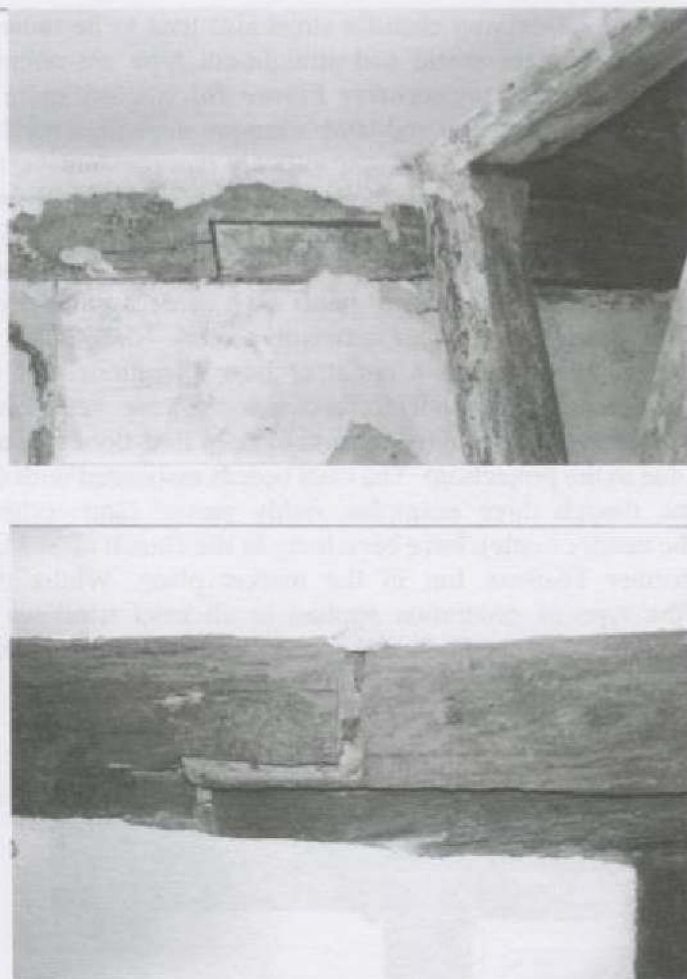
**Figure 22**

Photograph of Corner Cottage/Crawford's, Market Place, New Buckenham. A rare 15<sup>th</sup>-century Wealden house later sub-divided into two and then three properties.

(Photograph by Adam Longcroft)

In all but the smallest of houses the wall-plate requires at least two timbers to be joined end-on-end. This involves the use of a particularly complex joint called a scarf joint. Carpenters experimented with a variety of scarf-joint designs during the Middle Ages and several different types are represented in the New Buckenham buildings.

Ten examples of edge-halved and bridled scarf joints were identified – these vary in length considerably, with the large examples normally being earlier (fifteenth and sixteenth century) (see Figure 23).



**Figure 23**

Long edge-halved and bridled scarf joint in wall-plate, Yellow Cottage, Market Place (top), of 1473, and short edge-halved and bridled scarf joint, Thatched House, Marsh Lane (bottom), with two edge-pegs and the rebate for a sliding shutter clearly visible. Early 16<sup>th</sup> century.

(Photographs by Michael Brown)

There are several examples of edge-halved joints which incorporate a splay, including that at the Old Vicarage (c.1451) and The White Horse, King Street. A fine seventeenth-century example of a typologically later face-halved and bridled scarf joint has been identified at Cosy Cottage, Church Street (*see Figure 24*).

The timbers used in construction in New Buckenham were generally of good quality, though owners and carpenters rarely went to the bother and expense of incorporating elaborate carved decoration. This is in stark contrast to the nearby town of Wymondham where Robert Smith has been able to show that use of complex chamfers and chamfer stops was commonplace.<sup>89</sup> Chamfers on principal and common joists tend to be either plain 45 degree chamfers like those on the inserted principal joists in the floored-over halls at Red Roof, King Street, Tanyard Cottage, Marsh Lane, and Thatched House, Marsh Lane, or single ovolo chamfers like those on a transverse joist at The Beams, King Street, or double ovolos like that on a principal parlour joist at Pickwick House, Grange Road (*see Figure 25*). The latter constitute a select group only and more elaborate chamfer decorations are

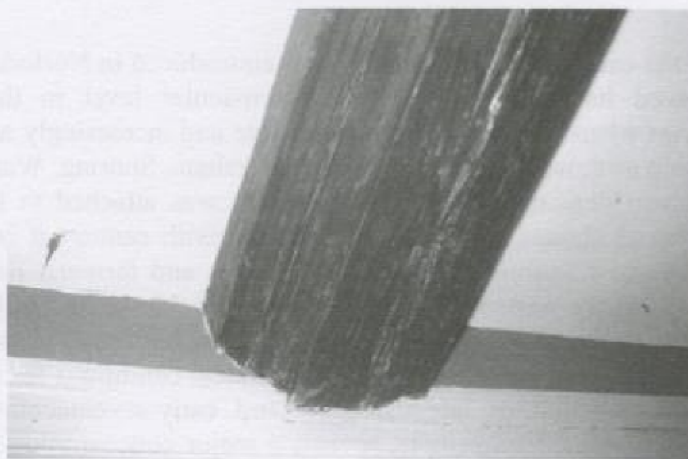


notable by their absence. Surviving chamfer stops also tend to be rather austere. Simple chamfer stops of run-out, plain shield and straight-cut type are common, and several properties lack chamfer stops of any sort (*see Figure 26*). Slightly more elaborate lamb's tongue stops were found in six houses and lamb's tongue stops incorporating a 'nick' were found in a further eight (*see Figure 27*). Comparatively rare pyramidal (broach) stops were found in only two houses and what might be termed 'elaborated' chamfers and stops were found in only four cases. Decorative mouldings of sixteenth-century origin are very rare in New Buckenham which may suggest that the emphasis in this period was on quality of timber construction rather than on 'luxury' items such as decoration. However, it should also be stressed that much evidence of sixteenth-century 'decoration' may have been disguised, concealed or destroyed as a result of later alterations. For example, several sixteenth-century projecting (first-floor) oriel windows have been identified, but the evidence of their existence normally only consists of deep first-floor sills and an absence of mullion mortices (due to the projection). The oriel boards associated with these windows do not survive in situ, though three examples, richly carved (and comprising a stylised representation of the nearby castle), have been hung in the church of St Martin. These were taken from the former Feathers Inn in the market place. Whilst this may not be representative of the type of decoration applied to all oriel windows in the sixteenth century, it seems reasonable to conclude that decorative oriel boards of one sort or another were a common sight in the town at one stage.



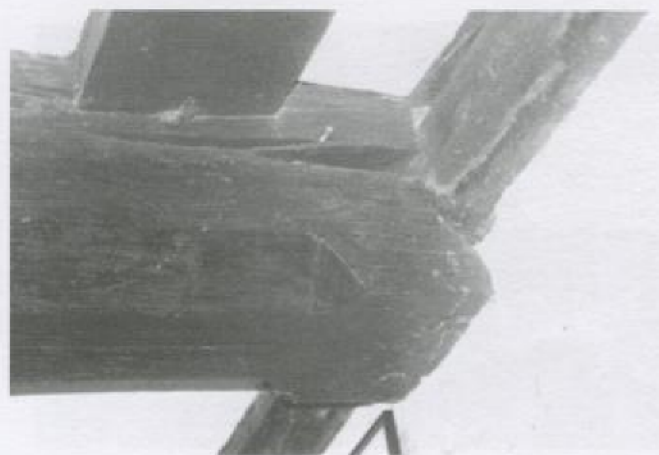
**Figure 24**

Edge-halved scarf joint with bridled abutments and slight splay, The White Horse, King Street. Late 16<sup>th</sup> century (top). Face-halved and bridled scarf joint, Cosy Cottage, Church Street, New Buckenham. Late 17<sup>th</sup>/early 18<sup>th</sup> century (bottom). (Photographs by Michael Brown)



**Figure 25**

Single ovolo chamfer on transverse joist at The Beams, King Street (bottom), and double ovolo moulding on parlour-end principal floor joist, Pickwick House, Grange Road (top), New Buckenham. Both 17<sup>th</sup> century.  
(Photographs by Michael Brown)



**Figure 26**

Straight-cut chamfer-stop, The Pleasance, Queen Street, New Buckenham.  
(Photograph by Michael Brown)



### Brick

Brick-making and the use of brick in building was reintroduced in Norfolk in the thirteenth century but achieved its finest expression at vernacular level in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when it became very fashionable and increasingly affordable. Its use in manor houses such as those at Caister, Oxburgh, Barsham, Snoring, Watlington, Shelton, Morley and Tibenham demonstrates the kudos which was attached to the new material amongst the seigniorial classes, but from the late sixteenth century it is also used more widely in the houses of wealthier tradesmen, merchants and farmers. Brick was adopted with particular gusto in the eastern half of the county and in south Norfolk in particular where the ready availability of good brick earths and a concentration of wealth (referred to earlier) amongst an emergent 'middle class' provided ideal conditions for it to be used on a wider basis. The distribution of late-sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century stepped (crow-stepped) brick gables, for example, reveals a major concentration within a triangle between Lopham (in the south-west), Bawburgh (in the north) and Aldeby (in the south-east). New Buckenham falls within this area of concentration with nine recorded stepped gables in neighbouring parishes.<sup>90</sup> It would seem from this evidence that in south Norfolk the period between 1580 and 1660 was a 'golden age' of brick construction at vernacular level. After 1660 a north-eastern concentration of 'Dutch' gables appears to suggest a shift in wealth and a relative decline in levels of wealth in the south of the county.<sup>91</sup> Significantly, no Dutch gables of seventeenth-century date survive in New Buckenham.



**Figure 27**

Lamb's tongue chamfer-stop with single nick (or notch), No.1 Chapel Hill (top), and lamb's tongue chamfer-stop with double nick, No.4 Chapel Hill (bottom), New Buckenham. (Photographs by Michael Brown)

Until the nineteenth century New Buckenham was essentially a timber-framed town. Thatch was also the dominant roofing material. Since 1800, however, the appearance of the town has fundamentally altered by the introduction of brick frontages and pantiled roofs. Indeed, it is interesting to note that New Buckenham has a very different appearance today to that most famous of medieval East Anglian towns – Lavenham (*see Figure 28*).

Like New Buckenham, Lavenham also sits within an area characterised by timber-framing. The difference between the two towns is that in Lavenham the timber frames are generally exposed – one might even say they are ‘on display’. Even the most jaded of tourists cannot fail to be impressed by the sheer quantity and quality of surviving timber-framed buildings in Lavenham and it is, indeed, precisely this that attracts bus-loads of tourists during the summer months.

However, it could be argued that the apparent visual differences between the two towns are entirely misleading. Analysis of photographs of Lavenham taken in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reveals that most buildings had their timbers concealed beneath layers of plaster render or pebble-dash. It is only in the latter part of the last century that the town developed its ‘chocolate box’ appearance and revealed its timber-framed attributes to an admiring audience.

New Buckenham, like Lavenham, is a timber-framed town. Unlike Lavenham, however, the vast majority of its timbers and jetties were concealed in the nineteenth century behind new brick frontages or ‘skins’. These were less easy to remove than a simple render and as a consequence New Buckenham’s modern appearance is utterly different to its Suffolk counterpart, despite sharing a common timber-framed legacy.

Thus, whilst Lavenham conforms to the popular perception of what a medieval East Anglian town should look like, the medieval and post-medieval timber-framed housing stock of New Buckenham remains hidden behind a facade of brick. That so many buildings acquired continuous brick frontages in the nineteenth century is interesting in itself. In some cases cheap red brick was employed, in others the same bricks were laid in a cost-saving rat-trap bond. Quite frequently, owners used the more expensive (and more fashionable) white bricks (*see Figure 29*).

Regardless of which type of brick was preferred, this widespread ‘re-skinning’ indicates that levels of wealth during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were sufficient to finance a remodelling of the housing stock but not a general process of rebuilding. This is in keeping with the documentary records which also indicate that the town was beginning to lose its urban functions at this time.



Ian Tyers (ARCUS), on a visit to New Buckenham Village Hall, explains the significance of the tree-ring results to members of the local community.





**Figure 28**  
Contrasting street scenes: New Buckenham, Norfolk (top two photographs), compared to Lavenham, Suffolk (bottom). (Photographs by Adam Longcroft)



**Figure 29**

Red brick 'skin', Pinchpot Cottage (top), and white brick 'skin', Saffron House (bottom),  
New Buckenham.

(Photographs by Adam Longcroft)

#### Roofing Materials

Of the 41 buildings (incorporating 51 separate properties) surveyed as part of this study only two have thatched roofs. Two have coverings of slate and the remainder have either red or black pantiles, the latter frequently used in preference to red on the front (roadside) pitch. Recent research has shown that thatch remained the dominant roofing material at a



vernacular level in Norfolk until the late eighteenth century – a dominance which was particularly pronounced in the south Norfolk districts of Depwade and Wayland where two-thirds of all parsonages were thatched in 1794.<sup>92</sup> This was significantly higher than the average proportional figure for the county which stood at 45%.<sup>93</sup> Given that parsonage houses were usually amongst the larger, more fashionable houses in most villages and towns it seems reasonable to conclude that the proportional figure for all houses was significantly higher than that for parsonages. A figure of 80-90% is probably not unlikely. By the late nineteenth century, the proportion of thatched parsonage houses in Norfolk had shrunk dramatically to less than 5%.<sup>94</sup> It is undoubtedly the nineteenth century, therefore, that heralds the wholesale replacement of thatch with alternative roofing materials, the most important of which in parsonages was slate which is virtually absent in 1794 but associated with nearly 50% of parsonages by 1894.<sup>95</sup> The two slate roofs recorded in New Buckenham probably appeared in the second half of the nineteenth century when long-distance transportation of heavy materials by rail made such materials both more readily available and affordable. They are certainly unlikely to be any earlier than 1794, at which time only a single slate roofed parsonage appears to have existed in Norfolk.<sup>96</sup> Pantiles are, of course, a distinctive feature of the historic housing stock in Norfolk and black pantiles, which were certainly being produced by 1771, are unique to East Anglia.<sup>97</sup> Vast numbers of pantiles began to be imported into Britain from the late sixteenth century onwards. In 1695 alone contemporary accounts put the figure for that year at 583,000, 363,000 of which came from the Netherlands and the remainder from Denmark.<sup>98</sup> Although 100,000 tiles only accounted for 60 average-sized dwellings, this would have been sufficient to have covered every house in New Buckenham and the cumulative effect of this level of importation was a dramatic change in the county's roof coverings by 1900. The transformation in the roofing of houses in New Buckenham reflects, therefore, a wider transformation within the county – a transformation which was given added momentum by the domestic manufacture of pantiles in Norfolk from the 1740s onwards.<sup>99</sup>

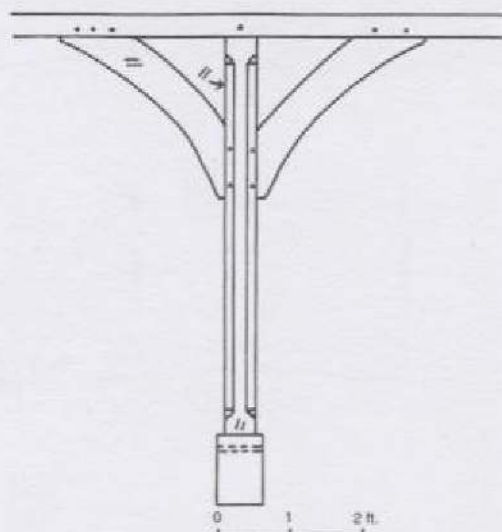
#### **10. *New Buckenham: roofs***

A substantial body of scholarly study is devoted to the design and construction of medieval roofs. This is not the time or place to recount the nature of these studies and what follows is, by necessity, a brief overview of the main types identified in New Buckenham.

Perhaps the single most significant observation which can be offered is that an impressive variety of roof structures were employed in New Buckenham. Detailed recording has revealed the presence of crown-post, queen-post, queen-strut, king-post, clasped-purlin, clasped and butt-purlin, butt-purlin, staggered butt-purlin, through-purlin, upper-cruck and collar rafter roofs. The frequent practice of 'raising' roofs in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has destroyed many earlier roofs and the variety referred to above may once have been even greater. The different roof types listed above were, of course, subject to different chronologies. The earliest are those of crown-post and queen-post type. These constitute what might be termed the 'standard' roof types of the period up to c.1580. The clasped purlin roofs are mostly of sixteenth or early-seventeenth-century date, whilst the various forms of butt-purlin roof are all of seventeenth-century origin. The king-post and through-purlin roofs appear to be very late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. In at least ten properties it has not been possible to determine the nature of the original roof structure either because there was no access to the roof space, or because the evidence had been destroyed by later alterations (re-roofing was a common phenomenon in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries).



The earliest securely-dated roof in New Buckenham is the fragmentary crown-post at the Old Vicarage which has been dendro-dated to winter 1451/1452. The next oldest, in terms of age, is found in the fundamentally different context of that most precocious of buildings in New Buckenham — Oak Cottage/Yellow Cottage, which has been dendro-dated to the spring of 1473 (*see Figure 30*). In this 'cutting-edge' two-storeyed, jettied building the crown-post roof was originally exposed in the roof space of the hall and service chambers. The posts and purlin of the original crown-post roof structure were retained within a later side-purlin roof with a shallower pitch.



**Figure 30**

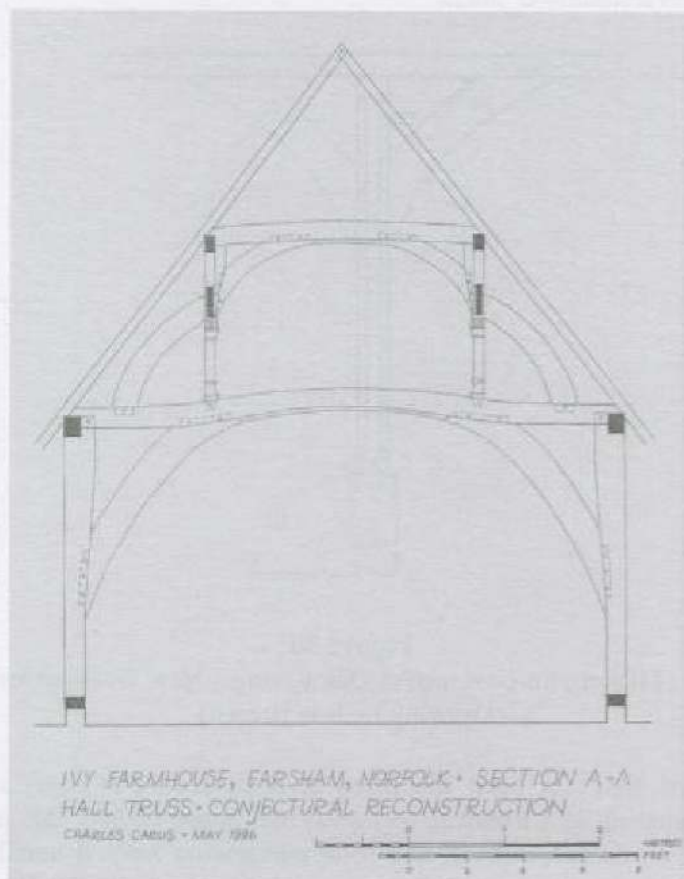
Drawing of the crown-post roof at Oak Cottage, New Buckenham, 1473.  
(Drawing by Sue Brown)

Another crown-post roof has been identified at Blair House/St Mary's Cottage on the market place. Originating as a tripartite medieval hall house c.1500, this property seems to have been formed on an 'assembled' site (one comprising several smaller plots) as it is probably the property described in 1542 as two-and-a-half tofts and half a toft in the same place. Owned by shearers and a woollen-draper in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, like Crawford's across the market place it was subdivided by the late seventeenth century. Above the parlour end is a crown-stud roof (lime washed) with its purlin, braces, seven collars (six by three inches) and probably original rafters with ashlar pieces intact. The partition wall has a king stud to the apex which is scribed with the carpenter's mark IIII which fits if the trusses were numbered from the south. The south end (which is over St. Mary's Cottage) is identical (it is also lime washed). The partition is made of wattle and daub and the stub of the truncated hall purlin is smoke blackened. Though the evidence remains inconclusive there is a suspicion that Blair House may be a Wealden, possibly with rear-facing jetties. The last building in the group is Beech House, Norwich Road, which appears to be a (mid?) fifteenth-century open-hall structure with a late-fifteenth-century ceiling inserted in the hall. In one of the tie beams over the hall there is a small cut-out for what may have been a crown post. On the basis of the current evidence all of the crown post roofs in New Buckenham appear to fall within the period 1450-1500.

The second key type of late-medieval roof was the queen-post roof. This was a derivative of the raised-aisle roof, examples of which date to the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries in south Norfolk and north Suffolk.<sup>100</sup> The queen-post roof is a distinctive East



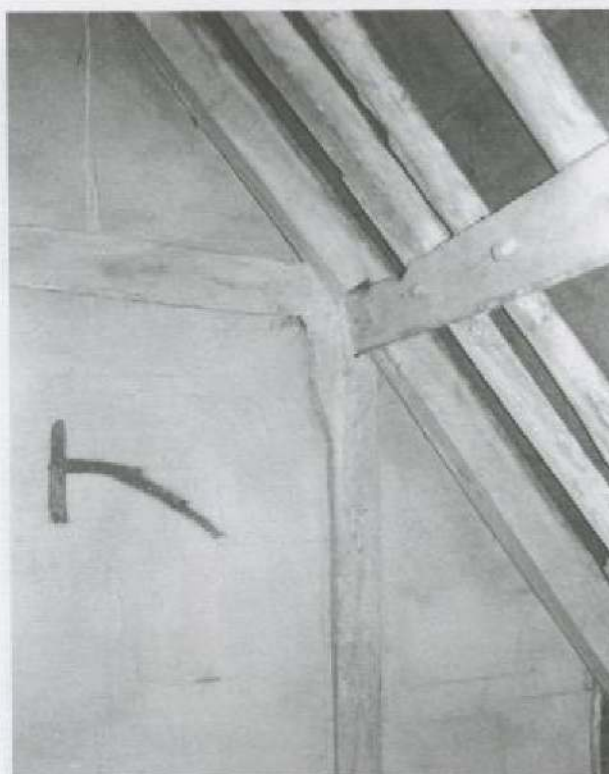
Anglian 'type' and constitutes the most numerous type of surviving late-medieval roof in the county. In reality many are of post-1500 date and could be classed technically as 'post-medieval'. Two truly medieval examples within the south Norfolk area are King's Head Cottage, Banham, and Ivy Farm, Earsham, both of which appear to be of late-fourteenth-century date. They are the only known examples which possess elaborately decorated bases and capitals to their queen posts (*see Figure 31*).



**Figure 31**  
Queen-post truss at Ivy Farm, Earsham, Norfolk.  
(Drawing by Charles Carus. Reproduced by kind permission.)

Whilst none of the New Buckenham buildings can compete with the elaboration seen at King's Head Cottage, the queen-post roof was a favoured type amongst the carpenters working in the town. The examples so far identified are at Thatched Cottage, Marsh Lane, Gingerbread Cottage, Church Street, The Pleasance, Queen Street (*See Figure 32*), No.1 Chapel Street, and the White Horse/White Horse Cottage. The earliest of these queen-post roofs is that at No.1 Chapel Street – a building which has been shown to be a gatehouse associated with a high status site. The evidence for the existence of the queen post is fragmentary due to a comprehensive rebuild in the seventeenth century, but the gatehouse appears to be mid-late fifteenth century. The other four examples appear to date to the first half of the sixteenth century (c.1500-1550) with the likelihood that most were erected between 1500 and 1530. It would seem, therefore, that there was a clear progression in roof forms in New Buckenham, with the crown post the dominant type in the fifteenth century and the queen post the dominant type during the first half of the sixteenth century. It will be

interesting to see whether this progression can be identified in other market towns in the region.



**Figure 32**

Queen-post roof at The Pleasance, Queen Street, New Buckenham. Early 16<sup>th</sup> century.  
(Photograph by Michael Brown)

We know from documentary evidence that the second half of the sixteenth century witnessed an increased tendency to integrate properly floored 'attics' in houses. However, the provision of an attic required roofs which were suited to the job – new types were favoured which did away with inconvenient and intrusive posts within the roof space. One roof type which measured-up was the clasped-collar purlin roof in which the lone purlins in each pitch were 'clasped' between collar and principal rafter. In New Buckenham this particular type of roof appears to supersede the queen-post roof around 1550 and remains in use into the early seventeenth century. By this time, however, it too faces competition from a new type of roof – the butt-purlin roof. A particularly fine example of the latter has been identified at Saffron House, a particularly tall early-seventeenth-century house of which only the parlour bay survives intact (*see Figure 33*). The site of Saffron House was owned by the Kendall family in 1542 and enlarged by purchase in 1560. The Kendalls were prosperous yeomen in the sixteenth century, rising into gentility in the seventeenth. Henry Kendall was given leave to enlarge the site towards the west and the north in 1627 and this dates the rebuilding. Truncated and re-fronted, it had become the steward's house for the adjoining Rookery (R3-4) by 1866.<sup>101</sup> The roof has tenoned butt-purlins in two tiers, some of them shaved. Only the principal rafters either side of the dormer window are pegged to the wall-plate. This elaborate system for supporting the dormer is an interesting example of structural anxiety about new building ideas. Obviously the concept of the dormer was sufficiently alien at this time to justify this type of contingency. The butt-purlin roof —



employed perhaps for the first time in new Buckenham at Saffron House — was to become the 'standard' roof type of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in Norfolk. By the mid-eighteenth century, however, king-post and through-purlin roofs, often of quite crude construction, were employed in New Buckenham.



**Figure 33**

Butt-purlin roof, Saffron House, Market Place, New Buckenham. Early 17<sup>th</sup> century.  
(Photograph by Michael Brown)

### **11. *New Buckenham: plan-forms***

In section 6 of this introduction an attempt was made to show the key types of post-medieval plan forms in south Norfolk. However, the examples employed are mostly rural in nature and, although some of the plan types discussed can be found in New Buckenham, the crowded nature of the urban environment with its tightly-packed burgage plots and narrow street frontages often produced unusual and sometimes idiosyncratic buildings which failed to conform to rural 'norms'. In this section we will explore the extent to which the surviving buildings of New Buckenham mirrored those which were being built in the surrounding countryside or, conversely, responded to and accommodated the varied commercial and trading priorities of its inhabitants by embodying overtly 'urban' characteristics.

One of the key findings of this research project has been that many buildings in New Buckenham were built parallel to the street, rather than at right-angles as is often the case in larger urban centres such as Norwich. A similar tendency for building houses parallel to the street has been identified in the cloth town of Lavenham in Suffolk. It would appear that in

both Lavenham and New Buckenham sub-division of urban plots was limited during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and, as a result, by the time the earliest surviving buildings were being constructed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, burgage plots remained sufficiently wide to allow owners to build often quite large houses which fronted onto a main thoroughfare. A key difference between the two towns lies in the use of cross-wings. In Lavenham these are a commonplace feature, but in New Buckenham buildings tended to conform to linear designs with long, continuous roofs.

Another key discovery is that the vast majority of surviving buildings in New Buckenham incorporate plans of medieval or sub-medieval type. To put it more plainly, they comprise such 'standard' elements of the medieval house as the hall, cross-passage and twin service-room arrangement at the lower end of the hall. Most New Buckenham houses embody these features, regardless of whether they are medieval or post-medieval and regardless of whether they contained open halls or were fully floored, two-storey structures. Only in the early decades of the seventeenth century do we see houses appearing in New Buckenham — such as Pinchpot Cottage — which possessed plans that had no medieval antecedents and which do not contain these elements. Two plan types appear to have dominated the building tradition within New Buckenham before 1600. The first and the most numerous is the tripartite arrangement of parlour, hall and service.



Medieval tripartite plan (schematic)

In the case of Crawford's this is articulated within the context of a Wealden design (with recessed hall and jettied end bays) which has its origins in the south-east of England and which is most numerous in the Weald of Kent and Sussex. In most cases, however, the plan appears within a less complex linear arrangement with the three main rooms in-line. Most of the houses built before 1530 (with the notable exception of Oak Cottage/Yellow Cottage) incorporated an open hall with a floored-over bay at each end. After this date fully floored, two-storey accommodation became the norm in new buildings and many older properties were 'modernised' by having ceilings inserted into their formerly open halls in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The in-line arrangement of parlour, hall and service can be seen repeatedly in New Buckenham. Pre-1600 examples, all of which are built parallel to the street frontage, include Thatched Cottage, Marsh Lane (early 16<sup>th</sup> C.) Blair House (early 16<sup>th</sup> C.), The Old Swan/Diken Cottage, King Street (early 16<sup>th</sup> C.), The Pleasance, Queen Street (early 16<sup>th</sup> C.) (*see Figure 34*), Butcher's Shop, King Street (mid 16<sup>th</sup> C.), Lane's End and Flintside (mid 16<sup>th</sup> C.), The Old Bakehouse/Bakehouse Cottage (mid 16<sup>th</sup> C.). Other properties which are likely to have conformed to the same arrangement include Lovell's Stores (early 16<sup>th</sup> C.) and Nos. 4-5 Chapel Hill (early 16<sup>th</sup> C.) (*see Figure 35*). Again, it will be interesting to see whether research in other small market towns in



Norfolk reveals a similar picture. The apparent unity of this group of three-cell structures disguises some interesting differences. For example, in several cases (e.g. Crawford's) the service bay or part of the service bay was given over to a shop unit. Indeed, it is clear that the practice of setting aside a small space adjoining the street frontage for commercial usage was commonplace in New Buckenham – a theme to which we shall return later.



**Figure 34**

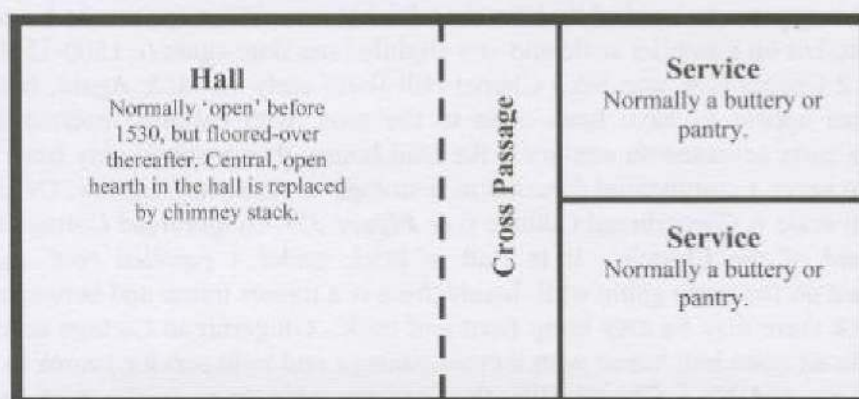
The Pleasance, Queen Street, New Buckenham.  
(Photograph by Adam Longcroft)



**Figure 35**

Nos. 4-5 Chapel Hill, New Buckenham. (Photograph by Adam Longcroft)

The second plan type to dominate prior to 1600 was a smaller, two-cell version of the one discussed above – comprising only a hall (open or otherwise) and a service bay (or shop unit). That this simple plan is found in buildings of medieval origin with open halls and also in those of mid-sixteenth-century date which were fully floored suggests that its inherent merits ensured its survival during a 'transitional' phase in the wider development of vernacular architecture within the county. One of the earliest examples of this plan is Dial House, King Street (*see Figure 36*).



Hall and service plan (schematic)



Figure 36

Dial House, King Street, New Buckenham. Late 15<sup>th</sup> century.  
(Photograph by Adam Longcroft)

This late-fifteenth-century building comprised both an open hall and an open service bay. The open hall was very large indeed and seems to be the prototype of other buildings in New Buckenham which conform to the same plan and which were apparently adapted mainly for storage or other commercial purposes. The building consists of five bays with tie-beams at head height on the first floor. The end walls have internally-trenched inverted arch braces above and below the girt and there are no pegs in the upper face of the tie-beams, which may suggest the roof was hipped at both ends. All the original timbers are sooted throughout the building. It is probably the house formerly Thomas Undyrwode's on which James Roberdes paid landgable in 1542. Undyrwode's will dated 1528 indicates that he was a housewright.<sup>102</sup> Roberdes's widow allowed the tenement to become 'waste next the street' in 1561 and the consequent repair might give a date for the insertion of floors and internal divisions. The very large landgable rent in 1634, 22 ¾ d., may include rent paid for a licensed encroachment beyond the original structure; the western chimney is built outside the frame. From the early seventeenth to the early nineteenth century the property included a tanyard. A possible parallel to this plan is to be found next door in The Beams. Here the same arrangement of hall, cross-passage and service is disguised within a subdivided property which now comprises both The Beams and the western end of Diken



Cottage. This appears to be slightly later than Dial House. What appears to be an identical arrangement, but on a smaller scale and at a slightly later date again (c.1500-1530?), can be seen at No.2 Chapel Hill, and No.3 Chapel Hill (both early 16<sup>th</sup> C.). Again, both hall and twin services appear to have been open to the roof, with ceilings inserted in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century. Like Dial house, this property may have been built originally to serve a commercial function as a storage or workshop facility. Of similar date but larger in scale is Gingerbread Cottage (*see Figure 37*). Gingerbread Cottage is opposite the west end of the Church. It is clad in brick under a pantiled roof and there is weatherboard on the north gable wall. Inside there is a timber frame and between the frame and the brick there may be clay lump front and back. Gingerbread Cottage seems to have been built as an open hall house with a cross-passage and twin service rooms to the south. In Dial House and No.3 Chapel Hill, the services were open to the roof, but here at Gingerbread Cottage they were floored over, creating a chamber above. A second crucial difference was that Gingerbread Cottage appears to have possessed a smoke bay. It is impossible to date the building precisely but it is likely to be c.1500. At some time later in the sixteenth century a brick stack was inserted into the space occupied previously by the smoke hood or smoke bay and a new ceiling was inserted in the hall together with a rather impressive plank-and-muntin screen (*see Figure 38*). That Gingerbread Cottage appears to have incorporated a smoke bay rather than an open hearth in the middle of the hall floor suggests that it was a 'transitional' type of building which retained traditional medieval elements of the domestic interior whilst presaging developments which would, by the late sixteenth century, revolutionise the design of vernacular buildings. Indeed, within half a century of the erection of Gingerbread Cottage new houses in New Buckenham were being equipped not only with brick chimneys, but also with two continuous storeys.



**Figure 37**  
Gingerbread Cottage, Church Street, New Buckenham. c.1500.  
(Photograph by Adam Longcroft)



**Figure 38**

Plank-and-muntin screen, late 16<sup>th</sup> century, Gingerbread Cottage, Church Street, New Buckenham. (Photograph by Michael Brown)

One of the characteristic features of this two-cell plan of hall and service in the houses of New Buckenham is the excessive length of the halls. In the case of The Beams/Diken Cottage, the original open hall was in excess of 30 feet in length. Even larger is that now contained within Senton/Redroof/Fairview in King Street. In this example, Senton appears to have originally constituted the storeyed (service?) end of a house which also comprised Red Roof and Fairview. The open trusses throughout Red Roof and Fairview suggest that they comprised a very large open hall of early sixteenth century date which contained no less than four bays. The purpose of these large halls is not entirely clear, but it is possible that they reflect commercial rather than domestic priorities (*see Figure 39*).<sup>103</sup>



**Figure 39**

Fairview (closest to camera), Red Roof and Senton, King Street. Possibly an early sixteenth-century large, four-bay open hall (Fairview and Red Roof) with a storeyed service bay (Senton).

(Photograph by Adam Longcroft)



Perhaps the most unusual and arguably one of the most important discoveries in New Buckenham relates to the tiny cottage known as Thyme Cottage, on Rosemary Lane (*see Figure 40*). Like so many houses in New Buckenham this property is clad in nineteenth-century brick and until recently was believed to have been built at that time. However, closer inspection by Paul Rutledge revealed the existence of internal timbers and detailed recording has shown that it is probably the hall of the second parish guild, either St Martin's or St Mary's. Humbly set in a back lane, it is not documented until 1670 when it is described as a cottage. It could always previously have gone with R35 and have been let out to the guild. With a flint-built extension it later (probably in the early nineteenth century) became three tiny cottages and in 1859 it is described as 'formerly three under one roof'.<sup>104</sup> The wall studs are four-to-five inches wide, the central posts are, rather surprisingly, only six inches square (below the jowl). The wall-plates are also of modest section at seven by four inches. The studs in the north wall exhibit a pattern of peg holes which taken together may suggest the presence of a bench at the high end of the hall. The mortice in the first stud from the west may indicate a screen relating to the former screens-passage. In each central post there is a brace mortice for the former tie-beam. One of the timbers used as a joist in the inserted floor has a brace mortice and part of a dovetail mortice, suggesting that it was a former tie-beam. It also has the shallow section seen in the existing wall-plates and a chamfer to one arris. Given the asymmetrical placing of the empty brace mortices on the posts, and the matching asymmetry of the brace mortice in the soffit of the tie-beam, this chamfer would have faced the possible high end bench if this joist is the original tie-beam re-used. What we appear to have here is a very rare type of building indeed: a medieval (possibly fifteenth-century) guildhall comprising just a two bay hall with screens-passage at the low end and tall hall window in the upper bay. Although it is far from being in a good state of preservation, this building appears to be a (so far) unique survival in the county.



**Figure 40**

Thyme Cottage, Rosemary Lane, New Buckenham.

Never judge a book by its cover! Identified tentatively as the second surviving medieval guildhall, this fifteenth-century structure comprises just a small two-bay open hall.

(Photograph by Adam Longcroft)



In the second half of the sixteenth century and the early decades of the seventeenth, plan forms in New Buckenham continued to incorporate medieval elements such as the hall and cross-passage, but within the context of two-storey construction. This is illustrated both by Saffron House (early 1600s), and Pickwick House (early 1600s). By the 1620s, however, the design of vernacular buildings in New Buckenham appears to have been undergoing another major change. By this time not only were medieval open halls being 'floored-over' and unglazed windows replaced by glazed examples, but medieval plan-forms incorporating traditional elements such as the cross-passage were giving way to innovatory plan types which incorporated multiple-flue axial chimney stacks and centralised plans. One of the most important of these new plans was the lobby-entry plan.

As we have seen, the earliest surviving lobby-entry houses in Norfolk appear to have been built between 1560 and 1580. Early examples of the plan usually have a staircase situated to the rear of the axial stack but by the early 1600s the stair was more likely to be placed in front of the stack thereby allowing independent access to the principal family rooms on the ground and first floors. The author's research suggests that in rural areas most houses which conform to the two-cell lobby-entry plan were most likely to be owned either by better-off husbandmen or lesser yeomen. Documentary evidence suggests that houses of this type which incorporated service rooms (e.g. a buttery or pantry) were far less common than those which had a cooking room (either a hall or kitchen) and a parlour.<sup>105</sup> The houses in New Buckenham which perhaps illustrate the shift towards this new type of plan most graphically are Pinchpot Cottage, Chapel Street, and Turnpike Lodge, on New Buckenham Common.

Pinchpot is built on a site that was probably newly developed in the early-mid sixteenth century (*refer back to Figure 29*). Documentary sources suggest the house was rebuilt between 1623 — when it is called a vacant tenement — and 1625 when it was a 'message built'. This was confirmed by dendrochronology which gave a date of 1624. It was bought in 1622 by Osbert Stacy, landlord of the Bull Inn, who left it to his wife Elizabeth in 1633.<sup>106</sup> The landgable rental of 1634 lists 'The widow Stacy for pinchpot hawll' — an ironic reference to a house paid for by short measure (pinching the leather pot) at the inn. This house seems to be a classic example of an early-seventeenth-century symmetrical lobby-entrance house. It is also notable for a very special plaster ceiling which survives in fragmentary form on the first floor west chimney bay. This plaster ceiling has an elaborate frieze with griffin motifs. There are four griffins in each frieze (the west frieze has gone) and the ceiling panel is a grape vine ornament with a central boss. The plaster work is of very good quality though decayed at present. It is the only one of its type to be discovered in the town. The survival of the plasterwork in the chimney bay, part of a scheme which no doubt extended to the rooms on either side, effectively identifies this building as the one built by Osbert Stacey. It is noteworthy that although the windows to the front and sides were large and glazed, those to the rear seem to be unglazed mullioned windows of medieval pattern. The house was evidently designed for display, hence the fenestration, the plaster work and the (unusual) ogee external braces facing down the street.

Turnpike Lodge conforms to the same basic plan arrangement (*see Figure 41*). This farmhouse lay at the southern edge of the common but within the town field called Bishop's Haugh Field. The field (perhaps part of a separate medieval deer park) originated as an outlier of the Bishop's estate at Eccles and it remained part of Eccles parish. The house site, described as 'a piece of land measuring 57 x 20 feet in the parish of Eccles in a field near New Buckenham called Busshopes Hawe Feld', was acknowledged by John Feeke in 1603 as having been purchased from Thomas Neve in 1601. In 1614 it is



described as a messuage with three closes containing six acres. Turnpike Lodge is clad in nineteenth-century brick today but like Pinchpot is entirely timber-framed. Again, like Pinchpot, Turnpike Lodge contains elements which are 'cutting-edge' (e.g. the lobby-entry plan) and also those which were archaic at the time of construction such as unglazed diamond mullioned windows. It is noteworthy that in both houses the principal staircase was originally located behind the main entrance (in front of the chimney stack) – this suggests that by the early 1600s the full potential of the lobby-entrance layout for creating a 'centralized' plan had been recognized by owners and carpenters, enabling independent access to first and ground floor rooms from the front entrance. Whilst the two lobby-entry houses recorded in New Buckenham are not particularly early, both contain elements of design which suggest that they were in tune with contemporary thinking. That only two examples have been securely identified in New Buckenham, however, indicates that the lobby-entry house was not widely adopted here. It may also indicate that the 1600s were a period of adaptation and improvement rather than one which saw the creation of large numbers of new houses – a reflection, perhaps, of economic factors pertaining at this time.



**Figure 41**  
Turnpike Lodge, The Common, New Buckenham.  
(Photograph by Michael Brown)

## **12. New Buckenham: shops and workshops**

Earlier in this introduction it was suggested that a number of the surviving houses in New Buckenham appear to incorporate evidence of shops and workshops. In this section an attempt will be made to describe the nature of these features and their likely functions. Unfortunately very little published material exists in relation to medieval and early-modern shops in East Anglia. The only historians to have published material on the subject are Stenning and Alston<sup>107</sup> and neither author draws on Norfolk examples. Norfolk shops are also poorly represented in two recently published national studies of urban buildings by Clark and Quiney.<sup>108</sup>

However, the evidence from other parts of the region (Suffolk and Essex) suggests that late-medieval and early post-medieval shops display certain characteristics. Firstly, shops occur in association with both civic and privately-owned buildings. They also, as Stenning reminds us, 'occur as independent structures, or in conjunction with most of the commonly



found building types of the region'.<sup>109</sup> When combined with a house the relationship is often an intimate one, suggesting occupation by a resident merchant or tradesman with a retail or manufacturing interest (or both). Surviving shops are not confined to market places. On the contrary, they can be found in minor side streets and in rear courtyards, attached to houses of varying size and status. The consumables and commodities of everyday life such as beer, fresh meat, fish, butter, cheese and milk, tended to be purchased from weekly markets. The evidence from documents suggests that permanent shops avoided competing with market traders and focused, instead, on manufacture. In a recent study Alston has suggested that the majority of shops were in fact workshops rather than retail outlets in the modern sense: 'they were areas in which production rather than selling formed the primary activity'.<sup>110</sup> However, he also warns that great caution is required when attempting to distinguish between shops and workshops and in many cases differentiating between the two may not be possible. Those specialised retailers we know existed from documentary records (often referred to as chandlers or grocers) often sold a bewildering variety of goods, from soap, hops and honey to needles, combs and scales. Indeed, the breadth of their stock appears to have been similar to the ubiquitous hardware stores of the American West which prided themselves on selling everything that one could possibly require for survival. Interestingly, the occupation of 'shopkeeper' does not appear in documents relating to New Buckenham until 1772.<sup>111</sup>

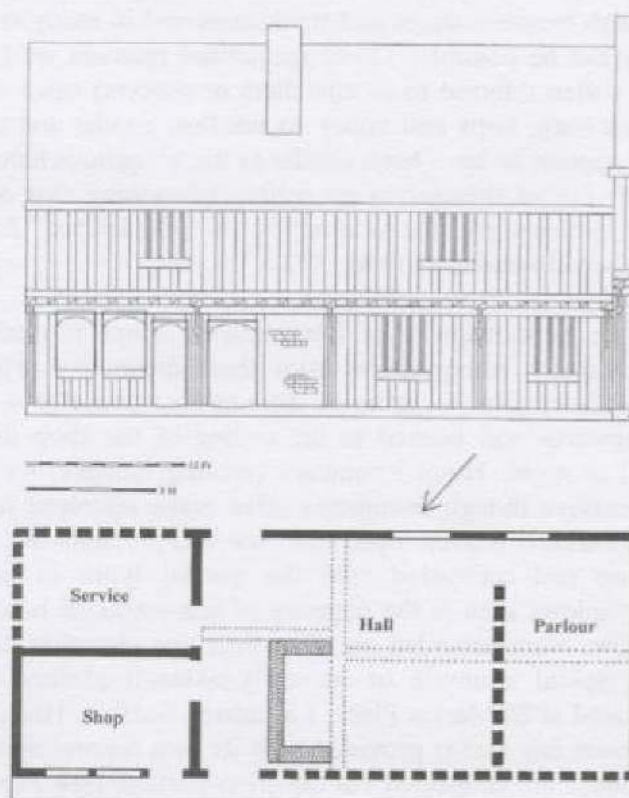
It is now clear that the great majority of late-medieval shops formed part of domestic houses. They are generally recognizable from their distinctive wide, arched-topped openings provided with internally — or much more rarely externally — secured shutters. These were swung upwards and latched to the ceiling of the shop during the day and lowered (and locked) at night. Hinged counters (serving hatches) for displaying goods outside shops rarely survive though documents often make reference to shop boards and trestles. The distinctive arched-headed 'open' window was probably the defining feature of the late-medieval shop and contrasted with the normal types of unglazed diamond-mullioned domestic windows seen in the majority of late-medieval houses. In some cases groups of shop windows were provided on more than one elevation, though one or two usually sufficed. A typical example of an early-sixteenth-century urban shop/house combination can be found at 26 Market Place, Lavenham, Suffolk. Here, the shop occupies the front half of a service bay and is provided with its own narrow doorway on the street front. The shop and house are connected via the cross-passage (*see Figure 42*). Note the twin arched-headed windows of the shop itself. This shop served a merchant's house situated on a prime site in the town but shops were often incorporated within speculative terrace developments such as that at 27 Cumberland Street, Woodbridge, which comprises an early-sixteenth-century semi-detached pair of two-cell tenements, each with a shop integrated within the service bay as at 26, The Market Place, Lavenham. The use of narrow doorways both externally and occasionally internally is probably a reflection of the desire to maximize shelving and storage space within shop units.

Identifying shops is not as easy as it might seem. Where extensive areas of wall framing survive and are still visible it is often possible, with a little deduction, to reconstruct the positions of shop doorways and windows. Where timber-framed ground floor walls are disguised below layers of render or, even worse, destroyed by later alterations and phases of rebuilding, the process of identification becomes rather more problematic. The problems of identification are compounded by the fact that descriptions in the statutory *Lists of Buildings of Special Architectural and Historic Significance* are based on mostly external analysis and are often unreliable. Many houses are simply not listed at all. As Alston points out, 'the true number of early shops in East Anglia is therefore unknown'.<sup>112</sup> In the case of



New Buckenham the re-skinning of the majority of timber-framed houses in brick, the plaster rendering of interiors and the frequent adaptation and rebuilding of older structures makes identification particularly difficult and the evidence, such as it is, is often fragmentary.

However, following detailed examination of the surviving buildings in New Buckenham it is possible to offer the following observations. Firstly most of the shops that have been identified in the town are, indeed, associated with domestic properties. They are also normally located at the 'low status' end of houses in the position normally occupied by a service bay.



**Figure 42**

No.26 Market Place, Lavenham, Suffolk. Early-sixteenth-century merchant house with shop unit integrated within front half of service bay.

(Illustration taken from L. Alston, 'Late medieval workshops in East Anglia' in P.S. Barnwell, M. Palmer & M. Airs (eds), *The vernacular workshop from craft to industry, 1400-1900* (Council for British Archaeology, 2004) p.41. Reproduced by kind permission.)

Alston has suggested that it is the norm in East Anglia for shops to occupy the front half of a service bay, with a buttery or pantry to the rear.<sup>113</sup> However, the evidence from New Buckenham does not appear to support this view; the normal practice seems, on the contrary, for shops to occupy an entire bay. In the case of The Old Swan/Diken Cottage, King Street, the shop, which is located at one end of a two-bay hall, seems to be formed from a whole bay, there being no evidence of an axial partition within the eastern bay. The same applies in the case of the shop bay at the north end of The Pleasance, in Queen Street. Here, the shop is at the lower end of a large, three-bay hall. No signs were found of an axial partition within the shop bay. Moreover, the shop is not always located at the lower end of



the house. In the case of The White Horse/White Horse Cottage, King Street, a rebuilt two-bay structure at the east 'high status' end of the building appears to comprise a large shop complete with two twin shop windows flanking a central wall post on the street front. The area of the shop has been extended to encompass the high-end bay of the three-bay hall. On the first floor, meanwhile, a connecting partition wall divides the two builds. This lack of coincidence between divisions of space at ground-floor and first-floor levels is a common feature of the buildings in New Buckenham and reflects, presumably, the complex, competing demands of domestic and workshop functions many of the buildings had to accommodate. A similar instance of a shop being placed at what appears to have been the high status end of a hall is to be seen at The Old Swan. Here the shop bay is located at the high end of the hall away from the cross-passage which in this case separates The Old Swan from its neighbour, Diken Cottage. Whilst this may seem an odd arrangement, parallels do exist outside New Buckenham. Number 16, Fen Street, Nayland, Suffolk, for example, is one of a pair of tenements each of which integrates a shop in the front half of a sub-divided parlour bay – though, admittedly, the hall here is open whilst The Old Swan always appears to have been a two-storey structure (it has been dendro-dated to 1573).<sup>114</sup> Interestingly, adjoining The Old Swan to the west is what may be another shop, in this case incorporated in the western half of what is now Diken Cottage. The Beams appears to constitute the large hall attached to this shop. Thus we have here two identical hall-with-shop houses of late-sixteenth-century date which are divided by a central passage which runs through the centre of these properties, providing access to the rear yards. Scrutiny of published examples of late-medieval shops indicates that the most common arrangement was for the street entrance into the shop to be located next to or in close proximity to the entrance into the cross-passage as is the case at The Ancient House Museum, Thetford (*see Figure 43*). Again, however, the surviving evidence in New Buckenham appears to indicate that shop doorways were located at the corner of buildings away from the principal entrance into the house itself. This certainly seems to be the case at both The Old Swan/Diken Cottage and The Pleasance. The reason for this subtle but notable difference remains unclear and requires further research.



**Figure 43**

The Ancient House Museum, Thetford.

(Photograph reproduced by kind permission of Norfolk Museums Service.)

Evidence of additional shop units has been identified in No.6 Chapel Hill, Beech House, Norwich Road, and Crawford's/Corner Cottage, on the Market Place. In the case of No.6



Chapel Hill, the chamber above this tiny two-bay seventeenth-century building lacks evidence of windows and may, therefore, have constituted a secure storage facility above the shop rather than a domestic chamber. At Beech House, Norwich Road, the survival of an elaborate medieval doorway within the former south gable of the property may again indicate the presence of a shop – gable end doorways are otherwise a rarity in New Buckenham. The fact that the south gable faced onto the market place at the point where the main road from Norwich entered the town meant that this was certainly a prime location for a shop. Though the original medieval frame at Beech House is not well preserved, it would appear that the shop was integrated within the western half of a sub-divided service bay – again a rare arrangement in the surviving houses of New Buckenham. Beech House appears to have comprised a large open hall with the service bay (including shop) at the south end.<sup>115</sup> In the case of Crawford's/Corner Cottage, evidence of a shop is limited to the existence of a doorway adjoining the main doorway into the cross-passage in the south front. Though this is elsewhere the standard arrangement of doorways in houses which contained a shop unit, it is so far the only example identified in New Buckenham. Circumstantial evidence of shop functions is also found in the form of pentice roofs. Though none of these survives intact, mortices and peg holes associated with them have been found in the front wall above the shop at Burrage House, King Street.

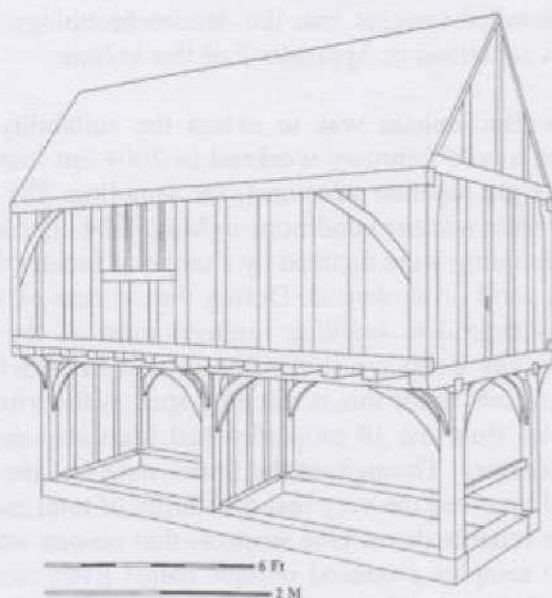
Whilst the majority of surviving shops in New Buckenham are associated with domestic properties, documentary sources provide tantalizing insights into other types of shops which existed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Research by Paul Rutledge has shown, for example, that rows of free-standing shop units with chambers above were once located in the market place. In one case, three such structures, probably single-bay timber-framed buildings, shared a single staircase which gave access to a secure storage chamber. It is not entirely clear what purpose these buildings served but it seems likely, from the documents, that they blurred the distinctions between retail outlet, workshop and warehouse. Warehouse facilities of this type continued to survive into the eighteenth century. In the 1736 will of Thomas Fulcher, a grocer and apothecary, reference is made to his 'warehouse next the market cross'.<sup>116</sup>

We know from records that a second property was attached to the surviving King's Head Inn by the mid-sixteenth century. This was sited on the market place itself and was some 80 feet in length. References to this structure continue until the 1630s. It seems likely that this structure was a timber-framed drinking booth rather than a permanent inn as such and may have looked similar to the other two-storey shop units previously referred to on the market place.<sup>117</sup> It seems likely that a wide range of specialized structures, many of them very small, were erected during the late-medieval period to replace temporary market stalls and to maximize the profits which could be gained from having a business on a market place.

Investigation by Alston has revealed the existence of a handful of surviving examples of late-medieval terraced groups of specialised shop units — almost certainly evolved from temporary market stalls — within the market places of Suffolk's small market towns. A particularly fine example is that which now forms part of Cleo's Restaurant in the Market Place at Debenham, Suffolk (*See Figure 44*). This early-sixteenth-century range of shops integrated two separate 'units' each 9 feet in width and less than 7 feet in depth. Each was provided with a small chamber above which was accessed via a stair ladder. On the basis of the documentary evidence and the discovery of tiny structures like those at Debenham, there is every reason to suspect that New Buckenham's market place possessed many timber-framed 'lock-ups' of this type during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. However, is there any unequivocal evidence that they have survived? The answer to this



question appears at present to be 'No'. However, detailed recording of Market Cross House at New Buckenham (the house adjacent to the market cross itself) did reveal that it and the market cross shared a common boundary to both north and south. Whilst no fabric was identified as being earlier than 1700, Market Cross House appears to have begun life as a row of two or possibly three shop units of single-storey form and flint construction, each of which was served by a single window and door facing onto the market place. Each seems to have had a tiny chamber contrived entirely within the roof space and one (the most easterly) had a cellar. The raising of the eaves, rebuilding of the roof, and replacement and repositioning of windows transformed the appearance of these properties in the late-eighteenth century. The remaining structural evidence suggests that small shop 'rows' of late medieval form continued to be built in the early 1700s but in flint rather than timber. In this particular case it seems reasonable to suggest that these eighteenth-century shops were themselves replacements of earlier timber-framed examples on the same site and that they respected long-established property boundaries. On reflection, it is tempting to speculate whether the row of three single-bay timber-framed shops referred to in sixteenth-century documents were those which antedated the flint examples at Market Cross House. There is also compelling archaeological evidence that the market cross itself, though largely rebuilt in the eighteenth century, comprises on the first floor the remains of two separate timber-framed shop units of seventeenth-century origin. This interpretation is reinforced by documentary records which clearly show that in 1715 the town authorities purchased two shops with chambers over them for use as a market cross.



**Figure 44**

Cleo's Restaurant, Market Place, Debenham. A rare surviving 'permanent market stall'. Early 16<sup>th</sup> century. The market place at New Buckenham probably possessed similar structures. Indeed, it seems likely that the row of shops at Market Cross House and the market cross itself looked like this prior to being rebuilt in the eighteenth century.

(Illustration taken from L. Alston, 'Late medieval workshops in East Anglia' in P.S. Barnwell, M. Palmer and M. Airs (eds), *The vernacular workshop from craft to industry, 1400-1900* (Council for British Archaeology, 2004) p.57. Reproduced by kind permission.)



This study has shown, therefore, that shops and workshops formed an important element of the built environment in New Buckenham. Whilst there are no surviving examples of shops within civic structures to compare with those in the Guildhall at Thaxted, Essex, numerous examples have been identified of shops that were integrated within houses. The earliest of these date to the early decades of the sixteenth century. The extensive and frequent remodelling and re-skinning of the late medieval buildings of New Buckenham means that there few original 'shop windows' survive intact and identification necessarily is reliant on other evidence. The layout of shops in New Buckenham appears to be subtly different to that usually seen in Suffolk and Essex, though the reasons for this are far from clear. Though there is also plentiful documentary evidence of the existence of specialized shop units within the market place, some of which appear to have taken the form of 'rows' like those which have been recorded in other towns and cities, the archaeological evidence of their existence in New Buckenham is limited to a few fragments within the Market Cross and the adjacent Market Cross House. Although there is little firm evidence to draw on it seems likely that the majority of the shops in New Buckenham were workshops associated with manufacture or industrial processes associated with particular trades such as brewing and tanning. These activities may well have spilled into adjacent rooms and into backyards.

### **13. New Buckenham: dendrochronological results**

The dendrochronological survey of the buildings in New Buckenham was undertaken by Ian Tyers from ARCUS Dendrochronology Laboratory at the University of Sheffield. In this section an attempt will be made to provide a brief overview of the key results. Those wishing to gain more detailed insights into the dendrochronology survey are referred to Ian's full report which is contained in Appendix 2 of this volume.

Ian's first task in New Buckenham was to assess the suitability of the buildings for sampling purposes. Over a cold February weekend in 2004 Ian inspected 21 properties in the town and chose 10 (eight separate structures) for sampling. The actual sampling phase was carried out during rather warmer conditions in May 2004. The location of the samples taken from within each building were dictated by a range of factors, including accessibility, and the presence of sapwood or hardwood. During the process of timber conversion (the conversion of trees into individual building timbers) most of the sapwood and bark is removed which automatically limits the suitability of most timbers for sampling purposes. All timbers sampled were oak, since this is the only species for which reliable data exists. Once the 32 core samples from the 10 properties had been acquired, they were analysed back at the ARCUS laboratory. Throughout the initial stages of the project, Ian had quite rightly emphasised to all involved the very real possibility of total failure – that none of the buildings would provide reliable dates. One suspects that no one was more surprised than Ian when five of the 10 samples produced reliable dates! Even more impressive was the fact that four of the five dates related to a specific year, with only one (Burrage House/Old Post Office) producing a wider date range (in this case between 1694 and 1729).

Reliable dates were secured in relation to the following properties:

<b>Property</b>	<b>Season/Date(s)</b>
Old Vicarage, Chapel Street, New Buckenham	winter 1451/1452
Oak Cottage & Yellow Cottage, Market Place, New Buckenham	spring 1473
The Old Swan, King Street, New Buckenham	winter 1573/1574
Pinchpot, Chapel Street, New Buckenham	summer 1624
Burrage House/Old Post Office, King Street, New Buckenham	1694-1729



No dates were forthcoming for the following:

Tanyard Cottage, Marsh Lane, New Buckenham

The Pleasance, Queen Street, New Buckenham

White Horse Inn, White Horse Cottage, King Street, New Buckenham

For those members of the NHBG who had carried out the detailed recording and stylistic (comparative) dating of the buildings in New Buckenham the dendrochronology results provided both reassurance and some surprises. In the case of The Old Vicarage, stylistic comparison of the surviving crown-post with other published examples suggested a date of c.1450. The dendro-date of winter 1451/2 provided confirmation that the stylistic dating criteria employed were reliable. In the case of Pinchpot Cottage, Sue and Michael Brown were convinced that the house was of early seventeenth-century origin. This appeared to tally with documentary evidence which also strongly implied a build date in the early 1620s. The dendro-date of summer 1624 confirmed both the reliability of the documentary evidence and Sue and Mike's stylistic criteria. Oak Cottage/Yellow Cottage, meanwhile, had been dated on stylistic evidence to the early sixteenth century. This seemed to be confirmed by the presence of joist joints which comprised soffit-tenons with diminished haunches. Published studies of joist joints suggested that this type of joint was an innovation of c.1510-20. However, the dendro-date of spring 1473 – which was derived from cores taken from floor joists in the building concerned – raises two possibilities. The first is that the joists in Oak Cottage/Yellow Cottage were reused from an earlier building. Structural evidence suggests this is very unlikely. The second – and the most likely – is that this type of joint actually emerges nearly half a century earlier than is commonly thought. In the light of this discovery it may be necessary to reassess the dates of other buildings in the county which have been dated partly or wholly on the basis of the presence of this type of joint. The unexpectedly early date of Oak Cottage/Yellow Cottage also demonstrates conclusively that the encroachment of properties onto the south side of the market place was already well advanced by the 1470s. What remains unclear is whether the row of buildings of which Oak Cottage/Yellow cottage form a part were themselves replacements of earlier encroachments. Confirmation of this will be dependent on future excavations or test pits in the rear gardens of these properties. The dendro-dates for The Old Swan were in keeping with the stylistic evidence but Burrage House/Old Post Office provided another unexpected result. Analysis of the various diagnostic features in the properties concerned indicated a likely build-date in the early seventeenth century. The dendro-date of 1694-1729 was entirely unexpected. Mike and Sue Brown were so concerned by the apparent mis-match of dates that they returned to the property to undertake further analysis. The tree-ring samples were taken from two flying tie beams and the principal joist in the parlour. On reflection, both agree that the flying tie beams (termed 'flying' because they do not relate to the main trusses of the frame) could easily have been inserted as part of a separate building phase. So far so good. The parlour joist now appears to be the key to the riddle. This beam is tenoned into the wall girt to the south, but closer inspection reveals that the mortice was deliberately cut oversize at some stage and packed with a wedge after the assembly of the joint – an unusual feature. It is entirely possible, therefore, that the principal joist in the parlour was inserted into a pre-existing frame by manoeuvring the tenon in sideways. These considerations mean that it would be unsafe to date the entire frame from the flying tie beams and the parlour joist. Indeed, the fact that datable tree-ring samples were derived from these timbers and not from other parts of the frame suggests that they may not be all of one date.



In cases where no secure dates were acquired this is probably a reflection of the fact that they were built, like so many of the properties in New Buckenham, from oaks which had been grown fast and used young. These timbers simply did not contain sufficient numbers of growth rings for a 'match' to be made in the laboratory. In fact, tree-ring analysis failed to date any buildings between 1473 and 1573. Although it is difficult to be certain, it seems likely from the detailed recording carried out by the NHBG that all the undated sixteenth-century properties were erected in the first half of that century. If this is the case it suggests that timber availability or timber size became an issue during the sixteenth century. Ian suggests several possible reasons for this in his report, but the most likely is an accelerated rate of construction during this period which placed greater than normal demand on the available timber resource. This probably resulted, in turn, in an increased reliance on fast-grown trees. Did a building boom in sixteenth-century New Buckenham occur? The evidence of the surviving buildings certainly supports this hypothesis – a large proportion of the buildings recorded in this volume do indeed appear to date to the early 1500s. Support for this theory is also to be found in the documentary record. As was previously noted the nearest large wood to New Buckenham was Harling Wood, a mile to the north, in Old Buckenham. By the 1580s it had passed to the Knyvett family of Buckenham Castle who in 1581 owned woodland in Old Buckenham and also in the nearby parishes of Carleton Rode and Tibenham.<sup>118</sup> The Knyvetts' fortunes were in decline in the late sixteenth century because of their Catholicism.<sup>119</sup> That their woods were managed traditionally during much of this century is indicated by the employment of a wood reeve or woodward, documented in 1540 and again in 1581.<sup>120</sup> Catholic recusants suffered increasingly heavy financial penalties from the 1580s and the family declined further in the seventeenth century, finally selling up in 1649. This situation may have led in the latter century to the abandonment of woodland management and the felling of mature trees – the stripping of assets in other words – either by the Knyvetts themselves or by men to whom their confiscated estates were committed by Central Government. By 1624 Harling Wood and other woods were in the hands of John Kendall, a New Buckenham draper, himself in some financial difficulty.<sup>121</sup> This situation, together with increasing pressure on woodland resources, may explain the reversion in the early seventeenth century from the use of fast-grown timber from coppiced woodland to the use of slow-grown timber from great trees. In the case of New Buckenham there appears to have been a direct relationship, therefore, between methods of woodland management and building activity and between the declining fortunes of a resident gentry family and changes in timber availability.

Some readers may find the final outcome of the dendrochronology project in New Buckenham a disappointment. After all, one might ask, what difference does securing reliable dates for five buildings actually make? The answer is that it makes a great deal of difference. To illustrate why, it may be instructive to consider the dendrochronology results from New Buckenham within the wider context of the county of Norfolk. Some readers may be surprised to learn that the number of dendro-dated buildings in Norfolk is tiny when compared to other English counties. If one were to rank counties according to the number of dendro-dated properties per acre, Norfolk would almost certainly occupy a position at the foot of the national league table. Prior to the completion of the New Buckenham project, only 20 dendro-dates existed for the entire county and these were associated with only 11 separate properties. If we look at *Figure 45* it is also apparent that these were almost without exception large buildings of medieval date that were associated either with wealthy lay manors, wealthy merchants, civic building projects or ecclesiastical sites. Only Gunter's House, Garvestone, fell into the category of 'vernacular house'. The dendro-project in New Buckenham is particularly important because it has succeeded in providing dates for a further five buildings of 'vernacular' type. Even though the Old Vicarage



appears to have served as one of the principal guildhalls in New Buckenham, it is arguably 'vernacular' both in relation to its scale and method of construction. It is no exaggeration, therefore, to assert that the New Buckenham project has made a major contribution both to the tree-ring database for Norfolk and also our understanding of the relationships between woodland management and vernacular buildings in the county.

<i>Building</i>	<i>Date(s)</i>	<i>Status</i>
St George's Guildhall, King's Lynn	1347-1430	Civic
Lodge Farm, Denton	1355-1360	Manorial
Prior's Lodgings, Castle Acre	1356-1392	Monastic
Prior's Lodgings, Castle Acre	1366-1390	Monastic
Prior's Lodgings, Castle Acre	1396-1419	Monastic
The Great Hospital, Norwich (ward roof)	1378-1399	Monastic
Grange Farm Barn, Ingham	1380-1381	Manorial
The Great Hospital, Norwich	1403	Monastic
Abbey Farm Cottage, Thetford	1405-1430	Monastic
Abbey Farm Barn, Thetford (west end)	1414-1439	Monastic
St George's Guildhall, King's Lynn	1417-1457	Civic
Dragon Hall, Norwich	1427	Display hall
Great Hospital, Norwich (cloister roof)	1447-1463	Monastic
<b>Old Vicarage, New Buckenham</b>	<b>1451-1452</b>	Civic
<b>Oak Cottage &amp; Yellow Cottage, New Buckenham</b>	<b>1473</b>	House
Marriott's Warehouse, King's Lynn	1498-1499	Merchant
Abbey Farm Barn, Thetford (east end)	1533-1536	Monastic
Marriott's Warehouse, King's Lynn	1569-1570	Merchant
<b>The Old Swan, New Buckenham</b>	<b>1573</b>	House
Paston Barn, Paston	1574-1585	Manorial
Gunter's Farmhouse, Garvestone	1579-1598	House
Marriott's Warehouse, King's Lynn	1583-1584	Merchant
<b>Pinchpot, New Buckenham</b>	<b>1624</b>	House
Abbey Farm Barn, Thetford (east gable and roof)	1628	Monastic
Felbrigg Hall, Felbrigg	1685	Manorial
<b>Burrage House, New Buckenham</b>	<b>1694-1729</b>	House

**Figure 45**  
Dendrochronological dates for Norfolk buildings.  
New Buckenham buildings and their dates are shown in **bold**.

#### 14. Conclusions

This study has thrown into stark relief some important themes in the development of the vernacular housing stock in New Buckenham. If the buildings are viewed in terms of their basic chronology (see *Figure 46*) it is quite clear that both the second half of the fifteenth century and the first half of the sixteenth witnessed extensive building programmes in the town – a programme that extended not just to domestic houses but also to civic building projects associated with the principal medieval craft guilds. The town appears to have experienced a late-medieval phase of prosperity – a prosperity which resulted in the construction of new guildhalls, the rebuilding of the church of St Martin in the Perpendicular style and the encroachment of new houses onto the market place. It is unclear when this rise in prosperity began since no surviving buildings appear to date to before 1451. However, the large number of surviving houses which date to the period 1470-1560 suggests that this was New Buckenham's 'Golden Age'.



(1) Refers to an initial building phase

(2) & (3) Refer to later modifications/rebuilding phases

(1473) Refers to a dendro-date

### **Late Fifteenth Century:**

Old Vicarage (1451/2)  
1 Chapel Street (1) (front gatehouse)  
Gingerbread Cottage (1)  
Corner Cottage/Crawford's  
Thyme Cottage (1) (guildhall phase)  
Oak Cottage/Yellow Cottage (1473)  
Blair House/St Mary's Cottage  
Dial House (1) (open hall phase)  
Wine Cellars?

### **Early Sixteenth Century:**

Dial House (2) (insertion of floor in hall)  
Fairview  
Lane's End (1)  
Lovell's Stores  
The Pleasance  
Red Roof & Senton  
Tanyard Cottage (1)  
Thatched Cottage  
1/2 Chapel Hill (1)  
3 Chapel Hill (1)  
4/5 Chapel Hill

### **Mid-Sixteenth Century:**

White Horse/White Horse Cottage  
Old Bakehouse/Bakehouse Cottage  
Park House  
The Beams/Diken Cottage (west)  
Beech House  
Butcher's Shop

### **Late Sixteenth-Century:**

King's Head (1)  
Gingerbread Cottage (2) (floor, chimney & screen inserted)  
Tanyard Cottage (2) (insertion of floor in hall)  
Market Cross  
The Old Swan/Diken Cottage (east) (1573)  
1 Chapel Street (2) (rear extension)

### **Early Seventeenth Century:**

Thatched Cottage (2) (parlour end rebuilt c.1608?)  
Lane's End (2) (Marsh Lane block added)  
Burrage House/Old Post Office (1) (likely initial build)  
Pickwick House  
Pinchpot Cottage (1624)  
The Rookery (1)  
Saffron House  
White Horse/White Horse Cottage (2)  
1/2 Chapel Hill (2) (parlour rebuilt, floors inserted)  
3 Chapel Hill (2) (floors inserted, chimney rebuilt)  
4 Chapel Hill (2) (floors inserted)  
6 Chapel Hill  
Thyme Cottage (2) (insertion of floors)  
Turnpike Lodge

### **Late Seventeenth-Century:**

Rose Cottage (1)  
King's Head (2)  
Market Cross Cottage (1)  
Burrage House/Old Post Office (2) (floor and flying tie-beams inserted) (1693-1729)

### **Eighteenth Century:**

Cosy Cottage  
The Cottage (King Street)  
Market Cross (2) (lower arcade and roof rebuilt)

### **Nineteenth Century:**

King's Head (3)  
The Rookery (2) (service end rebuilt)  
Hunt's Farmhouse (1857)  
Gable Cottage (1820)  
Market Cross Cottage (2)  
Rose Cottage (2)

**Figure 46**

Outline chronology for houses in New Buckenham.

This discovery is significant for two reasons. The first is that this period coincides with a 'transitional' phase in the development of vernacular architecture generally. The open hall with its decorative roof and open hearth had been the defining feature of the medieval house but buildings like Oak Cottage/Yellow Cottage reveal that by the 1470s changing notions of social and spatial organisation were producing entirely new types of houses which were two-storeyed throughout. However, to suggest that this 'cutting-edge' building with its impressive jettied front immediately set a new trend in house design would be premature, since it seems likely that other more 'traditional' open hall houses such as Blair House and Corner Cottage/Crawford's were being built at about the same time or even after Oak Cottage/Yellow Cottage. Indeed, the latter may have been 'ahead of its time'; it may have taken a few decades for the merits of this new type of building to overcome the natural conservatism of other house-owners. By the mid 1500s, however, the evidence suggests that open halls were being abandoned in favour of houses with two storeys and a chimney stack.

The second reason is that this chronology does not provide a 'fit' with that proposed by W.G. Hoskins in his now famous thesis on the 'Great Rebuilding of Rural England' published in the journal *Past & Present* in 1953.<sup>122</sup> Hoskins believed that:

Between the accession of Elizabeth I and the outbreak of the Civil War, there occurred in England a revolution in the housing of a considerable part of the population.... The movement appears to have begun in the 1560s and was most conspicuous in the last generation of the sixteenth century and the first generation of the seventeenth — roughly between 1570 and 1640.<sup>123</sup>

According to Hoskins the Great Rebuilding took two main forms: the rebuilding of existing houses and fresh building on new sites.<sup>124</sup> The emphasis on each varied from place to place, with modernisation characteristic of some parts of the country and complete rebuilding characteristic of others. Notwithstanding these variables, Hoskins felt that the evidence for a Great Rebuilding between 1570 and 1640 was abundant and inescapable 'from Cornwall up to Lancashire, and from Herefordshire across to Suffolk'.<sup>125</sup> He identified three principal causes. The first was rising levels of wealth enjoyed by the middling classes of rural society: in particular 'the bigger husbandmen, the yeomen and the lesser gentry'.<sup>126</sup>

The second causal factor was population growth. Hoskins felt that growth in population during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was inextricably linked with the Great Rebuilding, but a lack of reliable population statistics for the period left him unsure of the nature of the relationship. The third causal factor was an increasing desire for what we would now term 'personal space'. This was expressed by Hoskins as a 'filtering down to the mass of the population ... of a sense of privacy that had formerly been enjoyed only by the upper classes'. This withdrawal from the common life and a corresponding emphasis on individuality was paralleled in other forms of material culture. The growing desire for privacy amongst the rural middle classes was instrumental, in Hoskins' view, in the proliferation of smaller, more specialised rooms and the building of houses which had two storeys throughout. This was linked also to a rise in material comfort as reflected in the greater use of coal and the adoption of glazed windows. Hoskins concluded his paper by placing the Great Rebuilding within a sequential model of long-term social and economic change:



'The sequence in England seems to be: Savings - rebuilding and enlargement — decreased mortality and perhaps higher fertility — rise of population — new building and development of congestion - rise in mortality rates.'<sup>127</sup>

The power of Hoskins' big idea lay in its simplicity and its apparent universality. The theory and the surviving buildings seemed, at the time, to produce a good 'fit' and provided a convenient framework for future research. Crucially, Hoskins' theory also seemed to provide a convincing parallel to the research of social and economic historians which had identified, by the 1940s, the emergence of a new and prosperous 'middle class' in pre-Industrial England during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>128</sup> Trevelyan, for example, had described the period between Elizabeth and the Restoration as 'a great age for the rural middle class'.<sup>129</sup> Hoskins' theory of the Great Rebuilding 'was thus elevated from the status of a plausible hypothesis to that of a key principal assumption'.<sup>130</sup> However, Hoskins' theory has not gone unchallenged. When Bob Machin studied the existing information relating to dated buildings (those dated by inscription) in the RCHM archive and the Department of Environment statutory lists of buildings in the 1970s a stark truth emerged: there was absolutely no evidence of a Great Rebuilding between 1570 and 1640. Instead, Machin discovered that the period between 1660 and 1739 was far more important, with every decade producing more dated houses than even the peak decade of the pre-Civil-War period. Any postulated national rebuilding had, therefore, to be re-dated to around 1690. More recently, Pat Ryan has suggested that Hoskins' Great Rebuilding should be re-conceptualised not as a single phenomenon, as Hoskins' viewed it, nor as an unbroken continuum of building, as proposed by Machin, but, instead, as a part of a cyclical 'Housing Revolution'. Ryan adds that: 'It is better, perhaps, to see it as a peak in the cycles of a continuum rather than the beginning of a continuum'.<sup>131</sup>

Whilst there was certainly some new building in New Buckenham in the period 1550-1650 (and also after 1690), the evidence indicates that the former was largely limited to the adaptation of existing, late-medieval buildings through the insertion of new floors and chimney stacks, the 'raising' of buildings and the subsequent provision of new roofs, and the widespread adoption of glazed windows. The housing stock is predominantly a medieval one with Jacobethan modifications and extensions. However, whilst New Buckenham provides a poor 'fit' with traditional notions of a late Tudor/early Jacobean 'Great Rebuilding' there is now good reason to believe that the chronology of building in the town is in tune with an emergent wider chronology established via tree-ring analysis.

In the last two decades important new light has been shed on the chronology of rebuilding by the science of dendrochronology – a dating technique which uses the evidence of tree growth rings to place individual timbers within a fixed chronology. Results of tree-ring dates from across the country have recently been summarised by Sarah Pearson. Her analysis of the 410 tree-ring dated buildings which existed in 1996 and her more recent update of 2001 has revealed some quite unexpected patterns.<sup>132</sup> Perhaps the most important is that in urban centres the main period of building activity was the period between 1400 and 1499 and not that between 1550 and 1650. Interestingly, there was a pronounced decline in activity after 1530. Tree-ring evidence allows us, therefore, to see the buildings of New Buckenham in a new light, and, in particular, within the context of a much wider chronology of urban building in the late Middle Ages. Far from being 'out-of-step' with rebuilding programmes elsewhere, New Buckenham appears to mirror a nationwide renewal of urban building between 1400 and 1530.



Whilst owners in New Buckenham may have been shocked by the appearance of Oak Cottage in the 1470s, they appear to have adapted to the new fashion for two-storey living by the mid-sixteenth century. However, they were less quick to abandon the traditional ground-floor layout of the medieval house and remained wedded to their (floored) halls and cross-passages until the early seventeenth century. It is only in the early 1600s that buildings like Pinchpot (and probably also Turnpike Lodge) appeared which did without halls altogether, and which, in terms of their plans, were a manifestation of wider changes within society – a change which Johnson has described as one from ‘a community based on face-to-face relations and governed by conceptions of authority, custom and status (*Gemeinschaft*) to a society based on less personal relations of class and capitalistic economic relations (*Gesellschaft*)’.<sup>133</sup> Houses like Pinchpot and Turnpike Lodge looked forwards rather than backwards and reflected increasing concerns about privacy and social segregation that were an inevitable consequence of the unprecedented and dramatic widening of the gulf between rich and poor which characterised the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. When first built, Pinchpot and Turnpike Lodge must have been as shocking as Oak Cottage had been a century-and-a-half earlier. The thing which perhaps marks out these two buildings more than anything else is the fact that they appear to be relatively rare in terms of new building in the town in the early seventeenth century. Most building work in this period appears to have been limited to the remodelling of existing properties.

The results of the tree-ring analysis have been better than anyone had a right to expect. The five dated buildings have largely confirmed the accuracy of the stylistic dating criteria employed by the NHBG in their recording and interpretation of the buildings and even in the case of Burrage House/Old Post Office, where the dendro-date of 1694-1729 provided a shock, it now seems likely that the tree-ring cores were taken from timbers which were inserted at a later date. They do not discount, therefore, an early seventeenth-century initial building phase as proposed by Sue and Michael Brown. As Ian Tyers points out in his report, the New Buckenham tree-ring project has made a major contribution not only to our understanding of the chronology of building in the town itself, but also to the wider task of establishing a useful concentration of parallel tree-ring sequences for the county as a whole. It has also greatly added to the number of truly ‘vernacular’ buildings of sub-manorial status for which reliable dendro-dates exist. The buildings, dendrochronology and documents taken together have shed valuable new light onto the relationship between timber supply, lordship and the historic housing stock. It now seems likely that during New Buckenham’s ‘Golden Age’ between 1470 and 1560 the demand for timbers was such that limited woodland resources had to be carefully marshalled and managed to provide large numbers of fast-grown, and hence undatable timbers. By the early seventeenth century the declining fortunes of the Knyvett family, combined, perhaps, with a general down-turn in new building and declining pressure on resources, resulted in what appears to have been a wholesale asset-stripping including, crucially, the felling of mature, ‘slow grown’ trees for building purposes.

Though availability of timber may always have been a problem in a poorly wooded area, the timbers used in construction tend to be good quality though largely lacking in elaborate ornamentation in comparison with other nearby towns. Timber-framing characterises the building stock of the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Thereafter, flint and brick are used more frequently in New Buckenham, though the fact that The Cottage, King Street, was entirely timber-framed when built in the early eighteenth century, indicates that timber-framing continued to compete with flint into the 1700s. Old habits, it appears, died hard in New Buckenham. In the nineteenth century the appearance of the housing stock in



the town was largely transformed by the introduction of brick frontages. The fluidity made possible by the continuous frontages in an urban layout permitted the reallocation of rooms or parts of rooms between neighbouring houses.

In terms of roof typologies, there seems to be a clear progression in New Buckenham from crown-post, to queen-post, to clasped-purlin and, finally, to butt-purlin types. The first appears to be a fifteenth-century feature. The middle two types appear to characterise construction in the early and late sixteenth century respectively, whilst the last is found in houses built after 1600. Roofs with elbowed principal rafters (not true upper-crucks) are also found – these were employed predominantly in houses which had their roofs rebuilt in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. A variety of bracing methods were used by carpenters. Most were of arch or inverted arch varieties, though occasionally more elaborate, decorative ogee bracing was used for ‘display’ purposes. Whilst the vast majority of medieval windows appear to have been unglazed and plain, evidence of a small group of late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth-century high-status oriel windows (presumably originally glazed) has come to light. One of these was found above the entrance of a very rare surviving medieval gatehouse which once gave access to a large courtyard house on an expansive one-acre messuage. This building (No.1 Chapel Street) appears to provide a link with known courtyard houses in other East Anglian towns with a cloth-manufacturing economy.

A number of surviving buildings appear to have conformed to the ‘standard’ medieval tripartite plan of parlour/hall/services. Two of these tripartite plan houses – Corner Cottage/Crawford’s and possibly also Blair House/St Mary’s Cottage – appear to have been ‘Wealden’ houses. These are, as yet, rare in Norfolk though one wonders how many more remain unidentified in other market towns in the county. One of the great surprises of the project has been the discovery of a large group of houses – some late fifteenth century, some early sixteenth century – which have a bipartite plan comprising just a hall (open or otherwise) and a floored-over service bay. Even more surprising was the sheer size of the halls in these houses; some are of three or four bays in length and may have served a commercial (storage?) or even industrial function. In cases where the hall was floored-over, the chamber above appears occasionally to have remained undivided, providing another unusually large space at first floor level. Of the post-medieval plans commonly found in Norfolk, no convincing recorded examples of Type S1 (single-cell) or Type S (two-cell) plan-forms have been identified in the town. Neither have any examples of Type T (three-cell) or Type J (three-cell) houses. The Type G (three-cell with cross-passage) plan appears to be the favoured type in the second half of the sixteenth century, with the Type I (two-cell with lobby-entry) gradually superseding it in the early 1600s.

Like any market town New Buckenham contained a number of shops, most of which were probably workshops where goods were made and sold. These appear to lack the narrow doorways seen in surviving shops elsewhere and their location also fails to conform to the expected arrangement close by a cross-passage, but sufficient evidence of window openings remains to indicate the original function of these premises as shops. In most cases, shops occupied an entire bay, normally, though not exclusively, at the ‘lower’ end of the hall. Where a shop displaced the parlour on the ground floor, the functions of the latter often appear to have been focused on the chamber over the shop. Detached shop units on market places have been identified in other parts of the region and evidence of them has been identified in New Buckenham. Fragments of a sixteenth-century example can be seen above the Market Cross itself, whilst more fragments of a seventeenth-century flint-and-

brick semi-detached 'row' has been discovered encased in later eighteenth- and nineteenth-century brickwork in Market Cross House next door.

The activities of the NHBG in New Buckenham have served to illustrate the potential of targeted and finite recording strategies when linked to a small-scale tree-ring project of this type. It has also shown the enormous value to be gained by combining documentary evidence with that derived from the standing buildings. I hope that readers of this journal will also agree that the results of this project have demonstrated clearly the important role that the NHBG now plays in advancing and promoting historical and archaeological research in the county. The creation of the Group back in 2000 was a gamble and there were no guarantees of success. Thankfully, the gamble has paid off and the Group, I hope, has a bright future ahead of it.

Dr Adam Longcroft

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