This building, a high quality timber-framed structure dating to the late fifteenth century, has been the subject of a recent programme of detailed recording and analysis, accompanied by dendrochronology. It is located on a prominent site, just opposite the church, at the centre of the village of Hallaton in south-east Leicestershire (OS ref: SP787966). The building, of six bays, had timber-framed walls with heavy close-studding throughout. Three bays originally formed an open hall, with a high arch-braced roof truss of an unusual 'stub tie beam' form, a rare Midlands type associated with high status houses. Although this was an open hall, the absence of smoke blackening indicates that there must have been a chimneystack from the beginning rather than an open hearth, an unusually early feature for the late fifteenth century. The whole timber-framed structure is of sophisticated, high class construction, and contrasts strongly with other houses of the period in the village, which are cruck-built. It is suggested that, though subsequently reduced in status and subdivided into four cottages, it was once one of the two main manor houses of Hallaton. The location of this second manor house has been lost since it was merged with the other main manor in the early seventeenth century.

Introduction

The pair of cottages, now known as 10/12 and 14 Churchgate, stands on a corner site, at the junction of Churchgate with Hunts Lane, immediately to the north-east of Hallaton church.Externally, the building has few features of interest, with cement-rendered walls under a thatched roof (illus. 1). Only one timber post at the upper south-west corner provides an indication of the timber-framed structure which lies within. Inside, however, the impressive quality of the original timber-framed building is immediately apparent. Large areas of heavy, close-studded timbers survive in the external walls, with large, curved braces to the main posts. At the centre of No. 14, in the western half of the building, fine moulded posts rise from ground to roof level, marking the location of a former open hall. Near the top of the posts, with their moulded, crown-motif caps, heavy arch-braces sweep up into the roof. Inspection in the roof void shows that this fine, open truss lies at the centre of an original six-bay roof structure, which survives in remarkably complete condition.

The building has received very little previous attention. It is mentioned only in passing in the Victoria County History (Vol. V, 1964, p.122) and Pevsner (1984, p.173), as one amongst several originally part timber-framed cottages. The listed building description, of 1966, notes that it has a partial timber frame, probably with a core of the late sixteenth to seventeenth century, though brief mention is also made of the internal close-studding and finely carved principal posts.
1. View of 10–14 Churchgate from the south-west in c.1960
Ground Floor

10-14 Churchgate, Hallaton

2. Ground floor plan

First Floor

3. First floor plan
From the late twelfth century, Hallaton had two main manors, Bardolf’s and Engaine’s. At a somewhat later date, a third manor, Hacluit’s, emerged, probably subordinate to Bardolf’s. One manor house, located at Hallaton Hall, on the east side of the village, was either Bardolf’s or Engaine’s. The subordinate manor house, Hacluit’s, was located to the south of the church. No location for the other main manor house has previously been identified.

The medieval building

Description

The original building has six bays, with three main bays, subdivided into intermediate bays at roof level (illus. 2–3). It has a span of c.6.3m (20ft 8in) and an overall length of c.17m (55ft 9in). The external walls are all close-studded where evidence survives. The plan is out-of-square at both gable ends, particularly to the west, following the line of the road frontages at the intersection of Churchgate and Hunts Lane.

There are two principal trusses, T3 and T5. The most striking feature of the building is the open truss, T3 (illus. 4). This has sweeping arch braces which cut the line of the tie beam, creating the interrupted or ‘stub tie beam’ pattern. In a normal, uninterrupted arrangement, the tie beam would span between the main posts, with any arch braces underneath it. The main posts have heavy, tapered jowls at the head, and a chamfered rib moulding to the inner face, carved from the solid main post timber, with a further chamfer to the main post section. At the head of the rib moulding to the posts is a shaped cap with a castellated, crown motif, above which rises the continuation of the chamfered moulding, on the arch braces (illus. 5). The stub tie beams are around 200mm (8in) square at the outer ends, which have a normal joint arrangement to the post, wall plate and principal rafter, but are reduced in section to 200 × 90mm (8 × 31/2 in) to allow for a neat junction to the arch braces.

The arch braces are tenoned to the lower collar, the collar itself having a deeper section to the centre, allowing the curving line of the arch braces to follow right through to its apex. On the south side, there is an additional strut in the spandrel above the arch brace, tenoned to the principal and the brace. But strangely, on the north side, there is a mortice for a matching strut on the arch brace, still containing a tenon, but no mortice to the principal rafter (which is certainly still the original in situ). It seems that the strut here was fitted purely for decorative, symmetrical effect, with no structural function.

Above the lower collar, which is of slightly cranked shape, the principal rafters carry two sets of clasped purlins, trapped between the rafter and the collar. There is a slightly curved, cambered upper collar and a diagonally-set ridge. Two curved struts run up from the lower to the upper collar, and a straight strut runs from the upper collar up to a saddle joining the principal rafters at the apex. The pegs of the saddle/principals joint are driven, unlike other pegs to the truss, from the east face. There are two sets of curved windbraces from principal rafters to the lower and upper purlins. Unusual carpenter’s assembly marks are visible to the junctions of the curved struts and lower collar, formed in S shapes by using a curved gouge, first one way round and then the other. These are the only carpenter’s marks of this type found in the building. The apex saddle has one set of long scribed marks (III), as found elsewhere, and there are marks (I) to the junction of arch braces and posts. The principals, collars and curved struts are all chamfered on the underside.
The wall posts with their double-chamfered detail continued down to ground level (past the inserted first floor), with a pyramid-type stop for the chamfer moulding near the foot of the post. Only the south post now survives below first floor level. Clearly, this

4. Truss T3 over the former open hall, of 'stub tie beam' type

West Face of Truss T3

The wall posts with their double-chamfered detail continued down to ground level (past the inserted first floor), with a pyramid-type stop for the chamfer moulding near the foot of the post. Only the south post now survives below first floor level. Clearly, this
5. Photograph of c.1960, showing detail of truss T3, with shaped cap of main post supporting arch brace
open truss was designed to create an impressive, lofty appearance. At 4.8m (15ft 9in),
the height to the eaves is already considerable, but the use of the arch braces and stub tie
beam design carries the height of the roof up still further, with the lower collar 5.7m
(18ft 8in) above ground level. The carpenters were perhaps over-ambitious, as the
resultant roof structure, with its relatively slender members, was weak. The roof has
spread outwards substantially, pulling the tie/collar joints apart by as much as 300mm
(12in) in places, and fracturing one of the principals. The deformed nature of the truss
made survey and reconstruction of its original form rather difficult. Repairs were made
to the truss to address this problem around the eighteenth century, when a new oak end
piece was scarfed onto the collar using big skew pegs with chamfered heads, and iron
straps were fitted to hold together the arch brace and collar joints, with wedged, ‘fore-
lock’ bolts of cotter pin type. Further major repairs were made in the twentieth century,
with the addition of many softwood members (illus. 6).

The other principal truss, T5, is of more usual form (illus. 7). It has a tie beam, with
raking struts up to the very slightly cranked lower collar, above which the structure is
the same as T3. The posts are chamfered, but without the additional chamfered rib
moulding. Curved braces rise from posts to tie (now missing on the north side). Quite
a number of the joints have carpenter’s marks, all of the long scored type, using the
number II. There is only a single tier of wind braces here. Below, the posts are not visible
on the ground floor, but a cased-in jowl shape survives on the south side, indicating
that there was a transverse beam at mid-height for a first floor. An important feature of
this truss to note is that it, like the main truss T3, was open, with no evidence for
partitioning at roof or first floor level.

The intermediate trusses (T2, T4 and T6) are of lighter, A-frame type with two
cambered collars holding the two sets of clasped purlins (illus. 8). The principal rafters
here are of small section timber, c.150 × 75mm (6 × 3in), similar to the common rafters.
The upper collars are strongly curved and chamfered to the undersides. Of truss T2, only
the north principal and the reset lower collar survive. Truss T4 is also largely missing, cut
out for the brick chimneybreast, but retains crucial evidence. A remaining section of the
lower collar on the south side has mortices to its underside (but without peg holes) for a
partition on this line, the only evidence of subdivision in the roof. The collar’s upper face
also has a shallow groove, though no mortices visible in the short remaining section,
which would have received infill material for the partition. On the north side, the foot of
the principal rafter tenons into a 150mm (6in) deep tie beam, now cut off, giving further
confirmation of an original partition in this location, as the other intermediate trusses
have principal rafters resting directly on the wall plate. There is also faint marking on the
underside of the south principal from the plaster/daub of the partition. It is interesting to
note on this truss the traces of original red marking-out ‘string’ lines for mortices in the
principal rafter to take the missing collar and apex saddle.

Carpenter’s marks on the three intermediate trusses suggest a proper sequence: T6 has
I, T4 has II and T2 has III. It seems these three trusses were framed up in a group by the
carpenters. Truss T5 is numbered II, which suggests it was thought the second main
truss, after the stub tie beam truss T3, which bears the number I, though it does also
have different numbers on the struts and apex.

At each gable end, trusses T1 and T7 have a cranked tie beam and lower collar,
with a cambered upper collar and regular close-studding throughout (illus. 9). Studs are
generally around 150 × 55mm (6 × 2in), and evidence can be seen of the original infill
with oak lath wedged into grooves in the studs and daubed both sides with mud. Any
carpenter’s marks would have been on the outermost, ‘face’ side so are not visible.
6. View of truss T3 with later repairs
East Face of Truss T5

10-14 Churchgate, Hallaton

7. Truss T5, of normal tie beam type with two upper collars
West Face of Truss T6
8. Truss T6, the most complete of the intermediate trusses

East Face of Truss T1

10-14 Churchgate, Hallaton
9. The west gable truss T1 with close studding throughout
There was a double tier of wind braces either side of the stub tie beam truss T3, and at the west end of the roof (now missing to the north side, but mortices remain). However, truss T5 and the east end have only a single tier – clearly a demonstration of relative importance, with double wind braces over the main open hall area.

The clasped purlins mainly survive, and are in three lengths with double-splayed scarf joints. This type of double-splayed scarf joint seems to be quite rare, though a similar type has been found at Rose Cottage, Bringhurst, Leics. The detail with the second splay gives a neat way of supporting the second purlin as it lays across the first, with several skew pegs added for fixing. On the upper south purlin of T5/6 there are three setting-out marks of doubled ‘V’ pattern, scratched with a knife. Two of them have the points of the ‘V’s cut off by the chamfers, showing the sequence of working the timber. The ridge, like the purlins, is also in three pieces with splayed scarf joints. A number of original rafters survive, though many are later replacements.

A particular feature of note is that there is a complete absence of smoke blackening to the roof timbers, which are quite clean throughout. Clearly, despite evidence for an open hall, there must have been an original chimney to confine smoke – or no heating at all.

Much of the timber frame survives to the first floor (illus. 10–11). The external walls are all close-studded, with heavy studs around 150mm (6in) wide set only c.175mm (7in) apart. The studs span from wall plate to first floor level without a mid-rail. Heavy curved downward braces run from the principal trusses T3 and T5 down to the girding beam at first floor level, and also at the gable ends (though now missing or not visible to the east end). The frames of the two long walls have intermediate posts of 120 × 200mm (6 × 8in) section, with chamfers. However, these do not align across the building or with the intermediate trusses. Surviving evidence of studs and peg holes (or their clear absence) indicates that the west end, with the main open hall, had no window openings along the front wall or most of the rear at first floor level; while the east, floored end shows two possible window positions on the first floor front wall with probably none to the rear. The west gable seems to have been fully studded, without windows. Evidence is not visible for the east gable. No evidence survives inside for original first floor partitions, though there was probably a partition at T4, continuing the line of the roof level partition. A close-studded internal partition survives near T6, with studs or peg holes for studs right across the building and a surviving framed doorway, but this may be a later insertion, as it tenons into a top beam which is simply lapped over the wall plate, and is not related to the main frame structure.

Very little evidence of the original timber-framed structure survives to the ground floor, most of the structure having been replaced in stone or brickwork. The main posts of truss T3 and probably T5 survive on the south side, as noted above. Otherwise, only the south post of intermediate truss T4 and a short section of sill beam remain, with evidence from peg holes in the first floor girding beam for ground floor walling of close studs. This small surviving section of wall framing contains some interesting evidence (see illus. 10). The sill beam sits on a stone plinth wall, now about 500mm (1ft 8in) high, and the intermediate post tenons into the sill beam in the normal way. However, the foot of the main post of T3 has peg holes to each side at its base, indicating that the structure here was of ‘interrupted sill’ type, with the sill beam jointed into either side of the main post, instead of passing underneath it. The end of the post sits on the stone plinth at the same level as the bottom of the sill beam, and seems never to have run further down towards ground level, unlike most interrupted sill structures.

Part of a timber-framed internal cross partition survives on the ground floor near the intermediate post of T4. Only the upper part of this is visible, with two posts -
framing a wide 1200mm (3ft 11in) opening. The posts are tenoned and pegged at the top to a head beam, which is chamfered to match the width of the opening. The opening has a timber lintol tenoned and pegged to the side posts, with three close-stud timbers above, unpegged. The partition abuts the front south wall (although details of this junction cannot be seen), and its north end is cut off by the later inserted
fireplace. As the lintol is around door head height, it seems likely this was a doorway, though it is unusually wide; alternatively, it could have been a hatch. Although the wall does not seem well integrated with the original framed structure and does not align with the nearby intermediate post, it may be original, as discussed below.
12. Reconstruction of presumed original building, with open hall heated by a chimneystack, cross passage and first floor chamber over service end
**Tree-ring dating**

Tree-ring dating was carried out in 2002 by Robert Howard of Nottingham University Tree-ring Dating Laboratory (Howard et al., 2002). Sixteen samples were taken from the roof structure, the first floor structure and also the head beam of the wide ground floor opening in the cross wall near T4. Unfortunately, most of the timbers in the building have very few rings, making secure dating difficult.

Only two samples of the roof timbers, from the collar of T5 and the north purlin of T3/4, could be dated, with a chronology 67 rings long. This produced a heart/sapwood boundary date of 1469, giving an estimated felling date (allowing 15–40 sapwood rings) of 1484–1509. The report recommends that this date, based on only two samples, should be treated with caution. However, it does point to confirmation of the presumed date of the primary timber-framed building.

**Stub tie beam roof**

The unusual 'stub tie beam' roof form is of particular interest. This has been previously recognised as a rare Midlands roof type, with seventeen other examples identified in 1996 (Alcock and Woodfield, 1996). It is clear from these examples that this was a prestige structural type, used in buildings of considerable status, such as Little Moreton Hall and two Guildhalls. All examples found probably date to the mid to late fifteenth century, though firm dates are only known for Hall House, Sawbridge (1449), the Old Guildhall at Newport, Shropshire (1487) and Hall House, Cheddleton, Staffordshire (c.1475, Howard et al., 1998). Locations identified so far have generally been within a 35 mile radius of Birmingham, with no other examples in Leicestershire; this new Hallaton example therefore significantly extends the range of the roof type. At 6.3m (20ft 8in) span and 4.8m (15ft 9in) eaves height, its size lies around the middle of the range of examples given by Alcock and Woodfield. Several other examples have moulded wall posts, but the arch braces at Hallaton are much slighter than those illustrated by Alcock and Woodfield, with clear open space between the arch brace and the principal rafter. The general effect is of a much lighter, more open structure, rather than the heavy, cruck-like timbers used elsewhere, perhaps indicative of a slightly later date. The Hallaton example also demonstrates very obviously the reason why the stub tie beam form was used. It would have been much more straightforward to construct the hall truss with an ordinary full tie beam at eaves level, as used at T5. Instead, the tie beam is reduced to stubs, allowing the large arch braces to sweep up to a higher-placed collar, creating a magnificent lofty arch. The stub tie beam form used is complicated to construct and structurally weak, as its later failure shows; its sole purpose was to impress.

**Open hall with chimneystack**

One would expect a hall of this type and date to have an open hearth, without a chimney-stack, but the complete absence of smoke-blackening proves this was not the case. The general pattern, which has been established across the country, is that halls which were open to the roof with open hearths were superseded during the sixteenth century by single storey halls, with a chimneystack and first floor chamber above. This development generally appears first in the more affluent south-east of England and at higher status levels. In late fifteenth-century Leicestershire one would very much expect a hall with an
open hearth, even for high status buildings. The occurrence of this open hall at Hallaton, apparently with a chimneystack, therefore warrants further discussion.

It has often been assumed that the provision of a chimneystack and of a first floor over the hall occurred together, in a single, radical move away from the open hall. However, detailed study in recent years has indicated that this was not always the case. John Walker (2003a) has noted that ‘Many Essex and Suffolk houses of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century were built with open halls heated by a chimney, and the hall was only floored later’. He cites one Suffolk example, Mill Farmhouse, Alpheton where a medieval open hall had a brick chimneystack inserted around 1500, but where the hall was only floored over a century later, using timber dendro-dated to 1617 (Bridge, 2002). Another example, much closer to hand, is at the Manor House, Medbourne, Leicestershire. Here a large stone stack was inserted into the medieval open hall in c.1570, without a first floor. A floor was subsequently added a little later (Hill, 2001, pp.51–2).

The demise of the open hall, representing the transformation of the medieval into the early modern house, has always been the focus of much attention within vernacular architectural studies. However, concentration on the vernacular level alone can give a distorted emphasis. At higher levels of society, the open hearth in the hall was replaced by a chimneystack, generally at an earlier date than for lower-status houses. But the open hall itself was retained, as a valued symbol of superior status, as can be seen in many country houses to this day. In Northamptonshire country houses of the period 1550–1640, ‘The open hall continued to act as the central focal point of the great houses, although after c.1570 it was replaced by a storeyed hall of less impressive character in the smaller houses of the gentry . . .’ (Heward and Taylor, 1996, p.27) At nearby Nevill Holt in Leicestershire, the open hearth of the thirteenth-century hall was replaced with a lateral stone chimneystack by Sir Thomas Nevill in the mid-sixteenth century (Hill, 1999, p.266) Unlike Medbourne Manor House, Nevill Holt retained its high status, and so has kept its hall open to the roof, without flooring over.

At Hallaton, the apparent provision of a chimneystack in the late-fifteenth century open hall is remarkably early. Recent studies have confirmed the dating of this development in several areas of south-east England. In Kent, lateral stacks first appeared in high status stone houses in the early to mid-fifteenth century, and in the best timber-framed houses in the later fifteenth century. (Pearson, 1994, p.108) Pearson cites three Kentish examples of high-class houses with open halls of the late fifteenth century where the roof timbers, as at Hallaton, have no smoke-blackening, and original lateral chimneystacks are inferred. In Hertfordshire, Smith concluded (1992, p.27) that insertion of the first chimneystacks into open halls appeared ‘at the highest social levels, probably not much before 1450’. The earliest surviving Hertfordshire example is at the bishop’s palace of Hatfield, built in 1478–86. In Hampshire, the first manor house with a floored hall was built in 1491–6 (Roberts, 2003, p.149). Away from the south-east, where affluence came earlier, development is slower. In nearby Northamptonshire, the earliest chimneystacks are in a group of high-status halls (Abington, Boughton, Fawsley and Upton) with highly ornate open roofs, built around the early sixteenth century (Meirion-Jones et al., 1987 and Heward and Taylor, 1996). In Leicestershire, evidence is less clear, and Hallaton may indeed be the earliest example yet identified. This precocious development is clearly another indication of the high-status aspiration of the building.

Some features of the building’s construction may, in fact, indicate that the builders over-reached themselves in striving to include the latest developments. While the framing of the main structure, including the stub tie beam roof, is achieved with competence and
expertise, the chimneystack was clearly not very well integrated with the surrounding structure. In Essex and Suffolk, early timber-framed houses with chimneystacks incorporated carefully-planned gaps in the framework, for timber chimneys. (Walker, 2003b)

At Hallaton, the chimneystack seems to have no such provision, appearing more like an unplanned afterthought. Evidence for similar difficulties has been identified by Roberts (2003, pp.153–5) in three examples of transitional houses from Hampshire. For example, at The George Inn at Odiham, a crudely built timber chimney cuts across and obscures a finely moulded roof truss. It had been assumed that the chimney was a later insertion, but tree-ring dating proved that both the hall and its chimney dated to 1486/7. Roberts concludes that the main master carpenter was responsible for the main frame, but, with little experience of accommodating chimneys within halls, failed to make proper provision. The chimney itself was probably fitted by another, inferior craftsman. A similar explanation may apply at Hallaton.

A further oddity of the timber-framing at Hallaton is the lack of high level windows to the hall. This may again be due to uncertainty over the design for a full-height open hall which was to have a chimneystack, rather than an open hearth. Also, the location of the main posts for the intermediate trusses, T2 and T5, is irregular. This irregularity goes beyond what was dictated by the out-of-square building footprint, suggesting the builders had to adapt the post locations to take account of the chimneystack or windows.

**Reconstruction of original plan and form**

Analysis of the fabric allows a probable reconstruction of the original plan and form of the building to be pieced together (illus. 12).

The original building had three main bays divided by intermediate trusses into a total of six bays. Evidently it contained an open hall to the west, of three bays, with a floored section to the east also of three bays. It appears that this represents the whole structure, a single linear block between gable ends, and there were no further cross wings, though it is just possible that there was a wing to the north-west, along the street frontage, which has left no trace.

As the evidence of the only original partition line is at truss T4, this might suggest that the main entrance doorway, with a normal cross passage plan, would be located just west of this. However, the surviving sill beam shows that there was no doorway between T3 and T4, so it must have lain further east. This would give a less usual arrangement, with the cross passage formed not within the end bay of the hall, but of ‘overshot’ type in the adjoining bay, with a first floor over the passage. It is reported that when the ground floor window between T4 and T5 was replaced in recent years, an arched head above was revealed, though now covered up again. This may have been the original doorway.

The wide opening in the ground floor timber-framed partition just east of T4 is an unusual feature. As noted above, this partition does not seem very well integrated with the surrounding structure. Despite this, it seems likely that the partition is original and not a later insertion. A partition near this location was necessary, given the closed truss at T4 above. The evidence of the ground floor intermediate post at T4, which has no mortices or jowls, indicates that it was not in this location. The existing partition is probably therefore the original subdivision, including its wide doorway. The partition timbers have good quality studs (160mm, 6\(\frac{1}{2}\) in wide), similar to the fabric of the original building. The ground floor partition was thus located 400mm (16in) east of the partition at T4 to the first floor and roof. The explanation of this is probably that the first floor joists projected westwards over the ground floor partition, forming an internal jetty at the
east end of the hall. Internal jetties of this type are found in some areas of the country, though usually at the ‘high end’ of the hall, giving a canopy over the high table on its dais (e.g. in Hampshire, Roberts 2003, pp.134–5). The partition probably extended right across the east end of the hall, though the later chimneystack has removed any evidence.

The hall would have extended westwards taking up three bays, with its impressive high-arching roof truss off-set eastwards from the centre of the room. The best ‘face’ side of the roof truss faced west, towards the ‘high end’ of the hall. Although the hall was full-height, the framing shows there were no tall hall windows; in fact, it seems that there were, most unusually, windows only at lower level and none in the upper walls.

The unexpected complete absence of smoke-blackening over the hall indicates that there must have been a chimneystack here from the start, rather than an open hearth – unless the hall was unheated or had a charcoal brazier, which seem most unlikely. However, it is difficult to identify a possible location for the stack. Timber framing to the whole of the south front and gable walls is unbroken, as it is also for most of the rear wall except for the missing section of wailing to the west, either side of a surviving first floor post. One small but perhaps vital clue is that a joist of the later inserted floor in this area, visible as a ground floor ceiling joist, has a roughly chamfered cut away section on its rear (north) edge for 800mm (2ft 7in), as if cut to fit around a chimneystack. This cut-back joist edge also has traces of blacking, which could be soot-blackening. If there had been an original chimneystack here which was retained in the second phase when the first floor was inserted, the joist could have been cut around it in this manner. However, the width of the cut-back section, at only 800mm (2ft 7in), seems small for a stack, and the stack would also have had to run up past the surviving first floor post. But other possibilities for a stack location seem even more unlikely. The stack might somehow have abutted the timber frame rather than cutting into it, leaving no mark of its position, but this would be unusual. It may have occupied a central position, free standing from the timber structure; but this would be strangely located in the middle of the space, and would seriously compromise the effect of the grand central arched truss. The location as a lateral stack on the rear wall thus seems the most likely, relating quite well to the room plan and the location of the arched truss. The stack at this date would almost certainly have been of timber and daub construction, not brick or stone. A timber chimney of this type, being of slight construction, may not have been long-lived, and would leave little evidence, once removed.

Beyond the partition at the east end of the hall, the cross passage would take up the next bay, with two remaining bays on the ground floor as service rooms – quite generous provision. Above, on the first floor, would be a main chamber with a high open truss (T5), again offset from the centre of the space. The chamber probably had two windows in the front wall and none elsewhere. Although it must have been an impressive room, it seems this first floor chamber was unheated.

**Discussion**

The plan form of the house, if correctly deduced, is unusual in several respects. The principal deviation from the standard house plan of the late medieval period is the absence of the normal private rooms beyond the high end of the hall: the parlour on the ground floor or the principal chamber (solar) on the first floor. Faulkner (1958) identified this ‘end hall’ plan type as common in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, but one would expect a high status house of the late fifteenth century to have a fully developed plan, with rooms at both the high and low ends of the hall. At Hallaton, an extensive low end
houses a spacious first floor chamber of three bays, giving rather more space for service rooms on the ground floor than was usual.

These anomalies lead to consideration of a further question. Could the building, with its lofty open hall, be a non-domestic structure, such as a court house? Such a function might also mean that the hall could have been used without a fireplace, explaining the lack of evidence of this. However, the provision of a fully-floored end points towards domestic use, and there is no surviving documentary evidence for a court house in the village. It seems most likely that the building was primarily domestic in function, but its impressive hall may perhaps have been designed with use as a manorial court or other ceremonial purposes in mind, and this may have influenced the form of the building.

Besides the stub tie beam roof and presumed early lateral chimneystack, the whole character of the building suggests a structure of high status. The close-studding to the walls is of heavy scantling and is used throughout the structure, not only on the main fronts. The whole timber frame has been constructed in a very competent and systematic manner, to a clearly-conceived overall design. One particularly unusual feature of the roof structure is its use of double sets of clasped purlins, instead of the single clasped purlins normally found. It seems likely that this was adopted by the carpenters at Hallaton as it integrated particularly well with the stub tie beam roof, the lower purlin being clasped in the raised collar. Apparently, the carpentry team were not only highly skilled and familiar with leading contemporary forms, such as the stub tie beam roof; they were also able to adapt current technology in innovative ways.

Timber framing of such quality is very rare in the locality, which lies on the western edge of the stone belt of East Leicestershire. The building forms a strong contrast with all the other known houses in the village of this period, which are cruck-built. Several of these cruck buildings survive, of which one, 29 High Street, has been tree-ring dated to 1466–91 (Howard et al., 1989). Though soundly built, all these cruck structures are of straightforward, unsophisticated construction, with many simple lapped joints and side purlins supported on collars. Clearly, while the crucks were the product of local carpenters, 10–14 Churchgate may have been built, or at least designed and supervised, by carpenters accustomed to working on much higher quality buildings, over a far wider geographical area. Their sophisticated imported methods seem to have had little effect on local, more vernacular construction. Crucks continued to be built in the same style for around another century, and quality timber-framing never took root in these parts.

Post-medieval development

The second principal phase which can be distinguished in the building is the insertion of a first floor structure into the open hall, which probably occurred around the end of the sixteenth or early seventeenth century. The fact that there is no similar inserted structure in the eastern half of the building provides further evidence for this part having been floored originally. Although somewhat crudely supported on heavy new posts set inside the line of the existing walls, the new floor is of good quality construction, with two large main beams and a narrower beam to the east. The inserted posts, beams and floor joists have neat chamfers and stops, and the floor is of plaster, not boarded. The eastern beam has evidence at its south end of a wide (1500mm, 4ft 11in) opening, with pintle hinges remaining on the south door jamb from a former door. Just east of this, the wide timber-framed opening with close-studding over, noted above, may date from this phase, or earlier. The close-studded first floor partition near T6 was probably inserted at this phase.

The open hall was thus converted to a large ground floor room of two and a half bays,
with a probable partition and a wide doorway on the east side. Beyond this lay a narrow half bay space, then another wide opening – all in all a rather odd plan form. This must have been influenced by the earlier layout, with the cross passage lying outside the end bay of the hall. The main room would have been one large open space without partitions or the present central chimney stack, which is nineteenth century. It seems the fireplace for the room was against the north wall, as noted above. The stair position for access to the first floor at this period is unclear.

Other features of seventeenth-century date are the canted stone bay window on the front, probably the stone-built ground floor rear wall and perhaps the central stone chimney breast at T4. It is hard to say whether this stone walling is of the same date as the inserted floor, though the absence of chamfer stops to the ceiling beams entering the stone wall suggests the walling may be later. The bay window is a typical regional feature of seventeenth-century stonemasonry, though set rather strangely here against a wall of half timbering. It is of good ironstone ashlar with a base plinth and mullioned windows, ovolo-moulded to the exterior and plain-splayed internally. It serves the ground floor only, with a slated roof, now Welsh slate, but probably of Collyweston slate originally. The rear stone wall is rendered and not visible, except for a strange line of projecting stone ashlar which forms an angled weathering under the line of the surviving first floor timber frame for around 3m (10ft) outside the present back door. The chimney breast at T4 is the only stack of stonework, though it is also built partly in early brick, with later nineteenth-century brickwork added.

Tree-ring dating was also attempted for the inserted first floor structure. Only one individual sample could be dated, and even this lacked a heart/sapwood boundary. The sample spanned the years 1419–1488, and the only firm conclusion possible is that it dates after 1503, pointing to this inserted floor as a later phase.

By the nineteenth century the building had declined greatly in status and was divided into four cottages, each with two main rooms on the ground floor and two on the first. An ironstone date plaque which reads ‘IHD 1856’, high on the east gable, is probably the date of much of this conversion work. Reverend John Henry Dent owned Hacluit’s manor and considerable property in Hallaton in the mid-nineteenth century, and a number of buildings have similar dated plaques showing work he undertook.

Brick chimneystacks were inserted in the western part and at the east end, with an additional flue added in brick to the earlier central stack. Timber-framed walling on both gables and parts of the front and rear walls, especially to the ground floor, was replaced in rendered brickwork. Entry to the second house from the west end was via a doorway in the rear wall which is now a window. The other three entrance doorways are still in situ. To the north-west, the timber-framed walling was lost and the building absorbed into a brick-built structure extending northwards. Various internal partitions were added to create the subdivided structure, including the angled ground floor partition by the stone bay window. The building would now have had four staircases. Two of these survive – one by the south end of T4 was removed in the 1960s, and the location of the fourth is not visible. During the 20th century, the subdivision was reduced to three units (10, 12 and 14 Churchgate), and then in the 1960s to two.

**Manorial history and context**

This account is based on the Victoria County History (Vol. V, 1964, pp.121–133). The manor of Hallaton was held by Geoffrey Alselin in 1086, but came into Crown ownership in 1155. Henry II granted part of the manor to Thomas Bardolf in 1171, thus
creating the two separate main manors, Bardolf’s (later Beaumont’s) manor and Engaine’s (later Broughton’s) manor.

Bardolf’s manor was inherited by William Beaumont in two parts, in 1447 and 1453. William became Viscount Beaumont in 1460 but had to forfeit his property to the new Yorkist king, Edward IV, when he took over the throne in 1461. The manor was restored to William Beaumont in 1485, on the Tudor accession at the end of the Wars of the Roses, but returned to the Crown again on his death in 1507. It remained Crown property until 1588, when it was bought by John Dent, a citizen and salt dealer of London. In 1595, on John Dent’s death, the manor passed to his brother Edward and then his nephew Francis, who sold it to William Street in 1607.

Engaine’s manor was held first by the Greinvill family, and then from the later thirteenth century by the Engaine family until the death of Sir Thomas Engaine in 1367. The manor then passed by the female line until John Broughton succeeded to the manor in 1436. Now known as Broughton’s manor, it descended in the family until the death of another John Broughton in 1518. It then passed to John’s granddaughter Agnes and her husband William Powlet, later Marquess of Winchester. Powlet sold the manor to Richard Oliver, who died possessed of it in 1612. Oliver’s son sold it to William Street, already the owner of Beaumont’s manor, in 1614, thus bringing the two manors together again.

Both manors subsequently descended together. They were held by the Street family until 1713, when they were sold to Benjamin Bewicke, then Vicar of Barrow on Soar (Leics). The estate remained with the Bewicke family into the twentieth century.

The third, apparently subordinate, manor in Hallaton was known as Hacluit’s or the Duchy manor. This was held by John Hacluit in the mid-fourteenth century and passed to John Mitton in 1406. Around the mid-fifteenth century, William Vowe inherited the manor by his wife, and it remained in the Vowe family until 1855.

The principal identified location of a major manor house in the village is at Hallaton Hall, which occupies an island site on the east side of the village, and was the Bewicke family home from 1713 until the mid-nineteenth century. The core of this house is said to date from the early eighteenth century, though with many later additions and alterations. The Victoria County History account states, ‘The site is presumably that of either Bardolf’s or Engaine’s manor-house’ (p.121). Hacluit’s manor house is thought to have been located near the stream to the south of the church (VCH, see also engraving views in Nichols’ History of Leicestershire, 1794) until the Vowes demolished it in 1845 and rebuilt ‘Hallaton Manor House’ on a new site half a mile south-west of the village. VCH gives no indication of any evidence pointing to the ‘lost’ site of Hallaton’s second main manor.

It thus seems likely that 10–14 Churchgate, a building of much higher status than other contemporary houses in the village, is the ‘lost’ manor house of Hallaton, whether Bardolf’s (Beaumont’s) or Engaine’s (Broughton’s). The two manors were of comparable status, as shown by the fact that both Bardolf and Engaine were granted weekly markets and annual fairs in 1284, and that the coats of arms of both families decorate the fourteenth century pinnacle at the north-east corner of the church. If 10–14 Churchgate is of late-fifteenth-century date, it would have been built when the manor was held either by William Beaumont (1485–1507) or John Broughton (d.1518). As important men and extensive property holders, neither of these, of course, would have been resident in Hallaton in person; the manor would have been occupied by a tenant or bailiff.

When William Street bought up both manors and combined them into one in 1614, he would have had a choice of two manor houses to occupy, the Churchgate or later Hallaton Hall site. William Street, it seems, was an up-and-coming commercial farmer,
one of the new breed of men who had started to grow rich under Elizabeth I. In 1617, he provoked a considerable inclosure riot in Hallaton, when he attempted to inclose 20 acres of land as part of his manor (VCH, p.126). When Benjamin Bewicke bought the manors in 1713, it seems he decided to redevelop and rebuild at the Hallaton Hall site, presumably because it was more spacious, being on the edge of the village, than the Churchgate site at the village centre. 10–14 Churchgate, having ceased to be a manor house, gradually declined in status and was later subdivided into cottages, its earlier importance forgotten.

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