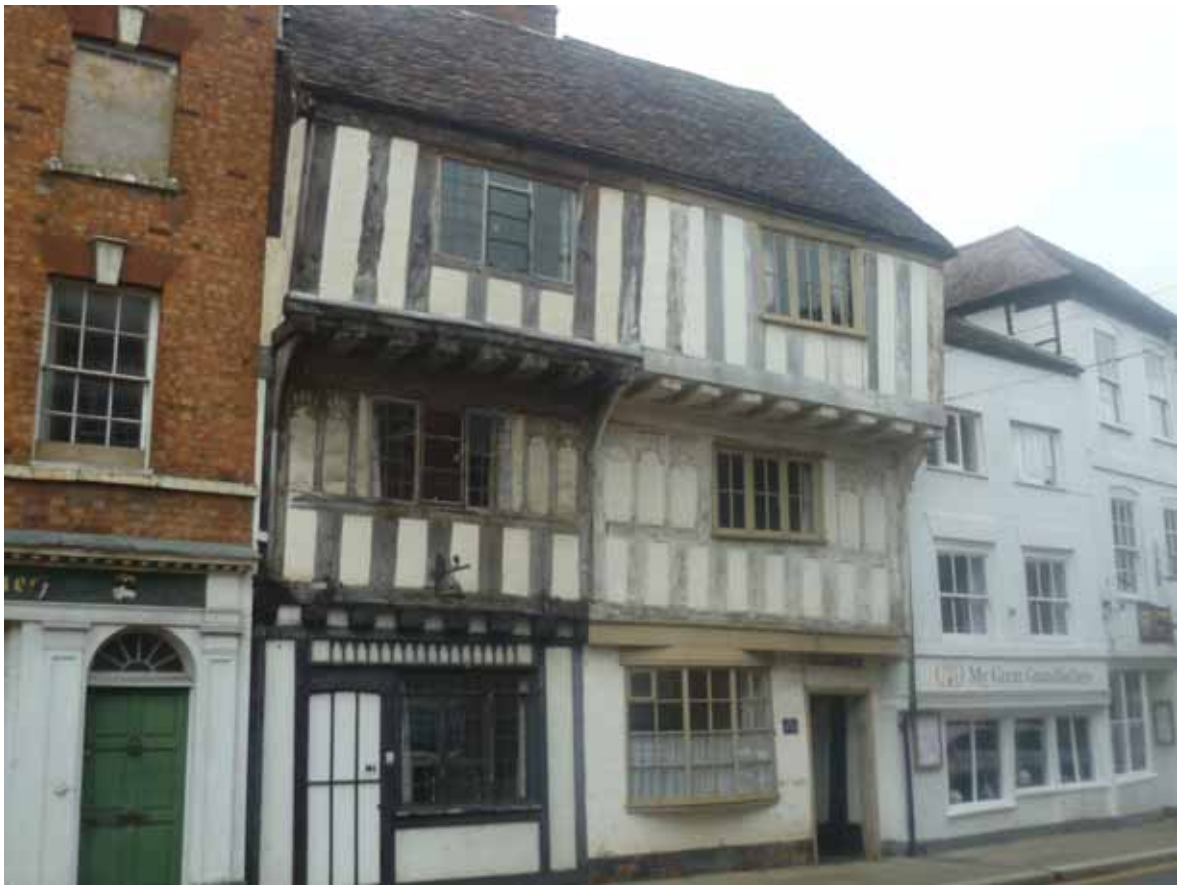
A BRIEF BUILDING RECORD OF 82 CHURCH STREET (CRAIK HOUSE), TEWKESBURY, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Report: GBRG0237



Gloucestershire Building Recording Group
www.buildingarchaeology.org

Figures

INTRODUCTION

Much of the special interest of timber buildings lies in how they differ in form and appearance from region to region, with buildings generally reflecting local tradition and locally derived building materials. Studies in Kent, Hampshire, Surrey and Shropshire have identified datable styles of building, but there has been little study or tree-ring dating in Gloucestershire which also had a strong tradition of timber building.

Typically few buildings survive before the 15th century, although there are marked regional variations in survival. Gloucestershire is particularly fortunate in its surviving examples of early medieval timber-framed buildings (before 1400). The Blackfriars 13th century Dominican friary in Gloucester is the best preserved in Britain and 26 Westgate Street is described as one of the finest timber-framed town houses of its kind. Early-medieval buildings which retain significant early fabric are of particular interest in terms of shedding light on the development, innovative use of structural techniques, and use of buildings.

The Gloucestershire Dendrochronology Project

Gloucester, Tewkesbury and Newent contain clusters of some best surviving, but little known timber-framed buildings in Gloucestershire. The project proposes to focus on these three clusters of buildings with exposed timber-framing. Medieval buildings in Gloucester, Tewkesbury and Newent will be carefully selected, recorded and some accurately tree-ring dated with the aim of providing a summary of how timber-framing developed in Gloucestershire and how key visual features may generally be used in dating such buildings.

The Gloucestershire Dendrochronology Project has secured Lottery Heritage Funding to record and precisely date a number of buildings in Newent through tree-ring dating. All the buildings will be recorded by members of the Gloucestershire Building Recording Group (GBRG). The GBRG is a non-profit organisation founded in 1993 by a group of enthusiasts to advance the understanding of buildings in Gloucestershire (see the website www.buildingarchaeology.com for further details about the group).

To ensure common nomenclature, the Council for British Archaeology (CBA) illustrated glossary of timber-framing terms has been used where possible (Alcock *et al.* 1996). Harris (1978) provides a useful introduction to the study of timber-framed buildings, while Brunskill (2000) details the study of vernacular architecture. All buildings are recorded using photography and a 'Tick-Box' sheet (available at www.buildingarchaeology.co.uk) which is used to summarise the most common and distinctive 'key features'. This information is entered into a purpose-built Building Archaeology Research Database (BARD), a resource then available for further analysis (Moir *et al.* 2012). The Search for Chamfer Stops (Moir and Parker 2020) provides additional information on chamfer stops and can be downloaded from the Gloucestershire Dendrochronology Project website at: www.timber-framed.com.

BUILDING RECORD

82 Church Street (NGR: SO 8915 3258)
An exceptionally fine and well-preserved town house stated to be late C15 or early C16 in date (Historic England List No: 1205867). Numbers 82 and 83 Church Street together form a three-storey building consisting of a 2-bay front range which runs east-west parallel to Church Street (**Photo 1**) with a side passage to the east. To the rear survives a single bay (of a possible originally 2-bay) rear range that runs north-south. The timber trusses of the front range have been labelled from A in south-west corner to C1 in the north-east corner and the rear range from D in south-west corner to F1 in the north-east corner (see APPENDIX I for the plan). Numbers 82 and 83 Church Street are owned separately and only number 82 was accessed and recorded in this report.

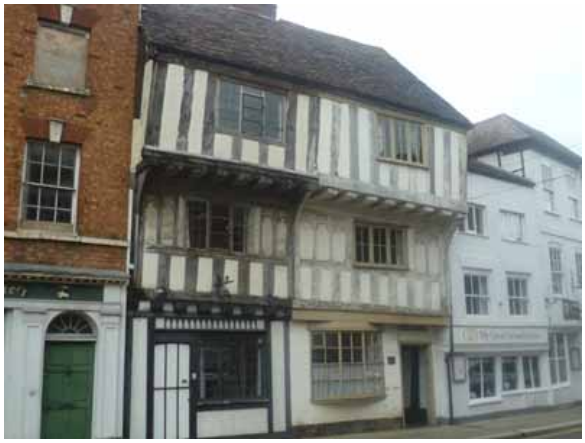


Figure 1: 82 Church Street (left) and 83 Church Street (right)

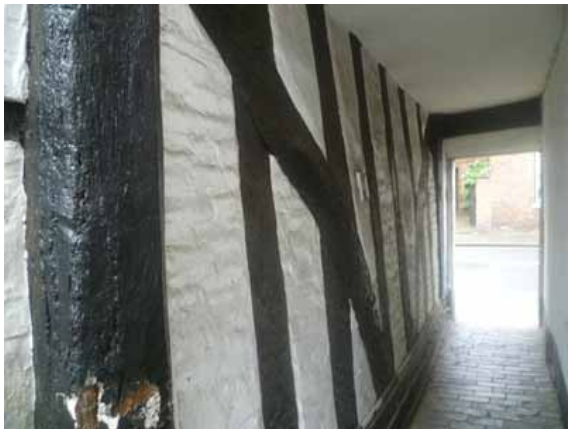


Figure 2: Side passage of 83 Church Street

Front range
This 2-bay, three-storey building is of box-frame construction. The timbers in the roof are lightly smoke-blackened suggesting that the building was partly open-halled or possibly heated with braziers. The roof is gabled (**Figure 3**) and has three studs in the central truss between the collar and tiebeam (**Figure 4**). Both the collars and tiebeam are cranked. The roof is of clasped purlin construction with curved wind braces (**Figure 5)**. The rafters are set flatways and pegged (**Figure 6**).

The externally visible wall-frame consists mainly of close studding, but the front face of the first floor has close studding with a mid rail (**Figure 1**). The gabled ends in the roof are likewise close studded (**Figure 3**), but there are small square panels to the rear. There are large passing curved braces (**Figure 2**) and jowled posts. Both the first and second floors are jettied to the front, with plain jetty brackets which abut buttress shafts (**Figure 7**). The joists are set flatways. Surviving tracery (**Figure 8**) indicates that the first floor above the rail was windowed across the full width of the two bays. The second floor jetty bressumer is moulded and heavily decorated (**Figure 8**).

Internally there are flat (also called straight) stops on the purlins (**Figure 9**). The timbers show signs of being trestle sawn, but no carpenters' marks were observed. The first floor joists were once painted with a black chevron pattern (**Figure 10**).

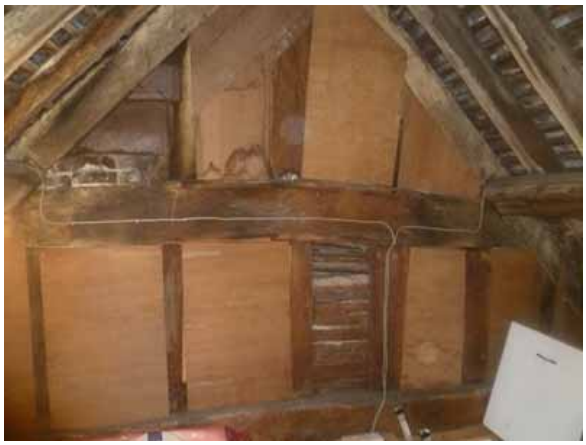


Figure 3: Gabled roof

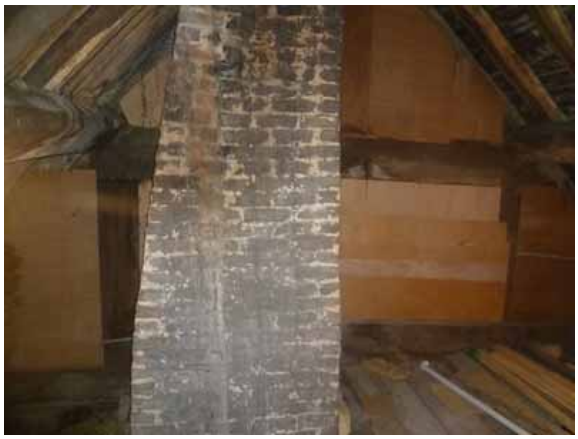


Figure 4: Three queen strut central truss

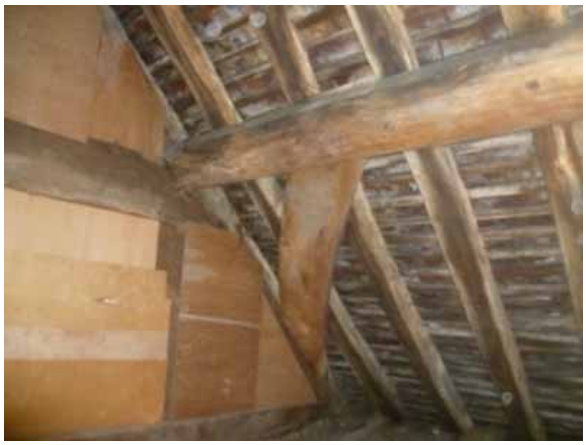


Figure 5: Curved wind braces

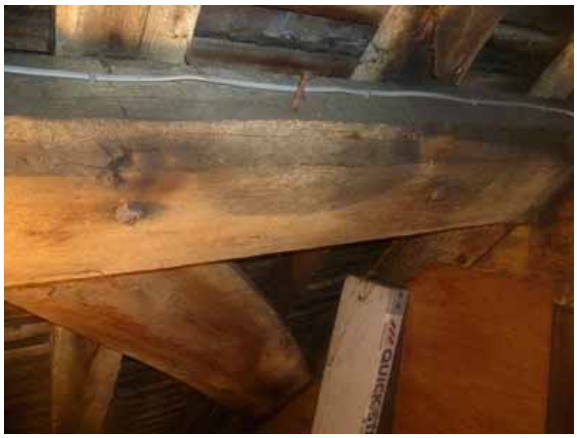


Figure 6: Rafters pegged to purlins

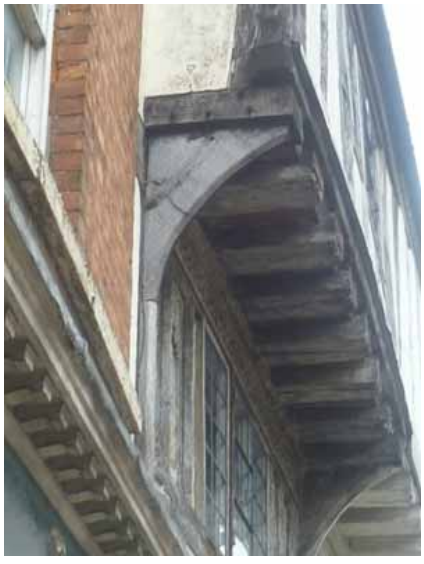


Figure 7: Jetty with simple jetty brackets on buttress shafts

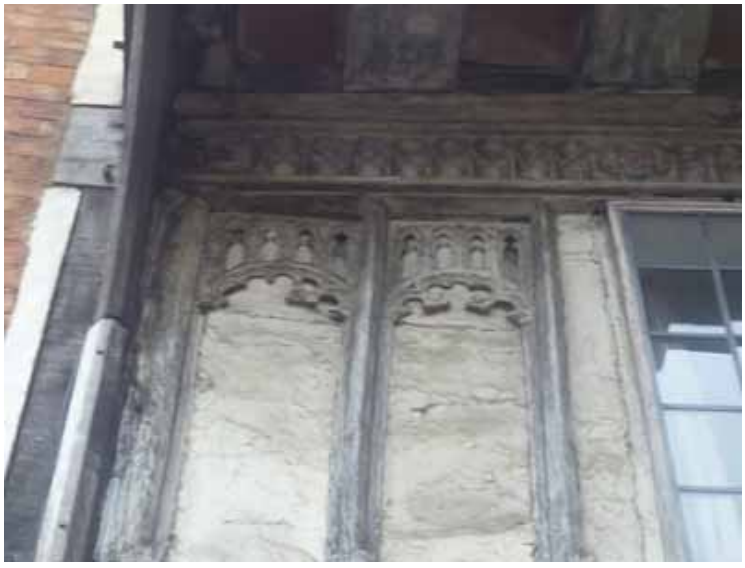


Figure 8: Window tracery with moulded and heavily decorated jetty bressumer above

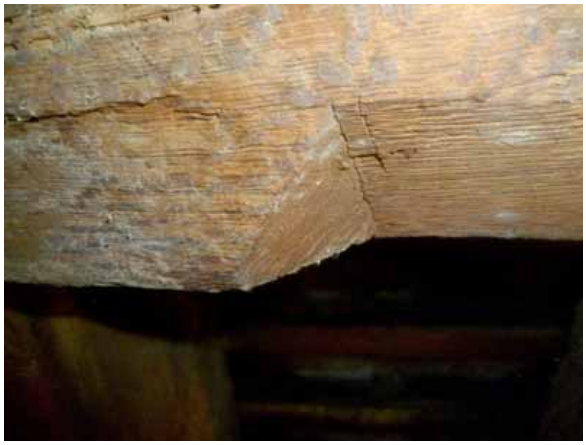


Figure 9: Straight stop

Figure 10: Painted timbers in chevron pattern

Rear range

One bay appears to survive of a possible 2-bay rear range of box-frame construction. The timbers in the roof are heavily smoke-blackened identifying it as an open hall or kitchen (**Figure 11**). The roof is gabled and has a single tier of clasped purlins. The wind-braces are curved and the rafters laid flatways.

No wall-frame was observed, but there is a fine four-centred door (**Figure 12**). The timbers show signs of being trestle sawn, but no carpenters' marks were observed.

The first floor joists have curved step stops, but this floor is thought to be a later insertion.

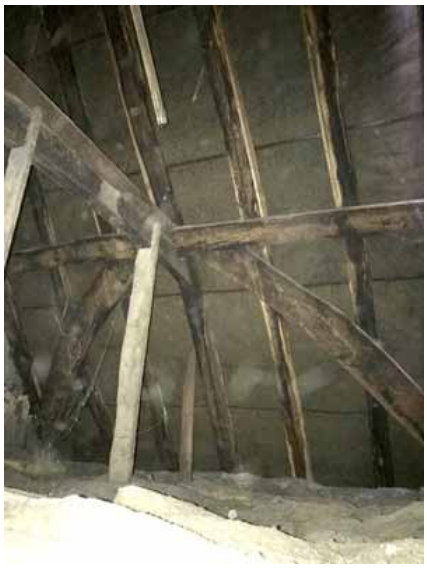


Figure 11: Smoke-blackened roof timbers

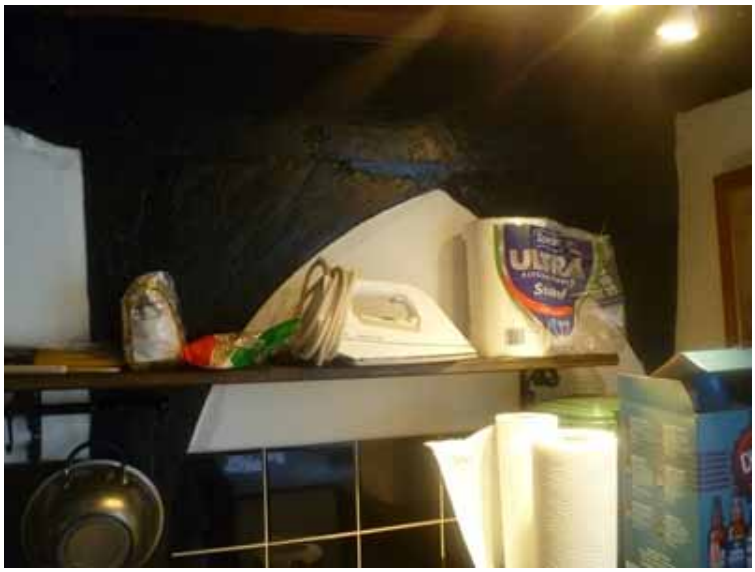


Figure 12: Four-centred door arch

Dendrochronological assessment
All observable timbers were assessed for their potential use in dendrochronological dating. Oak timbers with more than 50 rings, traces of sapwood or bark, and accessibility were the main considerations.

Front range
The majority of timbers observed were oak and contained over 80 rings. Full sapwood was observed to survive on the collar, tiebeam, rafters and some of the ground floor joists. The heartwood sapwood transition was observed on some of the wall-plates and posts. Altogether the timbers in the front range appear to have excellent potential for tree-ring dating.

Rear range
At the time of the assessment the roof timbers were inaccessible. Few timbers could be clearly observed and the dendrochronological potential for tree-ring dating was unclear.

DISCUSSION

Stylistic Dating
It should be borne in mind that developing date ranges for stylistic features in Gloucestershire is in its early stages, and few buildings have so far been dated by tree-ring analysis. Nevertheless, a primary feature in the dating of old buildings is the method of heating, with a well-recognised general progression from open hall to smoke bay/smoke hood to brick chimney. Open halls were the rule until they stopped being built, quite abruptly, in the 1540s.

Front range
The smoke-blackened rafters in the roof identify this as an open hall building and so likely built before the 1540s. Many of the stylistic features including the flatways rafters, curved wind braces, close studding and trestle sawn timbers all indicate that the building was constructed before 1540, but do not help to further narrow down a date for construction.

Figure 13: Number of tree-ring dated stylistic features

Stylistc feature	Pre 1400	1400-24	1425-49	1450-74	1475-99	1500-24	1525-49	1550-74	After 1575	Total
Plain jetty brackets (in Tewkesbury)	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Curved passing braces (in Gloucestershire	0	1	1	0	2	2	0	0	0	6
Flat step stops (in Gloucestershire)	2	0	2	1	0	2	0	0	0	7
Tracery (in Shropshire & Worcestershire)	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3

Examples of the use of curved passing braces or flat step stops (**Figure 13**) have so far been recorded in buildings dated before the 1520s. The use of plain jetty brackets (**Figure 13**) appears to be an early feature and has been recorded on two tree-ring dated buildings in Tewkesbury: 39-45 Church Street (dated 1409) and 66 Church Street (dated 1475). Thee use of tracery also appears to be an early feature and has only been identified on buildings before the 1470s. While previously examples of the three queen struts roof truss were

thought to generally occur after the 1600s, recently an early example has been identified in Herefordshire that is tree-ring dated to 1467. From the stylistic features currently identified a date of construction between 1420s and 1470s is suggested for the front range. Too few stylistic features were recorded for the rear range to establish a date estimate.

CONCLUSIONS

The front range is a 2-bay, three-storey building of box-frame construction. The roof is of clasped purlin construction with curved wind braces and the timbers are lightly smoke-blackened. Externally, the wall-frame consists mainly of close studding, although the first floor has close studding with a mid rail. There is a side passage and both the first and second floors are jettied to the front, with plain jetty brackets. Overall, the stylistic features recorded suggest the front range dates to between the 1420s and 1470s. The timbers of the front range are identified as having good potential to be tree-ring dated.

One bay of a possible once 2-bay rear range was also observed. The timbers in the roof are heavily smoke-blackened suggesting it was an open hall or kitchen, but too few timbers were observed to establish a date estimate, or to identify its dendrochronological potential.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Gloucestershire Building Recording Group (GBRG) would like to express their thanks to the owners for kindly allowing access. This report has been authored by Andy Moir. Alison Goodall kindly edited this report.

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APPENDIX I: PLAN