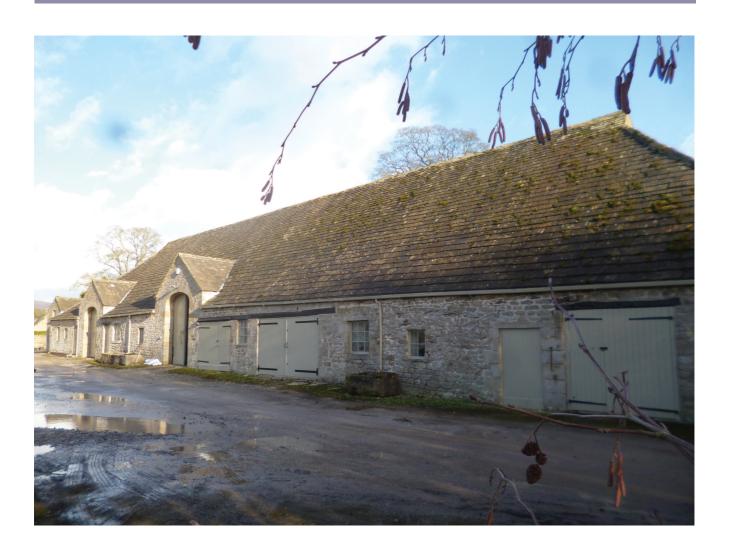


The Great Tythe Barn, Bolton Abbey, North Yorkshire

Tree-ring Analysis of Timbers

Alison Arnold, Robert Howard, and Cathy Tyers

Discovery, Innovation and Science in the Historic Environment



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THE GREAT TYTHE BARN, BOLTON ABBEY, NORTH YORKSHIRE

TRFF-RING ANALYSIS OF TIMBERS

Alison Arnold, Robert Howard, and Cathy Tyers

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SUMMARY

Dendrochronological analysis was undertaken on 42 of the 43 samples obtained from the northern and southern parts of the Great Tythe Barn at Bolton Abbey. This analysis produced a single site chronology comprising 37 samples, being 169 rings long, and dated as spanning AD 1350–1518. Interpretation of the sapwood on the dated samples indicates that the entire barn is the product of a single programme of felling starting in the spring of AD 1518 and finishing in the dormant period during the winter of AD 1518/19. As such, it is clear that the two parts of the barn, in spite of showing some differences in construction, are coeval. Five measured samples remain ungrouped and undated.

CONTRIBUTORS

Alison Arnold, Robert Howard, and Cathy Tyers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CONTACT DETAILS

Alison Arnold and Robert Howard Nottingham Tree-ring Dating Laboratory 20 Hillcrest Grove Sherwood Nottingham NG5 IFT 0115 960 3833 roberthoward@tree-ringdating.co.uk alisonarnold@tree-ringdating.co.uk

Cathy Tyers
Historic England
I Waterhouse Square
I38–I42 Holborn
London ECIN 2ST
0207 973 3000
cathy.tyers@historicengland.org.uk

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INTRODUCTION

The Great Tythe Barn, a Grade II* listed building, is part of the Scheduled Monument of Bolton Priory, the remains of which lie some 350 metres to the north-north-east of the barn (Figs Ta/b/c). The barn has been the subject of preliminary survey and recording undertaken by the Yorkshire Vernacular Buildings Study Group (YVBSG 2004) and is currently the subject of further research. The barn is a substantial, approximately northsouth, double-aisled structure, just over 47 metres long (Figs 2 and 3), formed of kingpost trusses, and is hipped at either end. The trusses support double purlins to each pitch of the roof. The upper principal rafters, above the tiebeams, tend to have a noticeable 'knee' in them near their bases, and there are slightly curved braces between arcade posts and tiebeams, between arcade posts and arcade plates, and between wall posts and aisle ties. There are also wind braces springing from the upper parts of the principal rafters to the ridge beam. Along the length of the barn, mid-way between each king-post truss, the roof is supported by intermediate trusses which consist of pairs of principal rafters linked at their upper ends by a saddle on which stands a stubby upper king-post supporting the ridge. These principals are carried by the arcade plates, with further principals supporting the aisle roof (Figs 4a/b).

The six trusses of the northern end of the barn have been numbered following the original carpenters marks I–VI, from north to south, while the four trusses of the southern end are numbered I–IIII, again from north to south. Although all of the trusses are of the same overall design and construction, there are noticeable differences between the northern six trusses and the four trusses to the southern end of the barn. The four southern trusses tend to utilise timber of larger scantling, with the posts widening towards the top from a cross-section of approximately $458 \, \text{mm} \times 305 \, \text{mm}$ near ground level, to $660 \, \text{mm} \times 305 \, \text{mm}$ near the top. In the northern part of the barn the posts widen less markedly, with the maximum cross-section being $610 \, \text{mm} \times 305 \, \text{mm}$. The braces are up to $400 \, \text{mm}$ broad on the southern trusses, but only $280 \, \text{mm}$ broad on the northern trusses. In addition, the joints in the wider or larger timbers of the southern end all appear to require three pegs to secure them, while the joints in the northern timbers only require two pegs.

Whilst it had been generally accepted that the barn was of sixteenth-century origin, these differences had previously led to speculation as to whether the barn comprised two completely separate phases of construction of different date or whether the two ends were basically coeval but perhaps constructed by two different teams of carpenters.

SAMPLING

An initial programme of dendrochronological analysis, instigated by Arnold Pacey of the YVBSG, was undertaken on the Great Tythe Barn in 2005 (Howard 2007) with the aim of ascertaining the date of construction of the northern and southern sections of the barn. It was hoped that this earlier analysis would resolve the chronological relationship

between the two sections of the barn and establish whether either section was of pre- or post-Dissolution date.

This first programme of analysis produced a total of 17 samples, nine from the northern end and eight from the southern. However, due to limited access at that time, sampling was less than optimal for such a large structure and, whilst the results hinted at a possible break of construction, albeit by only a single year, between the two halves of the barn, the issue was not adequately resolved. In 2014 English Heritage commissioned a programme of additional sampling to inform decisions relating to the future use of the barn. It was hoped that it would be possible to enhance the previous findings and provide further information relating to the extent of the survival of timber associated with the primary construction. Access issues to individual timbers had significantly improved and it was intended that this new programme would target previously inaccessible timbers, particularly those with surviving bark edge. In addition, it was hoped to ascertain when the internal partition wall (on the line of truss I south) was inserted.

Thus, having first reassessed the timbers throughout the barn as to their suitability for tree-ring analysis, and in compliance with the limits set by the Scheduled Monument Consent, an additional 26 samples were obtained from the most appropriate timbers by coring, this giving an overall total for the site of 43 samples. Each sample was given the code BLT-A (for Bolton Abbey, site 'A') and numbered 01-43 (Table 1), those from the earlier programme of analysis being renumbered as appropriate. Nineteen samples (BLT-A01-A19) have been obtained from the six trusses of the northern end of the barn (trusses I-6 north), 22 samples (BLT-A20-A37 and BLT-A40-43) from the timbers of the four trusses of the southern end (trusses I-4 south), and two samples (BLT-A38 and A39) from the only extant timbers of the internal partition wall. It should be noted that a number of timbers selected for sampling had complete sapwood present but that it was in a highly friable state and, unfortunately, could not be kept intact on the core during sampling. In respect of the sampling, it might be noted that while there were many other timbers which could potentially have been sampled (to the intermediate trusses for example), these were often less suitable in either having lower ring numbers, or perhaps not having sapwood or the heartwood/sapwood boundary

Where possible (samples BLT-A38 and BLT-A39 not being shown), the locations of the cores were recorded at the time of sampling on drawings taken from the YVBSG survey, these being shown here as Figure 5a-k. The samples have been located following the schema of these drawings, with individual timbers being then further identified on a north-south or east-west basis as appropriate.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Each of the 43 samples obtained from the Great Tythe Barn was prepared by sanding and polishing. It was seen at this time that one sample, BLT-A38, had less than the 40 rings deemed necessary for possible dating here and it was rejected from this programme of

analysis. The annual growth ring widths of the remaining 42 samples were measured, the data of these measurements being given at the end of this report.

The data of the 42 measured samples were then compared with each other by the Litton/Zainodin grouping procedure (see Appendix). This comparative process resulted in the production of a single group comprising 37 samples being formed, the samples crossmatching with each other as shown in Figure 6. The 37 samples were combined at their indicated offset positions to form site chronology BLTASQ01, this having an overall length of 169 rings.

Site chronology BLTASQ01 was then compared to an extensive corpus of reference material for oak, this indicating a consistent and repeated match with a series of these when the date of its first ring is AD 1350 and the date of its last measured ring is AD 1518. The evidence for this dating is given in Table 2.

Site chronology BLTASQ01 was also compared to the five remaining measured but ungrouped samples, but there was no further satisfactory cross-matching. These five ungrouped samples were then compared individually to the full corpus of reference data, but again there was no satisfactory cross-matching and they must all, therefore, remain undated.

INTERPRETATION

Northern trusses 1-6

Of the 17 dated samples from the northern part of the barn, five retain complete sapwood, this meaning that they each have the last growth produced by the tree represented before it was felled. In each case this last growth ring is dated AD 1518. In one instance this outermost growth ring appears to be complete, comprising spring wood and summer wood (Fig 7a), and would thus appear to indicate that the timber represented was felled during the dormant period in the winter of AD 1518/19. The remaining four samples all have spring wood but very little, if any, summer wood (Figs 7b-f) suggesting that the timbers represented were felled during the summer of AD 1518 before the dormant season set in. It should, however, be noted that the outermost rings on sample BLT-A08 are all very narrow and thus it is possible that its outermost ring is complete and hence it could also have been felled during the dormant period in winter AD 1518/19,

The amount of sapwood, including the known sapwood amounts lost during coring, and the relative position the heartwood/sapwood boundary on the other nine samples from the northern end of the barn, makes it very likely that the trees they represent were felled in, or around, AD 1518 as well. As, may be seen, on Table 1 and Figure 6, the heartwood/sapwood boundary of this entire group of dated timbers from the northern section varies by only 12 years, from relative position 133 (AD 1482) on sample BLT-

A03, to relative position 145 (AD 1494) on samples BLT-A07, BLT-A10, and BLT-A11. Such a small variation is indicative of a group of timbers representing a single felling programme. The remaining three samples have no trace of sapwood but the level of cross-matching within this group of timbers from the northern end of the barn, as well as possible same-tree matches between BLT-A02 and BLT-A19 (t=10.3) and BLT-A17 and BLT-A18 (t=12.2), strongly suggests that they are coeval and hence part of the same programme of felling.

Southern trusses I-4

Of the 20 dated samples from the southern part of the barn, three also retain complete sapwood. In two instances, the outermost complete and measured ring dates to AD 1517 but partial spring wood is present for the following year (Figs 7f and 7g) indicating that the timbers represented were felled during the spring of AD 1518. The outermost growth ring of the remaining sample appears to be complete (Fig 7h) and dates to AD 1518 and would thus appear to indicate that the timber represented was felled during the dormant period in winter AD 1518/19.

The amount of sapwood, including the known sapwood amounts lost during coring, and the relative position of the heartwood/sapwood boundary of the other 17 samples from the southern section, again, makes it likely that the timbers they represent were also part of the same felling programme. As may again be seen on Table I and Figure 6, the heartwood/sapwood boundary on this entire group of dated timbers from the southern section varies, with one exception, by 17 years from relative position 139 (AD 1488) on sample BLT-A36, to relative position 156 (AD 1505) on sample BLT-A33. Such a variation is again indicative of a group of timbers representing a single programme of felling. The exception is BLT-A41 which has a slightly earlier heartwood/sapwood boundary dating to AD 1481, but this is one of the three dated timbers with bark edge.

DISCUSSION

The timbers from the northern and southern section of the barn are clearly coeval and represent a single programme of felling but there are differences between the timbers in each section which suggests that they were derived from different, albeit relatively local, woodland sources.

The 17 dated samples from the northern section cross-match with each other very well, with a number of values in excess of t=5.0, t=6.0, and t=7.0 being seen. Such values would suggest that the source trees were growing close to each other in a discrete area of woodland. Indeed the cross-matching between some samples, as indicated above, would suggest that some pairs of timbers may be derived from single trees. The 20 dated samples from the southern section, on the other hand, appear more disparate and cross-match with each other slightly less well, with fewer values in excess of t=5.0 being seen and no potential same-tree matches. The cross-matching between the dated samples

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from each section is generally relatively lower suggesting different sources were being used for timbers from either end of the barn. In respect of the location of the source woodlands, it may be noted from Table 2 that, although site chronology BLTASQ01 and its two sub-sequences, representing the two sections of the barn, have been compared to reference chronologies from all parts of England, the highest levels of similarity are found with other sites in northern England, particularly those elsewhere in Yorkshire. This suggests that the dated timbers used throughout the Great Tythe Barn are from relatively local woodland sources.

The rate of growth and ages of the trees used in the two sections of the barn show some overall differences (Fig 8). Although the number of rings present in the cores is under-representative of the age of the tree at felling it can be seen that the trees used in the southern section tend to be younger and faster grown when compared to the more variable ages and growth rates of the trees used in the northern section. This again points to the use of different woodland sources.

Also notable is the difference in date of the average heartwood/sapwood boundary for the two sections of the barn with timbers in the northern section tending to have earlier heartwood/sapwood boundary dates than those from the southern section (Fig 9; Table I). The average heartwood/sapwood boundary ring of the northern samples is dated AD I489, while on the southern samples the average heartwood/sapwood boundary is dated to AD I497. In the absence of any complete sapwood this could have led to the suggestion that the northern section potentially pre-dated the southern section by a few years which is clearly not the case as the timbers used in both sections appear to represent a single programme of felling.

CONCLUSION

Tree-ring analysis of 42 measured samples from the Great Tythe Barn at Bolton Abbey has produced a single site chronology, BLTASQ01, comprising 37 samples and being 169 rings long. These rings are dated as spanning the years AD 1350–1518. The dated samples all represent timbers associated with the main primary construction of the barn; unfortunately it was not possible to date the only measured sample from the internal partition.

The analysis undertaken shows that those dated timbers with complete sapwood were felled over a period spanning a maximum of just under a year but potentially a minimum of around six months. The earliest definite felling identified is in spring AD 1518 with the latest felling identified being in the winter of AD 1518/19. The southern section of the barn has timbers felled in spring AD 1518 and winter AD 1518/19, whereas the northern section of the barn has timbers felled during summer AD 1518 and winter AD 1518/19. As such, it is clear is that the two parts of the barn are coeval. The results also indicate that all of the timbers were derived from local woodlands but that the source of timber for the two sections of the barn appears to be different.

The presence of undated samples is, however, a frequent feature of tree-ring analysis, and in this respect the Great Tythe Barn is slightly unusual in having such a high number of its measured samples, 88%, successfully dated, particularly when considering that some parts of North Yorkshire are problematic. Despite having sufficient rings for reliable dating, five measured samples, BLT-A09, BLT-A15, BLT-A34, BLT-A35, and BLT-A39, remain ungrouped and undated, although none of them show any distortion or disturbance to their growth which might make cross-matching and dating difficult.

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TABLES

Table 1: Details of tree-ring samples from the Great Tythe Barn, Bolton Abbey, North Yorkshire

Sample	Sample location	Total rings	Sapwood	First measured	Last heartwood	Last measured
number			rings*	ring date AD	ring date AD	ring date AD
	North barn, trusses 1–6					
BLT-A01	Brace to tiebeam from east arcade post, truss I	107	no h/s	1378		1484
BLT-A02	Brace to tiebeam from west arcade post, truss I	99	no h/s	1371		1469
BLT-A03	East arcade post, truss 2	124	36C	1395	1482	1518
BLT-A04	Brace to tiebeam from east arcade post, truss 2	87	h/s	1403	1489	1489
BLT-A05	Brace to tiebeam from west arcade post, truss 2	105	25C	1414	1493	1518
BLT-A06	East arcade post, truss 3	68	h/s	1420	1487	1487
BLT-A07	Brace to tiebeam from west arcade post, truss 3	115	24C	1404	1494	1518
BLT-A08	Tiebeam, truss 4	136	30C	1383	1488	1518
BLT-A09	West arcade post, truss 5	88	h/s			
BLT-A10	Tiebeam, truss 3	112	24C	1407	1494	1518
BLT-A11	West principal rafter, truss 3	90	3	1408	1494	1497
BLT-A12	East arcade post, truss 4	136	21+5mm ?c	1374	1488	1509
BLT-A13	East principal rafter, truss 4	67	h/s+30mm c	1418	1484	1484
BLT-A14	West arcade post, truss 4	113	9	1383	1486	1495
BLT-A15	Brace to tiebeam from east arcade post, truss 4	73	h/s			
BLT-A16	Brace to tiebeam from east arcade post, truss 5	58	h/s	1433	1490	1490
BLT-A17	Brace to tiebeam from west arcade post, truss 5	60	no h/s	1413		1472
BLT-A18	Brace to tiebeam from west arcade post, truss 6	89	h/s	1397	1485	1485
BLT-A19	South brace to west arcade plate from truss 6	91	h/s	1397	1487	1487

Table 1: continued

Sample number	Sample location	Total rings	Sapwood rings*	First measured ring date AD	Last heartwood ring date AD	Last measured ring date AD
	South barn trusses 1–4					
BLT-A20	South brace to east arcade plate, truss I	82	h/s	1421	1502	1502
BLT-A21	King post, truss 2	97	2	1408	1502	1504
BLT-A22	Tiebeam, truss 2	69	h/s	1436	1504	1504
BLT-A23	East aisle tie, truss 3	127	h/s	1364	1490	1490
BLT-A24	West lower purlin, truss 3–4	62	17	1445	1489	1506
BLT-A25	North brace, to east arcade plate, truss 4	83	19C	1435	1498	1517
BLT-A26	East arcade post, truss 4	91	h/s	1403	1493	1493
BLT-A27	West arcade post, truss 4	83	h/s	1415	1497	1497
BLT-A28	West arcade post, truss I	69	8	1439	1499	1507
BLT-A29	East arcade post, truss 2	82	h/s	1422	1503	1503
BLT-A30	West arcade post, truss 2	96	12+10mm	1417	1500	1512
BLT-A31	East arcade post, truss 3	86	20+2mm	1431	1496	1516
BLT-A32	West arcade post, truss 3	86	4+20mm	1420	1501	1505
BLT-A33	Brace to tiebeam from west arcade post, truss 3	77	2	1431	1505	1507
BLT-A34	South brace to west arcade plate, truss 3	48	7+10mm			
BLT-A35	East rafter, intermediate truss 3A	72	h/s			
BLT-A36	East lower purlin, truss 3–4	53	4	1440	1488	1492
BLT-A37	South hip purlin	53	h/s+20mm	1437	1489	1489
BLT-A40	East principal rafter, truss 2	93	17C	1425	1500	1517
BLT-A41	King post, truss 3	168	36C	1350	1481	1517
BLT-A42	Tiebeam, truss 3	89	h/s+15mm c	1416	1504	1504
BLT-A43	West plate, aisle post truss 4 to south wall	84	h/s+20mm c	1420	1503	1503
	Partition wall timbers					
BLT-A38	Cross wall, units 5–7	nm				
BLT-A39	Aisle wall, units 3–5	83	9			

h/s = the heartwood/sapwood ring is the last ring on the sample; C = complete sapwood is retained on the sample; c = complete sapwood on timber, but all or part lost from sample in coring; nm = rings not measured: mm = millimetres of core lost during sampling

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Table 2: Results of the cross-matching of site sequence BLTASQ01 and relevant reference chronologies when the first-ring date is AD 1350 and the last-ring date is AD 1518

Reference chronology	Span of chronology				Reference
		BLTASQ01	BLTA-N	BLTA-S	
Headlands Hall, Liversedge, West Yorkshire	AD 1388-1487	11.4	8.7	11.4	(Tyers 2001)
Elland Old Hall, West Yorkshire	AD 1372-1574	10.0	9.7	7.8	(Hillam 1984)
Nether Levens Hall, Kendal, Cumbria	AD 1395-1541	9.8	8.5	8.1	(Howard <i>et al</i> 1991)
Red Gables Cottage, Crigglestone, West Yorkshire	AD 1384-1590	9.8	8.5	7.3	(Arnold and Howard 2013 unpubl)
Horbury Hall, Wakefield, West Yorkshire	AD 1368-1473	9.2	8.2	7.5	(Howard <i>et al</i> 1992)
Whalley Abbey, Whalley, Lancashire	AD 1362-1559	9.0	6.2	8.1	(Arnold and Howard 2015)
Ordsall Hall, Salford, Greater Manchester	AD 1385-1512	8.7	7.3	7.4	(Howard <i>et al</i> 1994)
Hall Broom Farm, Dungworth, Derbyshire	AD 1382-1495	8.7	7.5	7.8	(Howard <i>et al</i> 1993)

FIGURES

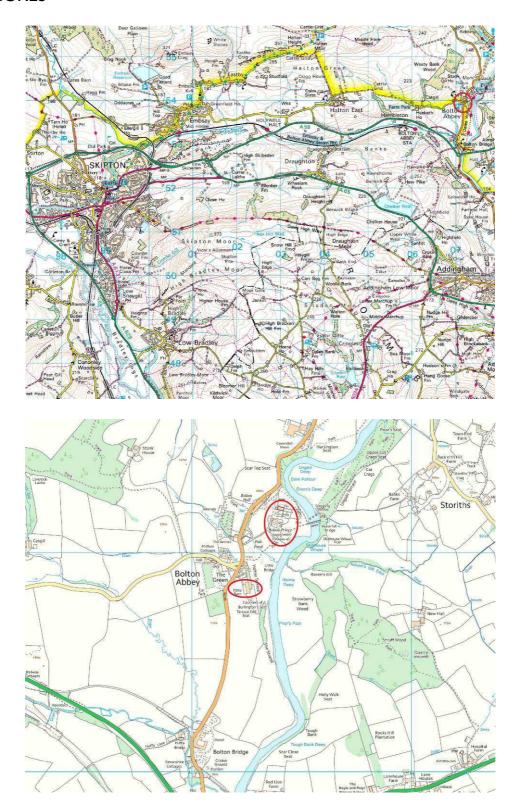


Figure 1a/b: Maps to show the location of Bolton Abbey (top) and the Barn and Priory (bottom). © Crown Copyright and database right 2015. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100024900



Figure 1c: Map to show the detailed location of the Barn. © Crown Copyright and database right 2015. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100024900

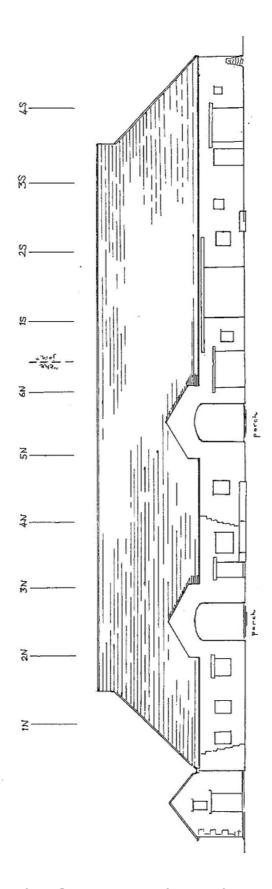


Figure 2: Exterior elevation of the Great Tythe Barn from the front or west (after Yorkshire Vernacular Buildings Study Group)

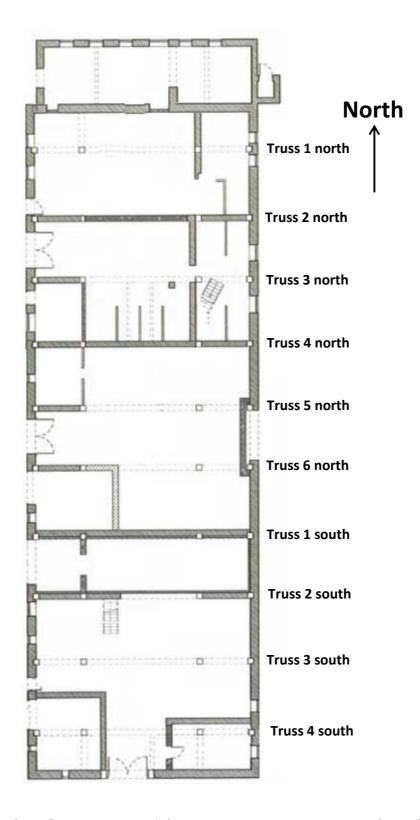
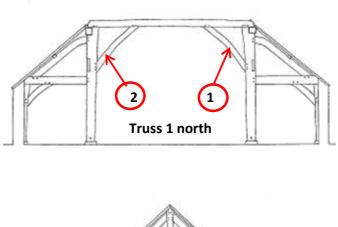


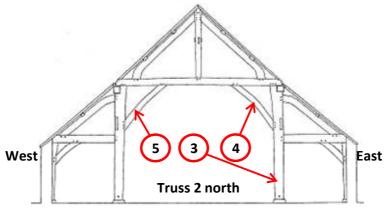
Figure 3: Plan of the Great Tythe Barn (after Yorkshire Vernacular Buildings Study Group)





Figure 4a/b: Views of the trusses (photographs Robert Howard)





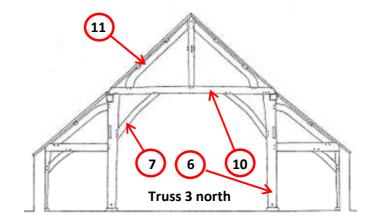


Figure 5a-c: Sections through the trusses to help locate sampled timbers (after Yorkshire Vernacular Buildings Study Group)

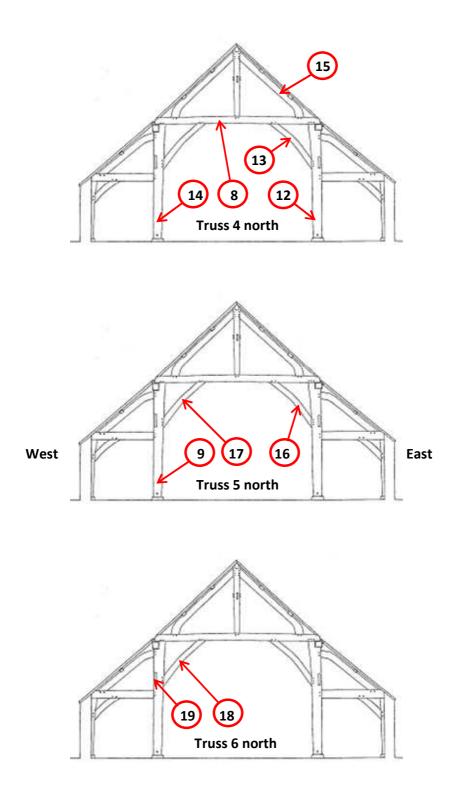
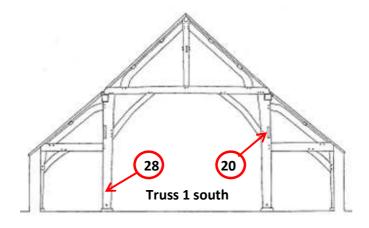


Figure 5d-f: Sections through the trusses to help locate sampled timbers (after Yorkshire Vernacular Buildings Study Group)



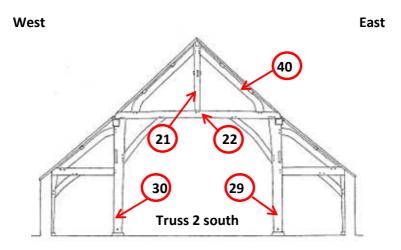
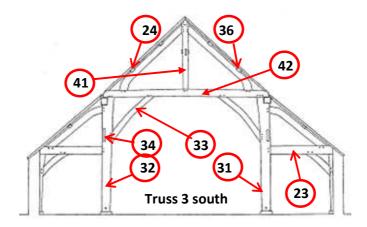
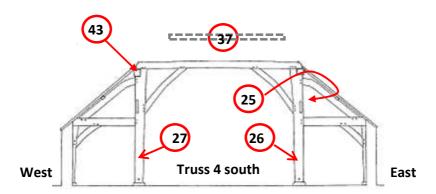


Figure 5g/h: Sections through the trusses to help locate sampled timbers (after Yorkshire Vernacular Buildings Study Group)





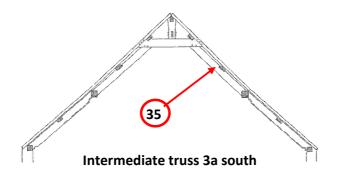


Figure 5i-k: Sections through the trusses to help locate sampled timbers (after Yorkshire Vernacular Buildings Study Group)

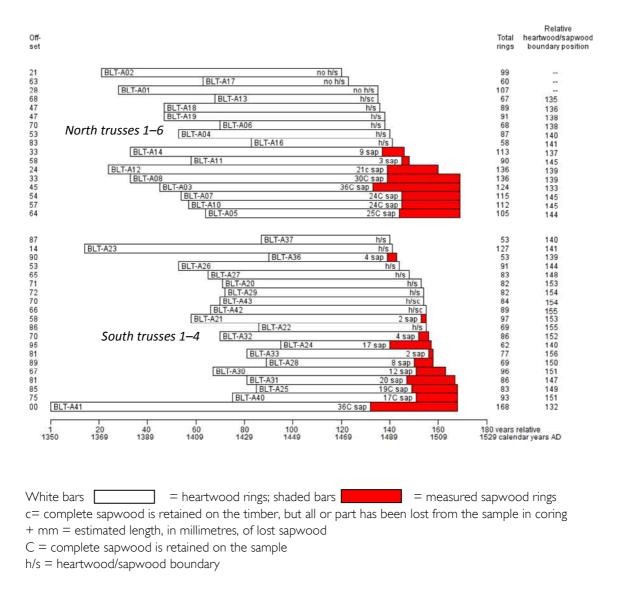


Figure 6: Bar diagram of the samples in site chronology BLTASQ01 sorted by sample location



Figure 7a-f: Cores with sapwood complete to bark edge (photographs Ian Tyers)



Figure 7g-h: Cores with sapwood complete to bark edge (photographs Ian Tyers)

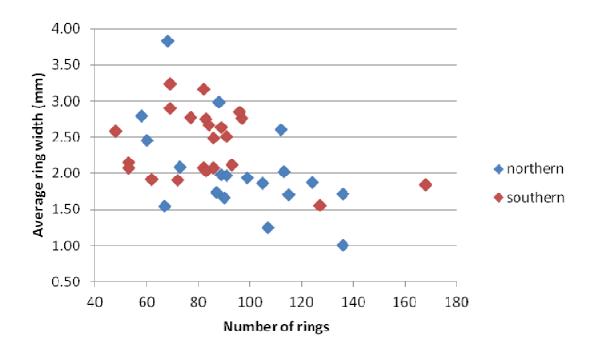


Figure 8: Diagram illustrating the differences in average ring width and ring sequence length between the northern and southern sections of the barn

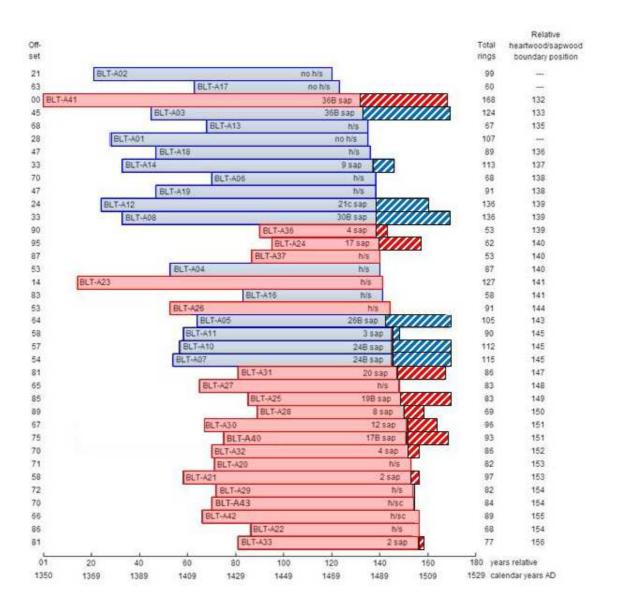


Figure 9: Bar diagram of the samples in site chronology BLTASQ01 sorted by heartwood/sapwood boundary date with the northern section samples in blue and the southern section samples in red

DATA OF MEASURED SAMPLES

Measurements in 0.01mm units

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BLT-A01A 107
117 191 176 169 193 170 165 113 174 156 197 218 180 172 216 175 156 166 157 130
119 143 183 147 127 153 179 174 177 131 162 146 144 153 182 141 134 131 92 108
163 92 183 146 79 117 134 119 104 88 86 111 94 92 111 88 82 124 74 86
71 65 77 74 64 69 78 76 73 100 88 73 96 92 123 97 115 112 137 126
114 129 129 99 119 106 95 88 107 119 114 133 135 135 135 123 115 142 132 113
94 95 101 111 118 112 111
BLT-A01B 107
115 180 163 170 178 185 155 146 159 169 198 210 175 181 182 185 162 173 169 135
125 | 30 | 91 | 144 | 16 | 153 | 167 | 177 | 175 | 12 | 153 | 149 | 138 | 150 | 187 | 146 | 146 | 125 | 110 | 120
164 85 177 140 100 137 127 128 101 81 92 114 103 87 108 95 84 120 62 87
75 57 70 78 64 89 82 70 73 110 86 81 93 93 116 107 109 109 127 134
110 129 125 106 118 103 145 91 102 119 107 129 138 137 134 125 106 134 141 107
98 96 99 114 117 112 110
BLT-A02A 99
378 347 185 237 217 210 177 291 271 187 174 164 180 267 186 217 253 220 254 183
212 260 226 171 194 227 179 182 178 233 178 116 185 171 202 270 142 163 249 219
212 224 195 200 168 130 177 214 133 218 189 138 127 182 141 135 170 201 195 226
188 331 165 217 238 245 210 186 154 150 155 106 132 226 213 148 192 173 173 181
189 214 133 181 169 211 228 167 180 202 147 140 116 102 100 160 194 211 221
BI T-A02B 99
407 351 200 227 206 215 205 260 276 175 184 223 182 265 189 217 235 237 255 206
189 278 225 169 190 225 174 185 170 246 183 143 181 179 193 273 138 168 254 218
217 212 207 190 181 146 196 195 137 204 196 139 132 170 146 131 173 198 201 234
181 347 159 200 232 254 209 193 137 168 152 125 128 228 218 160 181 190 170 175
173 203 146 178 171 194 224 172 196 210 145 140 121 90 106 159 206 183 226
BLT-A03A 124
401 466 335 379 316 367 346 322 334 355 306 425 252 382 400 298 294 376 309 249
300 | 78 273 244 | 154 460 226 220 228 228 267 253 244 268 300 | 199 222 319 | 136 243
192 181 172 188 205 143 173 124 178 180 213 142 189 154 175 145 138 198 127 113
134 178 162 112 162 145 150 171 194 149 135 215 201 205 197 182 203 96 128 81
183 171 128 119 150 133 145 89 137 103 129 140 178 78 74 59 64 61 53 79
82 | 137 89 | 128 | 102 | 103 82 | 119 | 144 | 164 | 101 | 118 | 124 98 | 100 | 134 | 106 90 95 | 100
68 97 115 105
BLT-A03B 124
399 476 326 367 317 366 332 325 330 371 283 430 272 364 375 302 293 388 282 242
250 | 188 | 268 | 220 | 161 | 450 | 248 | 246 | 218 | 260 | 265 | 243 | 253 | 253 | 315 | 209 | 223 | 323 | 140 | 231 |
200 177 164 196 206 140 172 120 181 178 213 139 190 151 176 150 132 203 118 99
135 175 158 115 165 132 151 154 207 146 137 230 209 218 177 197 211 81 134 87
187 159 139 117 135 146 156 71 140 128 125 134 175 81 78 59 53 62 59 86
79 127 106 110 112 110 74 115 166 147 105 131 124 102 95 118 113 82 102 93
75 95 116 108
BLT-A04A 87
247 297 220 231 164 206 295 220 200 238 194 257 162 195 239 252 133 269 208 161
206 | 155 249 225 202 | 155 219 | 192 267 265 | 178 | 176 | 150 226 | 169 | 122 | 148 | 164 | 141 | 65
177 | 158 | 14 | 76 | 104 | 13 | 160 | 152 | 184 | 224 | 134 | 15 | 174 | 169 | 167 | 120 | 193 | 150 | 189 | 155
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120 105 91 115 155 163 189 178 127 138 118 149 172 154 152 129 139 165 178 160

133 164 222 148 192 163 141

BLT-A04B 87

222 291 235 223 151 199 282 207 192 244 196 258 173 189 242 272 125 271 207 162 212 147 244 227 192 153 226 203 258 281 171 171 153 240 179 129 158 163 142 68 175 143 143 79 100 146 151 167 209 207 103 167 159 178 177 128 192 164 95 139 125 118 79 110 173 150 190 181 120 136 121 143 175 143 163 115 140 153 159 165 135 167 219 158 190 157 146

BLT-A05A 105

275 318 276 305 278 221 359 350 252 321 292 355 344 370 306 324 300 265 319 283 271 281 235 178 206 198 206 193 159 173 188 154 159 198 133 164 150 165 153 151 127 150 157 160 135 151 147 131 165 161 114 103 72 73 140 131 161 154 124 146 162 214 223 180 153 217 170 224 108 155 132 205 191 226 163 155 163 155 120 165 126 113 111 121 137 142 118 109 128 108 129 134 158 156 142 161 187 215 160 197 179 149 145 148 155

BLT-A05B 105

300 310 267 302 295 218 360 346 255 317 299 376 333 376 305 319 307 275 329 268 285 279 239 184 215 189 203 200 135 179 164 124 121 206 128 164 160 162 160 150 135 145 145 164 118 164 118 142 169 140 120 86 79 77 139 143 149 164 120 152 162 212 224 165 183 186 177 213 127 156 134 179 193 240 162 153 156 161 131 162 131 109 100 129 153 143 100 127 116 117 125 134 158 144 141 208 191 206 128 196 171 143 145 147 150

BLT-A06A 68

709 522 575 560 500 593 446 399 464 538 581 548 598 457 458 517 606 446 452 414 448 476 325 447 472 445 452 526 484 490 468 363 462 312 421 433 367 388 382 301 362 360 381 339 320 281 353 314 458 260 220 219 155 163 164 234 216 148 205 158 182 234 142 156 286 253 257 336

BLT-A06B 68

704 519 576 544 514 569 427 434 444 586 536 567 565 434 492 536 589 454 462 406 429 503 312 454 486 453 459 542 466 489 459 379 466 325 378 434 381 404 380 301 372 356 371 340 328 277 377 303 466 293 212 231 165 156 168 218 231 136 178 184 180 231 150 174 281 251 257 328

BLT-A07A 115

339 324 283 218 175 148 146 142 207 215 180 201 168 223 182 155 299 165 125 186 182 223 194 193 174 159 167 268 225 155 147 200 159 222 163 154 103 209 138 208 180 168 129 188 187 219 210 199 217 164 173 194 181 160 160 200 208 133 210 171 95 131 154 132 175 153 233 192 137 151 141 228 183 126 156 149 169 186 103 96 83 174 164 294 222 191 214 125 97 122 155 154 209 133 147 141 199 139 158 127 144 110 159 178 137 113 133 136 75 82 137 97 128 94 75

BLT-A07B 115

345 320 288 221 177 153 158 153 210 217 176 202 179 220 183 169 306 167 133 189 182 220 182 181 162 156 163 279 234 166 156 212 152 237 154 159 89 206 139 212 168 173 117 192 162 235 204 209 223 160 173 196 177 168 167 199 204 137 205 175 100 132 142 127 188 156 231 201 123 153 129 234 188 132 154 142 169 195 87 106 70 185 162 300 205 209 214 112 103 128 158 157 217 131 153 146 212 122 156 150 131 101 168 181 144 114 112 151 68 105 134 99 130 93 70

BLT-A08A 136

208 268 209 260 251 229 202 181 199 217 237 228 186 237 184 158 166 243 235 156 181 129 154 154 135 163 191 173 165 125 146 96 115 114 118 116 99 129 139 108 96 113 107 107 91 80 105 118 94 120 79 119 86 74 69 94 73 72 79 72

85 83 96 73 83 52 82 63 61 71 51 52 56 63 67 59 57 59 70 60

51 47 58 51 75 59 54 58 62 49 51 64 63 65 57 54 58 53 53 57

80 63 64 63 89 69 58 86 41 57 76 52 72 71 56 72 59 48 65 45

57 68 58 58 64 72 71 57 57 55 58 42 56 63 49 67

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BLT-A08B 136
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206 269 217 283 252 229 200 176 192 226 234 233 191 239 178 159 161 239 234 157 180 140 151 159 130 169 197 191 148 117 157 110 103 122 118 111 105 126 142 105 100 104 115 107 93 79 98 139 92 109 87 121 79 73 76 87 77 77 72 73

98 84 93 71 81 60 82 59 67 56 56 56 54 62 67 62 53 55 69 68

53 42 57 50 75 54 51 65 59 46 57 56 70 59 59 56 53 65 51 62

67 62 64 70 78 71 65 76 54 53 75 60 64 61 57 75 51 62 62 56

57 62 61 56 68 75 68 62 55 57 49 44 58 65 50 69

BI T-A09A 88

480 265 459 329 477 450 462 388 377 515 382 455 421 332 389 357 414 424 372 458 429 389 280 207 211 198 310 348 219 398 212 197 273 226 344 320 213 195 261 370 386 319 263 349 382 356 357 224 125 176 365 251 252 211 212 229 279 227 339 323 245 338 383 443 241 229 309 280 182 198 130 177 129 151 166 215 169 164 145 231 314 282 218 174 241 303 265 252

BLT-A09B 88

509 384 492 344 525 476 483 374 432 500 362 465 422 369 384 378 403 435 381 434 406 387 290 204 223 214 293 333 235 406 208 213 279 245 360 269 236 200 259 365 393 324 250 359 369 364 353 225 112 192 364 265 250 203 225 251 282 246 334 317 225 377 366 394 245 235 320 278 183 238 131 187 132 163 160 231 179 184 137 228 308 278 215 188 243 312 256 249

BLT-A10A 112

409 409 529 545 517 491 527 478 453 393 447 397 313 513 531 434 503 481 460 379 459 435 412 350 348 459 267 321 375 389 352 395 234 310 271 265 243 296 369 259 358 253 297 259 271 250 196 223 208 197 242 173 196 208 186 208 227 159 162 180 191 197 190 221 198 178 171 149 174 191 185 168 175 118 167 132 132 133 181 130 157 178 142 171 146 178 160 143 182 185 159 178 172 194 103 73 53 99 142 192 220 91 156 184 195 168 172 138 137 140 120 142

BLT-A10B 112

391 424 526 554 512 519 534 475 460 400 446 397 333 538 562 412 507 489 460 379 476 416 425 357 365 473 282 310 367 357 377 388 236 310 265 268 268 293 376 258 344 253 295 241 299 253 189 229 186 209 246 182 192 212 187 222 225 165 168 211 212 199 181 215 218 156 166 157 170 191 177 161 159 129 169 133 126 126 162 167 172 181 128 163 149 156 180 128 185 193 187 137 160 153 196 121 143 191 143 213 223 97 148 179 187 171 169 145 142 131 118 139

BLT-AIIA 90

227 223 250 222 282 211 182 192 147 190 196 150 282 171 170 119 147 103 64 85 155 186 157 142 164 113 135 169 210 138 202 90 144 127 139 147 167 150 160 185 146 160 168 137 234 135 132 143 171 139 124 131 194 235 200 203 112 134 192 159 223 165 256 181 129 198 167 216 225 174 165 112 180 188 103 176 167 162 190 271 218 172 117 143 99 161 118 137 125 146

BLT-AIIB 90

223 218 263 232 260 218 175 192 150 190 184 137 276 176 171 117 139 101 62 85 150 188 147 139 157 107 137 164 219 132 205 89 154 107 138 139 171 151 164 182 153 150 164 148 242 142 116 131 162 135 120 164 203 225 195 204 123 142 178 142 243 168 245 171 125 192 157 225 226 176 146 117 195 185 101 184 151 165 187 292 210 183 116 139 100 161 112 159 127 147

BLT-A12A 136

620 357 285 342 436 409 382 293 266 467 210 240 191 324 304 128 141 146 232 207 272 112 255 176 167 276 289 165 195 193 287 271 285 128 181 196 206 196 260 200 124 162 115 118 134 82 109 112 140 131 148 132 64 78 101 210 165 147 160 75 178 90 103 119 170 84 115 37 90 54 70 84 76 90 81 80 84 106 109 84 81 130 183 157 96 125 146 213 275 240 160 119 100 192 282 212 171 199 150 109 117 135 184 133 162 181 138 136 128 144 121 178 110 287 160 155 129 87 74 97 107 167 209 145 193 125 112 140 109 131 159 166 159 196 174 150 BLT-A12B 136

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252 | 16 253 | 171 | 159 | 167 | 174 | 199 | 184 | 187 | 182 | 198 205 | 194 219 | 123 | 149 | 151 | 136 | 170 | 150 | 118 | 112 | 119 | 96 | 128 | 148 | 107 | 112 | 174 | 128 | 164 | 128 | 153 | 170 | 97 | 135 | 103 | 118 | 146 | 117 | 118 | 121 | 143 | 178 | 155 | 142 | 163 | 187 | 160 | 176 | 171 | 161 | 168 | 134 | 153 | 120 | 198 200 | 170 | 151 | 127 | 117 | 146 | 126 | 148 | 197

BLT-A13B 67

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244 263 179 247 253 306 262 273 284 285 250 221 253 250 199 194 187 173 204 244 174 104 135 155 185 180 207 216 196 221 257 177 251 210 189 259 282 206 210 250 160 244 185 143 123 109 157 164 165 175 179 148 151 156 192 178 187 185 225 220 271 167 201 219 296 247 268 221 218 224 197 178 252

BLT-A15B 73

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- 178 135 184 209 162 165 150 117 114 162 126 121 171 148 150 110 149 112 181 168 126 138 159 159 205 162 166 140 153 159 236

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BLT-A21A 97

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BLT-A24B 62

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BLT-A25A 83

390 417 331 452 223 213 179 144 207 264 483 248 341 457 467 418 334 498 265 291 235 310 320 178 208 252 282 217 283 159 187 179 254 238 218 185 219 170 201 152 165 157 100 86 135 134 110 119 162 121 137 152 214 117 130 128 110 139 108 160 147 174 102 159 127 142 121 128 119 155 158 125 171 117 154 80 87 87 136 138 153 154 169

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BLT-A26B 91

469 440 407 364 278 326 355 296 318 320 407 210 261 241 284 299 209 353 186 164 286 264 293 200 164 179 195 209 361 328 212 379 342 334 270 279 320 315 339 246 443 351 415 165 234 246 237 272 293 246 259 280 310 256 240 244 293 321 274 150 178 153 183 256 302 346 367 240 200 186 171 134 146 190 144 166 229 145 166 237 203 153 174 190 161 160 136 125 104 129 150

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561 593 603 525 285 463 212 147 240 196 158 86 68 90 106 105 365 310 376 365 295 366 358 295 374 481 445 270 453 435 536 308 429 439 494 320 268 299 281 250 273 272 291 239 193 218 236 215 194 197 262 260 330 197 172 251 307 291 299 206 237 296 250 179 219 248 265 274 291 227 244 200 285 156 162 131 124 158 123 164 139 188 118

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BLT-A28B 69

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BLT-A29A 82

463 733 558 697 634 626 606 493 454 568 568 415 536 454 479 424 500 304 299 292 228 404 433 384 267 369 312 333 278 268 280 191 215 231 273 259 222 209 221 205 212 265 263 262 290 426 296 300 299 315 137 107 92 142 203 275 281 350 299 378 353 356 287 277 283 296 209 259 203 218 259 233 300 207 195 175 218 162 148 136 148 160

48 - 2015

BLT-A29B 82

458 716 556 718 629 606 584 502 439 524 558 420 529 454 500 449 517 338 280 301 254 413 436 379 268 376 364 328 270 264 272 215 220 236 277 259 243 172 228 193 217 262 244 257 294 427 293 293 306 301 131 123 87 150 216 279 284 340 272 368 365 349 284 287 266 301 225 256 188 221 255 225 307 192 197 159 206 168 133 145 170 170

BLT-A30A 96

660 655 445 875 600 490 708 589 778 712 653 560 553 526 578 629 414 468 409 450 403 365 276 302 290 197 285 300 325 224 339 338 302 271 276 266 175 257 227 249 293 290 303 290 253 246 268 271 100 160 194 211 225 145 203 133 193 192 198 201 177 158 155 134 169 181 159 160 171 150 171 115 147 173 153 155 183 177 144 182 153 143 118 112 126 175 167 171 165 144 176 139 145 143 106 151 BLT-A30B 96

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409 417 355 439 382 368 251 315 278 285 286 231 337 387 303 212 314 360 360 306 353 304 293 367 296 281 339 314 204 317 351 132 105 89 138 197 360 285 292 208 242 120 109 111 124 207 130 151 171 125 144 137 217 107 72 82 165 96 115 112 124 106 101 99 107 131 111 170 187 121 135 112 98 137 143 149 110 103 156 167 128 104 95 103 116 158

BLT-A31B 86

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APPENDIX: TREE-RING DATING

The Principles of Tree-Ring Dating

Tree-ring dating, or dendrochronology as it is known, is discussed in some detail in the Laboratory's Monograph, An East Midlands Master Tree-Ring Chronology and its uses for dating Vernacular Building (Laxton and Litton 1988) and Dendrochronology: Guidelines on Producing and Interpreting Dendrochronological Dates (English Heritage 1998). Here we will give the bare outlines. Each year an oak tree grows an extra ring on the outside of its trunk and all its branches just inside its bark. The width of this annual ring depends largely on the weather during the growing season, about April to October, and possibly also on the weather during the previous year. Good growing seasons give rise to relatively wide rings, poor ones to very narrow rings and average ones to relatively average ring widths. Since the climate is so variable from year to year, almost randomlike, the widths of these rings will also appear random-like in sequence, reflecting the seasons. This is illustrated in Figure A1 where, for example, the widest rings appear at irregular intervals. This is the key to dating by tree rings, or rather, by their widths. Records of the average ring widths for oaks, one for each year for the last 1000 years or more, are available for different areas. These are called master chronologies. Because of the random-like nature of these sequences of widths, there is usually only one position at which a sequence of ring widths from a sample of oak timber with at least 70 rings will match a master. This will date the timber and, in particular, the last ring.

If the bark is still on the sample, as in Figure AI, then the date of the last ring will be the date of felling of the oak from which it was cut. There is much evidence that in medieval times oaks cut down for building purposes were used almost immediately, usually within the year or so (Rackham 1976). Hence if bark is present on several main timbers in a building, none of which appear reused or are later insertions, and if they all have the same date for their last ring, then we can be quite confident that this is the date of construction or soon after. If there is no bark on the sample, then we have to make an estimate of the felling date; how this is done is explained below.

The Practice of Tree-Ring Dating at the Nottingham Tree-Ring Dating Laboratory

I. Inspecting the Building and Sampling the Timbers. Together with a building historian the timbers in a building are inspected to try to ensure that those sampled are not reused or later insertions. Sampling is almost always done by coring into the timber, which has the great advantage that we can sample *in situ* timbers and those judged best to give the date of construction, or phase of construction if there is more than one in the building. The timbers to be sampled are also inspected to see how many rings they have. We normally look for timbers with at least 70 rings, and preferably more. With fewer rings than this, 50 for example, sequences of widths become difficult to match to a unique

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position within a master sequence of ring widths and so are difficult to date (Litton and Zainodin 1991). The cross-section of the rafter shown in Figure A2 has about 120 rings; about 20 of which are sapwood rings — the lighter rings on the outside. Similarly the core has just over 100 rings with a few sapwood rings.

To ensure that we are getting the date of the building as a whole, or the whole of a phase of construction if there is more than one, about 8–10 samples per phase are usually taken. Sometimes we take many more, especially if the construction is complicated. One reason for taking so many samples is that, in general, some will fail to give a date. There may be many reasons why a particular sequence of ring widths from a sample of timber fails to give a date even though others from the same building do. For example, a particular tree may have grown in an odd ecological niche, so odd indeed that the widths of its rings were determined by factors other than the local climate! In such circumstances it will be impossible to date a timber from this tree using the master sequence whose widths, we can assume, were predominantly determined by the local climate at the time.

Sampling is done by coring into the timber with a hollow corer attached to an electric drill and usually from its outer rings inwards towards where the centre of the tree, the pith, is judged to be. An illustration of a core is shown in Figure A2; it is about 150mm long and 10mm diameter. Great care has to be taken to ensure that as few as possible of the outer rings are lost in coring. This can be difficult as these outer rings are often very soft (see below on sapwood). Each sample is given a code which identifies uniquely which timber it comes from, which building it is from and where the building is located. For example, CRO-A06 is the sixth core taken from the first building (A) sampled by the Laboratory in Cropwell Bishop. Where it came from in that building will be shown in the sampling records and drawings. No structural damage is done to any timbers by coring, nor does it weaken them.

During the initial inspection of the building and its timbers the dendrochronologist may come to the conclusion that, as far as can be judged, none of the timbers have sufficient rings in them for dating purposes and may advise against sampling to save further unwarranted expense.

All sampling by the Laboratory is undertaken according to current Health and Safety Standards. The Laboratory's dendrochronologists are insured.



Figure A1: A wedge of oak from a tree felled in 1976. It shows the annual growth rings, one for each year from the innermost ring to the last ring on the outside just inside the bark. The year of each ring can be determined by counting back from the outside ring, which grew in 1976



Figure A2: Cross-section of a rafter, showing sapwood rings in the left-hand corner, the arrow points to the heartwood/sapwood boundary (H/S); and a core with sapwood; again the arrow is pointing to the H/S. The core is about the size of a pencil

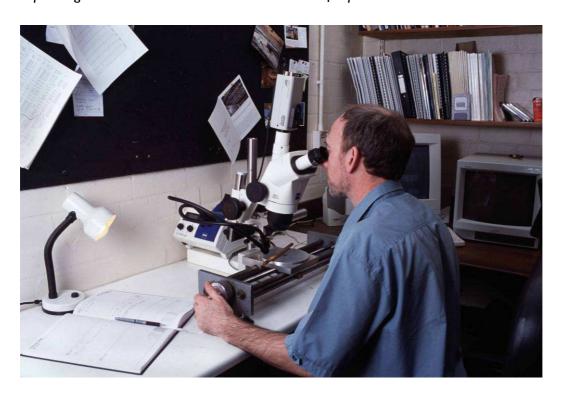


Figure A3: Measuring ring widths under a microscope. The microscope is fixed while the sample is on a moving platform. The total sequence of widths is measured twice to ensure that an error has not been made. This type of apparatus is needed to process a large number of samples on a regular basis

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Figure A4: Three cores from timbers in a building. They come from trees growing at the same time. Notice that, although the sequences of widths look similar, they are not identical. This is typical

- 2. Measuring Ring Widths. Each core is sanded down with a belt sander using medium-grit paper and then finished by hand with flourgrade-grit paper. The rings are then clearly visible and differentiated from each other with a result very much like that shown in Figure A2. The core is then mounted on a movable table below a microscope and the ring-widths measured individually from the innermost ring to the outermost. The widths are automatically recorded in a computer file as they are measured (see Fig A3).
- 3. Cross-Matching and Dating the Samples. Because of the factors besides the local climate which may determine the annual widths of a tree's rings, no two sequences of ring widths from different oaks growing at the same time are exactly alike (Fig A4). Indeed, the sequences may not be exactly alike even when the trees are growing near to each other. Consequently, in the Laboratory we do not attempt to match two sequences of ring widths by eye, or graphically, or by any other subjective method. Instead, it is done objectively (ie statistically) on a computer by a process called cross-matching. The output from the computer tells us the extent of correlation between two sample sequences of widths or, if we are dating, between a sample sequence of widths and the master, at each relative position of one to the other (offsets). The extent of the correlation at an offset is determined by the t-value (defined in almost any introductory book on statistics). That offset with the maximum t-value among the t-values at all the offsets will be the best candidate for dating one sequence relative to the other. If one of these is a master chronology, then this will date the other. Experiments carried out in the past with sequences from oaks of known date suggest that a t-value of at least 4.5, and preferably at least 5.0, is usually adequate for the dating to be accepted with reasonable confidence (Laxton and Litton 1988; Laxton et al 1988; Howard et al 1984–1995).

This is illustrated in Figure A5 with timbers from one of the roofs of Lincoln Cathedral. Here four sequences of ring widths, LIN-C04, 05, 08, and 45, have been cross-matched with each other. The ring widths themselves have been omitted in the bar diagram, as is usual, but the offsets at which they best cross-match each other are shown; eg the sequence of ring widths of C08 matches the sequence of ring widths of C45 best when it is at a position starting 20 rings after the first ring of C45, and similarly for the others. The actual *t*-values between the four at these offsets of best correlations are in the matrix. Thus at the offset of +20 rings, the *t*-value between C45 and C08 is 5.6 and is the maximum found between these two among all the positions of one sequence relative to the other.

It is standard practice in our Laboratory first to cross-match as many as possible of the ring-width sequences of the samples in a building and then to form an average from them. This average is called a site sequence of the building being dated and is illustrated in Figure A5. The fifth bar at the bottom is a site sequence for a roof at Lincoln Cathedral and is constructed from the matching sequences of the four timbers. The site sequence width for each year is the average of the widths in each of the sample sequences which has a width for that year. Thus in Fig A5 if the widths shown are 0.8mm for C45, 0.2mm for C08, 0.7mm for C05, and 0.3mm for C04, then the corresponding width of the site

sequence is the average of these, 0.55mm. The actual sequence of widths of this site sequence is stored on the computer. The reason for creating site sequences is that it is usually easier to date an average sequence of ring widths with a master sequence than it is to date the individual component sample sequences separately.

The straightforward method of cross-matching several sample sequences with each other one at a time is called the 'maximal *t*-value' method. The actual method of cross-matching a group of sequences of ring-widths used in the Laboratory involves grouping and averaging the ring-width sequences and is called the 'Litton-Zainodin Grouping Procedure'. It is a modification of the straightforward method and was successfully developed and tested in the Laboratory and has been published (Litton and Zainodin 1991; Laxton *et al* 1988).

4. Estimating the Felling Date. As mentioned above, if the bark is present on a sample, then the date of its last ring is the date of the felling of its tree (or the last full year before felling, if it was felled in the first three months of the following calendar year, before any new growth had started, but this is not too important a consideration in most cases). The actual bark may not be present on a timber in a building, though the dendrochronologist who is sampling can often see from its surface that only the bark is missing. In these cases the date of the last ring is still the date of felling.

Quite often some, though not all, of the original outer rings are missing on a timber. The outer rings on an oak, called sapwood rings, are usually lighter than the inner rings, the heartwood, and so are relatively easy to identify. For example, sapwood can be seen in the corner of the rafter and at the outer end of the core in Figure A2, both indicated by arrows. More importantly for dendrochronology, the sapwood is relatively soft and so liable to insect attack and wear and tear. The builder, therefore, may remove some of the sapwood for precisely these reasons. Nevertheless, if at least some of the sapwood rings are left on a sample, we will know that not too many rings have been lost since felling so that the date of the last ring on the sample is only a few years before the date of the original last ring on the tree, and so to the date of felling.

Various estimates have been made and used for the average number of sapwood rings in mature oak trees (English Heritage 1998). A fairly conservative range is between 15 and 50 and that this holds for 95% of mature oaks. This means, of course, that in a small number of cases there could be fewer than 15 and more than 50 sapwood rings. For example, the core CRO-A06 has only 9 sapwood rings and some have obviously been lost over time — either they were removed originally by the carpenter and/or they rotted away in the building and/or they were lost in the coring. It is not known exactly how many sapwood rings are missing, but using the above range the Laboratory would estimate between a minimum of 6 (=15-9) and a maximum of 41 (=50-9). If the last ring of CRO-A06 has been dated to 1500, say, then the estimated felling-date range for the tree from which it came originally would be between 1506 and 1541. The Laboratory uses this estimate for sapwood in areas of England where it has no prior information. It

also uses it when dealing with samples with very many rings, about 120 to the last heartwood ring. But in other areas of England where the Laboratory has accumulated a number of samples with complete sapwood, that is, no sapwood lost since felling, other estimates in place of the conservative range of 15 to 50 are used. In the East Midlands (Laxton *et al* 2001) and the east to the south down to Kent (Pearson 1995) where it has sampled extensively in the past, the Laboratory uses the shorter estimate of 15 to 35 sapwood rings in 95% of mature oaks growing in these parts. Since the sample CRO-A06 comes from a house in Cropwell Bishop in the East Midlands, a better estimate of sapwood rings lost since felling is between a minimum of 6 (=15-9) and 26 (=35-9) and the felling would be estimated to have taken place between 1506 and 1526, a shorter period than before. Oak boards quite often come from the Baltic region and in these cases the 95% confidence limits for sapwood are 9 to 36 (Howard *et al* 1992, 56).

Even more precise estimates of the felling date and range can often be obtained using knowledge of a particular case and information gathered at the time of sampling. For example, at the time of sampling the dendrochronologist may have noted that the timber from which the core of Figure A2 was taken still had complete sapwood but that some of the soft sapwood rings were lost in coring. By measuring into the timber the depth of sapwood lost, say 20mm, a reasonable estimate can be made of the number of sapwood rings lost, say 12 to 15 rings in this case. By adding on 12 to 15 years to the date of the last ring on the sample a good tight estimate for the range of the felling date can be obtained, which is often better than the 15 to 35 years later we would have estimated without this observation. In the example, the felling is now estimated to have taken place between AD 1512 and 1515, which is much more precise than without this extra information.

Even if all the sapwood rings are missing on a sample, but none of the heartwood rings are, then an estimate of the felling-date range is possible by adding on the full compliment of, say, 15 to 35 years to the date of the last heartwood ring (called the heartwood/sapwood boundary or transition ring and denoted H/S). Fortunately it is often easy for a trained dendrochronologist to identify this boundary on a timber. If a timber does not have its heartwood/sapwood boundary, then only a *post quem* date for felling is possible.

5. Estimating the Date of Construction. There is a considerable body of evidence collected by dendrochronologists over the years that oak timbers used in buildings were not seasoned in medieval or early modern times (English Heritage 1998; Miles 1997, 50–5). Hence, provided that all the samples in a building have estimated felling-date ranges broadly in agreement with each other, so that they appear to have been felled as a group, then this should give an accurate estimate of the period when the structure was built, or soon after (Laxton *et al* 2001, fig 8; 34–5, where 'associated groups of fellings' are discussed in detail). However, if there is any evidence of storage before use, or if there is evidence the oak came from abroad (eg Baltic boards), then some allowance has to be made for this.

- Master Chronological Sequences. Ultimately, to date a sequence of ring widths, or 6. a site sequence, we need a master sequence of dated ring widths with which to crossmatch it, a Master Chronology. To construct such a sequence we have to start with a sequence of widths whose dates are known and this means beginning with a sequence from an oak tree whose date of felling is known. In Figure A6 such a sequence is SHE-T, which came from a tree in Sherwood Forest which was blown down in a recent gale. After this other sequences which cross-match with it are added and gradually the sequence is 'pushed back in time' as far as the age of samples will allow. This process is illustrated in Figure A6. We have a master chronological sequence of widths for Nottinghamshire and East Midlands oak for each year from AD 882 to 1981. It is described in great detail in Laxton and Litton (1988), but the components it contains are shown here in the form of a bar diagram. As can be seen, it is well replicated in that for each year in this period there are several sample sequences having widths for that year. The master is the average of these. This master can now be used to date oak from this area and from the surrounding areas where the climate is very similar to that in the East Midlands. The Laboratory has also constructed a master for Kent (Laxton and Litton 1989). The method the Laboratory uses to construct a master sequence, such as the East Midlands and Kent, is completely objective and uses the Litton-Zainodin grouping procedure (Laxton et al 1988). Other laboratories and individuals have constructed masters for other areas and have made them available. As well as these masters, local (dated) site chronologies can be used to date other buildings from nearby. The Laboratory has hundreds of these site sequences from many parts of England and Wales covering many short periods.
- 7. Ring-Width Indices. Tree-ring dating can be done by cross-matching the ring widths themselves, as described above. However, it is advantageous to modify the widths first. Because different trees grow at different rates and because a young oak grows in a different way from an older oak, irrespective of the climate, the widths are first standardized before any matching between them is attempted. These standard widths are known as ring-width indices and were first used in dendrochronology by Baillie and Pilcher (1973). The exact form they take is explained in this paper and in the appendix of Laxton and Litton (1988) and is illustrated in the graphs in Figure A7. Here ring-widths are plotted vertically, one for each year of growth. In the upper sequence of (a), the generally large early growth after 1810 is very apparent as is the smaller later growth from about 1900 onwards when the tree is maturing. A similar phenomenon can be observed in the lower sequence of (a) starting in 1835. In both the widths are also changing rapidly from year to year. The peaks are the wide rings and the troughs are the narrow rings corresponding to good and poor growing seasons, respectively. The two corresponding sequence of Baillie-Pilcher indices are plotted in (b) where the differences in the immature and mature growths have been removed and only the rapidly changing peaks and troughs remain, that are associated with the common climatic signal. This makes cross-matching easier.

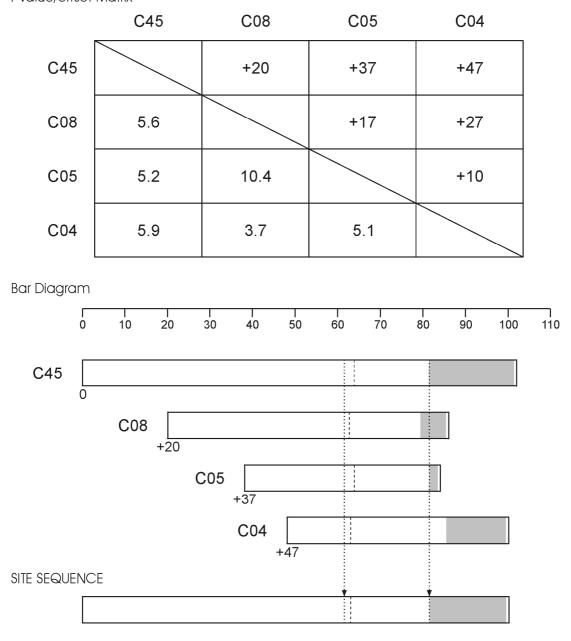


Figure A5: Cross-matching of four sequences from a Lincoln Cathedral roof and the formation of a site sequence from them

The bar diagram represents these sequences without the rings themselves. The length of the bar is proportional to the number of rings in the sequence. Here the four sequences are set at relative positions (offsets) to each other at which they have maximum correlation as measured by the *t*-values. The *t*-value/offset matrix contains the maximum *t*-values below the diagonal and the offsets above it. Thus, the maximum *t*-value between C08 and C45 occurs at the offset of +20 rings and the *t*-value is then 5.6. The site sequence is composed of the average of the corresponding widths, as illustrated with one width.

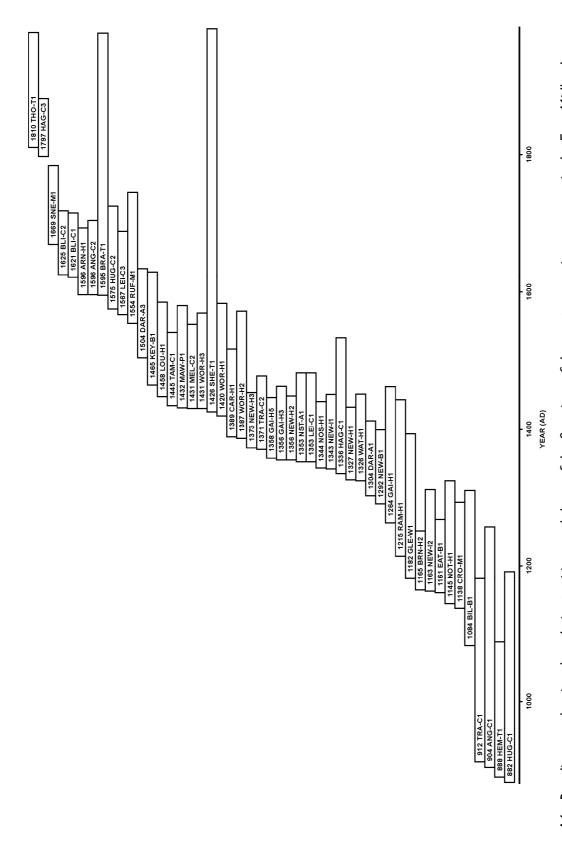
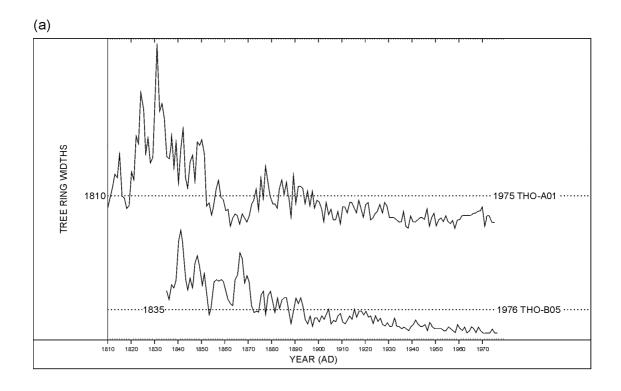


Figure A6: Bar diagram showing the relative positions and dates of the first rings of the component site sequences in the East Midlands Master Dendrochronological Sequence, EM08/87



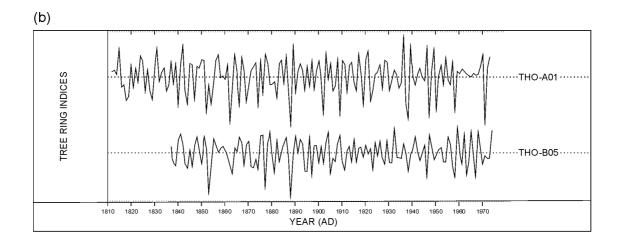


Figure A7 (a): The raw ring-widths of two samples, THO-A01 and THO-B05, whose felling dates are known

Here the ring widths are plotted vertically, one for each year, so that peaks represent wide rings and troughs narrow ones. Notice the growth-trends in each; on average the earlier rings of the young tree are wider than the later ones of the older tree in both sequences

Figure A7 (b): The Baillie-Pilcher indices of the above widths

The growth trends have been removed completely

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