

have lasted much longer than they did. The cause of the constant rebuildings could have been the decaying roof as well as collapsing walls especially if the thatching or wallinfilling was of poor quality so as not to fully waterproof the structures. It may be that this flimsy construction was intentional, with the idea that in each generation the son taking over from his father would rebuild his house anew.

The only evidence for roof construction again comes from the burnt down sunken-hut at West Stow (site 210A) and the house at Dinna Clerks (site 37) where the remains demonstrate a structure of oak rafters with hazel twigs twined between them. In view of the almost complete absence of tiles from excavated sites, thatch or turf roofs may be assumed to have been universal. On the few sites where clay,<sup>71</sup> stone or slate tiles<sup>72</sup> are found these are very few in number so they can hardly have been completely tiled. It may be that some peasant-houses had a limited covering around the hole in the roof to let the smoke out, thereby giving some protection to this area against the dangers of fire. There may also have been tiles along the wall tops to stop the rain percolating through, or the wind from lifting, the thatch. At Seacourt (site 5A) ridge tiles were found. These were presumably used because the ridge is a difficult place to make water tight. No attempt will therefore be made here to describe the various possible roof types since the archaeological evidence is insufficient. It is hoped that this may be attempted at some future date in a joint paper with Mr. J. T. Smith.

## II. Building Plans and Uses

### *Anglo-Saxon buildings and sunken-huts*

Although there have been very few recent excavations of Anglo-Saxon village sites, it has been demonstrated from earlier work that the *Grubenhäuser* or sunken-hut is the most common type of building. Excavations on the Continent have shown that this was the same over large parts of Europe<sup>73</sup> but that on most sites there were also larger buildings at ground level. Until recently these had not been discovered in this country but they are now known from several sites. It has been suggested that, as was the case with the so-called prehistoric pit-dwellings which have now been reinterpreted as storage-pits associated with substantial timber structures which were not previously recognised, the Anglo-Saxon actually lived in large houses at ground level while the sunken-huts were used for weaving or for other industrial activities, not being lived in at all (Radford, 1957). Recent work has, however, suggested that the pendulum has swung too far, for at West Stow (site 210) and Mucking (site 56A) where the complete or large-scale excavation of two pagan Anglo-Saxon villages is in progress, by far the largest number of structures are sunken-huts. The only pre-war large scale excavation of a Saxon village was at Sutton Courtenay (site 6, Leeds, 1923, 1927 and 1947) where Mr. Leeds found 33 sunken-huts and no larger buildings were recognised. Since the results of recent

71. Sites 5A, 45 and 227.

72. Sites 30, 45 and 227.

73. W. U. Gyan, "Die frühmittelalterliche Siedlung von Osterfingen", *Zeitschrift für schweizerische Archäologie Kunstgeschichte*, xi (1950), 206–12 and "Einige Karten zur Verbreitung der Grubenhäuser in Mitteleuropa im ersten nachchristlichen Jahrtausend", *Jahrbuch der schweizerischen Gesellschaft für Urgeschichte*, XLII (1952), 174–97.

work on the Continent he has been much criticised for having missed the large timber buildings which it has been supposed must have been in the gaps between. At West Stow, however, a pattern of 34 sunken-huts has so far been excavated but only three buildings have been located and these are quite small compared with continental



Fig. 15. West Stow, Suffolk.

Plan of part of the pagan Saxon settlement showing sunken-huts, with only two larger buildings, and a number of pits and ditches, see p. 101.

buildings, only about 10 m. long (Fig. 15). Although Mr. West has shown that many of the huts were used for weaving and other processes connected with wool, it is hard to believe that there were only three living-houses in this part of the village with so many associated working-huts. The same applies at Mucking where a pattern of sunken-huts

is visible on the air photography, 68 having so far been excavated. No certain houses have been located at all on this part of the site although the dating of many post-hole features is uncertain due to the complexity of earlier remains of the Iron Age and Roman periods. At the Linford site (site 56), adjoining Mucking and of the same early fifth century date, Mr. Barton did find at least one house, though unfortunately its length was uncertain since it was quarried away, together with another smaller weaving shed nearby. The whole question has been further complicated by the discovery at Eynsham (site 175) of five sunken-huts associated with three buildings. Prof. Jope was unable to locate any buildings when he investigated the nearby site of Cassington (site 172) and he had argued that Mr. Leeds may not have missed buildings at Sutton Courtenay. There is clearly no simple answer to this problem and it is difficult to draw

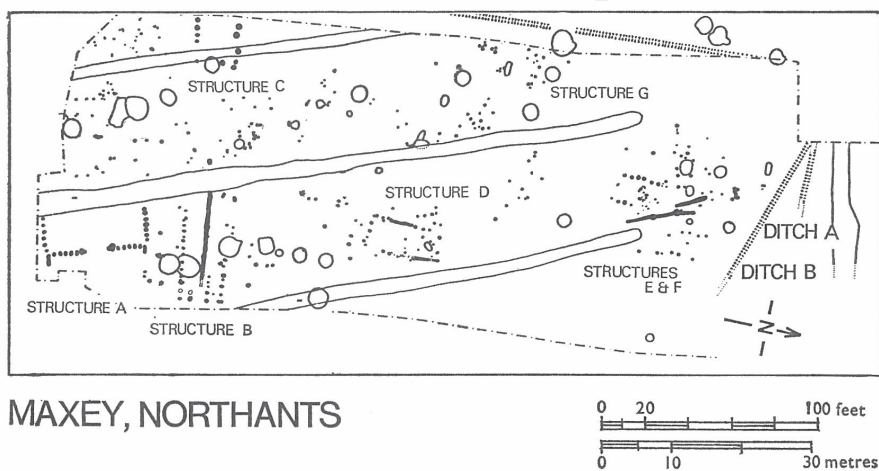


Fig. 16. Maxey, Northamptonshire.

Plan of the middle Saxon settlement with post-holes defining timber buildings, various types of pit between and overlaid by the furrows of the medieval field system, see p. 102.

firm conclusions from earlier excavations; although nearly 100 sites have produced evidence for sunken-huts one can never be sure whether larger buildings were missed, especially as so much of the evidence was only recorded during gravel-working.

At Maxey (site 150) in the middle-Saxon period, seven buildings excavated were post-hole structures and five possible sunken-huts were located (Fig. 16). At the late-Saxon village of St. Neots eight sunken-huts were excavated in 1929 (site 56) but when Mr. Addyman returned in 1958 to an adjoining site (site 56A) he found a row of large buildings with no sunken-huts at all. Excavations at the middle- and late-Saxon site of Old Windsor (site 9) produced important results with associated large buildings and sunken-huts, but full assessment of this site must await publication of the report.

Since only these seven Saxon settlements have been excavated on a large scale, and are not only of various dates, the fifth to the tenth century, but are also in different parts of England, it is too early to attempt a solution to the problem. From the present evidence at Mucking, West Stow and Sutton Courtenay it might be suggested that there were very few large houses and that the poorer peasants must have lived in sunken-huts. At Maxey and St. Neots there were certainly groups of substantial buildings and at St. Neots the sunken-huts were grouped behind them. As only part of the site was excavated at Maxey there might well have been more sunken-huts on another part of the site, i.e. not mixed in with the other houses. This could either be interpreted as separate working-huts going with the houses but separated from them or the houses of the poorer peasants segregated from those of the more prosperous ones.

Only the complete excavation of several village sites of different dates and periods can give us the answer. Because of the costs involved this is likely to be a long time ahead. Unfortunately due to gravel-working the complete plan of Mucking/Linford can never be obtained, but there will in due course be a complete plan of West Stow which may provide crucial evidence if a single large house, or a group of houses, is found on one part of the site. On the Continent, although there have been a large number of excavations of the Migration period, later village excavations on any scale, such as that at Warendorf,<sup>74</sup> are very rare. In the later Saxon period at Tilleda, in the Harz, Prof. Grimm has shown that there were both sunken-huts and above-ground buildings in use and he suggests that both types were inhabited.<sup>75</sup> Sunken-huts continued until the twelfth century<sup>76</sup> into the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries,<sup>77</sup> or even till recently in Somerset and Ireland,<sup>78</sup> but there are only isolated examples of this. The type also disappeared on the continent in the thirteenth century (Grimm, 1939). Sunken-huts on village sites may be related to the cellars, first found on Anglo-Saxon town sites, which of course continued throughout the medieval period, usually built of stone as vaulted storerooms. This suggests another possible use for sunken huts and the important evidence obtained at West Stow for a timber-floor over the sunken part raises other interesting possibilities for those sunken-huts which apparently have no features actually in the bottom. The industrial use of many of these sunken-huts is often shown by the large quantities of ash found in them and by the clay loom-weights and post-holes for vertical looms found in others (Radford, 1957).

There are too few excavated Saxon timber houses as yet to attempt any classification but it can be said that neither at Hound Tor (site 38) nor at Maxey was there any evidence for the medieval type of long-house. This is surprising as aisled buildings, with

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74. W. Winkelmann, "Eine Westfälische Siedlung des 8 Jahrhunderts bei Warendorf, Kr. Warendorf", *Germania*, xxxii (1954), 189–213 and "Die Ausgrabungen in der Frühmittelalterlichen Siedlung bei Warendorf (Westfalen)", *Neue Ausgrabungen in Deutschland* (1958), 492–517.

75. P. Grimm, "The Royal Palace at Tilleda, Excavations from 1935–66", *Med. Archaeol.*, xii (1968), 91–96.

76. Sites 18 and 80.

77. Sites 226, 244 and 274.

78. H. Laver, "Ancient Type of Huts at Athelney", *Proc. Som. Archaeol. Soc.*, lv (1909), 175–89, reproduced in *Colvin* (1958), 79; C. O. Danachair, "Semi-Underground Habitations", *Journ. Galway Archaeol. and Hist. Soc.*, xxvi (1954–56), 75–80 and "Some Notes on Traditional House Types in County Kildare", *Journ. Kildare Archaeol. Soc.*, xiv (1966–67), 234–46.

humans and animals under the same roof, had a long life on the Continent, going back to the Bronze Age (Hurst, 1965), and it is strange that it is not represented in any Anglo-Saxon house so far excavated in lowland Britain, though there are early examples of long-houses at Jarlshof<sup>79</sup> and Mawgan Porth (site 28) which are hard to fit into the main development of the medieval peasant-house. The problem must therefore remain for the moment, with the long-house apparently becoming common from the twelfth century onwards. Recent comparison of the pottery from Mucking with that from Feddersen Wierde in north-west Germany<sup>80</sup> suggests that it is so similar there must be links between the abandonment of Feddersen Wierde c. 400 and the start of Mucking at the same date. The main stumbling block though is that the inhabitants of these north-west German sites had a cattle economy and lived in long-houses, while those at Mucking, and many other English sites like West Stow, had a sheep economy and had a preponderance of sunken-huts. It may therefore be that we are asking the wrong questions and the different house types may be due to different economic rather than cultural conditions. Though it is hard to see how the change could be so sudden and complete from Feddersen Wierde to Mucking and West Stow.

### *Medieval house plan types*

There have been excavations on more medieval than Anglo-Saxon peasant-house sites, so it is easier to draw conclusions, although there is still a great deal to do and future work may modify the conclusions presented below. Although 209 excavations have taken place on 186 sites only 90 of these produced buildings and many of these are difficult to interpret due to incomplete or poor excavation. Single building plans have been recorded from 56 sites and 35 have produced plans of several houses, enabling comment to be made on the general layout of the medieval village (see Table XVI, p. 147). There are many variations in house plan (see Figs. 17–21) and it may in time be possible to draw distribution maps of regional types and chronological variations but at the moment the excavations are too widely scattered for this to be possible. The houses so far excavated may be divided into three main groups (Fig. 17), first defined in Hurst, 1965.

A. At the lower end of the social scale was the hut of the cottar or bordar who had no land of his own. This was the *cot* which was either a small one-roomed house about 5 m. by 3.5 m. or a larger two-roomed house about 10 m. by 4 m.

B. The medieval villein would have lived in a *long-house*. This would have at one end a living-part, often divided into two rooms, with a byre at the other end usually separated from the living-part by a cross-passage but always with access between the two without going outside. These long-houses varied greatly in size from small two-roomed buildings little bigger than the larger cots, about 10 m. by 4 m., to a more

79. J. R. C. Hamilton, *Excavations at Jarlshof* (1956).

80. W. Haarnagel, "Die Ergebnisse der Grabung auf der Wurt Feddersen Wierde bei Bremerhaven in den Jahren von 1955–1957", *Neue Ausgrabungen in Deutschland* (1958), 215–28; "Zur Grabung auf der Feddersen Wierde, 1955–9", *Germania*, xxxix (1961), 42–69 and "Die Ergebnisse der Grabung Feddersen Wierde in Jahre 1961", *Germania*, xli (1963), 280–317. For English summary see Helen Parker, "Feddersen Wierde and Vallhagar: a Contrast in Settlements", *Med. Archaeol.*, ix (1965), 1–10.

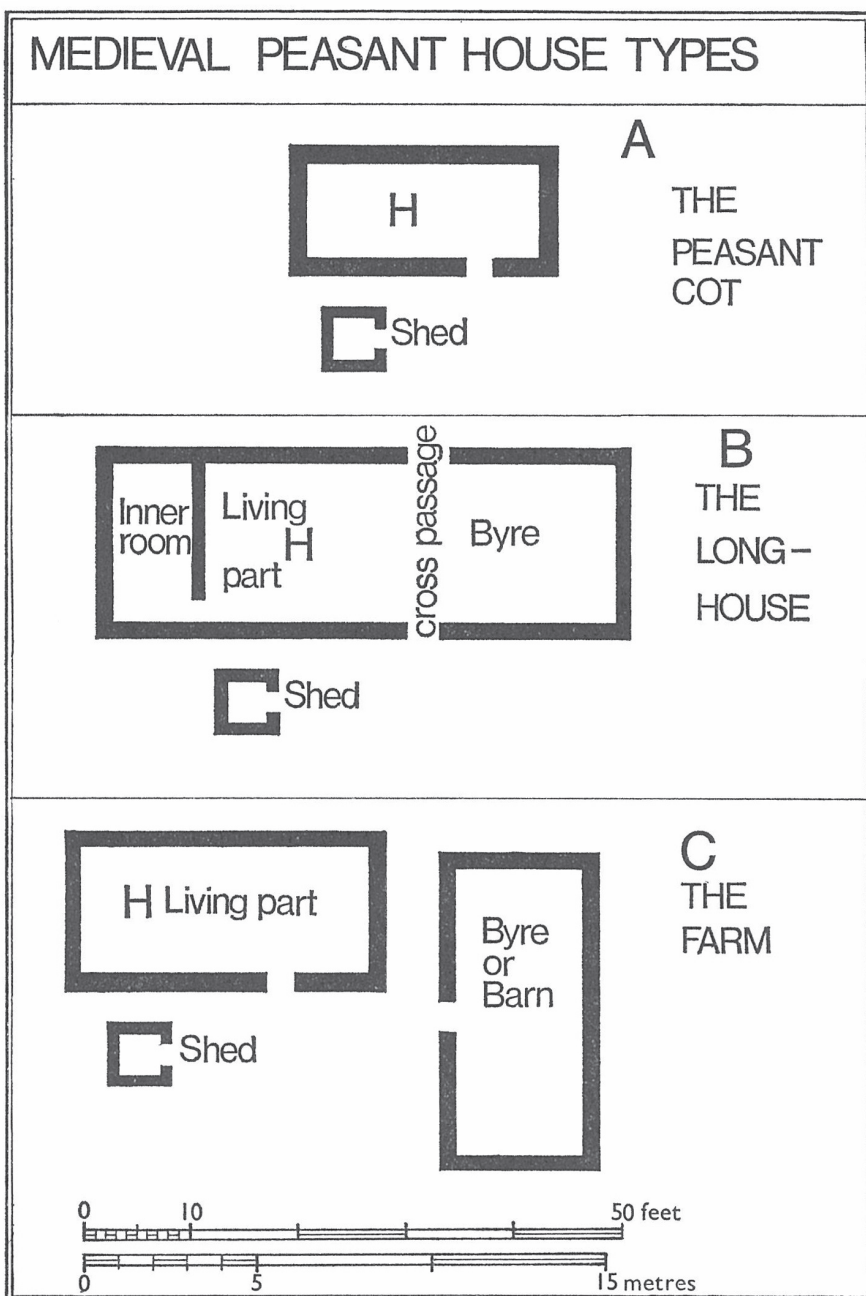


Fig. 17. Medieval peasant-house types.

(A) The peasant cot, (B) the long-house, (C) the farm, see p. 104



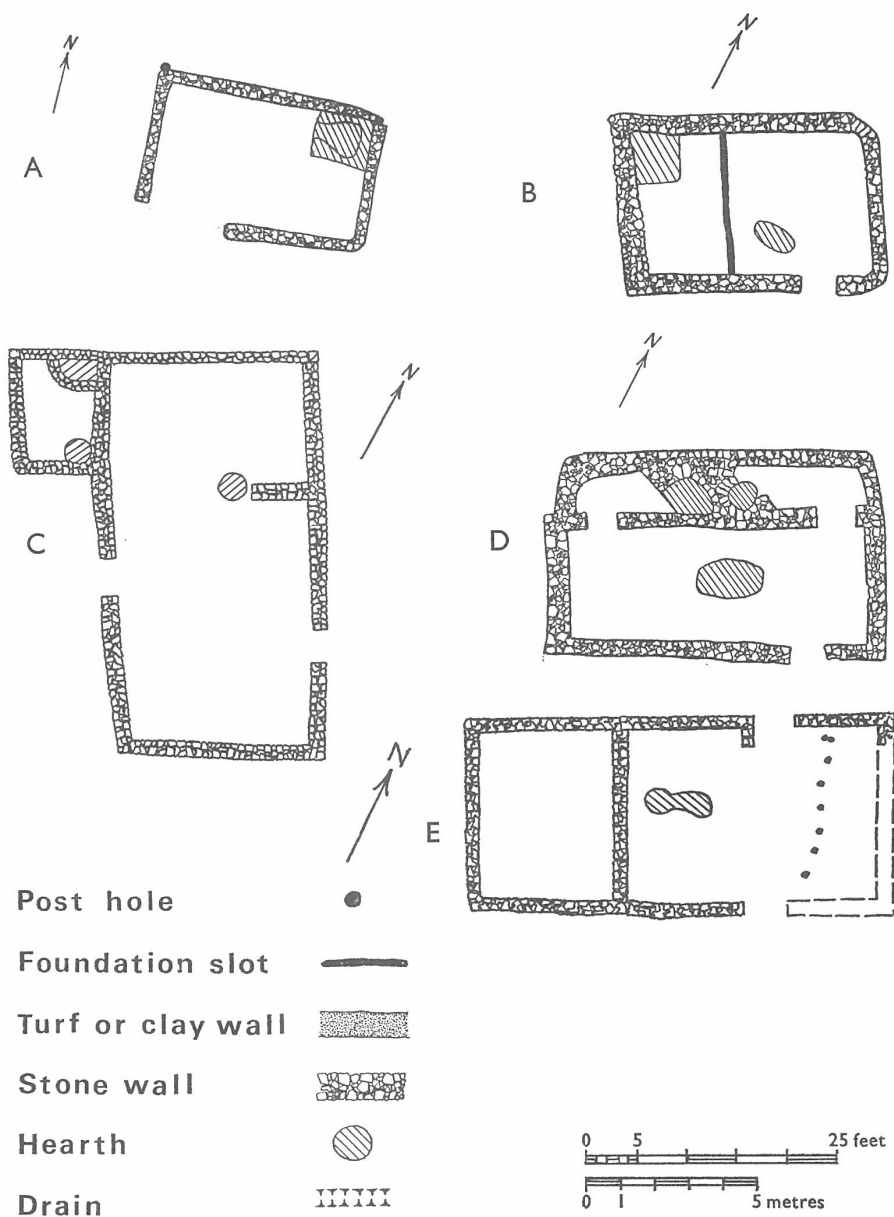


Fig. 18. Hangleton, Sussex, various thirteenth-century house plans.

(A) Building 3, single-roomed cot; (B) Building n, double-roomed cot; (C) Building 12, long-house at right angles to slope, with staggered entrance and outshut; (D) Building 10, single-roomed house with long outshut; (E) Building 1, three-roomed long-house parallel to the slope, see p. 104

normal size of up to 15 m. in length, but there are many examples which are as long as 25 or 30 m.

C. The third main type of peasant-house was *the farm* in which the byre or barn was separated from the main living-house and placed in a distinct building, usually at right angles to the other, forming the basis of a rectangular courtyard. This would be the home of the most prosperous villagers especially the emerging yeoman farmers who were acquiring their freeholds during the later medieval period.

### *The long-house*

A most important result of medieval excavation since the war has been to demonstrate that the long-house, which was at one time thought to be a Celtic house-type, because of its survival in Wales and other highland areas, was common, being found on 27 sites (Figs. 19–20) over large areas of England. Examples have now been excavated in south-west England, all across southern England as far as Sussex (site 227), in the west Midlands (site 187, where there is also good medieval documentary evidence (Field, 1965)), in Northamptonshire (site 157), in Yorkshire (site 274), and further north (site 51). The main gaps at the moment are the central Midlands, East Anglia and Kent although very few excavations have as yet taken place in these areas. The earliest authenticated examples, with the exceptions already listed (see p. 104, above), are in the south-west where Mrs. Minter suggests that they developed out of, or replaced, earlier simple structures in the twelfth century. On most sites where the earliest complete plans are late twelfth or thirteenth century they are already fully developed with three rooms. Although many long-houses have earlier timber buildings underneath them their plan is almost always too uncertain either to give the dimensions of the timber building or the purposes to which various parts of it were put.

### *The farm*

Farm complexes have been found in many areas from the thirteenth century onwards (Site 5A, Fig. 21 A), and excavations at Hangleton (site 227 where long-houses and farms were in use side by side) show that these were not regional variations in plan but more a question of the prosperity of peasants who seem to have tried to make a break with the long-house by emphasising the distinction between the living and farm accommodation, not only by putting them in separate buildings, but also by putting them at right angles to each other. Farms have been recognised on 11 D.M.V. sites. There have been 22 excavations on isolated farms as opposed to 112 excavations on D.M.V.s and 52 excavations on shrunk or surviving villages (see Table XVI, p. 148). In many of these the buildings have been long-houses not farm complexes. With the latter a certain amount of copying of the manorial complex, with its building round a courtyard, may also be suggested. Excavations at Gomeldon (site 244) and Upton (site 67) are crucial since here the actual process of change from the long-house to the farm has been found by excavation. At Gomeldon in at least two cases long-houses were changed into courtyard farms, Fig. 22. The change from long-house to farm did not take place at the same time all over the country as is shown by the case of Wharram Percy where, when the village was destroyed in the early sixteenth century, all the houses were long-houses,