

Arborfield Barn dates from around 1500 and is an example of cruck construction, where the four pairs of curved cruck blades transmit the roof load directly to the ground cills. Each pair of cruck blades was made from a single piece of timber sawn lengthways, thus giving a pair of identically curved timbers. The marks left by the saw blade can still be seen on some of the crucks in this building. All the timber in the barn, including the wattle walls, is oak. The plinth wall is of flint, and the roof is thatched with wheat straw.

At some point in time the barn had been enlarged and some of the internal timbers had been removed or replaced. It had been clad with feather edge boards which replaced the original oak wattles, the roof had been re-made in asbestos, and the cill had been underpinned with brick. The two centre cruck frames were complete except for the mid-height collar and the short king struts which support the roof ridge. The two gable end cruck frames had each had their tie beams sawn out, and the ends of the cruck blades themselves had been roughly sawn off.

At the Museum the barn has been rebuilt in its original form, using the locating mortices as evidence of the positions of the timbers that were missing. The feet of all the crucks had deteriorated, and so new timbers have been spliced on to each one. The new rafters and wind braces are based on the original timbers. The purlins are replaced with



BELOW: The barn at Carter's Hill Farm at Arborfield near Reading in Berkshire. It was offered to the Museum in 1977 when it was condemned as unsafe.

The framework was repaired and re-erected during 1979/1980 under the supervision of Peter McCurdy and Company of Thatcham, Newbury.



timbers of the correct size, based on the housings cut into the backs of the crucks. The original ridge had gone, so the new one is based on those surviving in similar buildings in the area.

Evidence suggests that the entrance to the barn was in an end bay rather than in the usual position of the centre bay. Also there is no evidence for a doorway in the opposite wall, as commonly found in most barns.

LEFT: The split oak for the walls was prepared by Mr Cottrell of Harpsden, Henley, Oxfordshire and was woven in the wall panels by volunteers. The thatching was done by Harwood and Holden.