

ROYDON NEAR DISS

20 and 21 Snow Street

This building was formerly one of an isolated group of houses at the centre of the hamlet of Snow Street, though new houses have been built all around in recent years. It is set at an angle to the road, aligned northwest-southeast whereas the road runs east-west to the north of the building. No. 19, another older house, is on the same alignment but further to the south. There is said to be a local tradition that the road once passed between the two buildings rather than to the north, and this seems quite possible.

EXTERIOR

The central section of the building, which is here considered as one property and taken to lie east-west, is of two storeys and two cells with a central stack and thatched roof, both of the latter features having been reconstructed in recent years. To each side is a wing, both of lower height but still of two storeys, and having tiled roofs. There is a pentise at the west end. There are no doorways in the north wall facing the road, whereas the south wall has three doors plus two on the pentise. The windows have all been replaced at various dates.

INTERIORGround floor

The eastern of the two tiled wings is divided into two rooms, with a later smaller room formed in the northeast corner. The walls have visible studwork and sillbeams on plinths; the east corner posts have straight wallbraces attached in all three walls, rising from the sill. The ceiling of the eastern room has a bridging beam set on edge, its south end resting on the lintel of a window, the north end set in a small chimney. The joists are also set on edge and rest on a girder attached to the faces of the east wall studs. The partition wall to the west incorporates a horizontal beam; a second stack is set against the west side. The western room has a spine beam, again set on edge; its east end is supported by a bracket, and in this case the girders supporting the joists are on the north and south walls.

The east wall of the central section, now a partition wall, contains studs but these are not clearly visible. This section is divided into two basic rooms set each side of the main stack. The eastern room has a chamfered bridging beam resting on brackets integral to the wallposts. There is a straight brace beside the post in

the north wall, but most of the structure is still covered over.

The main stack is set against the south wall; the fireplace in the east room has been reduced. North of the stack is a closet, entered from the east. The studwork of its west wall is slight and may be a later insertion, and there may have been an external door in the north wall.

The western room has an identical ceiling beam to the eastern room. The western tiled extension consists of one basic room with the stairs taken out of the north side (the eastern extension has its own staircase). In this room the ceiling is supported by boards set on edge, without a beam. There is an internal west stack containing a 19th century oven, and with a closet to each side. The northern closet has a small north window, and another in the west wall now blocked, both of which show a great thickness of walling.

The pentise attached to the west is built of clay lump.

Upper Floor

In the eastern extension, the easternmost room has a horizontal offset a foot or so above floor level in the three external walls. West of this room is the top of the winding staircase, and a featureless room.

In the main building, the easternmost room has studwork and the wallplate visible in the north and south walls. There is a blocked window in the former east gable. A dormer has been made in the south roofslope. A wavy tiebeam crosses in front of the stack and rests on top of the wallplates.

There is a closet to the north of the stack entered from the east; a low door formerly below the beam to the west has been blocked. There is a scarf joint in the north wallplate. The rafters are visible at this point; they are crudely cut, and the original thatch was tied with string.

To the west of the stack another wavy tiebeam is present, but is mostly concealed by wallpaper. The posts that support the ceiling beam on the floor below can be seen here to stand forward of the studs, and are tenoned into the wallplate but without expanded heads. However, the west corner posts of the original building are gunstocks in form. There is a window in the former west gable; the west wallplate is cut by a doorway.

The upper level of the west extension has an iron fireplace in its stack.

DISCUSSION

The central section of the building clearly predates the wings, as can be seen from the blocked windows in its

gables, and the change of construction techniques. However, the techniques that it does use - the straight brace, the posts without jowls, the beams resting on the wallplate - indicate a late date, as does the scantlings of the timber, and the plan of one room each side of a central stack. It is possible the original entrance was by a lobby north of the stack, and the stairs may also have been here, though the doorways from the closet above would seem somewhat low for that. The date might be the very end of the 17th century but is more likely to be in the early 18th. The house probably represents encroachment on the edge of the green.

The east extension is certainly of later 18th century date. It would appear that it was once of one storey only. The joists resting on girders and the beam on edge resting on the window might, at this late date, be original features; but the offset in the outer walls above the upper floor seems a clear indication of heightening.

The west extension may be of even later date. The pentise being of clay lump must date to after 1800.

The original building would have formed one dwelling. The addition of the extensions may mark its subdivision.

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