

## TAW AND TAWSIDE COTTAGES - BALCHINS LANE.

*“Now these two cottages appear from the road to be a typical pair of Victorian estate cottages. They are brick to ground floor and tile hung above under a tiled and gabled roof, with a modern chimney stack sitting square on the ridge. A great deal of restoration has taken place, probably in the late 19th Century, but evidence remains that this building was originally a four/three(?) bay timber framed open hall house with an internal jetty(?) and two floored ends. The roof was of coupled rafters with no collars and no purlins.”*

The cottages face East and stand on a horse-shoe shaped lane to the West of and leading to the village of Westcott. Westcott retains a number of very old timber framed houses, including Brook Cottage (DBRG Report No. 459) which also has an internal jetty and a coupled rafter roof. Both these features are unusual in Surrey.

All the rafters of the two cottages have been replaced. The wall posts can still be identified, and the trusses A, B and C remain. There are \_peg holes on top of the ties for either crown post or queen posts.

The South bay of Taw Cottage appears to have been the solar end. The ceiling joists are massive, wider than they are deep, approximately 17/19 cm wide by 11/12 cm deep, and are closely spaced. These joists extend 35 cm. into the hall bay forming a jetty. The solar room over is therefore wider than the room below.

The joist ends have been fined back where they protrude and had been covered with plaster for many years, but have recently been exposed. They had not been morticed into a bressumer. On one of these large- joists a scorch mark remains showing where a rush light once burned. This is an unusual place to find one of these scorch marks.

A chimney stack has been inserted into the North bay of the open hall, and evidence remains for an added smoke bay before the chimney. There is soot encrustation on the plaster partition on the inside of the open Truss C1/C. Formerly this open truss spanned the centre of the open hall. Both sides of the tie to this open truss are chamfered.

The chimney stack serves both cottages, each having an inglenook fireplace and a hearth on the first floor. In Taw Cottage the hearth has recently been exposed. The chimney throat has a shelf halfway across to create a smoking area for bacon above. In one corner is a small brick oven and flue, made of bricks set on edge. The hole remains in the brickwork on the other side showing where the bar rested which stretched across the hearth and held the pot hooks. The lintel over the hearth shows the peg holes which held the mortices for two wooden posts framing the hearth.

In Tawsides Cottage the hearth also has wooden side posts, but these are framed from the first floor tie to the ground. This is an unusual feature and has so far only been found in houses with framing for a smoke bay.

In Taw Cottage the inserted floor has a large spine beam with joists pegged **in**. The joists have run out stops. On the South end of this main spine beam there is a small lamb's tongue stop.

Recently a new spine beam was inserted into the two bays in Tawsides Cottage, to run from the chimney

to the end of the building, cutting away the truss which divided the hall from the two floored end and opening up this end into one large room.

The arch braces still remaining in the trusses are wide and deep. The wall posts are not jowelled. At one time there was a doorway upstairs between two bays of the open hall (after it had been floored). The cut-away for the top of the door remains in the wall tie next to the present hearth.

At the back of Taw Cottage is an old small barn or workshop, much altered, but retaining its cladding of planks cut from the outer parts of the trunks of trees, still with the bark attached.

On a map dated 1818 by Edwards, Taw and Tawsides are marked as Blacknest Farm, and the present Rookery Farm 100 yards to the South is noted as Stawton Farm. Taw is perhaps a corruption of this name. Taw contains interesting framing and is among the very few houses in Surrey with an internal jetty. The purpose of the jetty could be threefold, perhaps to give more room in the solar above, to provide a smoke free alcove in the open hall, or as a convenient way of framing in the floor joists in the room over.

Recorded by Ann Monie, Marion Herridge, Joan Harding and Victoria Houghton. By kind permission of Mr. and Mrs. F. Hillier and Mr. and Mrs. W.R. Shrimpton.

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The original report contains a sketch of the exterior of the two cottages and various diagrams describing the internal features. There is also a reference to a sun Alliance insurance policy dated 3 October 1766 at which time the property was apparently owned by Daniel Dibble, salesman of Reigate. There are also copies of four (only three seen) old maps – 1838 tithe, Lansdell 1818 and Ordnance Survey 1896.