

John Thorp

Creation of the inner room chamber with an oak studded partition.

Before the hall was floored over, the inner room at the uphill end of the house was floored over to create a chamber for the master of the household and maybe his immediate family. I mean it was quite common for these first floor master chambers to be created whilst the hall was still open to the roof and heated with an open hearth fire. Here is a close-studded cross wall between the two chambers and again the earlier framing in Devon is of large oak-framed panels filled with wattle and daub, but as we move into the 16th century, again a richer society starts showing off its use of oak so you get these more tightly spaced oak studs with grooves cut in the side of them and laths between which are faced up in plaster, but the whole thing is a bit of show of status.

Burn marks, there are two arguments about them – are they where a rush candle has been pinned to the wall and has scorched the timber? Or in other cases it's certainly true that what you've done is actually apply a red hot poker, and it's almost like sympathetic magic, that you burn the house to inoculate it against fire damage, a kind of superstitious or homeopathic kind of medicine, you teach it fire.