

John Thorp

Dating by architectural stylistic variations.

When the light's right you can see the kind of scalloped finish to the beams which was using an adze or a broad axe to finish the timber and make it square. The edges are given a chamfer and where it hits the wall this is returned to the square section in a kind of bar stop: these kind of decorative elements at the ends of beams are very handy in dating historic timbers and in Devon most of these bar stops seem to date from the 17th century, and that's by comparison with dated examples in town houses and farm houses. And then the original joists are also chamfered because they're for show and they end up in what we call step stops, now these are commonly attributed to the 16th century and superseded, stylistically, by what are called scroll stops, but on Dartmoor we find these step stops carrying on well into the 17th century in many houses.