

TOL113

Queen's House Roof, Tower of London- Recording 13-10-10

Recording and Survey of area to be removed from Queen's Residence roof for the insertion of a hatch doorway to provide easier access to roof space.

Background

The two eastern areas of the Queen's House roof at the Tower of London are currently inaccessible for regular maintenance. Historic Royal Palaces (HRP) has proposed providing roof access for clearing the valley gutters, checking smoke detectors and maintaining the existing services within the roof. It will also provide easier access for future assessment and recording of the roof structure.

Statement of Significance

Below is a statement that has been prepared by Jane Spooner, Historic Building Curator, Historic Royal Palaces.

The area for the new proposed access hatch has been inspected by myself and Lee Posser, who has specialist expertise in historic roof structures. An initial scantlings survey was carried out, and the roof structure of the south range of the Queen's House was examined. The timber framed roof structure appears to be 16th century, and original to be the 1540's build of the Queen's House, with 17th century additions, probably added during Lieutenant Waad's alterations of the Queen's House in 1607/8. The proposed access hatch area is framed by a tie-beam of the 2nd bay in the central gable from the north, in between the bridging joist and a trimmer. It appears to have been the location of an earlier hatch (510mm x 750mm), which has subsequently made good by later, low quality piecing in.

Aims and Objectives

The aim of the work is to record for posterity that part of the roof which is to be removed and to produce an archive of any drawings, photos and written description. The work focused only on the small area that is to be removed and not the roof structure as a whole.

Methodology

The area of roof that is to be removed was planned at a scale of 1:10 on archivally stable permatrace, digitally photographed with scale and a short written description was produced. A full report was not required by HRP and this short summary statement was principally produced to accompany the archive drawing.

Description *(See drawing and digital photos)*

The area to be removed is approximately 52cm by 75cm and is framed by the tie-beam of the 2nd bay in the central gable on the north side and on the east side by the large bridging joist. Two original joists have been cut on the west side and a narrow modern timber nailed to them to frame the area. The south side is framed by a complete original joist. Original common joists are joined to the bridging joist with bare-faced diminished haunched tenons.

Two narrow modern timbers have been inserted east west into the area where a possible earlier hatch was located. These are roughly nailed into the modern timber on the west side and the bridging joist on the east side with diagonal nailing.

Beneath the timber frame is a rough lath and plaster infill. The laths are approximately 2-3cm in width and are spaced close together. The plaster is a rough, coarse white lime plaster.

There are two mortices for bare-faced diminished haunch tenons in the bridging joist, which are likely to have housed the tenons of the original joists. These however are out of line with the existing truncated joists. These may have been moved when the earlier hatch was inserted or when the modern timbers and lath and plaster infill were pieced in.

Conclusion

The area surveyed is not a part of the original fabric of the roof and therefore is not of great historic significance, nor does it contribute greatly to the historic character of the roof space.

Deirdre Forde
20/10/10