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Discovering Old Welsh Houses

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North West Wales Dendrochronology Project: Trefadog, Llanfaethlu



North West Wales Dendrochronology Project: Trefadog, Llanfaethlu

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Prepared for : North Wales Dendrochronology Project

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North West Wales Dendrochronology Project

Trefadog, Llanfaethlu, Anglesey. NGR SH 29288613

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North West Wales Dendrochronology Project

Trefadog, Llanfaethlu, Anglesey. NGR SH 29288613

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North West Wales Dendrochronology Project

Trefadog, Llanfaethlu, Anglesey. NGR SH 29288613

Location

In isolated coastal location

Community Council: Llanfaethlu

County: Anglesey

PRN: 11212

NPRN: 15896

Listed Building Status: II, Record Number 2305

Introduction

This report contains the results of a survey undertaken to complement the dating of timbers at Trefadog, Llanfaethlu, Anglesey as part of the North West Wales Dendrochronology project. The survey was undertaken on 17 February 2012.

Documentary research will be undertaken by volunteers to accompany this survey, and separate reports will be issued describing the results of the documentary survey and of the dendrochronology sampling.

A brief for the survey was provided by North West Wales Dendrochronology Project, and Gwynedd Archaeological Trust provided a design to meet the specification of the brief.

Methodology

The survey was undertaken using tapes and distance-measuring recorders. A scaled plan at ground and first floor level was produced on site, and all significant timbers were drawn to scale on site. Access to the upper roof space was not possible, so no details of the ridge or upper part of the crucks can be provided.

Survey report

Trefadog lies in an exposed coastal position on the west coast of Anglesey, opposite Holyhead. In medieval times it was a free township held by the heirs of Cadrod Hardd (Carr 1982, 152). Three hundred metres south of the house is a heavily defended coastal earthwork which excavation showed to be of late Viking date (c. AD 10th – 11th century).

The house is accompanied by a group of farm buildings, no longer in agricultural use, one range of which has been converted into domestic use. The farm buildings were not examined in detail, but none appeared to be earlier than late 18th century, and the majority were thought to be 19th century in date.

The present house contains the remains of a late medieval hall house with two-bay hall divided by a jointed cruck, a cross passage at the north end, and two outer rooms below the cross-passage. Two further jointed crucks define the two sides of the cross-passage. The present exterior of the house reflects a refurbishment in the 18th century, when the first floor was inserted and gabled dormers constructed (see plate 1). The house was considerably refurbished c. 1980, when the Georgian interior was removed, and the plan layout of the late medieval house was re-established.

The house is aligned approximately north-south, parallel to the coast edge, and is in a slight hollow 50m from the sea. The house is of two storeys, of rendered stone. The slate roof is modern. There are three rectangular chimney stacks, two at the gables and one to the left (south) of centre. The main front faces east, with an off-centre door to the north, two replaced sash windows to the south and one to the north. Four gabled dormers, all fitted with replaced sash windows, light the first floor. The north side of the house has a catslide addition occupying the north half, of probable 19th century date, though with modern horizontal casement windows in the west wall. The south side of the house is lit by a sash window on the ground floor and two gabled dormers on the first floor. A rear door lies in the corner created by the catslide extension (see plate 2).

The east front door opens into the medieval cross-passage, now a hall with stairs. The downstairs plan layout reflects the original medieval house. To the left of the front door is access to the two-bay hall, with an open fireplace on the south gable wall, and another blocked chimney in the east passage wall. The date of the latter is not known. The ceiling is supported by a large central longitudinal beam and another beam running the full length of the east wall, both put in during the modern refurbishment. The present bressumer over the south gable fireplace is a re-used timber, with three mortise holes in the north face. There is a simple chamfer, with no stops, on the lower corner, which looks clean and relatively late. The surface of the beam has been roughened to take a coat of plaster.

Modern stairs at the south end of the hall provide access to a single bedroom and adjoining bathroom which occupy one bay. There is no modern access at first floor level between these rooms and those on the first floor to the north. The central cruck is clearly visible in this room (described below), as is the projecting chimney on the north gable.

The modern hall stairs provide access to the northern part of the first floor. Above the south bay of the living room (the medieval hall) lie two rooms – currently a bedroom and office. Beyond the cross-passage lie another bedroom and bathroom.

The medieval crucks

There are three medieval crucks – either side the cross passage and across the centre of the medieval hall. These will be described from south to north. Only parts of each are visible, and none were visible above the first floor ceiling height, so the ridges were not recorded.

The cruck which divides the hall consists of two principals which disappear into the wall on either side. These have a jointed vertical post which curves onto the principal to form the bend of the cruck. The two are fastened by a wide mortise and tenon joint held with three pegs. It is not possible to see how far the vertical post goes into the wall. None of the vertical posts appear to go below the level of the present first floor, and it is not known if they ever went below that level. An arch-braced collar beam is partly visible below first-floor ceiling level – the remainder hidden by the ceiling. The braces are joined to the collar and principals by mortise and tenon joints (see plates 1 to 6).

The cruck forming the south side of the screens passage is only partially visible and appears to have been modified on the west side. The arch-bracing to the collar beam on the east side links to a vertical post. There is only a small section left of this, as it has been cut by a door, but it is probable that this vertical post once continued down to ground floor level, and formed part of the screens partition. A vertical wall post, but with less of a curve than on the hall cruck, is linked to the end of the principal, and continues downwards in the lateral wall. This is partly mirrored on the west side, but the vertical post has been replaced with a modern one lower down the principal. Two dowel holes mark the likely location of the original vertical post. There is no evidence for a curving brace to the collar beam, though not enough of the collar beam is visible to confirm if one formerly existed (see plates 7 to 9).

The northern passage cruck is different again. Here the principles are jointed onto vertical wall plates, but there is no collar beam visible, nor any bracing. A housing for a tie beam, however, lies across the cruck joint on the south face – an odd arrangement, but possibly original. The tie beam has been removed, but a housing exists on both east and west sides. The different nature of this truss suggests the outer rooms were two storey (see plates 10 to 12).

At the north end of the house a single principal is visible a short distance from the north gable on the east side. This is not medieval, but the remainder of the truss was not visible, so its purpose and status are not clear. Access into the adjoining bedroom was not possible, so it is not known if a similar principal was visible on the west side.

Dendrochronology sampling

Full details of the dendrochronological sampling have not been provided.

Conclusions

Trefadog is a good example of a two-bay hall house with screens passage and outer rooms. Only small parts of the trusses are visible, but they can be classed as jointed crucks, with arch-braced collar beams. The outer screens division appears not to have had a collar beam, certainly not at the level of the other two crucks, but did have a tie beam, perhaps reflecting the two storey nature of this end of the house.

References

Carr, A. D., 1982 *Medieval Anglesey*, Anglesey Antiquarian Society.

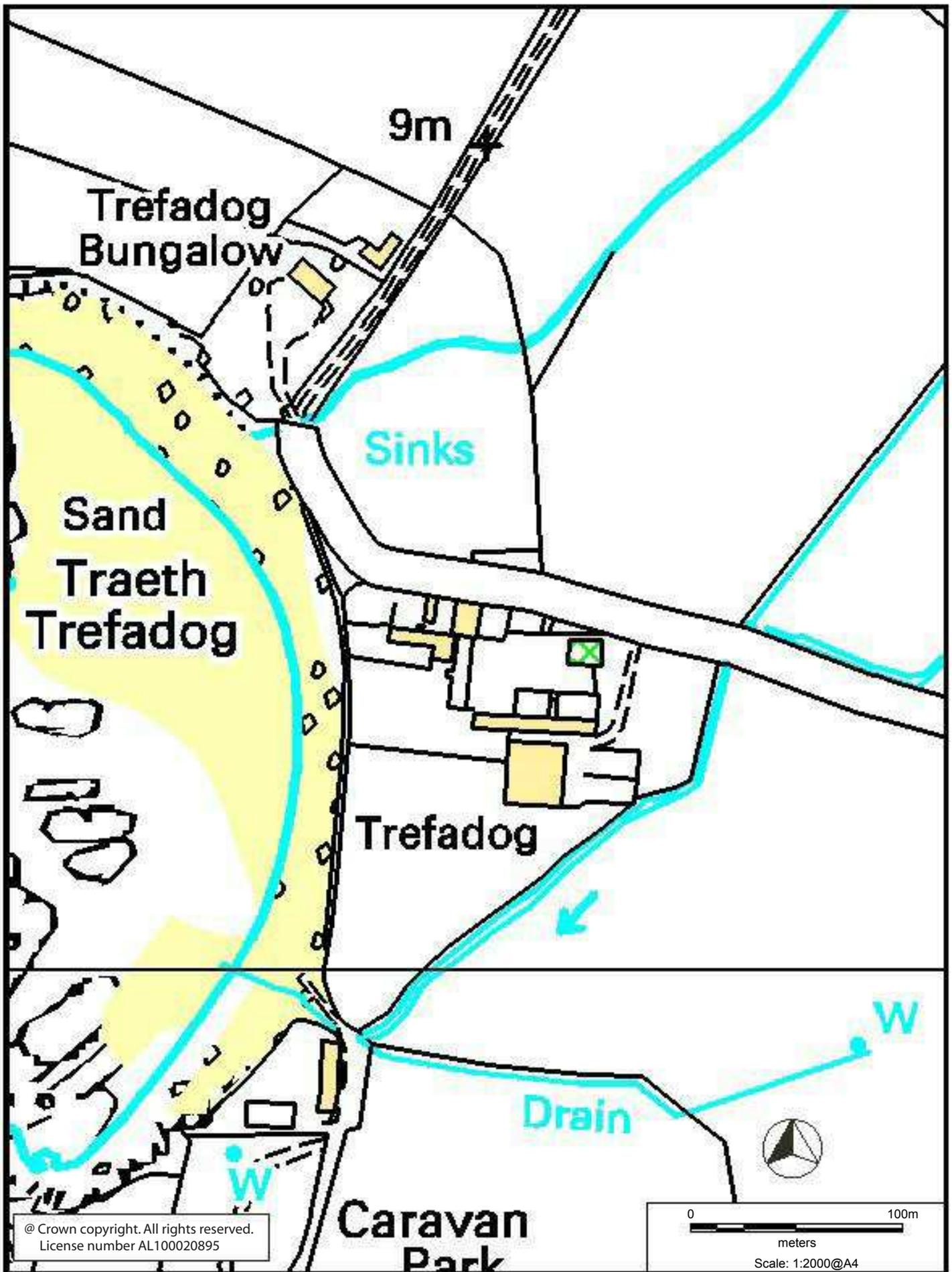


Figure 1 Trefadog location map

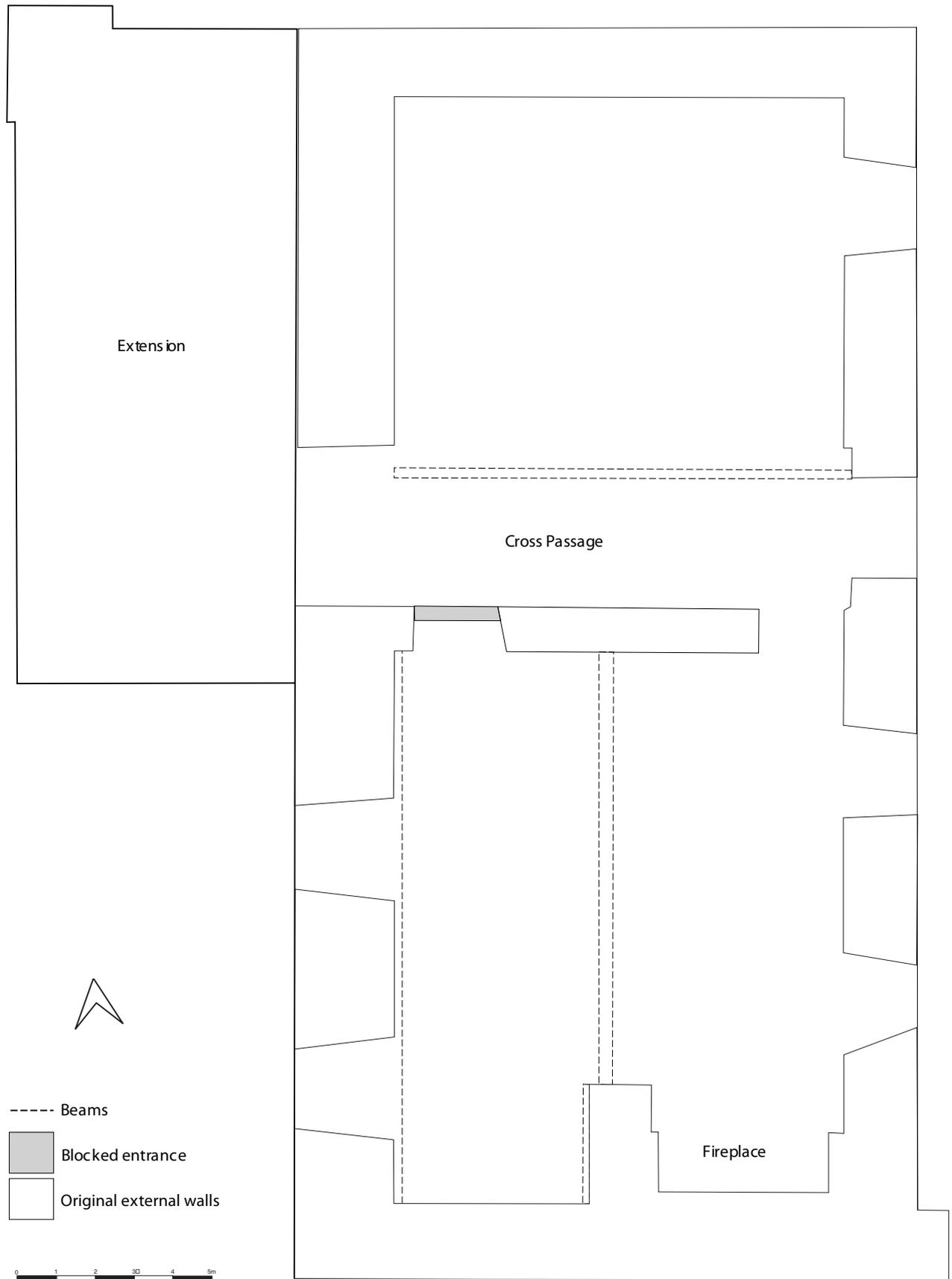


Figure 2 Trefadog, ground floor plan

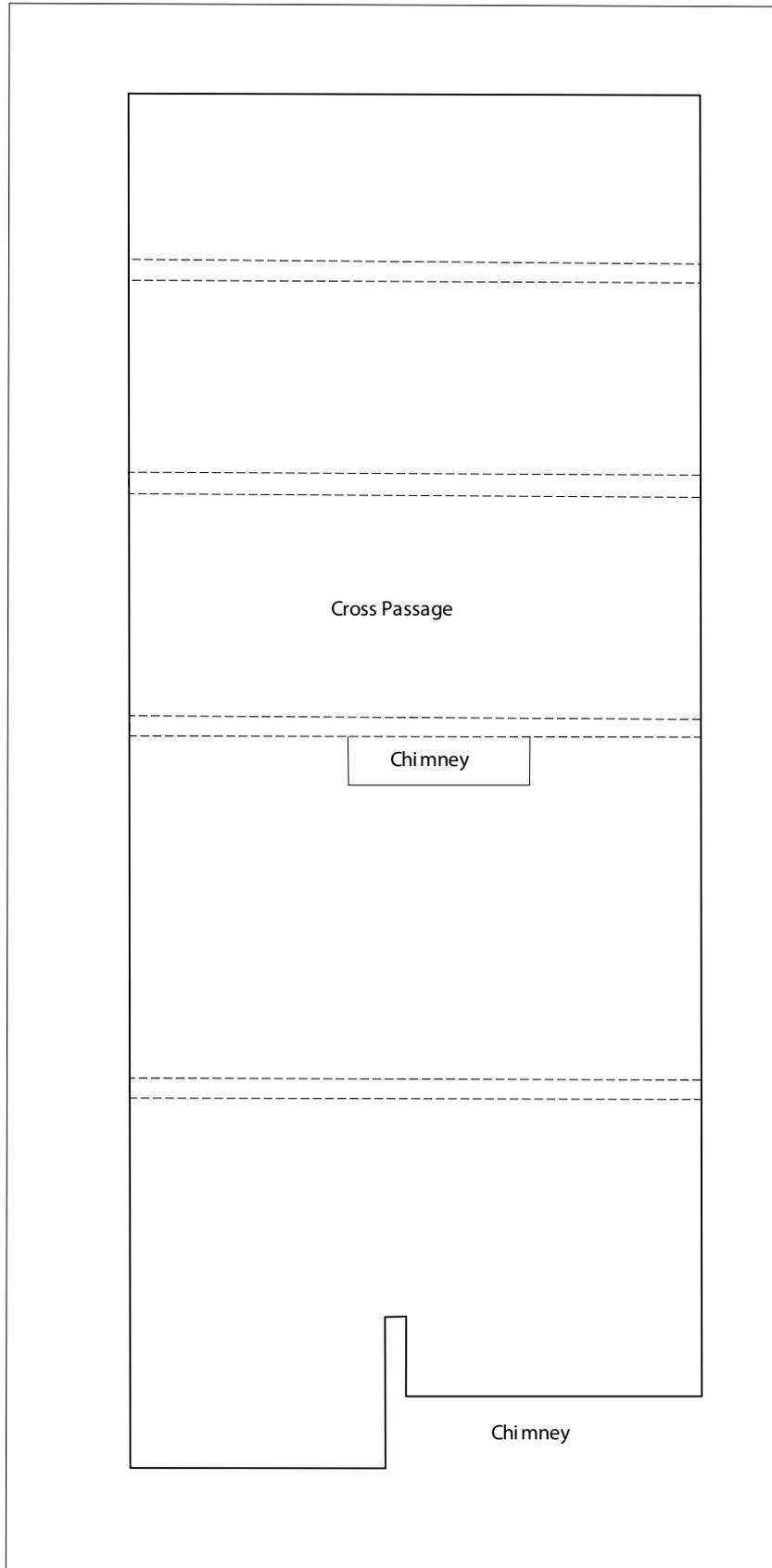
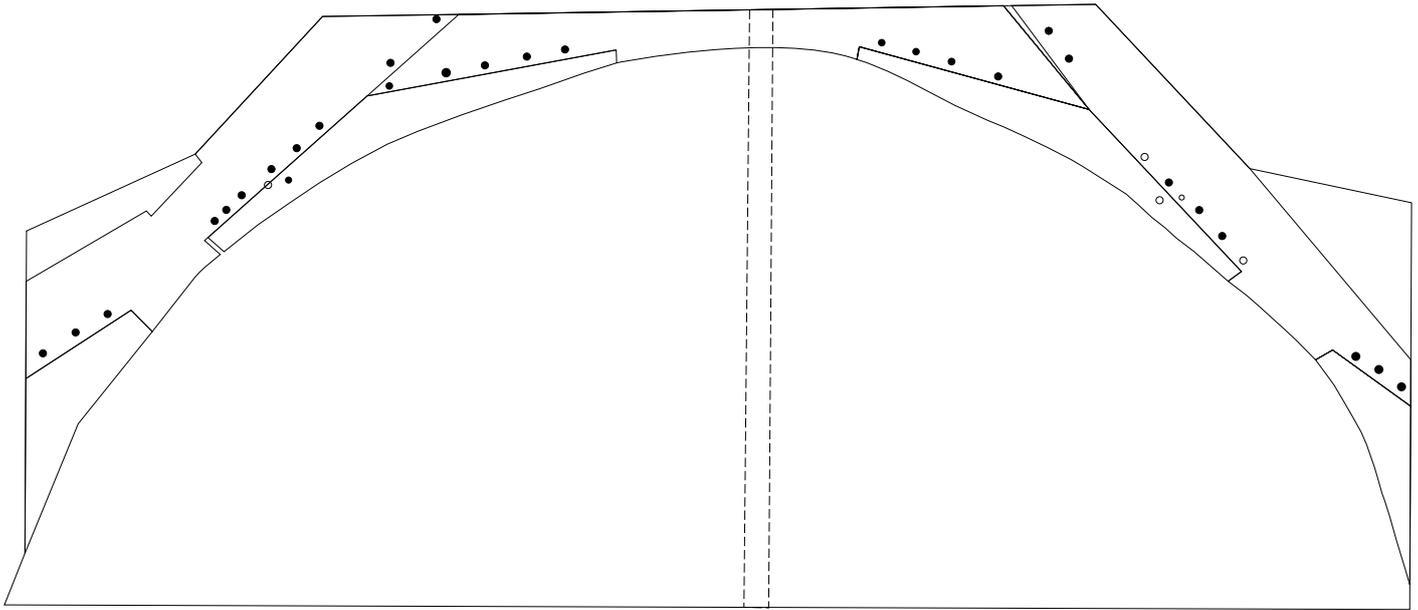
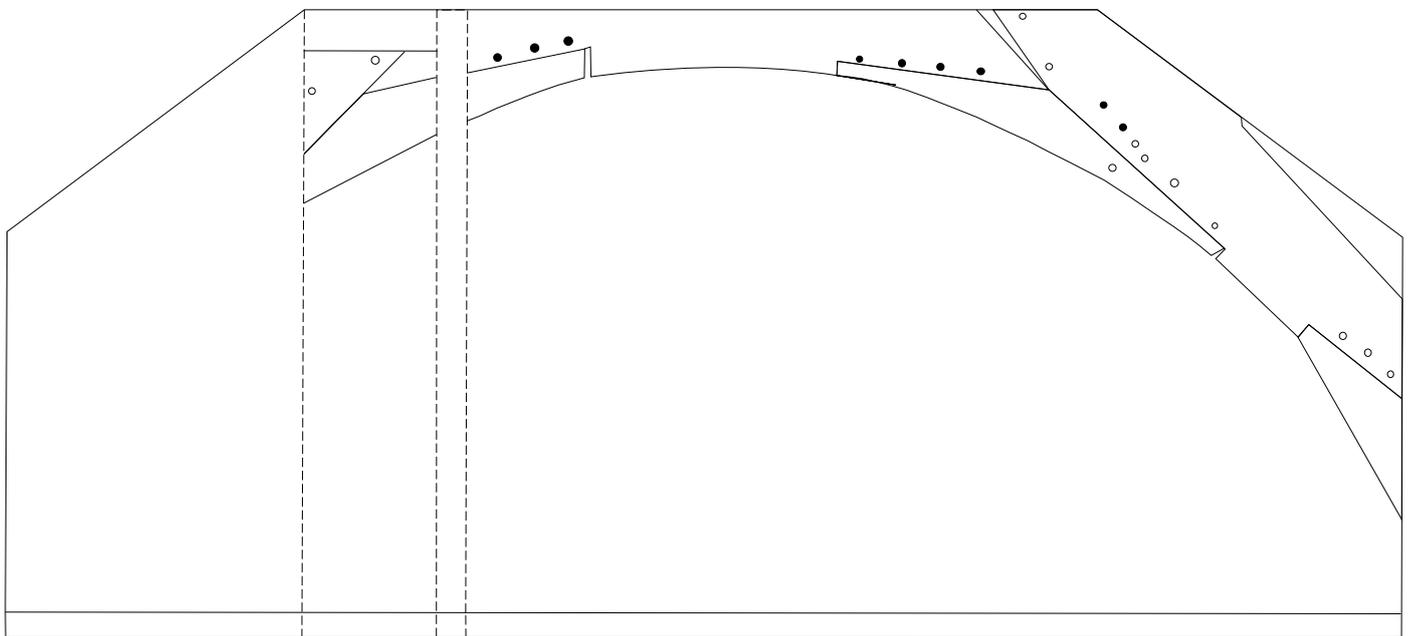


Figure 3: Trefadog, first floor plan

The northern face of the southern cruck which divides the hall



The southern face of the southern cruck which divides the hall



Wooden Peg



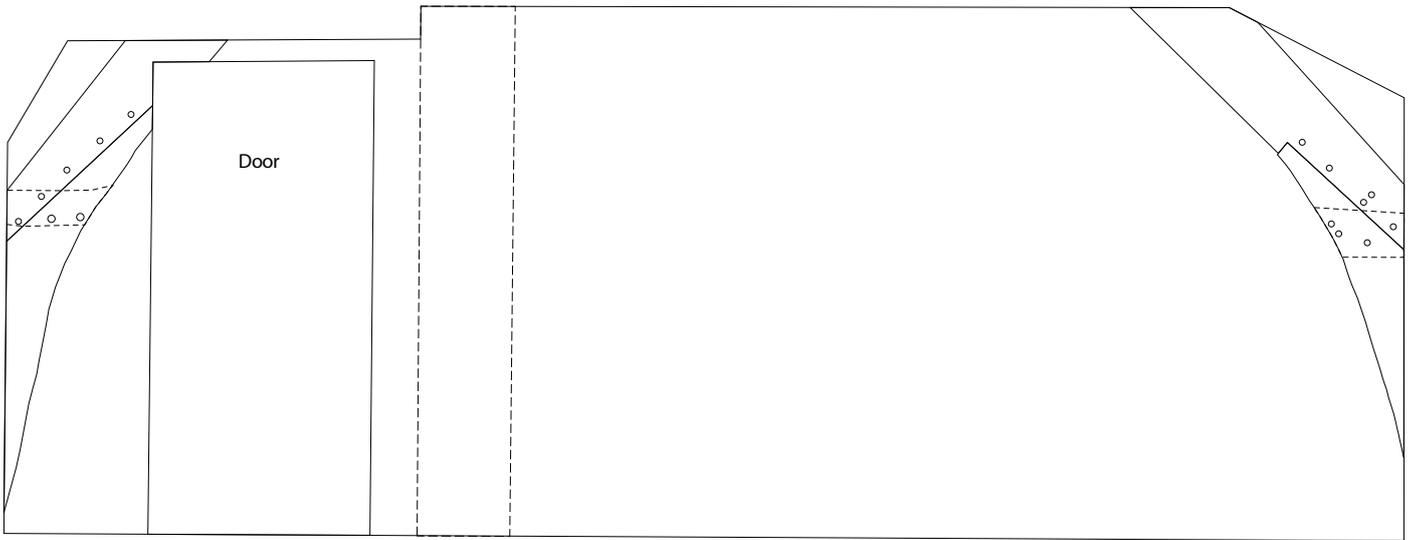
Peg Hole

----- Internal Partition Walls

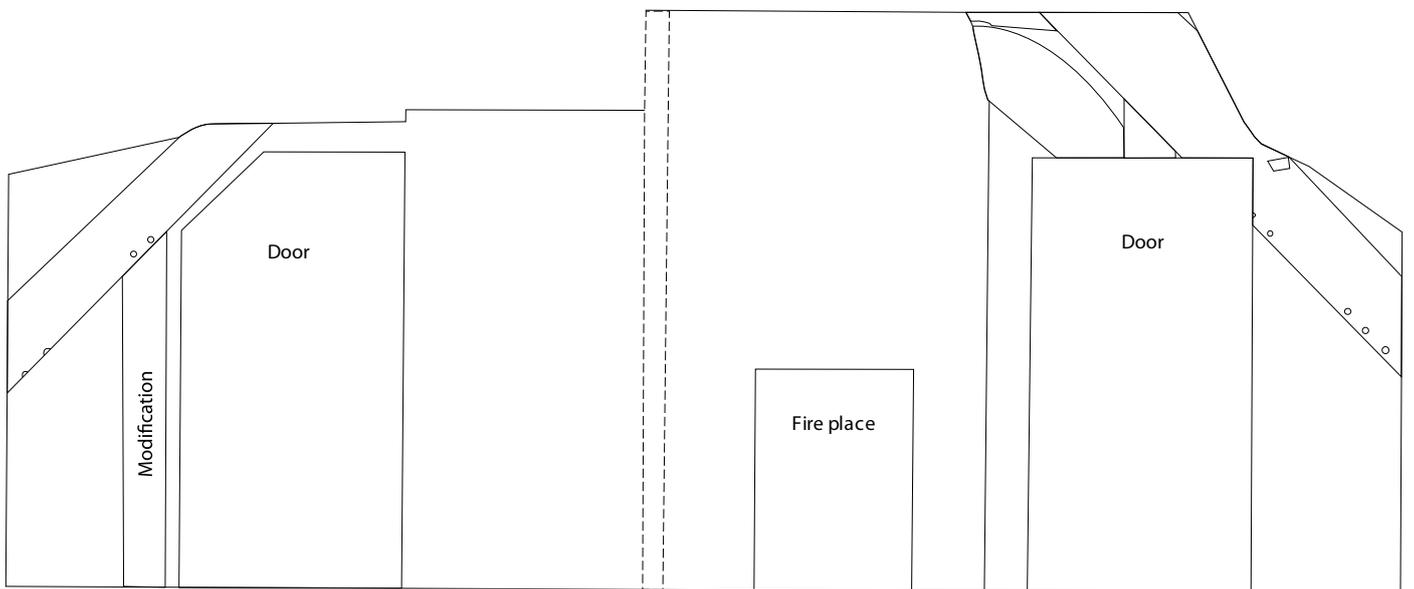


Figure 4 Trefadog, southern cruck

The southern face of the cruck on the northern side of the cross passage



The southern face of the cruck on the southern side of the cross passage



● Wooden Peg

○ Peg Hole

----- Internal Partition Walls



Figure 5: Trefadog, the crucks on the northern and the southern sides of the cross passage



Plate 01: The eastern elevation of Trefadog; view from the northeast.



Plate 02: The western elevation of Trefadog; view from the northwest.



Plate 3: The eastern side of the southern face of the southern cruck which divides the hall; view from the south.



Plate 4: Close up of the pegs which join the jointed vertical post with the principal to form the bend of the southern cruck. This is the western side of the southern face; view from the south.



Plate 5: The western side of the northern face of the southern cruck which divides the hall; view from the north.



Plate 6: The eastern side of the northern face of the southern cruck which divides the hall; view from the north.



Plate 7: The eastern side of the southern face of the central cruck which forms the south side of the screens passage; view from the south.



Plate 08: The western side of the southern face of the central cruck which forms the south side of the screens passage



Plate 9: The eastern side of the northern face of the central cruck which forms the southside of the screens passage; view from the north.



Plate 10: The eastern side of the southern face of the northern cruck which forms the southside of the screens passage



Plate 11: The eastern side of the northern face of the northern cruck which forms the northside of the screens passage; view from the north.



Plate 12: Close up of the housing for a tie beam on the eastern side of the southern face of the northern cruck, which forms the southside of the screens passage; view from the south.



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