



# Darganfod Hen Dai Cymreig

## Discovering Old Welsh Houses

Reports: Welcome to the many Discovering Old Welsh Houses Reports which are available here on our website. All the reports - House Histories, Building Reports and Tree-ring Dating reports - can be accessed - [here](#)

Discovering Old Welsh Houses studies and celebrates the traditional houses of North Wales and the lives of the people who lived in them.

The copyright of most of these reports belongs to Discovering Old Welsh Houses. Where copyright resides with others, we have made every effort to obtain their permission to reproduce reports on our site. Our policy is to allow free access to our research documents as part of the public benefit we provide as a registered charity. You are welcome to reproduce this material but if you do so, please acknowledge the source

If you find the content useful, please consider becoming a [Member](#) to access the many benefits available.



Please note that these reports are being updated as part of an ongoing programme of revision. Older reports sometimes refer to the old names of the Group. Between 2005 and 2012 also known as The Snowdonia Dendrochronology Project, then the N W Wales Dendrochronology Project and then the Dating Old Welsh Houses Group.

New reports will be added from time to time. Keep an eye on our website for updates.



©Discovering Old Welsh Houses Group

Rhif Elusen Gofrestredig: No: 1131782: Registered charity

[www.discoveringoldwelshhouses.co.uk](http://www.discoveringoldwelshhouses.co.uk)

---

North West Wales Dendrochronology Project

**16a & 18 Palace Street, Caernarfon**

---



***Adam Voelcker*** MA (Cantab) Dip Arch RIBA AABC IHBC  
Pant Glas Uchaf, Pant Glas, Garndolbenmaen, Gwynedd LL51 9DQ

# **North West Wales Dendrochronology Project**

## **16a & 18 Palace Street, Caernarfon**

### **Introduction**

This report contains the results of a survey undertaken to complement the proposed dating of timbers at 16a & 18 Palace Street, Caernarfon, as part of the North West Wales Dendrochronology Project. The survey was undertaken on 2 February 2010 by Adam Voelcker. 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.

### **Site particulars**

#### **Site address**

16a & 18 Palace Street, Caernarfon, Gwynedd LL55 1RR

#### **NGR**

SH 24785 36274

#### **NPRN**

16641

#### **Listing status**

Grade II\*

### **Methodology**

Only photos taken during inspection. Both houses were full of clutter, and parts were unsafe. No electricity supply available.

Location of site and presumed lines of baggage plots.

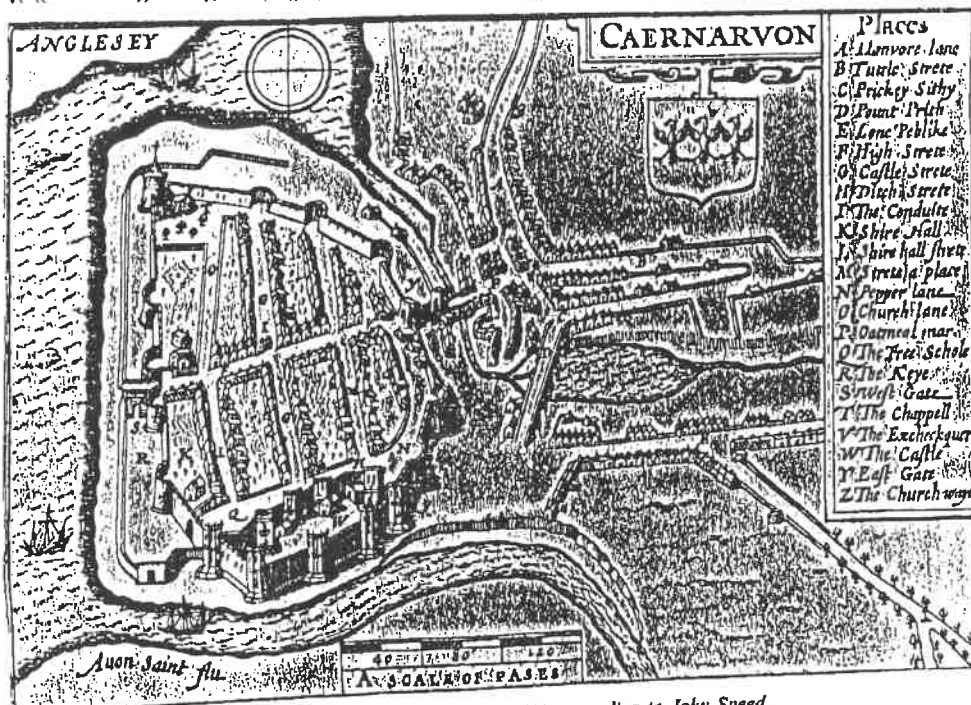


Fig. 4. CAERNARVON IN 1610, according to John Speed

CLASS Oc		6a-18 PALACE STREET NAME		SH	42	SE	Ecc. PARISH Civil LLANBEBLIG	
CO		Caernarfon		NGR		Quarter sheet of	OS MAP 6-inch or 1:10000	N.Grid series
CA	Old	Inv. No.	New	47	[ 85 ]	62	[ 73 ]	OS Ref. RCAM
						County series		

Two contiguous properties, but always separate although noted together in the Caerns.Inv.(no.1115). No.18 has a timber frame, possibly late mediaeval, and no.16a is a 17th century addition.

The street frontage of both is 19th century, the walls of rendered rubble with slate roofs. The shop window to no.18 has a central cast-iron column under the lintel, the window to no.16a is modern. The first floor windows of no.18 are four-pane Victorian sashes, that to no.16a is a three-light Yorkshire sash. The rear elevation faces into a yard, formerly known as Palace Street Court and containing small cottages, now lined with modern sheds. The walls are of rendered rubble masonry, and there is a large square projecting chimney stack with a corbel in the N face. The doorway from the passage into the court is probably 18th-19th century, and may have a reused lintel.

The interiors have been heavily altered. No.18 has a cellar below the W bay, reached by the 'vice' stair noted in the Inventory: it is, however, of brick with stone treads, and the beams over the cellar are probably 19th century. The ground floor was formerly a paint shop, with a wide shop window to the street. The ceiling is supported by cased beams, probably 19th century (one is bolted to an earlier post). The N wall retains much of the timber framing. The E corner post survives, with a tenon on the foot and a wattle groove indicating that a sole-plate supported closed framing inside the present frontage. The head of the post has been cut off. A sole-plate on a high rubble plinth carries the few remaining original posts, one of them considerably narrowed (section CC), and is also notched for later light-weight studding. Mortices in the original posts indicate cross-rails, but the framing pattern remains too incomplete for satisfactory reconstruction; there may have been full-height narrow panels (as at the Snowdon Vaults - see Caerns.Inv. II p.118). The main cross-rail survives, with peg-holed for studding above; however the existing studs are almost certainly replaced or reset, since they are jointed into the modern wall-plate and have a flush face to the inside rather than to the outside of the wall. Most of the infill has gone, but there is some (?) 19th century horizontal boarding in grooved in the edges of the posts, faced with lath and plaster; this replaces wattle and daub set between a groove in the lower plate and drill-holes in the upper plate. The W surviving post is a bay-post, with mortices for a continuation of two cross-rails. It supports a bolted-on 19th century ceiling-beam, and on the S face is a scarfed and pegged plate with a joint for a missing ceiling beam; this must be secondary, since there is a mortice at a higher level for an original cross-beam in the opposite post. The S wall retains some shop fittings. There is one original post remaining, its face cut back. It has a shallow mortice and a peg, probably from the removed support for the secondary main beam: just above the modern floor-level is the mortice for an original cross-beam. W of the post the wall is of brick above a tall stone plinth. At the W end is a tall fixed-light window with angled reveals. The thick W wall



NAME		NGR		Quarter sheet of	Eccl. PARISH..... Civil	OS MAP 6-inch or 1:10000	N. Grid series	OS Ref.	RCAM
CLASS									
CO	Old	Inv. No.	New		County series				

- 2 -

is of plastered rubble masonry, with a 19th century doorway leading into a modern store. A 19th century stair leads to the first floor, crossing a splayed window. The first floor has a 19th century cast iron grate in a small projecting chimney. The roof has been altered, so that the E half has the ridge parallel to the street. One original truss remains (section BB), a closed tie-beam truss (possibly with a central open panel) on jowled wall-posts, with straight wind-braces under the through purlins. There were two posts below the tie to a now-missing cross-beam: no details survive below the modern floor. None of the original wall-plates remain.

No.16a, formerly a cobbler's shop, is reached from the passage into Palace Street Court. This passage is evidently secondary, since its S wall is of light studding infilled with brick and lath-and-plaster which cuts across an ogee-stopped ceiling beam. The N wall of the passage is of brick infilling timber framing (section DD); it is not clear how much of the framing is original, apart from the cross-rail and the central stud. The other end of the ceiling beam is tenoned through the timber-framed wall of no.18. Most of the joists are 19th century. There is a 19th century fireplace with a cast iron range in the W wall; a deep recess adjacent may have been part of a wider original fireplace. The corner of the E wall abuts the corner-post of no.18. A 19th century stair (now removed) led to the first floor, which oversails the passage. It has an 18th-19th century ceiling beam (small in scantling with thin chamfers) and contemporary joists, supported at one end by a post resting on the ceiling beam below and at the other end by a post under the tie beam of the N truss. There is a small casement window in the W wall in a narrowed embrasure, and a brick blocking <sup>with plastered sides</sup> in the face of the chimney breast which suggests the location of a reduced and then blocked fireplace. The N wall has a thin timber frame, with fillets nailed to the posts to form grooves to take a boarded infill under lath-and-plaster. The attic has a modern roof-line parallel to the street. In the N wall is the truss, now redundant since the eaves have been raised. It is closed above a cranked tie-beam, and had wind-braces below the lower purlins. The lack of evidence for wallposts suggests that the outer walls may have been of stone.

The building is evidently of several phases of development. No.18 is the older, and probably represents a two-unit structure with an open 'hall' (gable-on to the street) and an inner room, possibly storeyed. Neither gable wall survives, and the position of the original rear gable is uncertain. The remaining part of the N wall shows no sign of doorways: the S wall has been destroyed, but the plinth survives at the W end.

CLASS		NAME		NGR		Quarter sheet of		Eccl. PARISH		Civil		OS MAP		N-Grid		OS Ref.		RCAM	
CO		Old		Inv. No.		New		OS MAP		6-inch or 1:10000		County series		N-Grid series					

- 3 -

Although not implausibly tall for its width (cf. Llai, HWC fig.38a), it would have been a very small single-bay end hall, comparable to the smaller rural hallhouses further east and south-east but smaller than most of the other halls recognised in towns in north Wales (see Table), and of a different character from them. Of the eight hall-houses in the Table, three have the hall parallel to the street, and two had a cross-wing along the street facade. In no case was it certain that the gable of the hall abutted the street. It therefore seems likely that no.18 was in fact the cross-wing to a now-missing hall. The lack of ~~doorways~~ doorways through the north wall implies that any missing building ran southwards, and this is supported by the probable line of the mediaeval land-divisions.

Burgage plots in Caernarfon are known to have measured 60ft wide by 80ft deep (Medieval Boroughs of Snowdonia p.63). Superimposition of these dimensions on to the modern map of the south end of Palace Street (taking into account Speed's map, which shows no houses fronting the castle ditch) indicates that the boundary between two plots ran between nos. 18 and 16a. This makes it possible that no.18 was a cross-wing on the northern edge of the burgage plot, with a hall running southwards: it is therefore of great interest that Speed draws precisely that on the southernmost plot in Palace Street.

The dating of the building is almost impossible to ascertain, since there are no decorative details and the framing style is not distinctive. The only clue is an unusual X-halving jointing under the tie-beam: a similar joint was seen on a reused timber at the 17th century barn at Bryniau (Llanbedr-y-Cennin). Innocent (English Building Construction p.77) illustrates an identical joint from 16th C houses near Sheffield; Hewett (English Cathedral & Monastic Carpentry fig.257) has another from Lichfield Cathedral (c.1665). It seems to be a logical extension of a lap-dovetail (Hewett, Development of English Carpentry figs 94-5) dated before the 15th century, so may be 15th-16th century in date. The structure had an open bay to the east, which was ceiled at a later date with beams tenoned into plates scarfed to the posts: this ceiling was raised in the 19th century when the present floor-beams were put in.

No.16a is a later addition; the axial ceiling beam is tenoned through the timber-framed wall of no.18, and the front wall is butted against it. However there are problems about its character. The ground floor ceiling beam is 17th century in date, and the rear chimney could well be contemporary. The truss above the north wall could be 16th century. However the first floor ceiling beam and the infill below the truss are of a later date, probably 18th century, and the truss seems to relate to a stone walled building rather than one framed in timber. So it is possible that no.16a was originally a single storeyed unit with a rear chimney, perhaps 17th-century infill between earlier structures to either side, which was raised together with the stone-walled no.16 to two-and-a-half storeys in the 18th century, the former intermediate truss above no.16 being moved to the present party wall. At the same time, ~~or later~~, the passage to Palace Street Court was

CLASS		NAME		NGR		Quarter sheet of	OS MAP	N. Grid series	OS Ref.	RCAM
CO	Old	Inv. No.	New	[ ]	[ ]		6-inch or 1:10000			
							County series			

- 4 -

constructed and the present elevation formed.

AJP  
14.1.91

TABLE - dimensions of urban hall-houses in N.Wales

Name	Hall			Wing			Notes
	L	W	Bay-length	L	W	Bay-length	
27-31 Vale St (Ruthin)*	-	4.8m	3.5m	-	-	-	Inner room in line
Gorphwysfa, Castle St (Ruthin)*	-	4.0m	3.4m	6.9m	3.5m	2.7m	TH-plan
9 Town Hill (Wrexham)*	8.0m	5.0m	4.0m	6.2m	5.0m	3.1m	(wing later)
Tudor Rose (Beaumaris)**	8.2m	5.5m	4.1m	-	7.0m	4.2m	(wing later)
Snowdon Vaults (Caernarfon)***	-	4.8m	3.5m	-	-	-	(fragment)
Old Ship (Ruthin)*	8.0m	6.0m	4.0m	-	-	-	3 units in line
Henblas (Beaumaris)**	11.0m	6.8m	-	{ (1) 10.2 (2) 10.8	5.0m 6.2m	- -	} H-plan
Bishop's Palace (Bangor)***	13.7m	6.7m	3.4m	9.2m	6.7m	-	

Sources - \* MMR

\*\* Anglesey Inventory

\*\*\* Caernarvon Inventory



## References

Cadw listing description

Record No. 3914 (see Appendix)

RCAHMMW Caernarvonshire Inventory

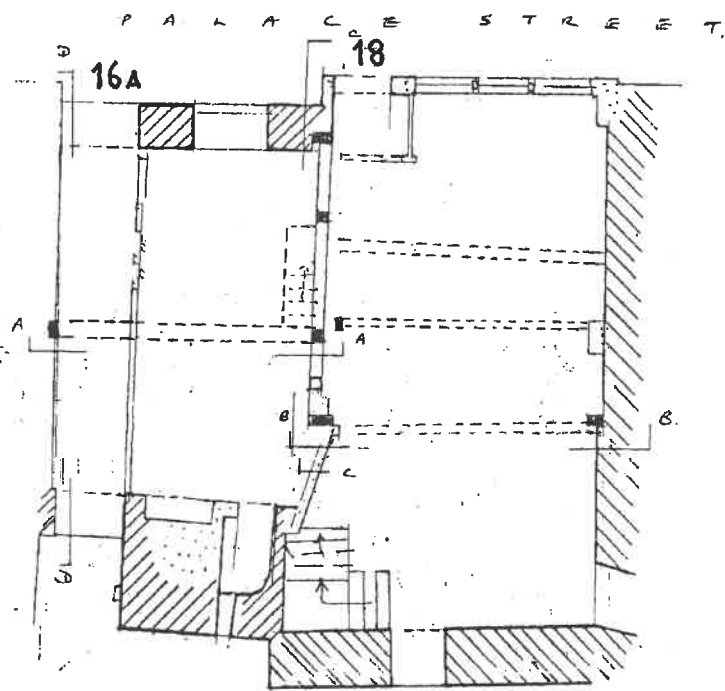
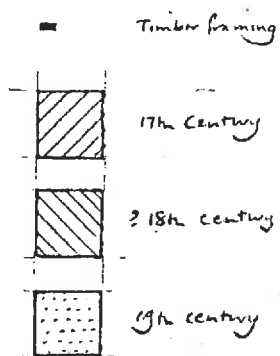
Vol.II. Entry no.1115 (p.157) (1949)

*'NOS.16a and 18, PALACE STREET. A much altered early 17<sup>th</sup>-century building with a stone vice beside the fireplace down to the cellar, the upper part of the stair being in wood. No other old features are visible.'*

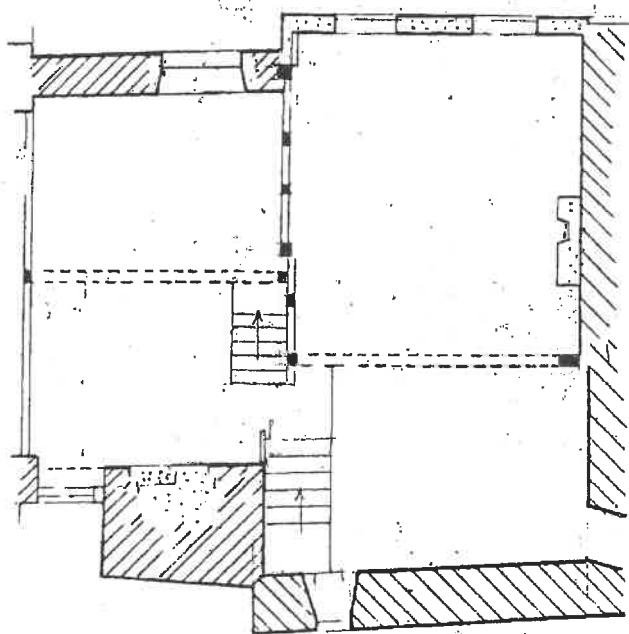
Sources of information at the NMRW, Aberystwyth

- block plan (Catalogue No. 11700)
- notes and drawings by A J Parkinson, 1991 (ref?)

NAME				COMMUNITY			
				PARISH			
1	CD	NRW	CLASS	NGR	OS CD SERIES	NMR No	NAR No
COPYRIGHT RESERVED							

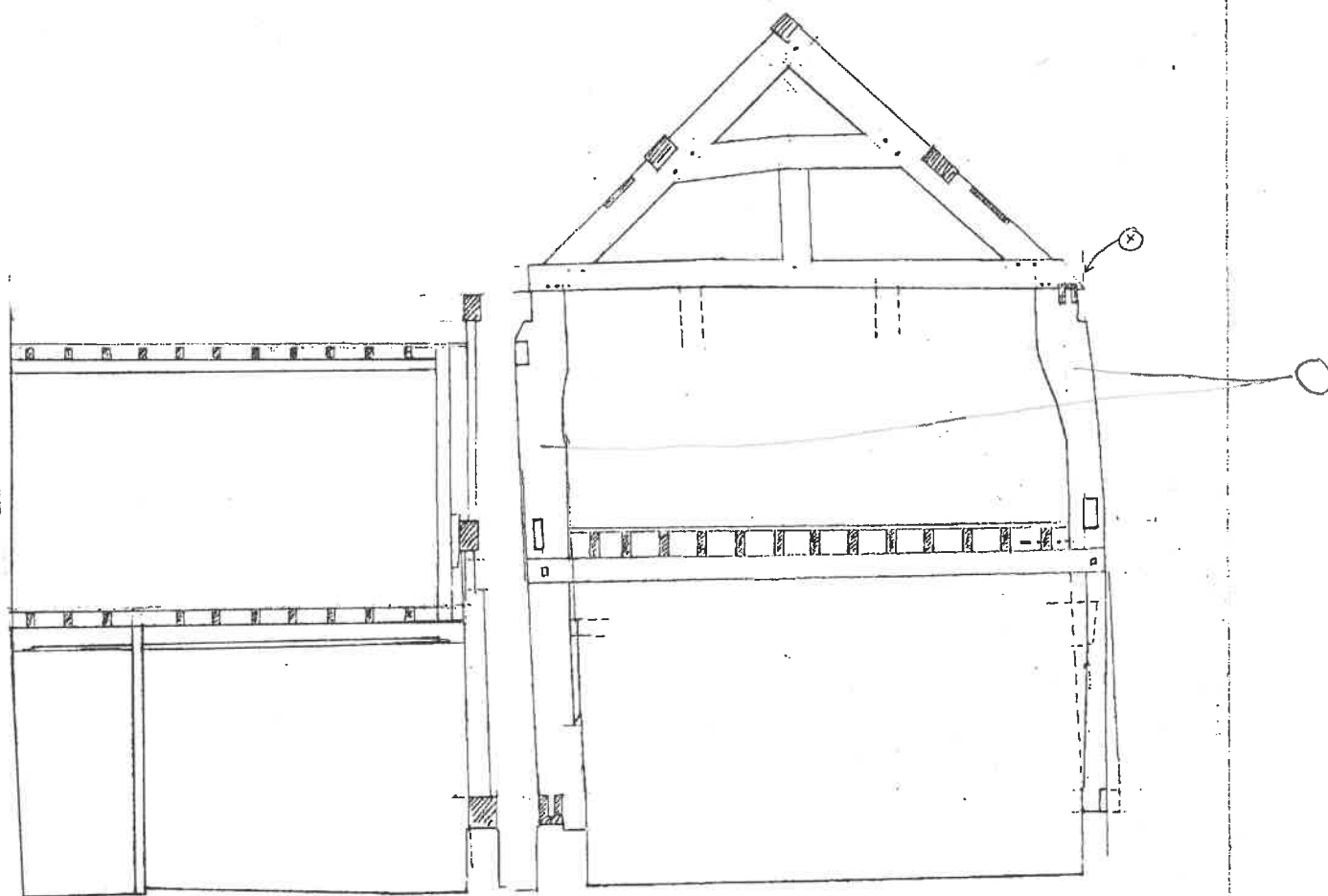


GROUND FLOOR PLAN



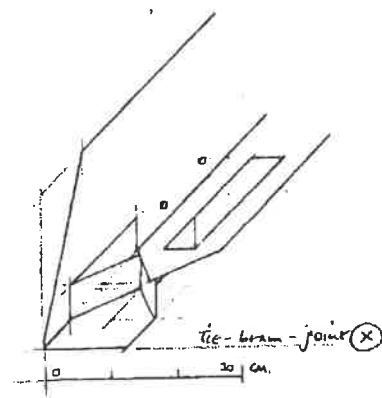
FIRST FLOOR PLAN

NAME				COMMUNITY			
				PARISH			
id	CO	new	CLASS	NGR	OS CO SERIES	NMR No	NAR No
COPYRIGHT RESERVED							

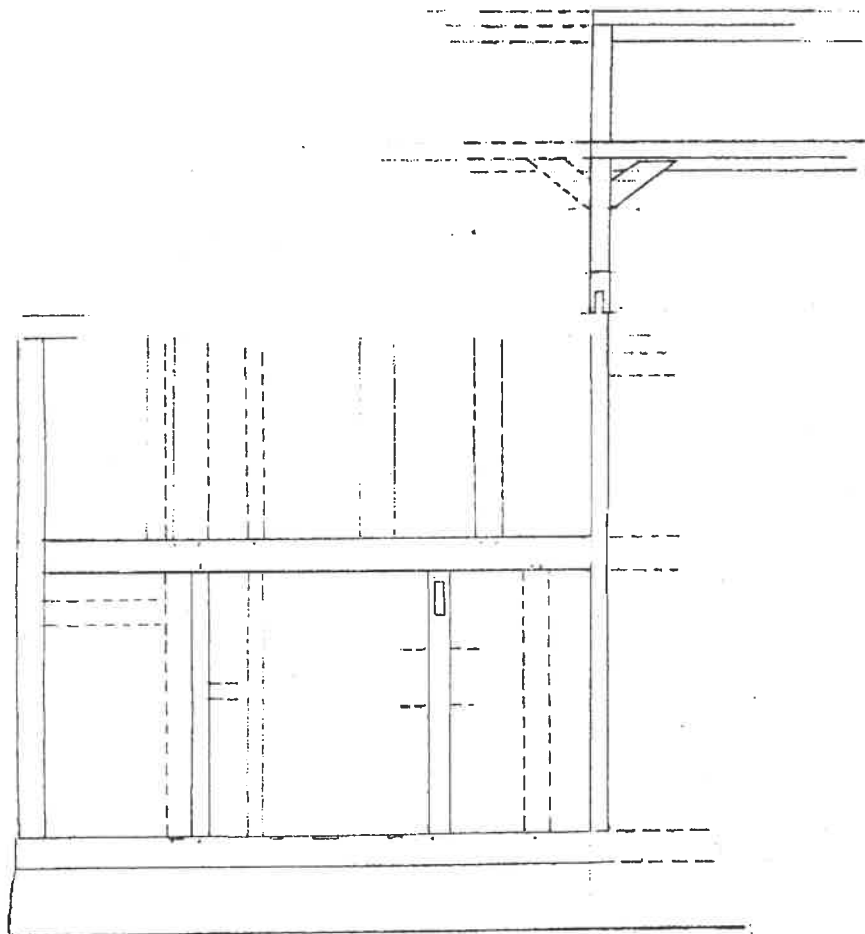


2m Section A-A

Section B-B



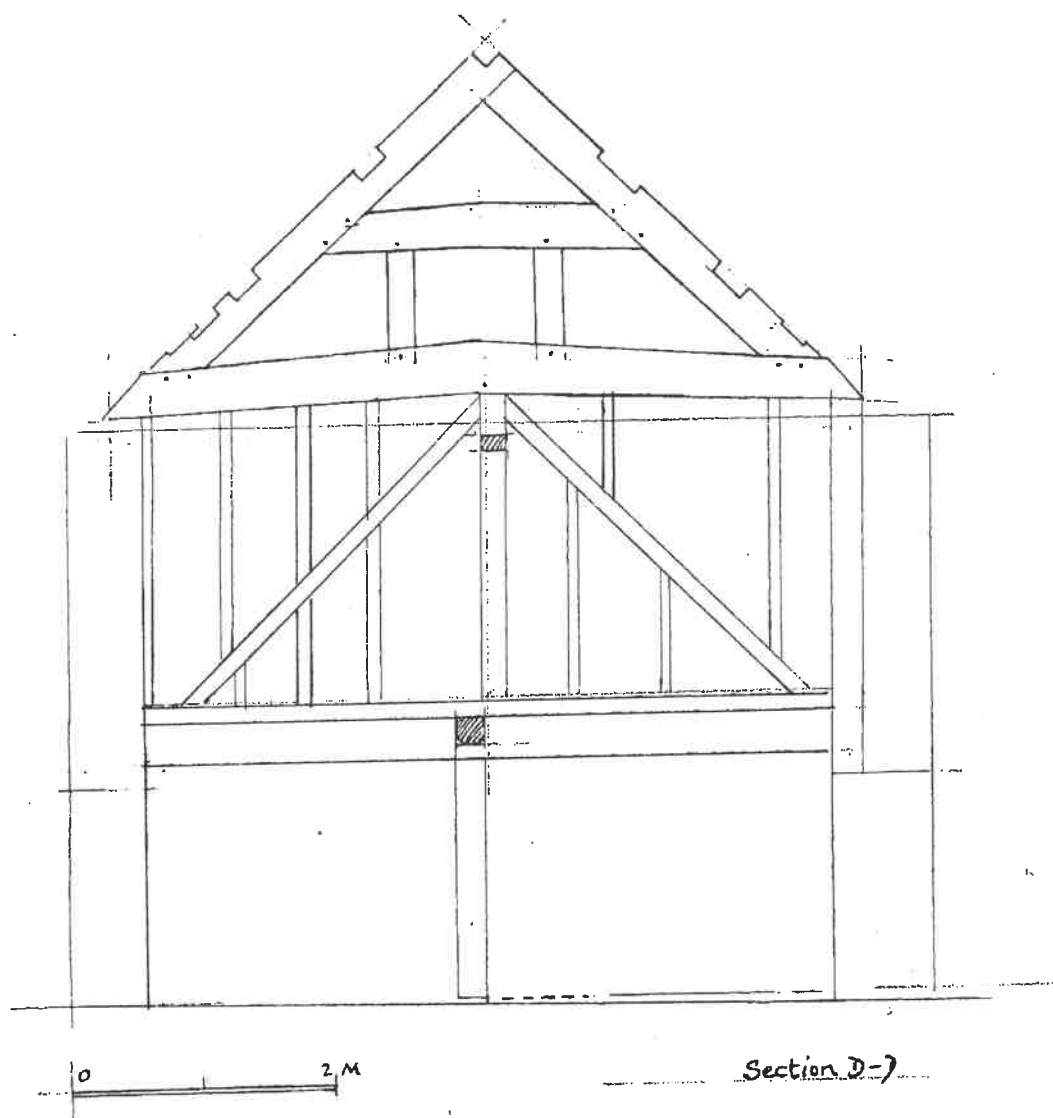
NAME				COMMUNITY			
				PARISH			
old	CO	new	CLASS	NGR		OS CO SERIES	NMR No
							NAR No
COPYRIGHT RESERVED							

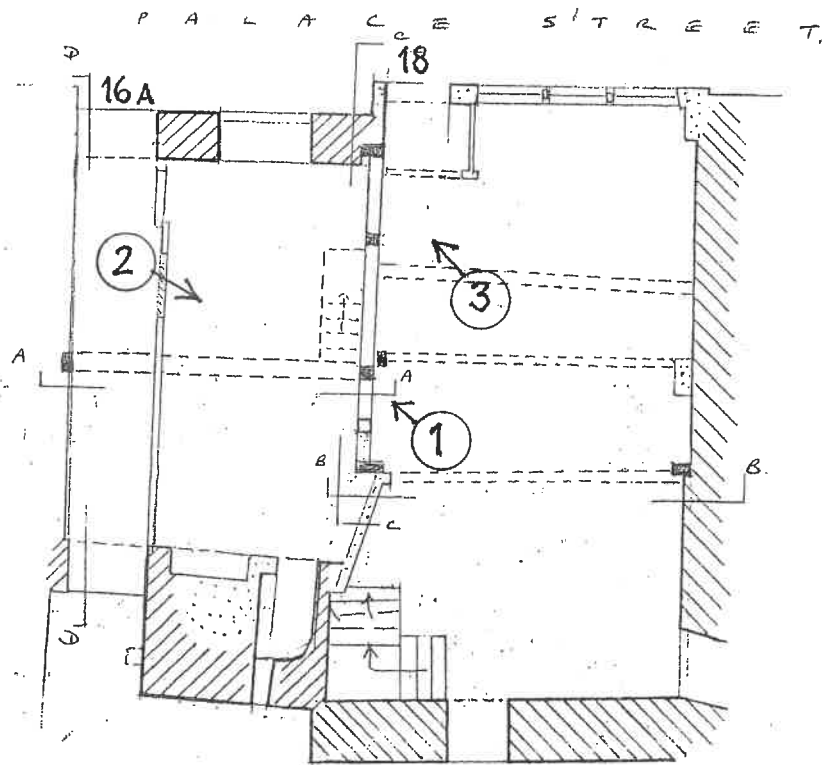
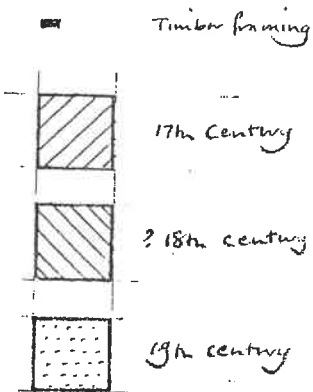


0 2M

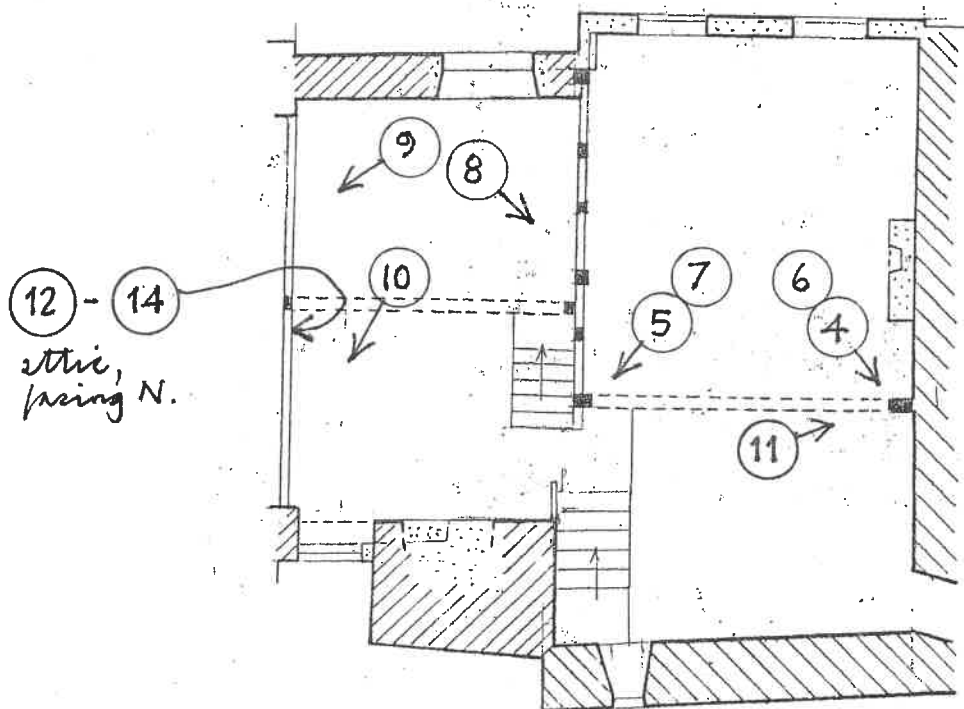
Section C-C

NAME			COMMUNITY		
			PARISH		
CO	new	CLASS	NGR	OS CO SERIES	NMR No
					NAR No
COPYRIGHT RESERVED					





GROUND FLOOR PLAN



0 3 M

FIRST FLOOR PLAN

Record of photos<sub>12</sub> (see list)



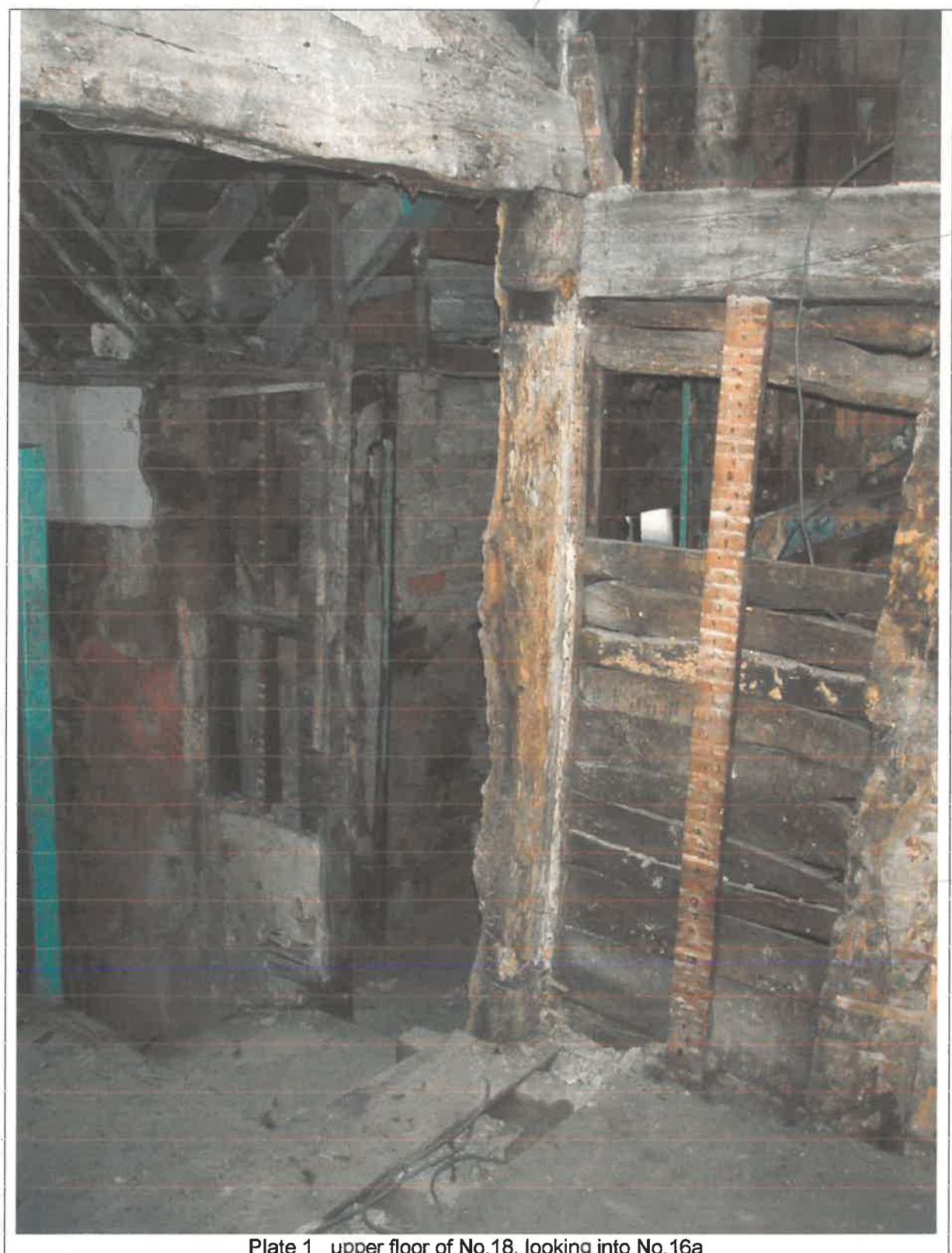


Plate 1 upper floor of No.18, looking into No.16a



Plate 2 upper floor of No.18, south end of truss at centre of house



Plate 3 upper floor of No.18, north end of truss at centre of house





Plate 4 attic floor of No.16a, truss in north wall (rear)



Plate 5 attic floor of No.16a, truss in north wall (front)





Plate 6 attic floor of No.16a, truss in north wall (centre)



Plate 7 rear of No.16a

Authority	Gwynedd	Record No	3914
		Date Listed	31/03/1983
Community	Caernarfon	Date Amended	03/05/2002 <sup>1</sup>
Locality	Walled town	Grid Ref	247850 362740
Postcode	LL55 1RR	Grade	II

#### Name

Street No, Name 16a Palace Street

Street Side W

#### Location

In a row of frontages near the S end of the street.

#### History

A small single-unit C17 house incorporating a passage to a court at the rear. The front wall was raised and a shop front with sash windows created in the late C19, perhaps when it was converted to commercial use. It was a watchmaker's shop in 1895.

#### Exterior

A 2-storey house of scribed roughcast walls and slate roof with added skylight. A panelled door is to the R, leading to an original passage, and a renewed horizontal sliding sash window is to the L. A similar sash window is in the upper storey.

The pebble-dashed rear has a large external stack partly taken down and capped. The passage is on its L side, above which is a 2-light casement.

#### Interior

The passage has a timber-framed partition with brick nogging. The roof retains a single queen-post truss abutting No 16. A lath and plaster partition is between the upper storeys of Nos 16a and 18, while in the lower storey a timber-framed partition is on a stone sill with sill beam, and retains wooden boarding.

#### Listed

Listed as one of the few buildings in the walled town retaining vernacular detail from before the substantial redevelopment of Caernarfon beginning in the late C18, and for its contribution to the historic integrity of the walled town.

#### Reference

Gwynedd Record Office, XM maps 1398/1, plan of Caernarfon, 1810;  
Slater's Directory of North Wales, 1895, p 124;  
Wood, John, Plan of the Town of Caernarvon, 1834.



Authority	<b>Gwynedd</b>	Record No	<b>3915</b>
		Date Listed	<b>31/03/1983</b>
Community	<b>Caernarfon</b>	Date Amended	<b>03/05/2002</b>
Locality	<b>Walled town</b>	Grid Ref	<b>247850 362740</b>
Postcode	<b>LL55 1RR</b>	Grade	<b>II</b>

#### Name

Street No, Name **18 Palace Street**  
Street Side **W**

#### Location

In a row of frontages near the S end of the street.

#### History

A small C17 house, probably originally with its gable end facing the street. It was converted to business premises in the C19 and by 1888 it was the Bardsey Inn. The present front, with roof higher and at right angles to the original, is probably early C20, when the building is said to have had a recessed shop front. The façade was completed in its present form in the mid C20. The form of the original building survives as a lower rear wing.

#### Exterior

A 2-storey house set forward from 16a Palace Street, of scribed roughcast brick front and slate roof. The shop front has a half-lit panelled door to the R and a shop window with wooden mullions. The doorway and window are framed by panelled pilasters, plain fascia, and dentilled cornice. In the upper storey are 2 early C20 4-pane sash windows. The pebble-dashed rear has a lower wing with brick end stack, and a later monopitched projection.

#### Interior

A stone winding stair leads to a cellar. The wooden stair to the upper storey is C19. In the upper storey of the rear wing is a single surviving C17 queen-post truss with plaster infill. A lath and plaster partition is between the upper storeys of Nos 16a and 18, while in the lower storey a timber-framed partition is on a stone sill with sill beam, and retains wooden boarding.

#### Listed

Listed as one of the few buildings in the walled town retaining vernacular detail from before the substantial redevelopment of Caernarfon beginning in the late C18, and for its contribution to the historic integrity of the walled town.

#### Reference

Gwynedd Record Office, XM maps 1398/1, plan of Caernarfon, 1810;  
Ordnance Survey, Carnarvon town sheet XV.4.13, 1888, scale 1:500;  
Slater's Directory of North Wales, 1895, p 124;  
Information from owner.

## LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS INCLUDED ON CD (see marked-up plan)

- 001 Exterior, rear (Plate 7)
- 002 ditto
- 003 ground floor wall between Nos. 16a & 18, from No. 18 looking towards rear
- 004 ditto, viewed from passage of No. 16a
- 005 ground floor wall between Nos. 16a & 18, from No. 18 looking towards front
- 006 upper floor of No. 18, south end of truss
- 007 ditto, north end of truss (Plate 1)
- 008 ditto, south end of truss (higher level) (Plate 2)
- 009 ditto, north end of truss (higher level) (Plate 3)
- 010 upper floor, wall between Nos. 16a & 18, from 16a looking towards rear
- 011 upper floor, north wall of No. 16a
- 012 ditto, viewed towards rear
- 013 upper floor, post below truss, south end detail
- 014 attic level, truss in north wall of No. 16a (Plate 4)
- 015 ditto (Plate 5)
- 016 ditto (Plate 6)
- 017 Exterior, front (on Palace Street) (cover)