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# Hen Wrych

Llanddulas Road, Abergele, Conwy B. C.

NRPN 308540 HWAR 16/18

Architectural Record, 2016

For Discovering Old Welsh Houses Group



## Final Report

December, 2016

*A report commissioned by  
The Discovering Old Welsh Houses Group in partnership with  
The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales*

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# Hen Wrych Llanddulas Road, Abergele, Clwyd. Architectural Record

## Project Data

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Community	Llanddulas and Rhyd-y-foel
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# Hen Wrych

## Llanddulas Road, Abergele,

### LL22 8EU

#### Architectural Record

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### *Summary*

*Hen Wrych is located about 3.5Km from Abergele on the south side of the A547 Abergele to Colwyn Bay road. It is now part of Conwy Borough Council and historically in Denbighshire. The A55 Expressway is just to the north and then there is access to the beach and Kinmel Bay. Hen Wrych sits on a relatively flat plain which rises very gently to the south climbing quite sharply to form an escarpment where Gwrych Castle is located in an elevated position. It is now located behind a castellated lodge which formed a secondary entrance and access to the Gwrych Estate once the seat was relocated from Hen Wrych to Gwrych Castle around 1819 or shortly after. It is centred on NGR SH 92792 78052. It is a Grade II Listed Building but there is minimal information in the National Monuments Record of Wales. This report is the result of an architectural survey and recording made in November and December and forms part of the Discovering Old Welsh Houses Project, undertaken in collaboration with the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales and dendrochronological sampling and analysis was by the Oxford Dendrochronology Laboratory in Oxford.*

*Hen Wrych, or Plas yn Gwrych using its former name, is an interesting building that is dated now to the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries using dendrochronology. Essentially, the building now comprises two rectangular ranges of similar size and fully storeyed from construction. Referred to here as the north range and the south range these ranges are staggered to form an approximate double pile in Z form. The south range comprises three bays of two floors with a two-unit ground floor plan while the north range displays further accommodation and service rooms, including basement, albeit shallow. A further floor has been introduced in this range. There are three chambers with fine ceilings and decorated, corbeled chimney pieces that are consistent with those found in the south range. A timber framed partition survives through floors 1 and 2 which appear to be primary to the construction. A striking gable has been added to the façade and a lateral chimney also rises from this elevation. The south range, entered through a rudimentary cross passage, reveals a magnificent framed ceiling of counter changing beams and joists over what was the hall and is served by a large lateral fireplace with a once external chimney. A kitchen (parlour) is beyond what may be a later partition. Heated by corbeled fireplace. It seems possible that a further bay existed at the far end NE of the hall and references to this possibility have come from former owners. Upstairs the bathroom reveals what remains of a once impressive close-studded timber-framed closed partition that extends into the loft. As the roof has been completely*

*A report commissioned by The Discovering Old Welsh Houses Group in partnership with The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales*

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*replace,d with just two early trusses extant, it is possible that the first floor rooms were open to the roof. It is problematic visualising the arrangement on this floor. There are now two large bedrooms, fashioned in the 18th or 19th centuries and a corridor that serves the length of the building but it seems possible that there may have been a further large chamber above the hall that was subsequently converted to bedrooms.*

*The plan seems redolent of houses in Denbighshire that boasted a lateral chimney against the hall, with parlour and service rooms either end of the hall but here with a further range added almost simultaneously. Tree ring dating seems to confirm this from timbers in both ranges while the first recorded occupant is David Lloyd, living here in 1608. Architecturally, the north range exhibits much of interest while the south range seems to have had the more thoroughgoing 'makeover' externally.*

*What is evident, and confusing, is that there has been considerable remodelling of the building. Much of the masonry around windows has been altered and it is said part of the buildings at Hen Wrych were demolished to reduce the size of the house. This may be correct but it is not immediately evident that this has occurred. The current footprint was recorded on the 1839 Tithe Apportionment map so it was established by then. Many early windows of sandstone have survived but some look as if they have been reset while iron windows of Gothic design were introduced by Thomas Rickman after 1819. The house was used as an office and accommodation from about 1820.*

*It would certainly be worthwhile undertaking further exploration and research to establish the early development and transition of the house before the 1819 conversions took place.*

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1.1 Background to the project

1.1.2 Hen Wrych was recorded in November and was commissioned by Margaret Dunn and the Discovering Old Welsh Houses Group (DOWHG). The resulting report would be used in conjunction with dendrochronological sampling by the Oxford Dendrochronology Laboratory (ODL) to ascertain a date of construction and to form part of the DOWHG's research into houses in Conwy and North East Wales and this work was undertaken in partnership with the Royal Commission on Ancient & Historic Monuments Wales (RCAHMW).

## 1.2 Site Location and Recording

1.2.1 Hen Wrych is located on the south side of the A547 Abergele to Colwyn Bay road about 3.5Km west of Abergele and is within Conwy Borough Council, but historically in Denbighshire. (Fig 1 & 2) The A55 Expressway is just to the north and then there is access to the beach and Kinmel Bay. Hen Wrych is centred on NGR SH 92792 78052 and sits on a relatively flat plain which rises very gently from the beach towards the south before rising quite sharply to form an escarpment where Gwrych Castle, the successor 'seat' is located in an elevated position to the SW. A castellated lodge and barns exist on the site but some buildings have been lost.

1.2.2 Hen Wrych is on the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest under ID 19038 and no information of note is held on the National Monuments Records of Wales in 2016.

1.2.3 This standing building record was requested to inform the Project about the architectural and historical development of the house located on the site. Dendrochronological sampling and analysis was undertaken by Dr. Martin Bridge and Dr. Dan Miles of the Oxford Dendrochronological Laboratory (ODL) and sampled by Ross Cook in the Spring of 2016 and their report (June 2016) places the felling date range of 1590 -1605. From this it is concluded that the construction date falls within this date range or thereabouts.

### **1.3 Extent of Report**

1.3.1 The report refers to the 'Design Brief for Historic Building Recording' of July 2016 and prepared by Margaret Dunn, the Project Director.

1.3.2 The following report gives the results of the building survey and has been prepared in accordance with English Heritage guidelines as published in Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice (EH 2016) and the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers' Analysis & Recording for the Conservation and Control of Works to Historic Building (ALGAO, 1997).

1.3.3 Fieldwork was conducted over two and a half days on November 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>. The report was prepared upon research and survey correct in December 2016.

### **1.4 References to buildings and estate**

1.4.1 Research was based upon online references to previous work. Coflein does not mention any visit and survey relating to Hen Wrych itself but does have reports on the adjacent Hen Wrych Lodge (NRPN 27326 & LB Grade II\*) and nearby outbuildings (NRPN 406976, LB Grade II). Tithe Apportionment Map of 1839 reveals extensive buildings and formal gardens on site, that are possibly 18<sup>th</sup> century. Modern aerial photographs suggest vestiges of these still exist. A sketch, supposedly drawn before extensive remodelling of the house depicts a rather different range of structures than currently exist.

## **2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

2.1 The objective of the historic building record, as per the agreed brief, was to produce a measured drawing, photographic record and a written record to be complemented by the dendrochronological survey. Volunteers approached the task of forming a record of documentary references to Hen Wrych into a House History which ultimately forms a documentary, architectural and scientifically dated record of the subject house.

### 3 **METHODOLOGY**

#### 3.1 **Documentary Research**

3.1.1 The brief requires that the individual buildings are assessed and analysed. The building recording is an activity independent of any documentary research into the history of the site. However, reference may be made to known sources where relevant.

#### 3.2 **Historic Building Record**

3.2.1 The requirement was to provide the report based on an examination of both the exterior and interior of the building and the production of measured drawings, photographic and written data.

##### **The measured drawings.**

3.2.2 A measured plan of the site was produced for the ground floor, first floor and second floor at a scale of 1:50 reduced to A4 where necessary. Measurement was by Electronic Disto laser measurer, tape and telescopic measuring rod. Cross sections of the building at two trusses and partitions were also prepared. Reference was also made to archive material and plans.

##### **Photographic Record (This report has been placed under restricted access due to the demands of the owners). A version with redacted images has also been submitted**

3.2.3 Images were captured on a Nikon D2X digital single-lens reflex camera giving 12mega pixel RAW files and JPEGs. A Fuji XE1 camera (16.4mp images) was also used. Photography was to the standard of a Level 3 survey defined by English Heritage (20016, 19). The record comprises exterior and interior images as follows

General images of elevations and features exterior and interior rooms

Detail images of architectural features of note exterior and interior both constructional and decorative where appropriate.

A scale divided into 500cm sections is used in a number of photographs. **Written Record**

3.2.4 To complete the drawing and photographic records, a written description detailing features, use and changes to the building plus a brief discussion and this follows below.

## 4 **BUILDING RECORD - DESCRIPTION**

### 4.1 **Exterior**

4.1.1 Hen Wrych stands on a staggered rectangular plan form running N east to S west and is of two phases of construction but may have been built relatively simultaneously. The building is constructed on almost level ground. The construction is of roughly coursed rubble stone, and comprises a two storey range to the south and a modified range to the N. The stone is local limestone with finely dressed and chiseled (as decoration) quoins to all corners. The Gwrych Estate once owned a local limestone quarry in Llanddulas. The quoins, and particularly the roofing corbels probably relate to later rebuilding as some obviously date from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and were used for inserting new windows. Roofing is in slate and the whole has been re-roofed, probably in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

4.1.2 The principal north elevation is asymmetrical in every sense. (Plates 1, 2,3). A fully storeyed range with an idiosyncratic arrangement of windows reveal the development of the internal arrangement of space. To the right a gable section of walling rises from later corbels, no doubt inserted when the roof was replaced. At roof level some 1.5meters to the left of this a flush lateral chimney rises from the eave of the pitched roof. From the ground, to the left, three windows are at ground level. A markedly offset doorway is situated to the R and is occupied by a modern boarded door with leaded light opening. Above this door is a later, inserted segmental arch of C19th date in 'Tudor' style. Immediately above this, at first floor level, is a plain, inserted, modern 4 light window of painted PVCU with 'leaded' glazing. Plain stone reveals and later dressed cill and lintel. Above this in the gable section of the elevation is a stone mullion window of two lights in worn sandstone of seven pieces and mason's mitre joints. This is headed by a moulded drip-stone or label without a drip-stop. The lights are of painted PVCU with leaded glazing. To the left at 2nd floor is an iron multi-light Tudor-arched window with tracery decoration at the head. Set in dressed stone all round with a segmental Tudor arch. Of C19th origin. Above this a moulded drip-stone with stops and relates to an earlier window in this position.

To the L at first fl level a larger, transomed, mullion window of 4 lights with ovolo moulding comprised of sandstone segments and in good repair. Moulded drip-stone with stops partly damaged to R side. Modern lights in timber or painted PVCU with modern leaded glazing. No drip-stone as close to eave. To L at first floor level a blocked window of same size as previous transomed window to its R. Just the moulded drip-stone and stops remain of the original. Below these windows are set three smaller windows at what is now just above ground level. The ground slopes up from the doorway to the left and this probably represents some form of infill as well as a drop in floor levels within the building. This will be examined later. The three windows start from right with a smaller 2 light mullion window without dripstone which has been blocked. To L a plain modern window, painted PVCU or timber, with 'leaded' glazing. It is without visible former detailing e.g. lintel or cill pieces. To the L again is a complete stone mullion window without drip-stone but this was possibly damaged and taken back to the level of the stone face. Modern PVCU lights with leaded glazing.

4.1.3 The east, gabled, elevation, of the front range exhibits four windows. At ground level to R is a 2 light modern light under a very large lintel some 400mm high. PVCU frame with leaded glazing. The lintel and reveals are dressed and chiseled with a distinctive pattern. To left the remnant of

a sandstone mullion window missing its central bar. Chamfered with mason's mitre joints but otherwise plain. Above is a large modern 4 light window, modern frame of PVCU with leaded glazing set in dressed stone with flat head. Above this, a Tudor arched window with a multi light iron frame and tracery pattern in head as before. Dressed stone with segmental arch of later date. Over-sailing verge. (Plates 4,5,6,7).

Rear wall S of north range is stone rubble wall without feature and E gable of south range is also plain apart from door set R with segmental arch of dressed stone matching similar elsewhere. Victorian or later door of two parts. Plain inset chimney above later over-sailing verge.

4.1.4 The south elevation of the south range has been formalised with regularly spaced fenestration set into varying sections of replaced masonry which is clearly visible. There are three windows at ground level and three at first floor with a blank faced dormer section of roof above the upper windows. All have modern 4 light transom style windows in painted PVCU, vertically proportioned and with decorative leaded glazing. This fenestration probably replaced box sash windows which were installed into the altered window openings, first half C19th. Inset plain chimney to L above later over-sailing verge.

4.1.5 West elevation with gables to south and north ranges. Southern gable has door to R and window above with modern window frame in similar style to all modernised windows with PVCU lights. At similar height but to L is a single light window with modern frame. A modern, single storey lean to extension sits across the bottom of the gable, enclosing the gable entry door. (Plates 8,9)

Gable to front range and return wall on rear range feature much of interest. The return wall at R has a ground floor Tudor arched window as previously found with multi-light iron window with tracery style top set in a later dressed stone opening with segmental arch above. Eroded brickwork forms part of the reveal to right. Above this is a smaller, horizontally proportioned modern window set in an opening without a lintel just below eave level. Immediately below this is the outline of what looks like a blocked doorway. To the L bottom a small modern window with leaded glazing has been set into a larger opening, possibly a former doorway into the hall. Above this a small sandstone window has been reset with parts from another window, the bottom cill having an ovolo moulding facing downwards.

On the gable of the north range, above, is a small sandstone mullion window, chamfered with a moulded drip-stone without drip stops. Below this at ground floor is the remnant of a mullion window which may have had a drip-stone but this appears to have been cut back flush, perhaps because of damage. Modern painted PVCU window with leaded glazing replaces earlier mullion and no cill piece.

To the right of the windows appears an area of disturbed masonry with some of this in brick. This may relate to problems with the lateral chimney stack which lay behind this wall, or forms part of it. The stack for the lateral chimney rises above the roof. (plates 10,11).

## **4.2 Interior**

### **4.2.1 Ground Floor Plan:**

The ground floor (**Figure 3**) on the north elevation is accessed at ground floor by a door offset to the right. This doorway and boarded door is headed by a shallow arch of dressed stone, lightly

chiseled for decoration. This stonework appears to have become an estate style found on a variety of later work and 19th century buildings and employed both flat lintels and Tudor or four centered arches, both being employed at Hen Wrych as on the adjacent 19<sup>th</sup> century lodge. Oak lintels span the doorway internally. This door enters into a hall or reception area (**GF1**) and is immediately opposed by a doorway into the main hall beyond. Noticeable is the limited headroom which measures 2m. Its use as a cross passage is further supported by two beams that run parallel between the doors. It was usual to have a partition drop down on either side of the passage, but not in every case, with a room on either side in this case. The beam to the right has regularly placed mortises at 306mm – 445mm spaces for upright posts, probably for a post and panel screen. Rudimentary working on beam to R with chamfers and stops. There is no evidence of a doorway but this may have been present in the partition itself. The beam to the left is also a relatively roughly worked timber with elements of the trunk in the round still remaining and only a poor chamfer in parts. Simple angled stop. This beam also has mortises at similar spacing. There are two housings cut into the edge and soffit on the east side of the beam where this meets the N wall and these appear to accept a door frame, or jambs at least, pegged into the head beam. One of these housings retains a peg. A variety of joists, some plain, some chamfered, are employed to support the floor above and appear not to be set into the beams but lay on top. Much of the timber here seems to have been re-used. (Plates 12 -15). Opposite the front door to the right of the passage protrudes the stack of the lateral chimney and the R beam is set into this. The stack is now imbedded in modern plaster so it was not possible to examine but the exposed wall at the doorway into hall does not suggest a high-quality join. From the back of the chimney in the hall to the outer limit of the stack in the room the masonry is approximately 420mm thick. To the R of the stack is a window in the west gable of this range. Modern glazing set in a sandstone mullion frame, the window has a distinctive arched head reminiscent of earlier windows, without a lintel, a feature of all windows in this range with mullion windows.(Plates 16,17).

- 4.2.2 To the L a further beam supports the landing for the stair to the next floor in this range. This beam is a much narrower timber, more the dimension of a purlin and the housing in the soffit, complete with remaining peg, seems to confirm a different use or later introduction of this beam when the stairway was inserted. The stairway is a 19th century style with stick balusters and a swept rail with modern steps. This beam supports the landing R. To the L is a heavier beam approximately 270mm wide x 140mm deep (visible) and it is impossible to see any evidence of a partition below this beam as it has been plastered recently and it supports the landing to L. at first floor. No chamfers. There is a timber post in situ below the beam and an iron strap supports a post rising to support the second floor landing but is later. Of similar dimension is a further beam as we enter a utility area. There is a drop in floor level of nearly 600mm. This also corresponds with a rise in in ground level externally. Again, a partition is not visible below the beam or immediately above, a consequence of recent modernisation, but it supports a full height timber frame partition through to the roof, above the second floor. In wall to L is a window. All reveals have been plastered to a square finish and no historic detail is now visible.

**4.2.3** Across the utility area, a wide corridor in fact, a door, possibly Victorian, enters into what is termed the basement. (**GF2**) This at the same floor level already reached. The room is entirely of bare stone walls on external walls of small random rubble. Immediately to left through door is a sandstone mullion window with modern glazing, slightly splayed reveals and a shallow stone arched head. (Plate 18) To R of window the bottom stones of a finely corbeled chimney against L wall. (Plate 21) Distinctly chiseled finish to corbel stones. A fine ceiling of two rows of joists set on a central transverse beam with wide chamfers and simple angular stops. Joists have been reused and only a few are finished with a deep chamfer and stops. There are two wider joists 145mm & 160mm compared to average of 90mm next to chimney. Other joists are plain if not crude in finish. This points to a re-use or relocation of used timber. All previously nailed for lath and plaster finish. Opposite the door is what appears to be a further window but on close inspection is a full height former door. (Plates 19, 20) The lintel is a large stone which has been struck and chiseled to form the head and the jambs have all been rebated to floor level. At least two pin holes for a hinge pin and bolt are visible in these rebated stone reveals. Inner reveal at head arch formed of segmental stone as in windows. To R another sandstone window, previously with mullion but now with modern glazing only. Shallow stone arch. Against right wall sits a large plinth of stone and a short pillar of stone from this supports the S end of the floor beam. With the modifications that have occurred at Hwn Wrych it is difficult to interpret the function of this room which appears to have had an external entrance and at a lower exterior level than now exists.

Returning to the cross-passage, entry is made into the rear range main hall, (**GF3**) a substantial room with an impressive framed ceiling with one transverse beam (350mm x 250mm) and one transverse beam above partition to R. Three sections of twin counter-changing beams dividing the ceiling into 9 sections of 8 joists each through the ground floor. All finished with plain chamfers and angled run out stops. (Plates 22, 24, 25, 27) To L plain wall to gable. On the frame of the ceiling to wall there is a curious cut out of the timber that once appeared to form an arch. However, the removed piece or similar has been re-fitted. (Plate 26) At left is a Tudor arched doorway. 19<sup>th</sup> century with C19th or later door.

The E gable wall has no interior features that are visible but the owner informs the writer that some time previously, former occupants, when Hen Wrych was used as a guest house, had the hall divided with a partition fitted somewhere under the main transverse beam and a Victorian fireplace in the E gable. These two features have since been removed and the fireplace blocked. Opposite S wall is plain apart from the enlarged windows in fitted with modern. Wall to R has door in partition under beam into kitchen otherwise plain. Returning to north wall in hall a window has been inserted into a larger opening, possible a former doorway. Window with modern glazing. Plain plastered reveals obscure any detail. To right is a large, lateral fireplace, protruding into the hall with once external stack behind. (Plate 23) This has a plastered arch of brick (not visible) that may have replaced a timber lintel. This shallow arch rests upon a corbeled fireplace with corbel and supporting jambs in a decoratively chiseled stone. The interior of the fireplace is curved and rendered.

Between the hall and kitchen is a large dimension transverse ceiling beam with partition below. Later opening L with 19th C door. The partition is now plastered and not possible to inspect if an earlier version lies beneath the surface but this forms the base of a closed partition. In the kitchen (**GF4**) two longitudinal beams run to the gable wall in a continuation of the hall ceiling with three sections of joists across the room. Chamfered with simple diagonal run out stops.

Floor beams in this section have sagged markedly but have been packed and levelled which poses a question as hall has same configuration but without any sagging in beams, perhaps suggestive of a storage use above but this is purely conjectural. The main transverse beam between hall and kitchen, or parlour, supports a close-studded partition into the loft. This appears to be a closed truss. This is primary and holds several timbers in the roof frame that were dendrochronologically sampled, arriving at the date 1590-1605.

To the left a large window, one of three on the southern façade, has a remnant of an early fielded type panel in the top reveal but otherwise modernised. Modern window and leaded glazing. W gable has exit door to left and a roughly corbeled and chiseled fireplace and chamfered and stopped oak bressummer. (Plate 28) Wall at N has one Tudor arched window with iron multi-paned frame with tracery top of C19th. To R dog leg stair rises to next floor. This may be a replacement for an earlier stair. The stairs appear C 19th in part but modernised. Risers with central hole.

### **4.3 First floor**

4.3.1 At the top of the stairs, north range, (Fig 4) the length of the range can be viewed down a corridor to N side, a C 18th or C19th alteration. **(FF7)** On north wall above stairs a window, with modern glazing sits above what appears to be a book case but this corresponds to the outline of a blocked doorway in the external stonework. (Plate 32) The left-hand part of the roof truss 1 is visible in the corridor. (Plate 31) Three rooms give off this corridor to the right. The bathroom **(FF6)** has a ceiling height of a considerable 2.76m. The wall to L displays the timber-framed partition that rises from the kitchen/hall beam. Part of the roof truss is visible with heavy tie-beam and part of the principal rafters on view. Originally a closed partition, it has since been modified at various times to suite changing use. It comprises heavy upright studs pierced with holes for horizontal oak staves and hazel twigs woven vertically and originally coated with daub or lime plaster. (Plates 29, 30,) A fraction of this wattle and daub is still visible in the loft. Some stave holes are visible in this room. The soffit of the tie beam has been cut away in two places, possibly to facilitate a door and other parts of the original screen are missing. The screen would have risen above the present ceiling into the loft. A large modern 4 light window with later frame and glazing is opposite S wall and the gable wall to right has a window with later frame and glazing. A fireplace to R with oak bressummer on stone corbeling. The next two rooms **(FF5, FF4)** along the corridor have no historically significant features visible which is unfortunate as it is not possible to view the reverse of the partition just described. Later windows in each. The second room, at the eastern gable of south range once had a fireplace but now concealed.

4.3.2 At this point entry is made from the corridor into the north range through a generous opening, over 2m wide, in the separating wall. Interesting to note that the oak lintels for this opening are reused timber with one having stopped chamfers uppermost i.e. reversed. A drop here of four steps shows a drop in floor level of around 800mm and faces 2 landings with the stairs rising between. **(FF2)** Modern stick balusters. Modern open tread staircase to second floor. Wall between left landing and bedroom **(FF1)** now has a screen with thin scantled softwood poles planted to beam and lath and plaster screen of later date. Bedroom with fully exposed ceiling of main transverse beam, chamfered with diagonal run out stops, and joists. Some joists re-used, all previously nailed for lath and plaster. To R is a small chimney and fireplace. (Plate 36) This has been let into the rear of the lateral chimney stack which is now internally sited. Breast

covered with modern plaster and later fireplace. Narrow breast not consistent with usually uniform external stack although may have been added onto stack. Wall to R has one window, a sandstone mullion with later modern frame and glazing. Wall to R, front of front range has large modern four light window with leaded glazing. Modern, internal wooden shutters.

Across landing to R entrance to bedroom R. **(FF3)** This is situated behind a timber framed partition (Plates 3 – 35) which extends from the floor to the ceiling height of second floor and across the width of the north range. Elongated rectangular panels in frame. A modern doorframe is fitted into an opening on extreme right and a re-used Victorian paneled door and four steps lead down into room. This a matching drop in floor level as at GF. The room has a beamed ceiling with large section central transverse beam with a variety of joists. Ceiling is 2.6m high. Beam has wide but vaguely defined chamfers with stops. Heavily scored for plaster key. Many joists are squared without chamfer or stop, some obviously re-used. Nail holes in joists evidence of lath and plaster. In room to left wall is box framed with some modification in places but appears be of vertically proportioned panels. Infill now of modern plaster. A beam rests on external walls next to frame to accommodate joists from central beam. Wall to R has high opening relating to blocked window and to R a narrow chimney breast with Victorian fireplace. This chimney breast is supported on the corbels in the basement below. Wall to R has large window with modern 4-light window and modern leaded glazing. No features on remaining wall to R.

- 4.3.1 The external wall on the landing - north range - has two windows. To R is a large 4- light sandstone transomed mullion window with modern PVCU inserts with leaded glazing. To its left at slightly higher level Tudor arched window with iron 16 light and tracery top. Central 4-pane opening light of second quarter C 19. Not the original opening at this point. Modern open tread stairway from landing leads to room on second floor to right. **(2F1)** The timber frame extends to the ceiling in stairwell and to full height in room which is situated in loft. In the room the wall on left has lateral chimney evident with Victorian or later fireplace. Wall opposite door, in gable E, a Tudor arched window with iron 16 light and tracery top window. Central 4-pane opening light of second quarter C 19th. Wall to right has no feature. Wall to R, facing window timber framed with visible collar set in principal rafter concealed under plaster. Doorway at R set into timber frame with re-used posts. Later boarded door. This room occupies the loft space of the north range at left. It is evident that the roof has been replaced with a C19th roof of lighter, softwood timbers. Not possible to investigate limited roof space above.

Across the modern landing, up a short flight of 4 steps is a further room, **(2F2)** also occupying loft space re-roofed in the 19th century. While this room would seem to have been the least sumptuous room in the building it is still lit by a sandstone mullion window with later PVCU lights. Beyond this room a part has been sectioned off recently to provide storage space but with little of interest. The top of the main lateral stack can be seen but there is a suggestion that a secondary, uneven stack of masonry was built against the original stack and this was rendered.

#### **4.4 Attic and roof**

Access to the roof is afforded from the ceiling of the bathroom by a modern drop -down ladder into the western end of the south range and the construction can be seen from the very limited survival of early roof timbers. There is one further softwood truss beyond and the existing space is divided almost equally so there is little reason to suspect any more than a single historic truss

is missing. Only one truss survives then, of what was, in the south range, a three-bay roof of almost equal bays, but a possible further bay may have existed. **Truss 1 (Fig 4 Section AA)** forms the top of a partition from the beam between parlour and hall at GF through to the roof apex. Truss 2 is of softwood and represents a C19th re-roofing. Throughout later softwood purlins were supported by a secondary softwood truss laid above **T1** and the height, or angle of roof raised some 400mm -500mm on average. The top of T1 forms an A-frame with large principal rafters (Plates 37 -39) dropping down through ceiling to join tie-beam at wall plate level beyond the extent of the loft. These PRs are connected by a collar in the loft with the main tie-beam being in the bathroom below. The collar is mortised for two struts that extended up to the principal rafters from a common mortise on the collar. Both strut ends retained with one peg. Extending below the collar are four visible posts that drop down to the tie beam. There are holes approximately 25mm to accept horizontal oak staves. Holes also in soffits of principals for same purpose. No stave holes above the collar. It is apparent that this truss was part of a closed partition as the studwork continues below the tie beam. To left, below collar is a surviving panel of wattle and daub with oak staves and hazel twigs visible and covered with lime and horsehair plaster. (Plate 40) The principal rafters are housed for trenched purlins, now all gone. There is no evidence of any form of wind bracing although roof probably too late for this feature. The structure above the original truss is of softwood principals laid onto the existing oak principals, reduced to fit and jacked up by blocks of timber. Softwood purlins set on edge raise the roof considerably. Roof of slate on softwood rafters, torched with lime probably C 19th.

All ceilings below appear to have been replaced with softwood joists, lath and plaster with no visible evidence of primary timber surviving in this range.

At east end of loft the transverse roof structure of the north range is visible but evidence is of complete re-roofing apart from one plain oak truss which could only be viewed from a distance safely. This is an A frame that is set directly on the masonry of the rear range, apparently, and takes the direction of the roof at right angles from south range with the apex forming the front gable that sits on front elevation. (Plate 42,43) Apart from this one truss the remaining visible truss in this section is of softwood. The roof that this conjoins on the north range east is not visible.

In summary, the roof shows clear signs that it was totally replaced at least once with only a couple of trusses surviving from its early construction. There are no other parts of the roof left and not one rafter remains. It was not possible to examine the roof over the eastern section of north range where a fragment of the early pitched roof may survive as part of the box frame partition but as this truss is mostly visible conclusions can be drawn as to its form as a simple A-frame. It is regrettable that a greater range of samples was not possible to determine clearer dates of the phasing of construction but these may not have yielded more than we now know.

## 5 **Dendrochronology**

- 5.1.1 Hen Wrych was sampled in June 2016 by Ross Cook and analyzed by Dr. Dan Miles and Martin Bridge of the Oxford Dendrochronology Laboratory and reported in June 2016. Five samples were taken in all. Locations shown figures 3, 4, 5,6.

- 5.1.2 These cores were of oak (*Quercas spp.*) After preparation the samples were measured under microscope and analyzed by desktop computer. Four of the five samples produced a site chronology which was subsequently to provide a felling date range of **1590 – 1605** and the likely construction date falls within this range. The ODL dendrochronological report should be consulted for full details. <http://datingoldwelshhouses.co.uk/library-h/reports.html>

## 6 Discussion

### 6.1.1 Origins & Development

- 6.1.2 The building comprised an original range of a heated parlour, large hall heated by a lateral fireplace and maybe service rooms that have now gone (conjectural). A lateral chimney, with fine decorated limestone jambs and corbeling served to heat the hall and the framed ceiling afforded an impressive space. It is not clear where the dais end was. The closed partition separated the hall from the parlour. At ground floor level there may have been a post and panel or a studded wattle and daub screen below the surviving screen. The second floor may have duplicated this arrangement with a private chamber and a grand chamber above the hall. A stair now rises from the parlour and this may have replaced a similar arrangement giving access to the next floor. The parlour was heated by a limestone corbeled fireplace with oak bressumer in the gable end. This arrangement is repeated in the room above. Similar fireplaces in the chambers in the north range point to a uniformity of style about this aspect of the construction.

The north range, in its current form is rather different where a pitched roof may have been altered to place a gable on the façade but may have been original. It combines a mixture of styles of windows, some of well worked sandstone, others may have been of timber. And all seem to have been set under stone arches internally. The rebated stone doorway, (**GF2**) set now below ground level is intriguing but the ground levels externally may not be original. The bedroom above this unheated chamber has a ceiling height of 2.65m, comparable to the bed chambers in the south range but had to be shoehorned into this range by dropping the floor levels, perhaps. Was this done to match the rooms in the south range which might suggest a different chronology and perhaps an earlier building have been rebuilt?

It seems the building we now see at Hen Wrych was constructed in two almost simultaneous phases in the period 1590 to 1605 and was built for a gentry status figure, David Lloyd, but there must be a caveat to this conclusion. Secondary sources suggest a diminution in the size of the building after 1819 and a sketch in the National Library of Wales, Gwrych Castle Papers (Plate 45) provided by the owner, depicts an extensive range of buildings from two aspects, prior to the demolitions. The Tithe Apportionment map of 1839 does show more buildings on the site, extensive buildings, and some of these have disappeared. It may be that the references and sketch relate to these other buildings but the Tithe map does show Hen Wrych itself on its current footprint. (Plate 44) There is a case to investigate this site more fully to inform our appreciation of the changes that may have taken place and would be a very worthwhile project. A previous owner has also stated that some excavation to the area next to the east gable on the south range unearthed the footings of an earlier development and the outline of four rooms. If so, this may well have been a demolished bay but this, again, is just conjecture. This may have referred to later developments and buildings that were adjacent to Hen Wrych. Further

research into this aspect of the changes made to the 'old seat' would hopefully inform our understanding of the buildings.

It is clear the building is meant to be appreciated from the south side, at least in later years and indeed the sale catalogue of 1946 emphasizes this describing it thus 'The House, which faces South and overlooks the Park...'. The formalization of the south façade, with the installation of box frame sash windows, was an improvement, perhaps, to afford a better modern view of the building to those travelling to the new 'estate' on the new road that came through the crenelated gatehouse lodge next to Hen Wrych but, again, that is conjectural. It might possibly explain why the façade to the rear, the north elevation, retained its rather chaotic display of windows, keeping stone mullion windows and introducing later window styles in places. However, the changes to the north façade and chimney may also have been a development from an earlier plain pitched roof on the north range.

## 8 Sources

### a) Published sources

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### b) Unpublished

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Figure 1. Hen Wrych location. Ordnance Survey. Based upon Landranger 50,000 map (Sheet OL17)



Figure 2: Aerial image of Hen Wrych and associated buildings. Courtesy Google Earth.



Plate 1: Hen Wrych north Elevation

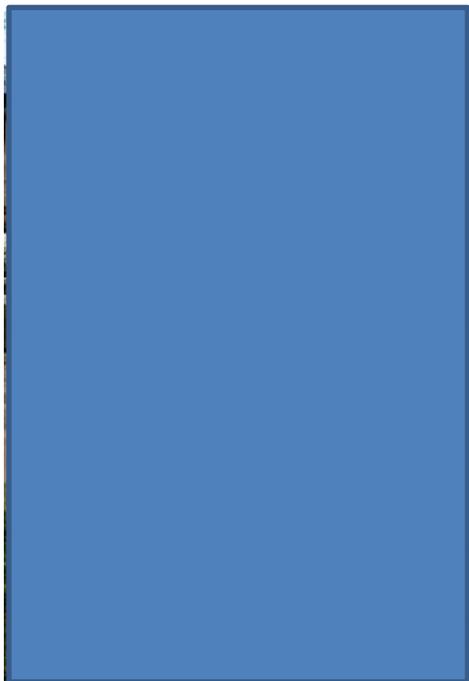


Plate 3: N elevation right

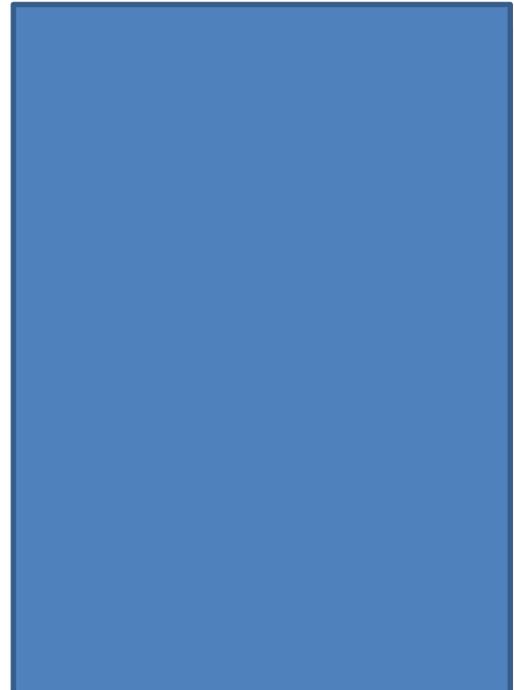


Plate 2: North elevation left



Plate 4: East gable north range. Note Rickman iron window at top.

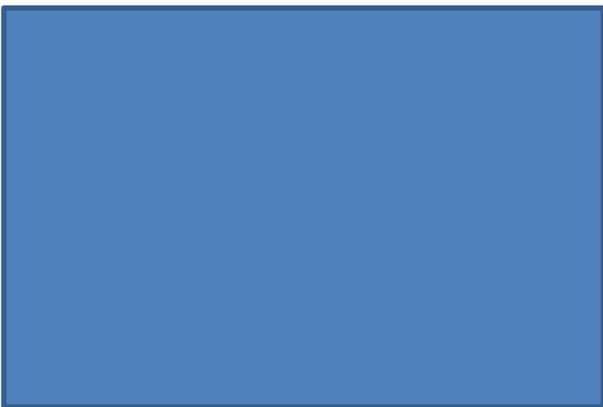


Plate 6: E gable. Former ground floor door now a window. Lintel heavily rebated internally.

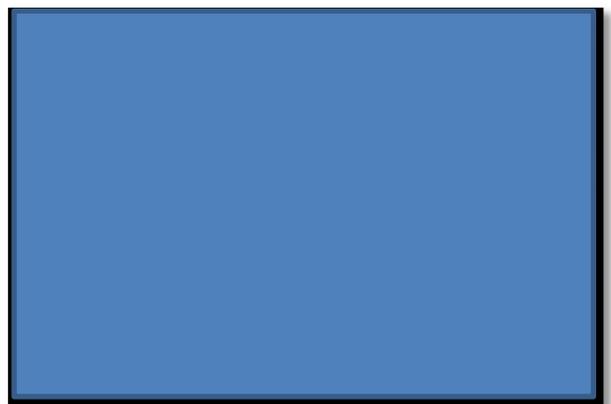


Plate 5: E gable with early sandstone mullion (missing). Dripstone cut back. Repaired.

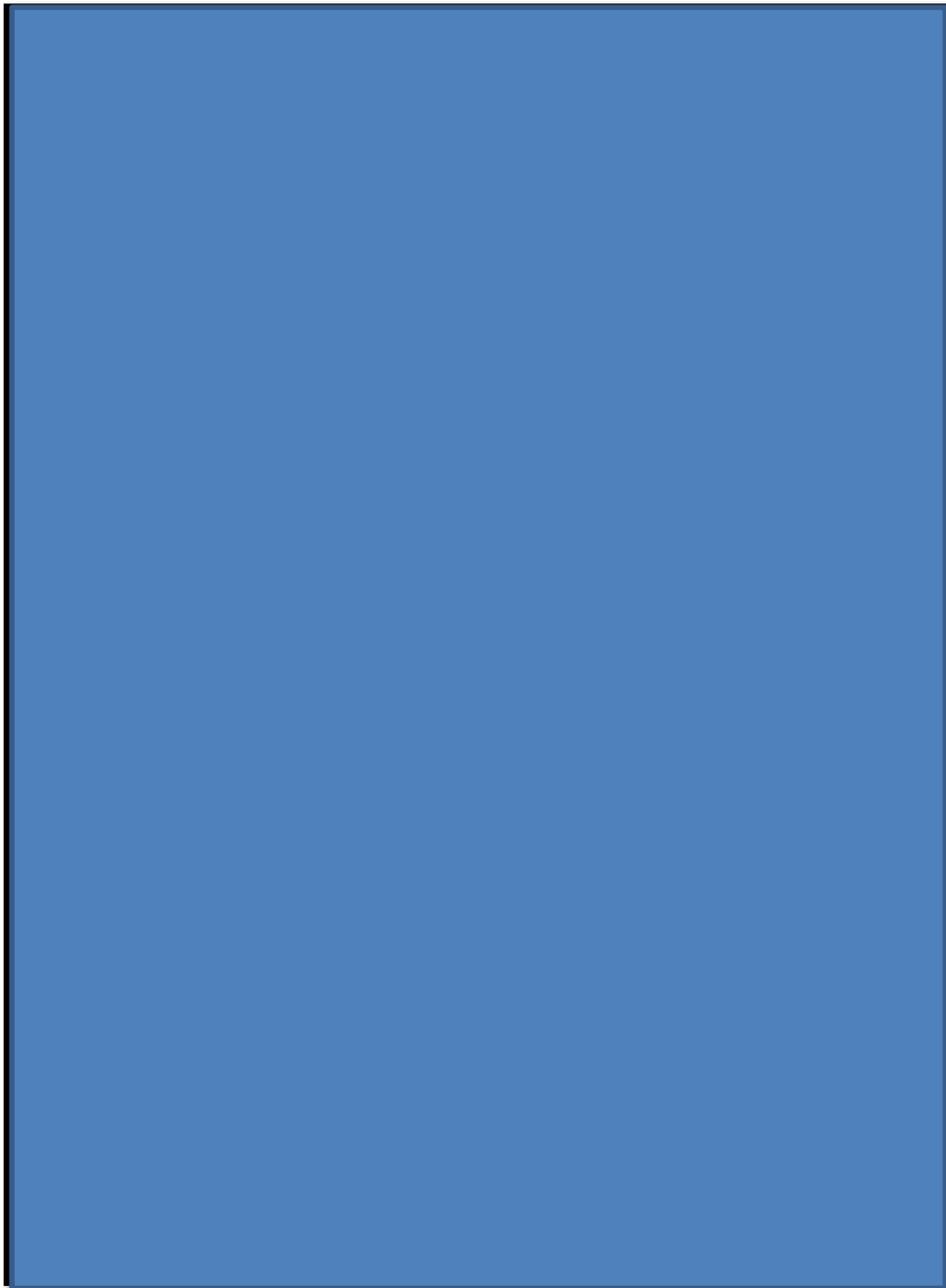


Plate 7: Limestone quoins. In some places these look like later work that may denote rebuilding. See window reveals and roof corbels.



Plate 8: South elevation. Altered masonry shows that windows were altered, probably to formalise the facade. Prior to current windows box sash windows occupied the same openings from old photographs. The masonry changes occurred then.

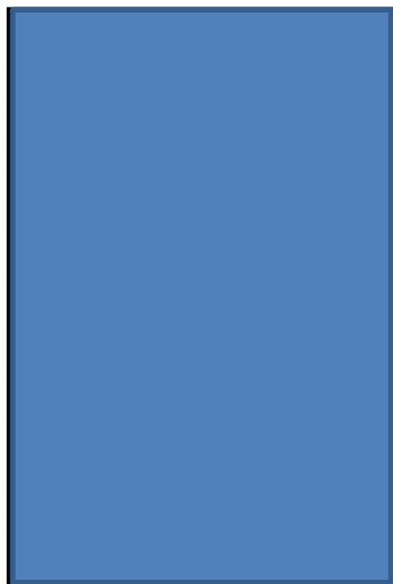


Plate 9: Long straight masonry join.  
Possibly a moved door.



Plate 10: Mixture of window styles. Iron Rickman window with Tudor arch to BR with modern window above bit a shadow of a door extends down from this.

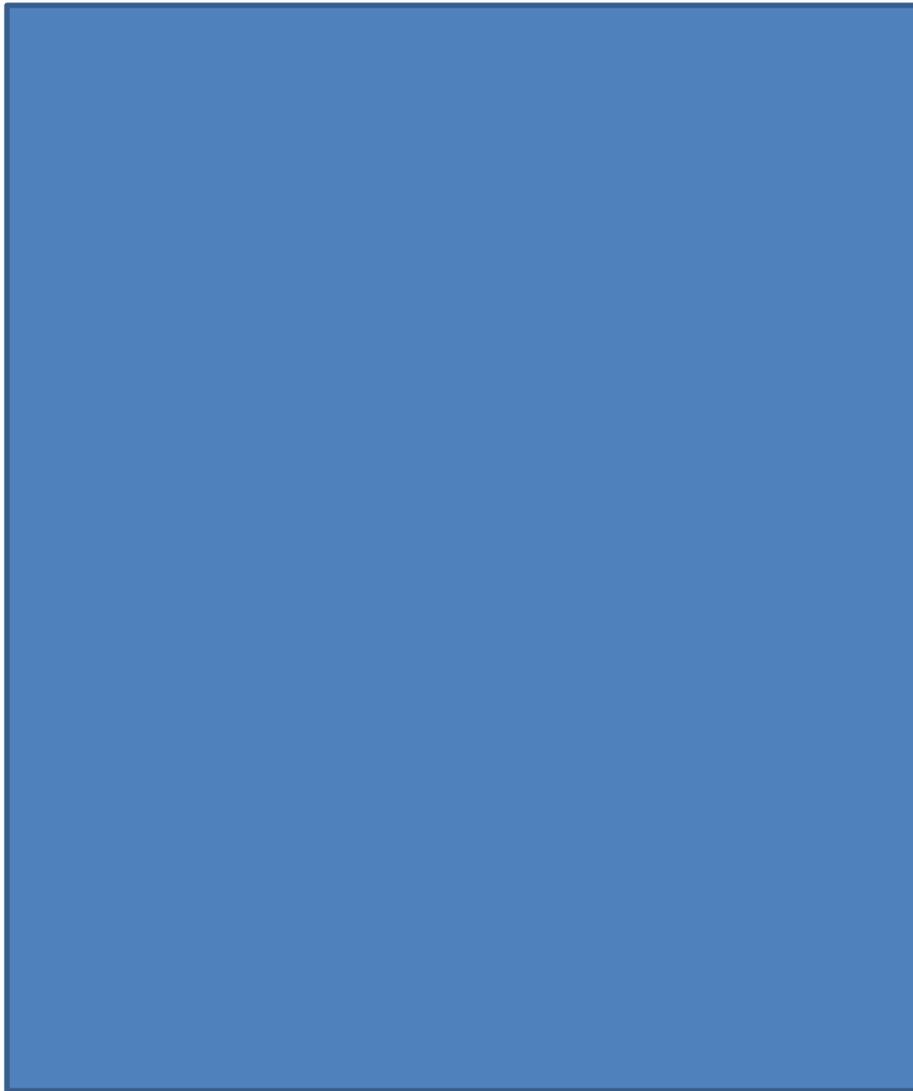


Plate 11: West end of N range. Mullion windows, lateral chimney stack and disturbed masonry to right of wall with brick inclusions. Roof corbel to left

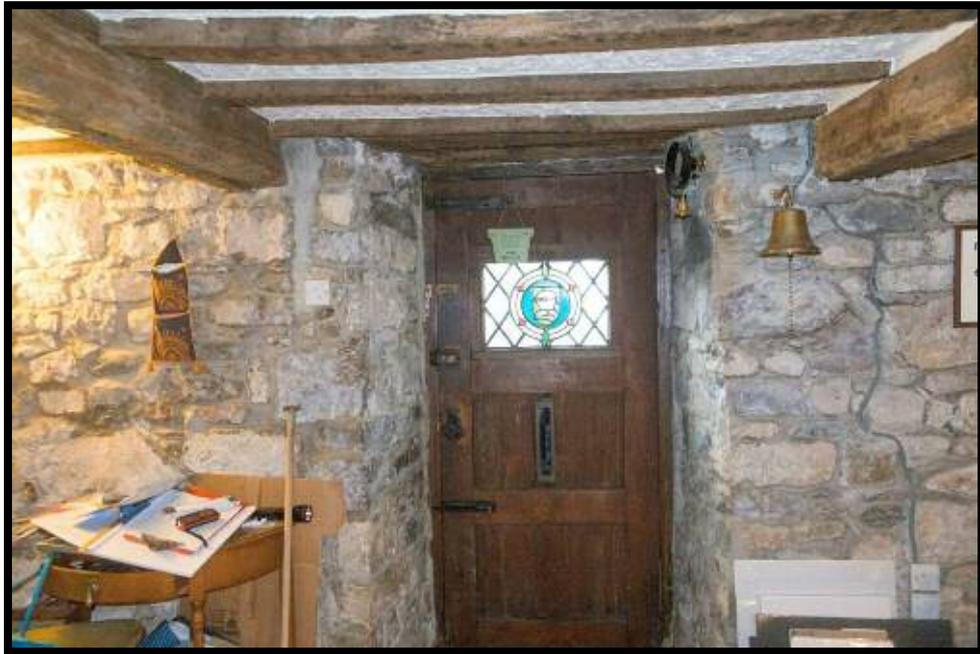


Plate 12: Front door to cross passage. Both passage beams are mortised for posts.



Plate 13: L beam notched for door posts.



Plate 14: Passage beam mortises.



Plate 15: Cross passage looking into hall.

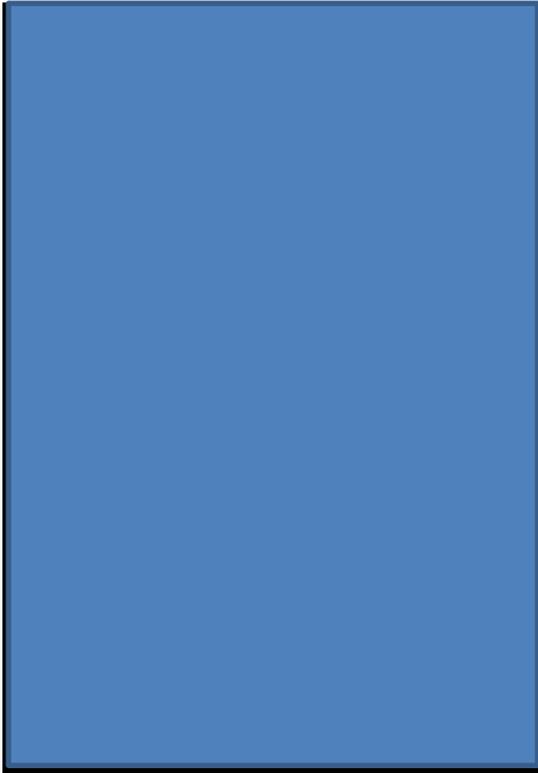


Plate 16: Lateral chimney stack and door to hall.

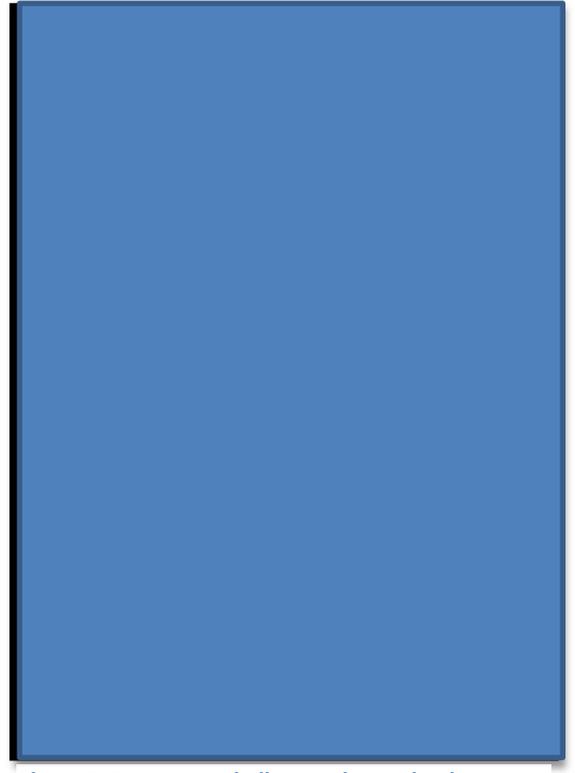


Plate 17: Doorway to hall. Large beam dendro sampled



Plate 18: Basement - sandstone window with arch. Common to all early basement windows.

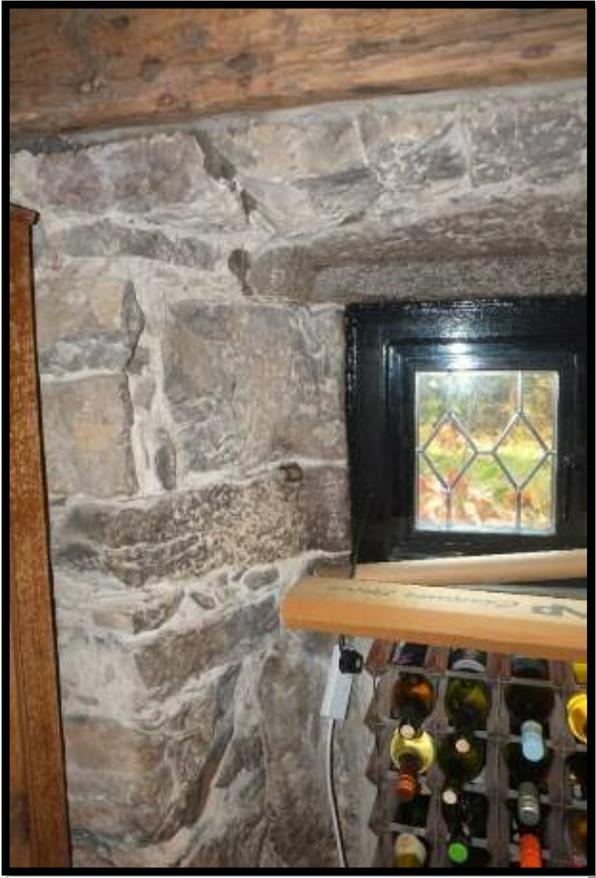


Plate 19: Former doorway with rebates in the stone.



Plate 20: Basement door and window R.



Plate 21: Corbeled chimney in basement.



Plate 22: Hall towards south west



Plate 23: Hall and lateral fireplace. Entrance to cross passage R



Plate 24: Transverse beam, chamfered and stopped located into fireplace.



Plate 25: Ceiling detail hall.



Plate 26: Curious replacement of what appears to be an arch. Suggestion by owner that investigation on other side of wall was a chamber that may have been a stairway now blocked.



Plate 27: Chamfer and stop detail hall.



Plate 28: Gable chimney in parlour.

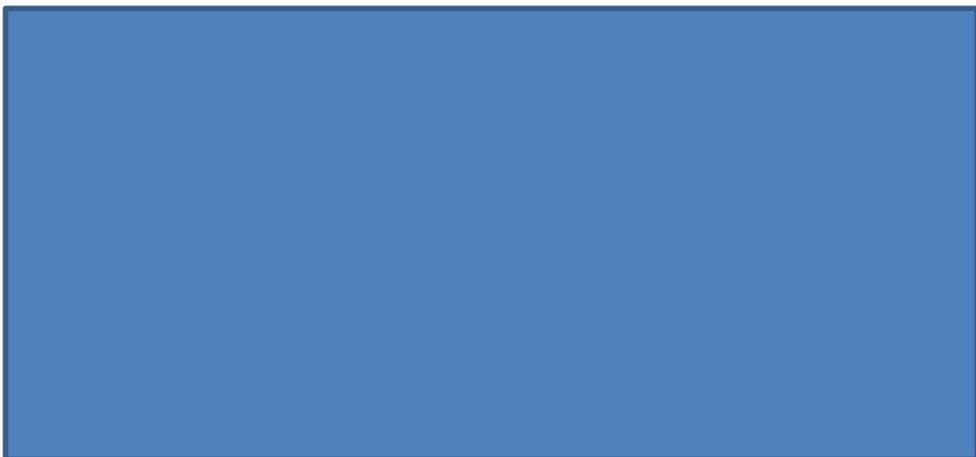


Plate 29: Bathroom - upstairs chamber. Tie beam of truss 1, part of a closed partition from first floor to loft. Doorway in centre?



Plate 30: Principal rafter and tie beam detail. Note stave holes on soffit of principal rafters for wattle and daub.



Plate 31: Portion of truss 1 where principal rafter meets ties beam. Heavy notching evident possibly for earlier door before later partitioning of rooms on first floor.

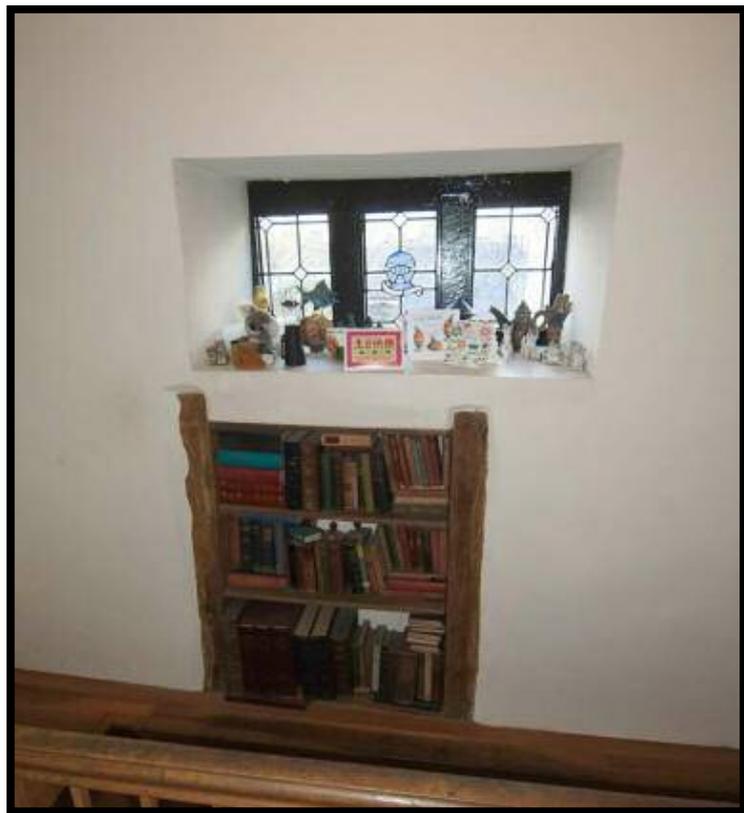


Plate 32: later window set above outline of possible door and mirrored on inside by the bookcase. Does this denote external access from first floor?

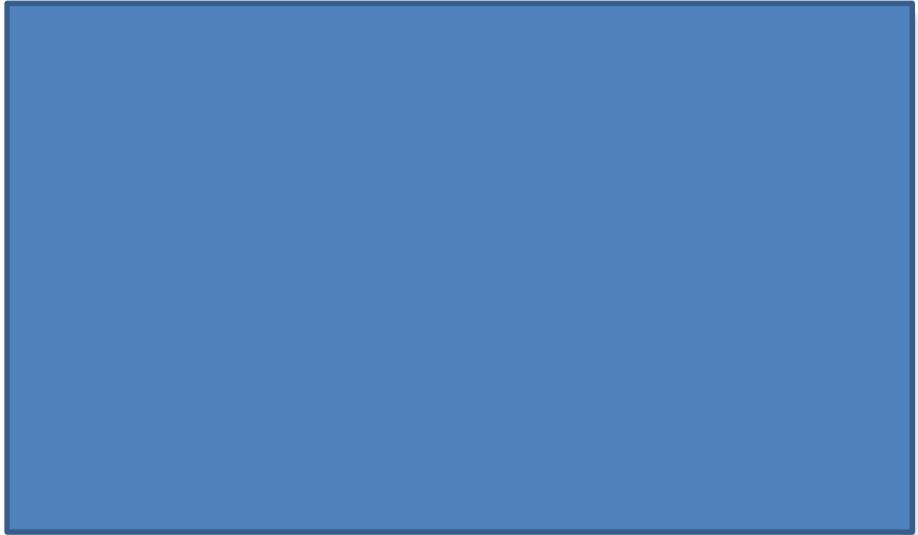


Plate 33: Section of box framing in north range.

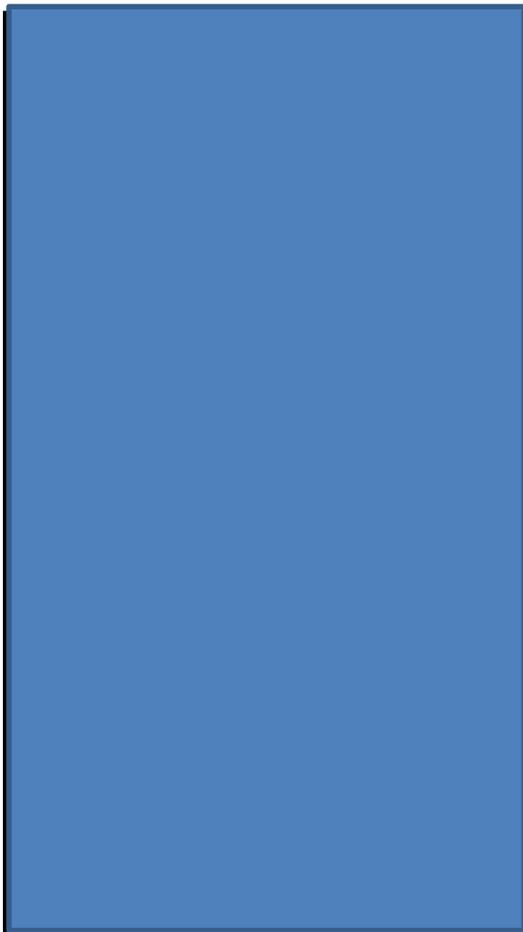


Plate 34: Box framing partition in passage.

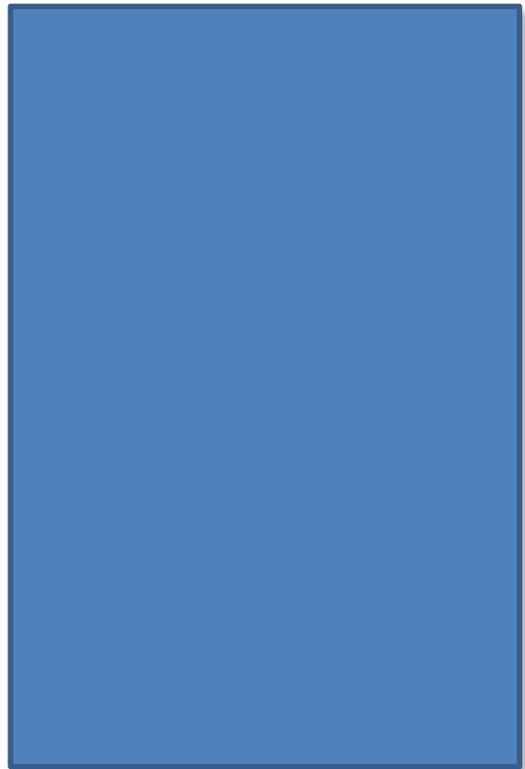


Plate 35: Box frame partition meets north wall.

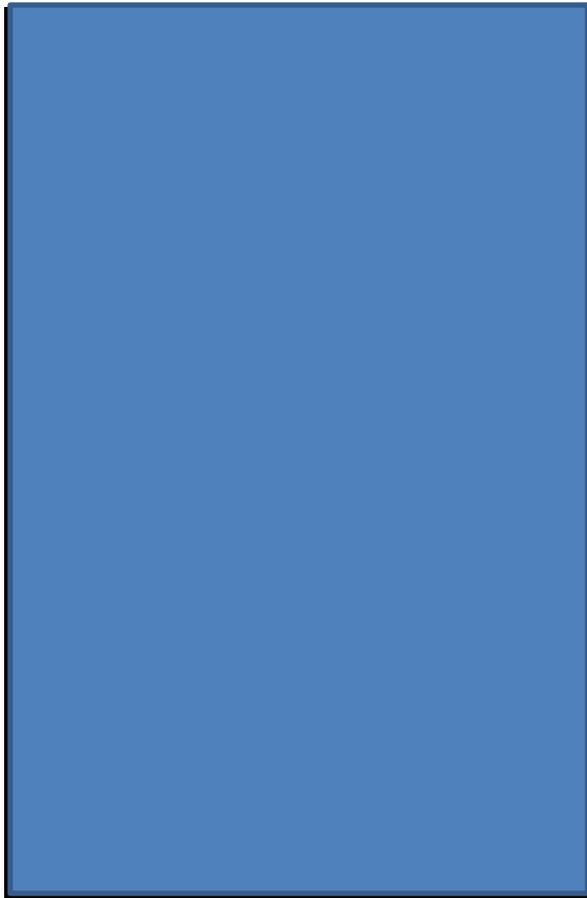


Plate 36: Chamber in north range. Corbeled fireplace mounted against main lateral chimney rising from south



Plate 37: Truss 1. Oak A frame with missing struts no surviving purlins or rafters. Later roof in softwood with slated roof and torched with lime.



Plate 38: Truss 1. Collar with studs dropping below. Mortised for slanted or raking struts braced to principal rafters. Pegged.



Plate 39: Oak truss trimmed and shaped to improve angle for later softwood truss and roof.



Plate 40: remains of a wattle and daub panel of horizontal oak staves woven with vertical hazel twigs to form a base for lime and horsehair plaster some of which survives.

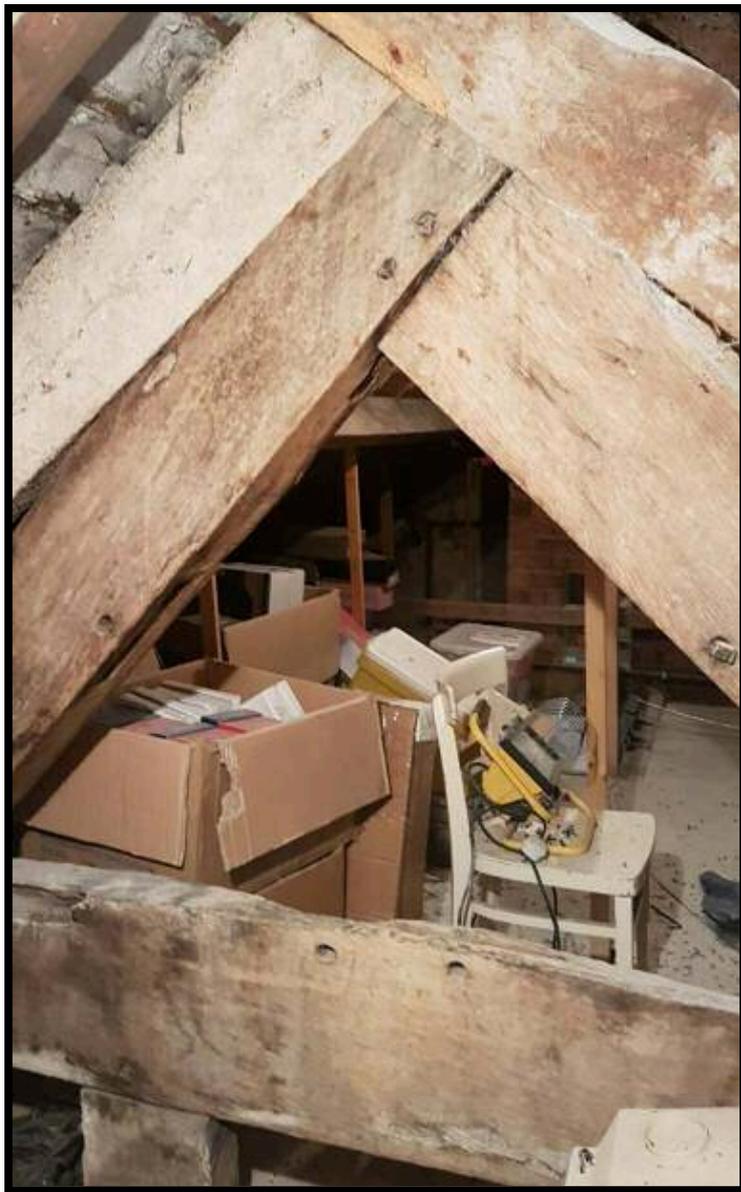


Plate 41: Truss 1 from east. Pegs and peg holes for struts between collar and principals.

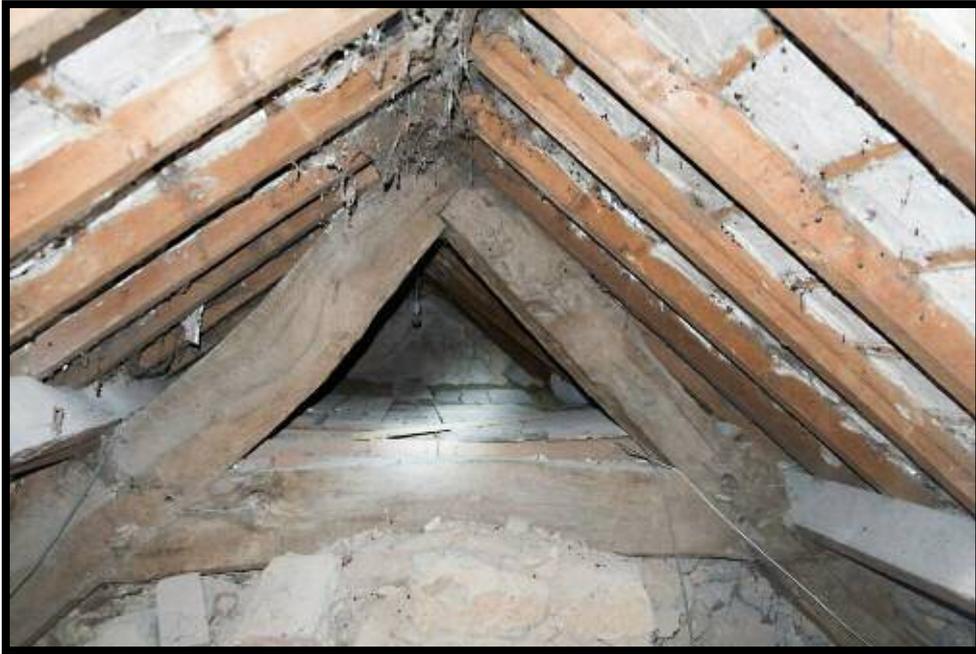


Plate 42: Transverse roof south to north on north range forming gable on facade R. Uncomfortably built over the masonry of the south range northern wall it has been mainly replaced with a later softwood structure leaving just this one truss.



Plate 43: Bottom of L principal rafter beyond which can be seen the masonry for the lateral stack rising out of the roof.

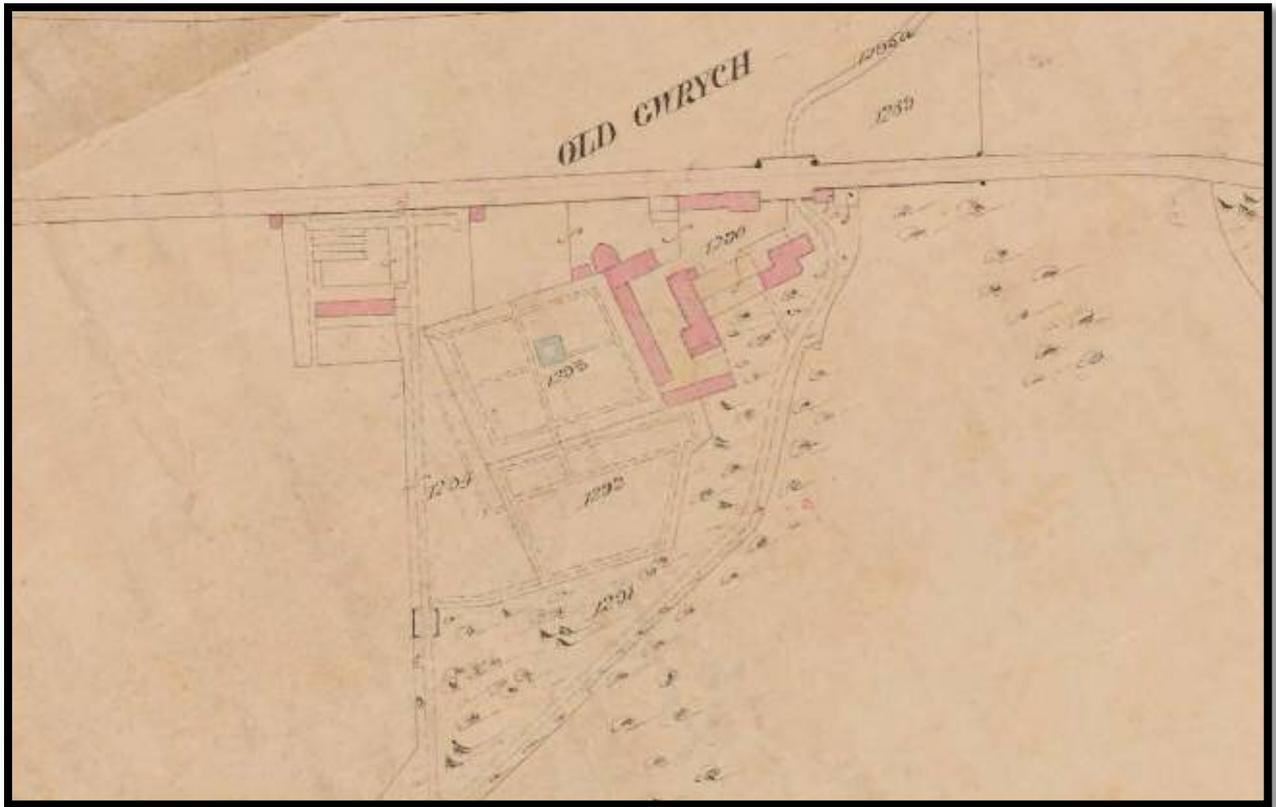


Plate 44: 1838 Tithing Apportionment Map revealing extant buildings when the survey was made. The remnants of some remain, others have disappeared but the house studied in this report was established then and has not altered since.

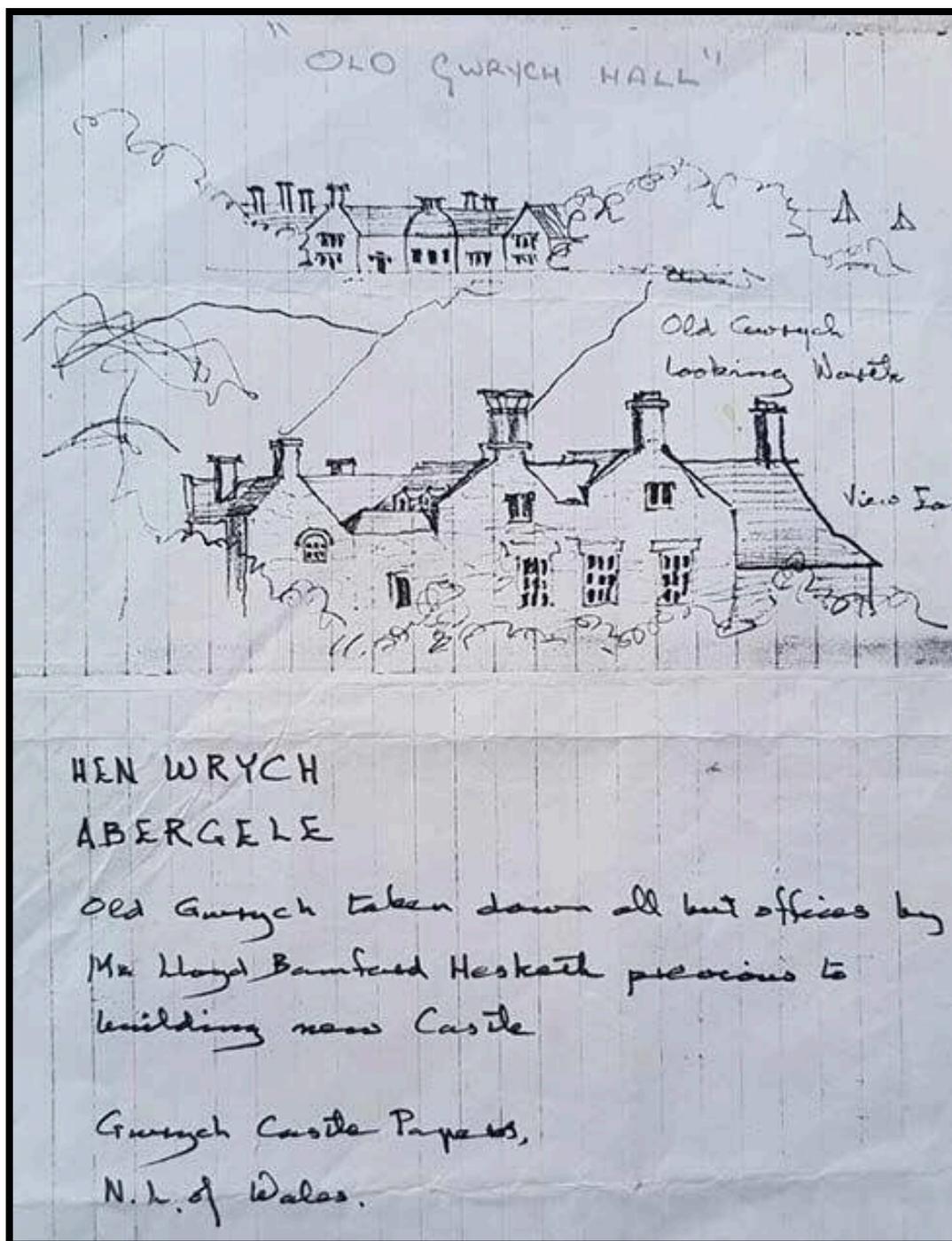
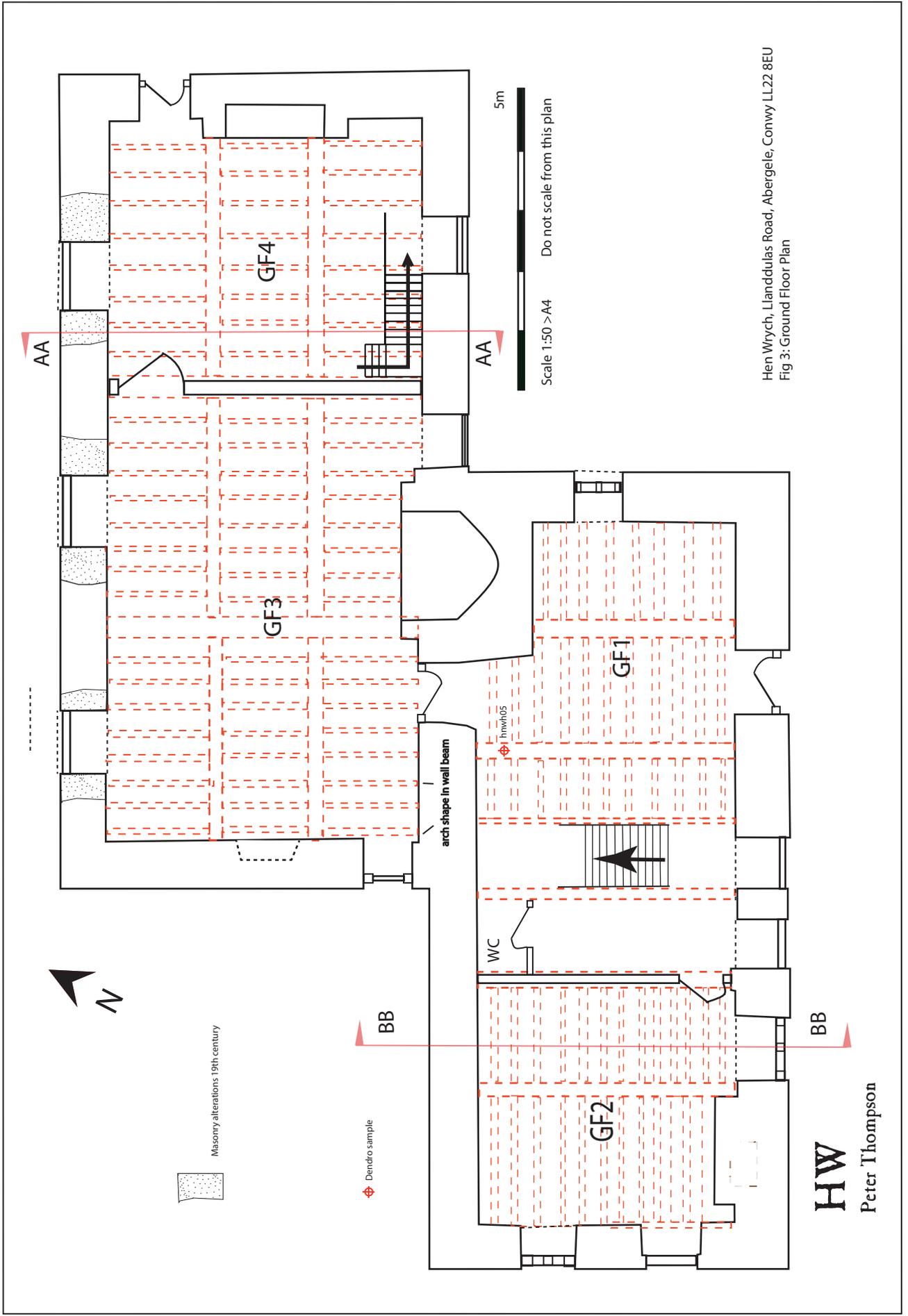
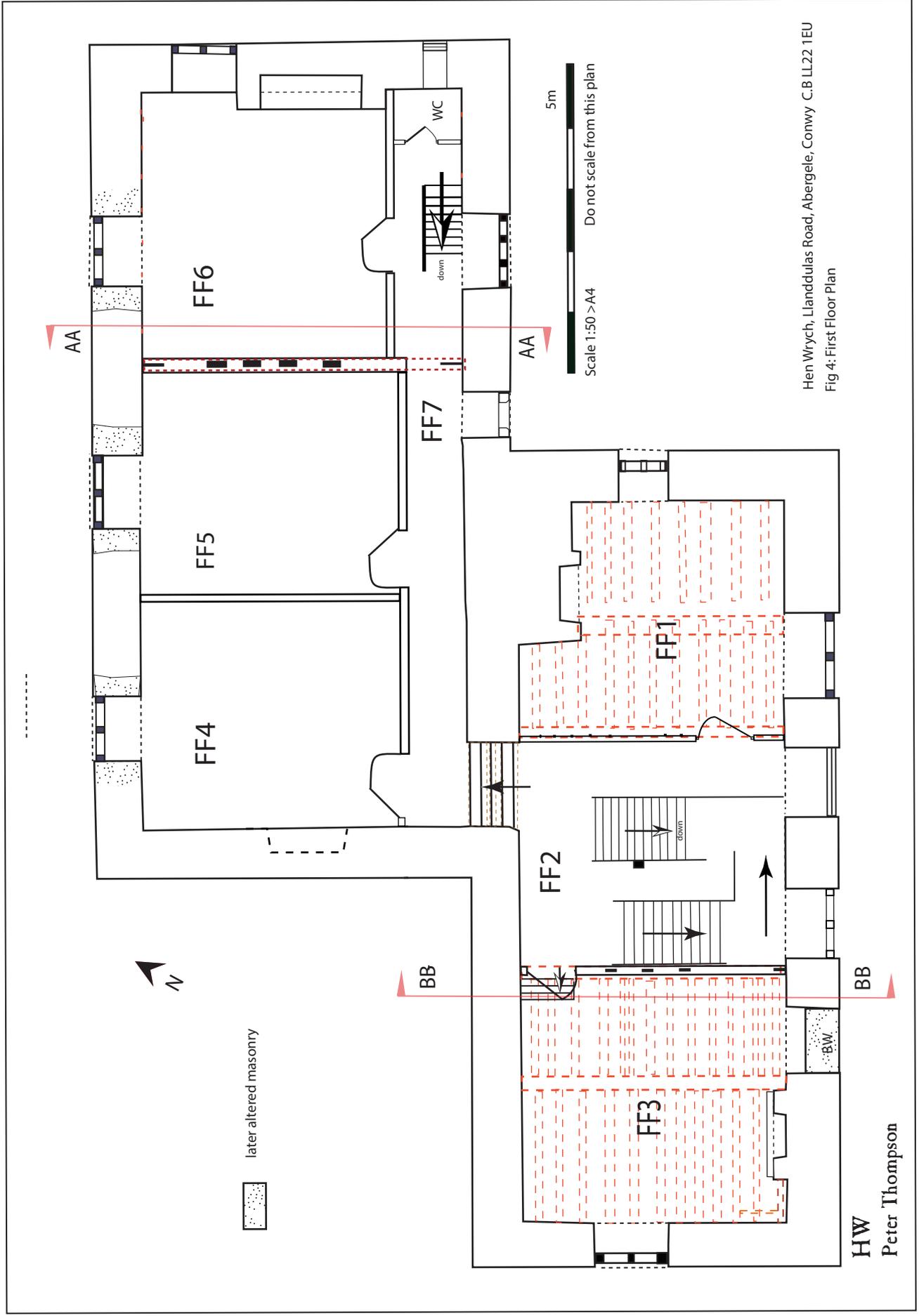


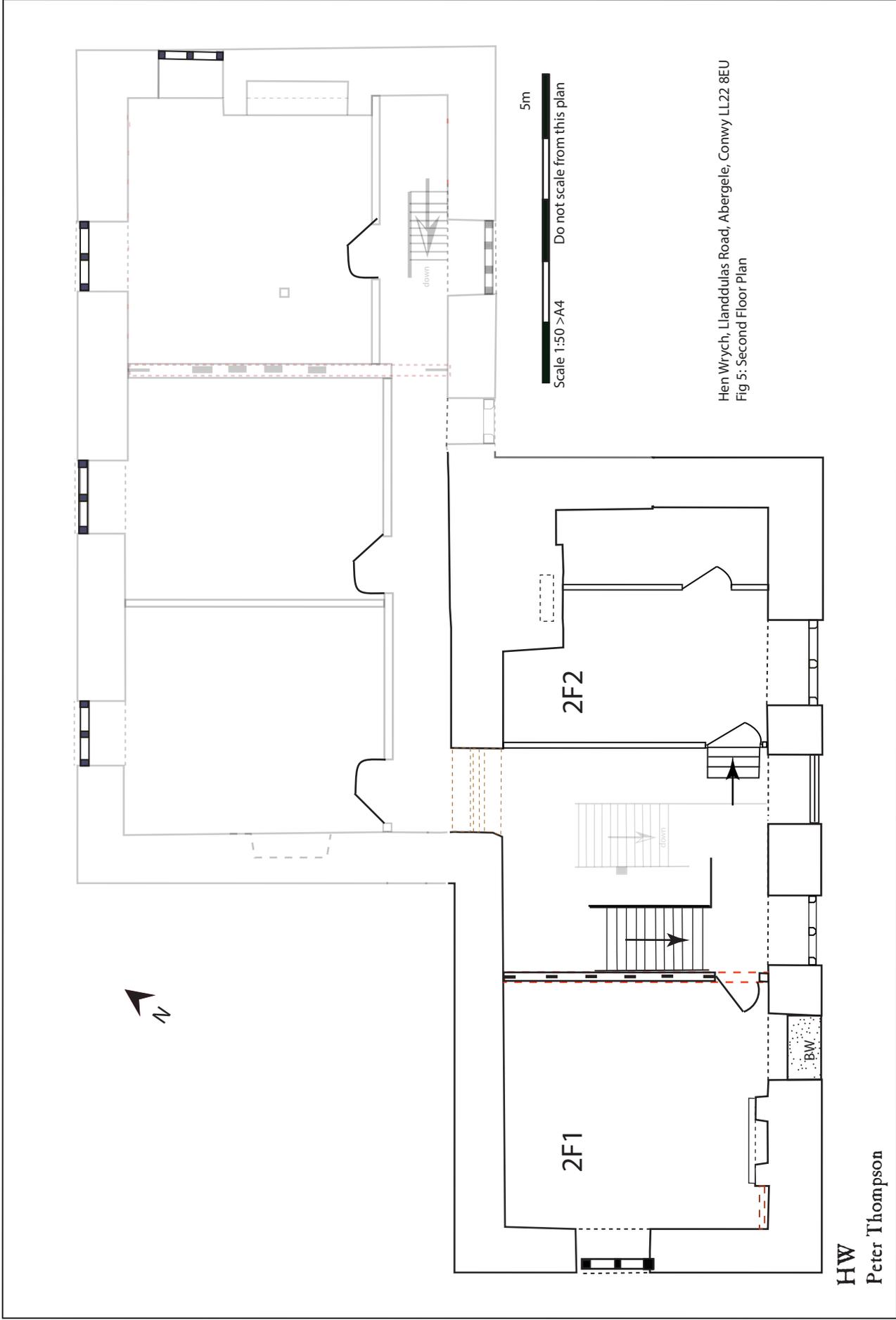
Plate 45: Sketch of Hen Wrych. Extensive range of buildings. Does part of this still exist?



Hen Wrych, Llandulas Road, Abergele, Conwy LL22 8EU  
 Fig 3: Ground Floor Plan

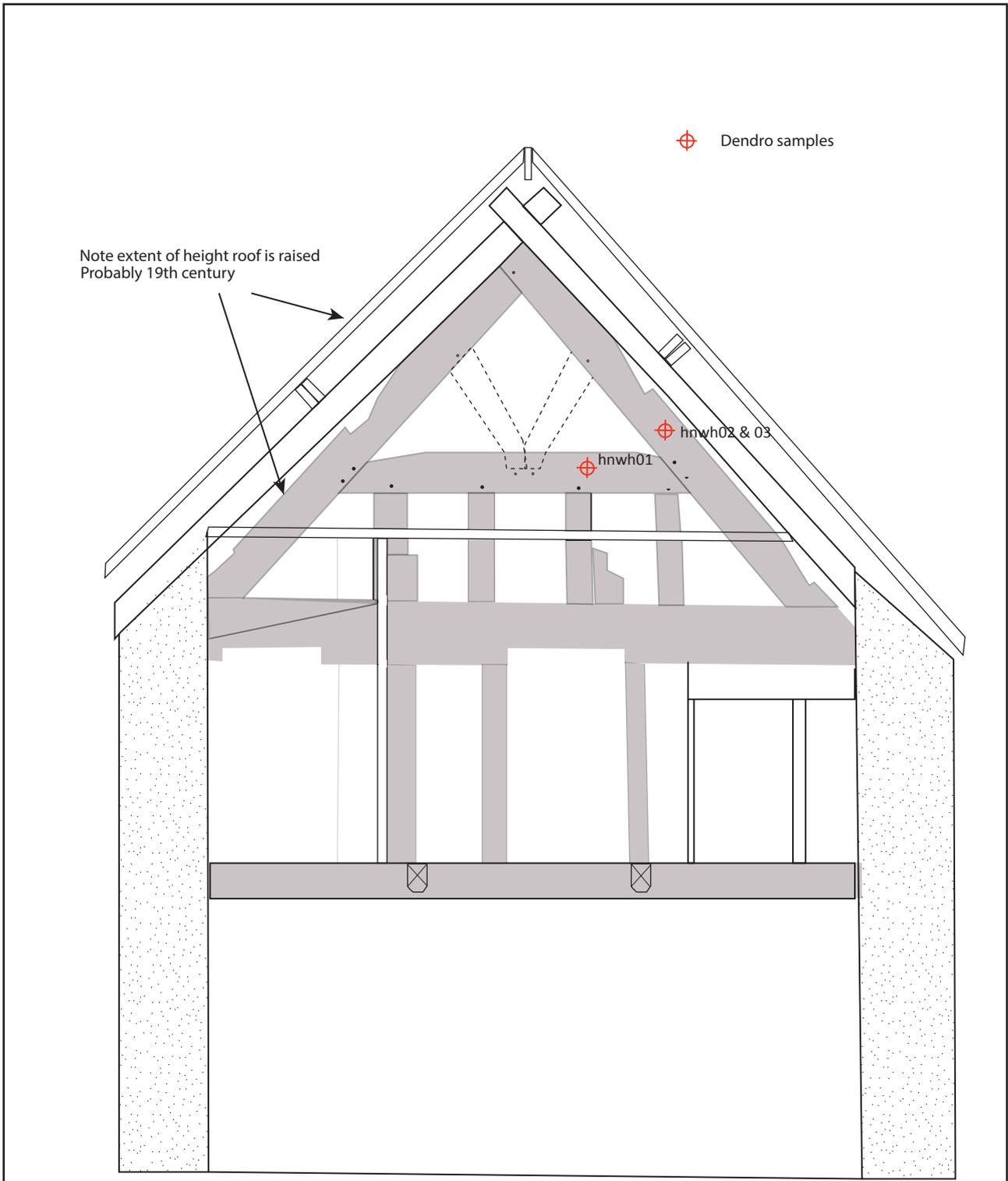


Hen Wrych, Llandulas Road, Abergele, Conwy C.B LL22 1EU  
 Fig 4: First Floor Plan



Hen Wrych, Llandulas Road, Abergele, Conwy LL22 8EU  
 Fig 5: Second Floor Plan

**HW**  
 Peter Thompson



⊕ Dendro samples

Note extent of height roof is raised  
Probably 19th century

⊕ hnwh02 & 03

⊕ hnwh01

5m



Scale 1:50 >A4

Do not scale from this plan

**HW**  
Peter Thompson

Hen Wrych, Llandulas Road, Abergele, Conwy B.C. LL22 8EU  
Figure 6 : Section AA Truss 1

