Darganfod Hen Dai Cymreig
Discovering Old Welsh Houses

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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.

North West Wales Dendrochronology Project
Tyn-llan, Gwyddelwern, Denbighshire

EAS Client Report 2009/18
December 2009

Engineering Archaeological Services Ltd
Unit 2 Glanypwll Workshops
Ffordd Tanygrisiau
Blaenau Ffestiniog
Gwynedd
LL41 3NW

Registered in England N^{o} 286978

North West Wales Dendrochronology Project
Tyn-llan, Gwyddelwern, Denbighshire

EAS Client Report 2009/18

Commissioned by
Margaret Dunn
For
North West Wales Dendrochronology Project

December 2009

By
I.P. Brooks and K. Laws

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North West Wales Dendrochronology Project

Tyn-llan, Gwyddelwern

SJ 0758 4675

NPRN 409865

Status: Not Listed

Introduction

This report details the recording of the house at Tyn-llan, Gwyddelwern, undertaken to compliment both the dendrochronological sampling, undertaken by Oxford Dendrochronology Laboratory, and the documentary study undertaken by volunteers for the North Wales Dendrochronology Project. The fieldwork took place on 19th November 2009. The house is a previously unrecognised hall house which was converted to a lobby-entry, storeyed house, of regional type, and was not previously noted in Smith's "Houses of the Welsh Countryside."

Methodology

The plans of the Tyn-llan are based on measured sketch plans made during the recording of this house. The drawings of the timberwork were carried out by direct measurement at a scale of 1:20. Photographs were taken with a Nikon D80 digital SLR camera at a resolution of 10.2 mega pixels. Where practical all the photographs included a metric scale

Survey Report

Tyn-llan is located in the centre of the village of Gwyddelwern and is aligned parallel to the road between Gwyddelwern and Caenog (Figure 1). Externally the house is a single range of one and a half storeys with rendered walls under a modern slate roof (Plate 1). There is a single, inserted bow window in the western end of the north wall and a modern glass and timber conservatory to the rear (Plate 2). The upper storey is lit by a series of modern gabled dormers. There is one brick built chimney on the western gable end. The eastern end of the building appears to have been converted from a cowhouse, whilst the western end was domestic accommodation (Figure 2).

Three trusses were recorded within the building each of which is of a different design. The western truss (Truss 1) (Figure 3, Plates 3 – 7) is an arch braced cruck frame with a slightly arched collar and raking braces above. There are carpenters marks on the collar and the curved braces below. The common rafters sit over the principal rafters and these have short, straight windbraces to the purlins (Plate 8). On the ground floor this truss sits in front of the fireplace and the relationship between this truss and the fireplace is unclear.

Truss 2 (Figure 4) sits between the main room and the hall and staircase, it also forms the western walls of the bathrooms (both upstairs and down) (Plates 9 – 12). It is clearly of box frame type with a tie-beam, now cut by an inserted doorway, collar and probable queen posts. Above the collar, three staves for a wattle and daub partition survive (Plate 9) together with a small patch of lime plaster. Below the tie-beam, a series of studs were recorded, those in the bathroom are close set and appear to define a doorway with a rounded head. In the stairwell the studs are wider set and appear to have a rail at their base, although the full extent of this feature is uncertain. Once again there are short, straight windbraces associated with this truss (Plate 13). The purlins are through purlins in all three trusses of the building.

Truss 3 (Figure 4), sits between the original house and cowhouse (now the kitchen with bedrooms above). It appears to be part of the box framing for the house, but consists of a collared rafter roof with a tie beam, straight collar supported by queen struts and raking braces above (Plate 14). Best exposed on the eastern side of the stairwell, the presence of the tops of studs below the tie-beam and timberwork encased in the wall between the hallway and the modern kitchen (Plate 15) would suggest this was part of a timber framed wall. There are indications that both studs and rails were part of this wall (Plate 16). Other indications that the original house was timber framed were also found in the master bedroom (Plate 17), a secondary bedroom and the upstairs bathroom (Plate 18) where studs were also located.

Whilst the relationship between the fireplace and the original building is uncertain this feature dominates the western end of the house. It has a large mantle beam which not only spans the chimney breast, but extends to the southern wall of the room. Originally this beam was moulded (Figure 5) with simple beads along the top, middle and base of the beam (Plate 19). These moulding were largely removed and tend to survive only at the ends of the mantle beam. The removal of the beading was crudely done with chisel marks surviving. Within the structure of the fireplace was a brick lined bread oven set into the southern side of the hearth.

The ceilings in the ground floor rooms (main room and hallway) have been added to the original structure. That in the main room has a longitudinal beam with joists running across the width of the room. The main beam is moderately chamfered with straight cut stops (Plate 20). At some time in its life this beam marked the position of a post and plank partition, evidence for which is shown on it's under surface (Figure 6, Plate 21). The partition consisted of a series of posts 260 mm x 40 mm in size, separated by planks approximately 340 mm wide and 25 mm thick. Centrally placed was a gap of 860 mm which may mark the position of a door. This partition sits uncomfortably within the room as it would divide the fireplace in two; it is therefore possible that this ceiling beam may have been re-used from elsewhere.

The ceiling in the hallway incorporated the stair well within its structure and consisted of a main beam running laterally with joists running longitudinally. The

pattern of beam and joists extends into the ground floor bathroom to the south, although there is some indication that this division marks the line of an older partition in the form of a series of dowel holes on the underside of the beam between the hall and bathroom. These dowels were separated by intervals of approximately 280 mm. There is also a single dowel hole on the underside of the main beam, approximately 320 mm from the northern end.

Dendrochronology Sampling

Seven samples were taken from Tyn-llan. One sample was from the mantle beam, one from Truss 1, one from the transverse floor beam below Truss 2, two from purlins and one a principal rafter from Truss 2 and one from the tie-beam for Truss 2.

Conclusions

Tyn-llan appears to have at least two main phases of alteration, prior to its modernisation. These are:

1. A timber framed house with three different trusses, being a mixture of cruck and box frame construction. The relationship between these trusses and the chimney is unclear. There is some suggestion that the house was divided with the provision of a doorway below the central truss (Truss 2)

2. The conversion to a storeyed house with a lobby entry and gable end chimney

3. The date of the addition of the cowhouse is uncertain, as is whether there was a longitudinal division within the ground floor main room.

Acknowledgments

The recording of this building was commissioned by Margaret Dunn for the North Wales Dendrochronology Project and she also organised access to the building. The forbearance of the owner, during the recording of the house, is gratefully acknowledged. The building was also visited by Richard Suggett of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, whose analysis of the buildings was extremely useful.

Plate 1: Tyn-llan, looking SE

Plate 2: Tyn-llan, looking NW

Plate 3: Top of Truss 1, looking west

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Plate 5: Base of Truss 1 and fireplace, looking SW

Plate 6: Base of Truss 1, looking south

Plate 7: Base of Truss 1, looking north

Plate 8: Windbrace in the master bedroom, associated with Truss 1, looking SW

Plate 9: Top of Truss 2, looking west

Plate 10: Truss 2 in upper bathroom, looking west

Plate 11: Truss 2 in back of cupboard in bedroom, looking west

Plate 12: Truss 2 in stairwell, looking NW

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Plate 20: Chamfer and stop on the main ceiling beam in the main room, looking east

Plate 21: Underside of ceiling beam in main room showing construction of the partition

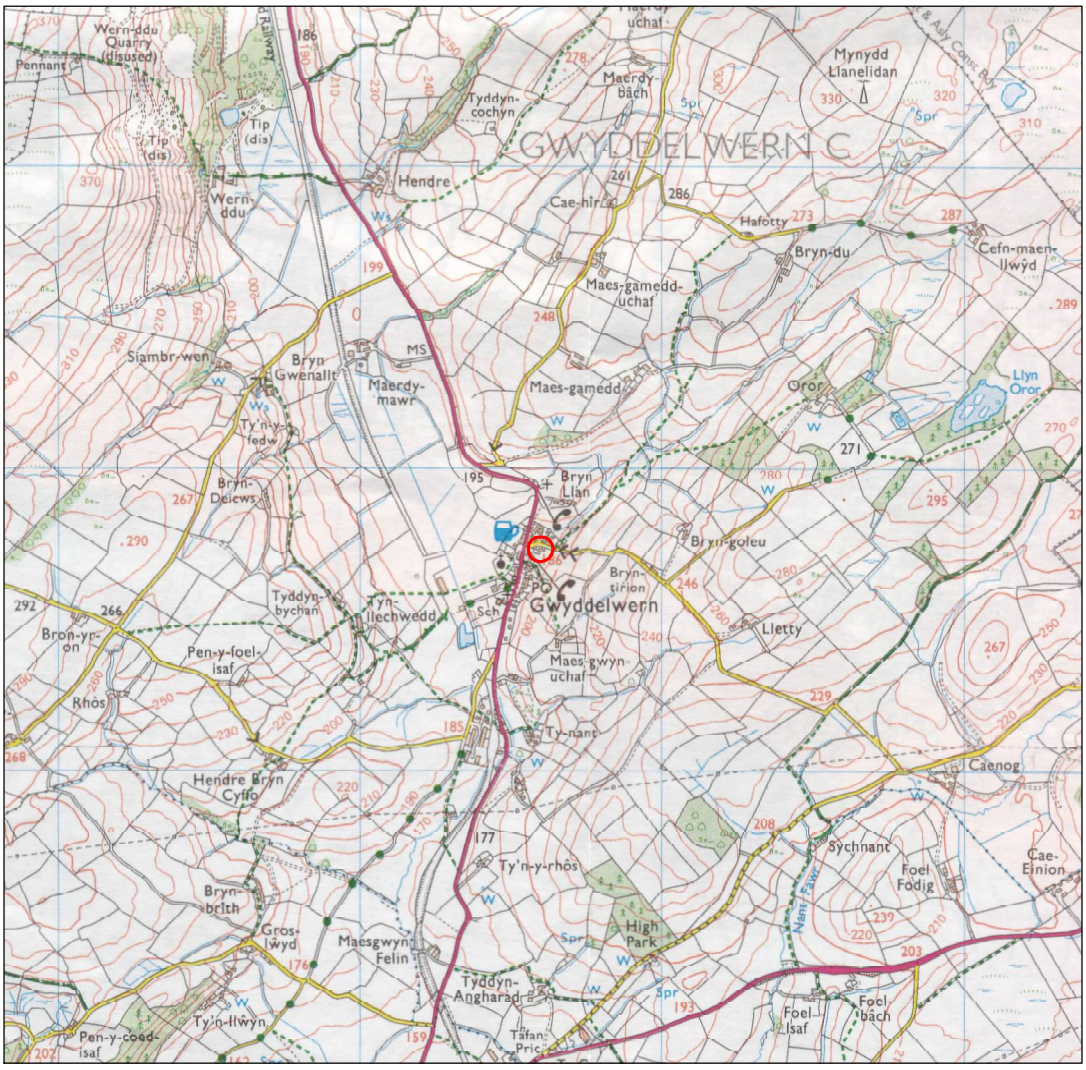

Figure 1: Tyn-llan, Gwyddelwern
Location
Scale 1:25,000

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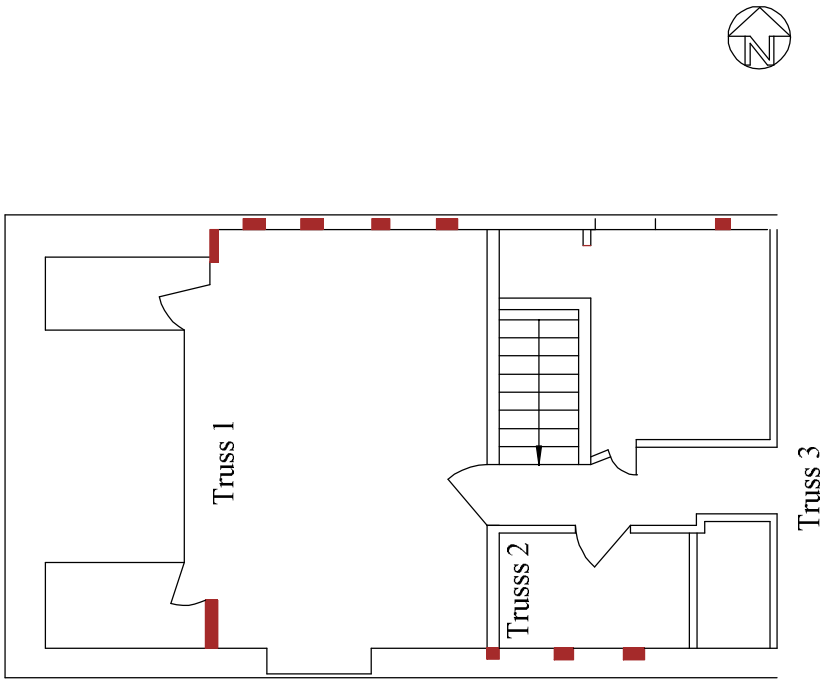


First Floor

Ground Floor

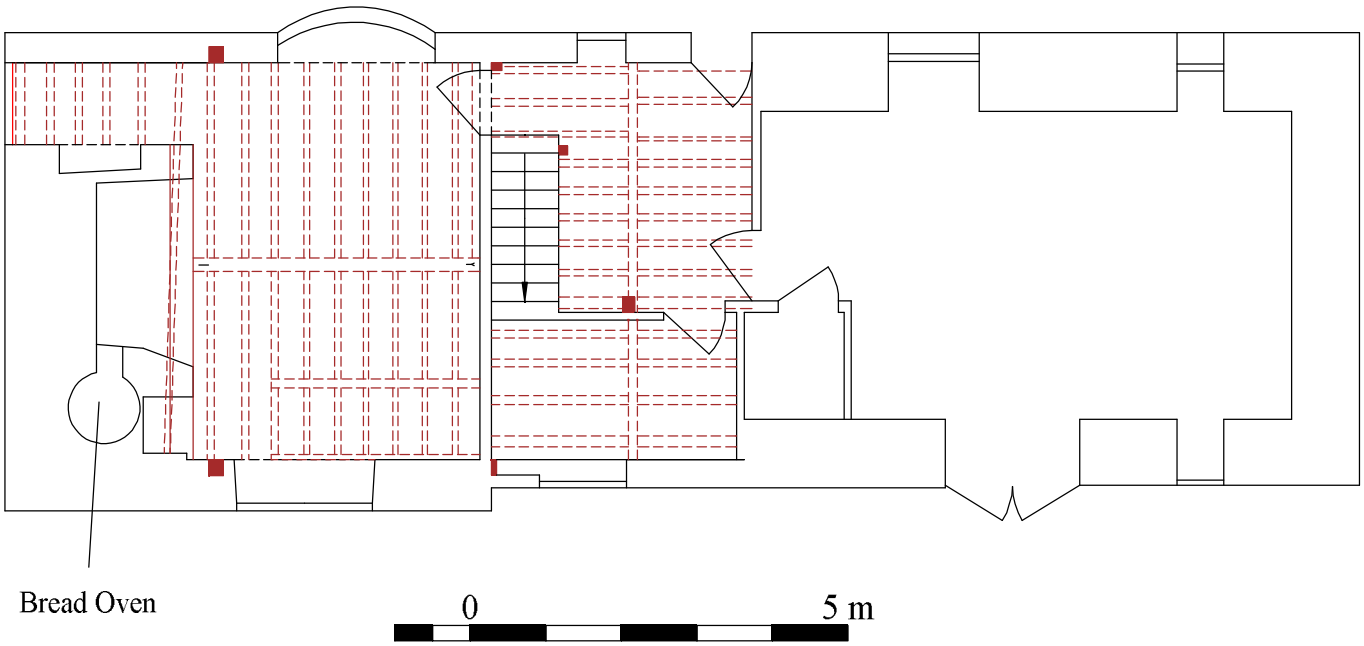
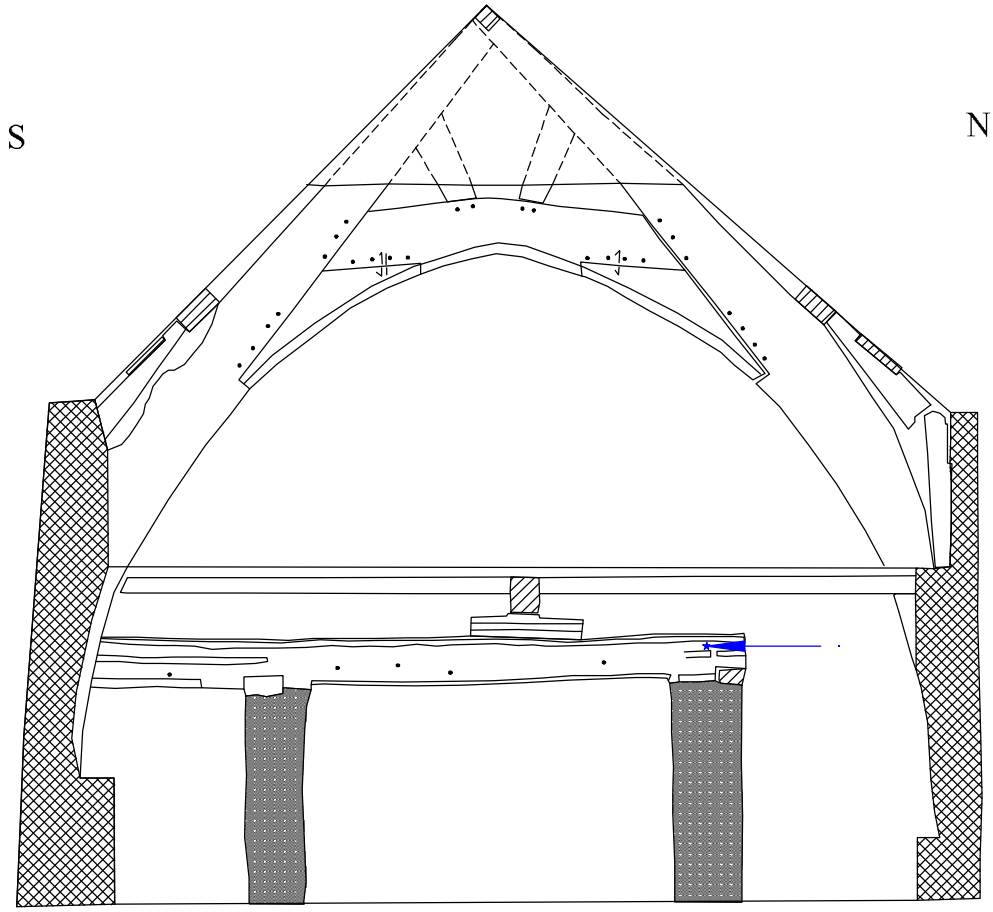


Figure 2: Tyn-llan, Gwyddelwern
Scale 1:100

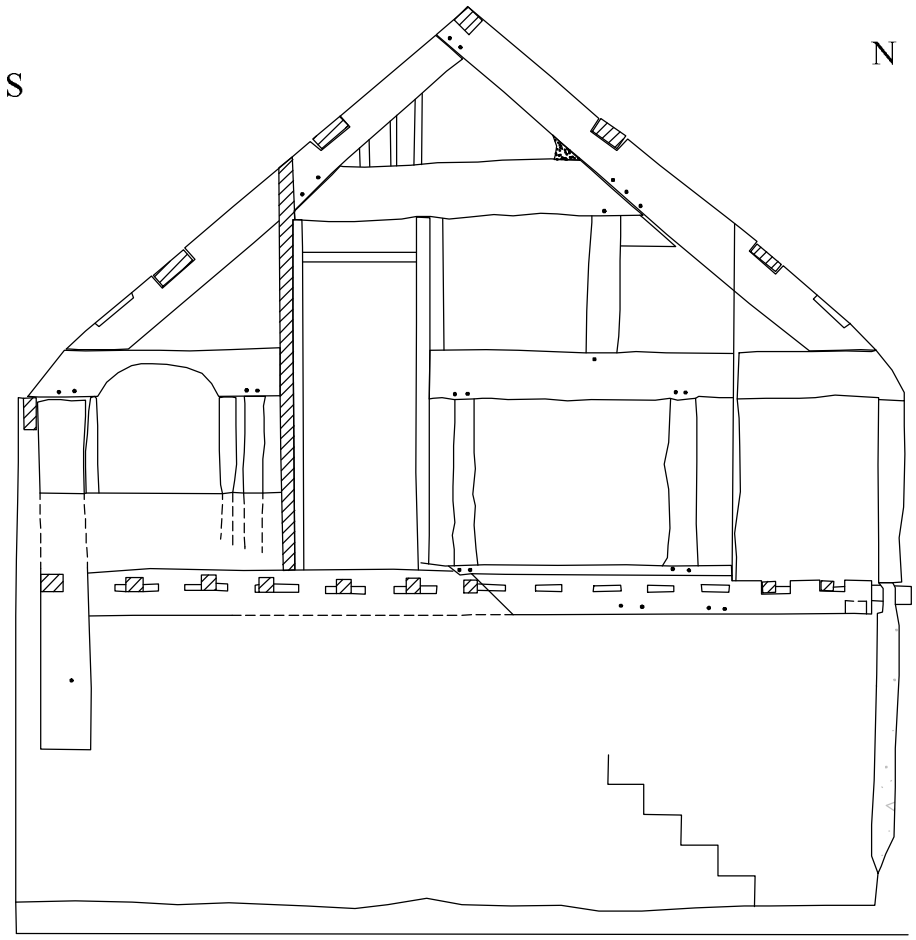


Truss 1 and Fireplace

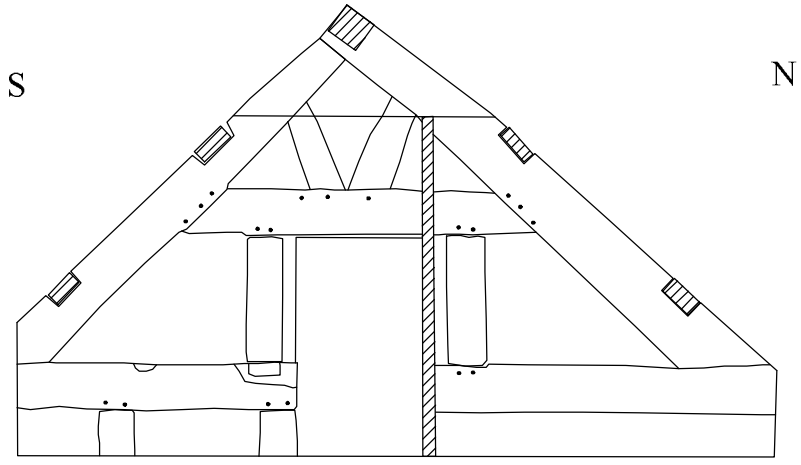
* Sample

0 5 m

Figure 3: Tyn-llan, Gwyddelwern
Scale 1:50



Truss 2



Truss 3

Figure 4: Tyn-llan, Gwyddelwern
Scale 1:50

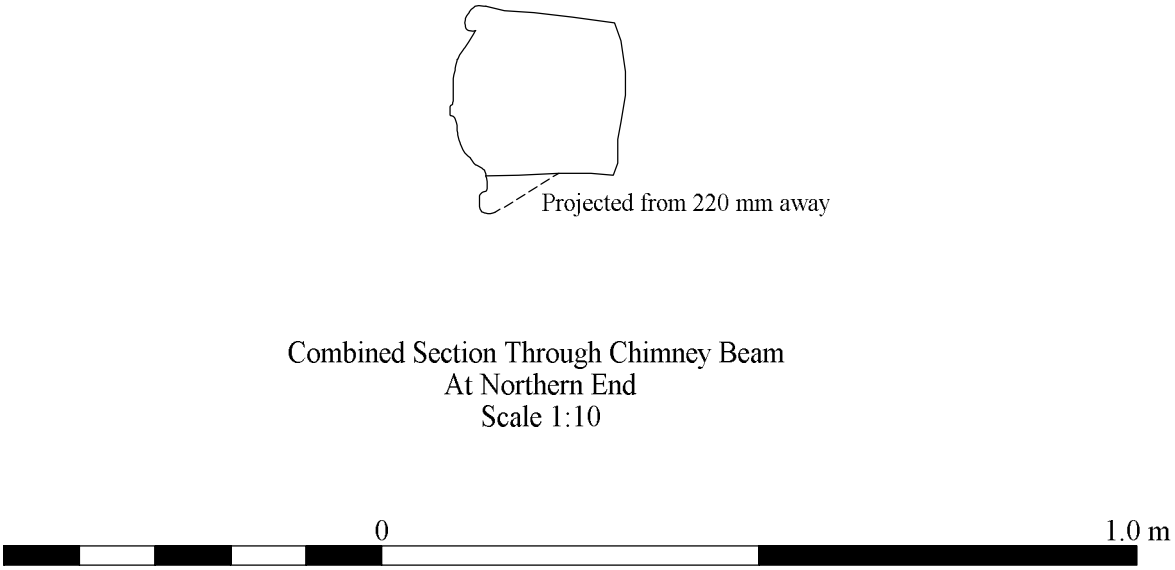


Figure 5: Section Through Mantel Beam

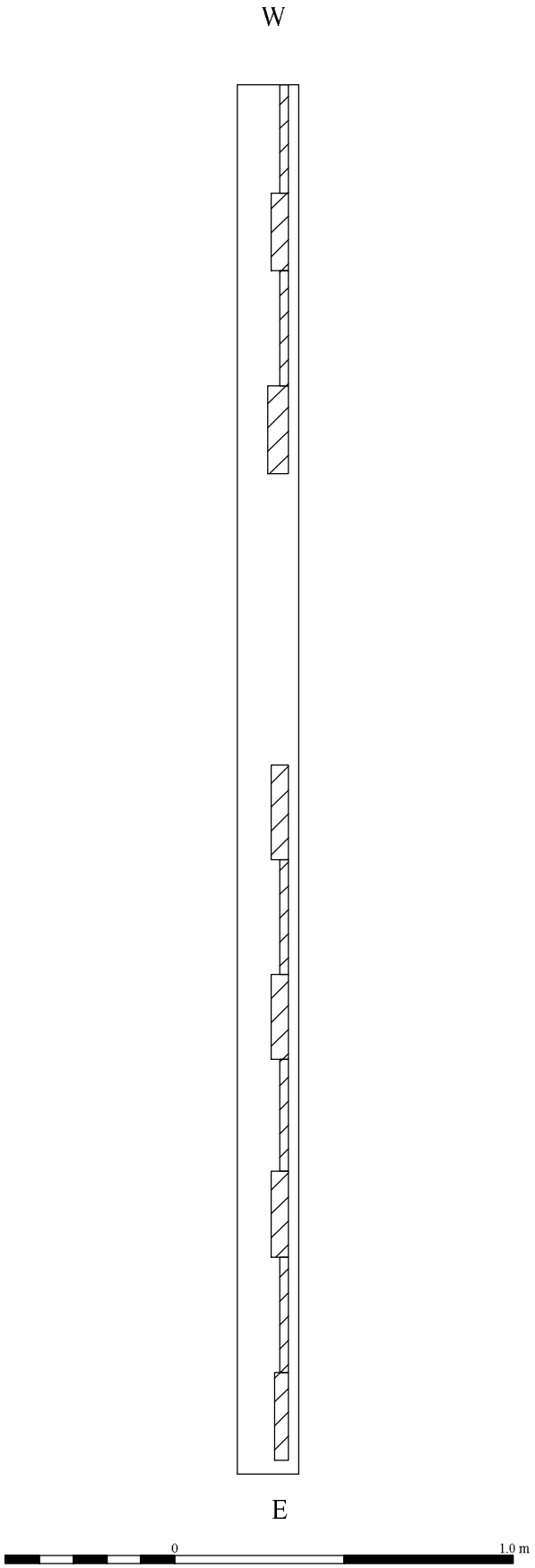


Figure 6: Plan of the underside of the ceiling beam in the main room
Scale 1:20