



Darganfod Hen Dai Cymreig Discovering Old Welsh Houses

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LLanfair-Isaf Llanfair, Merioneth



Building Report

Author: CADW & Peter Smith, RCAHMW

Updated 24-10-2003

Written in the language chosen by the volunteers and researchers & including information so far discovered

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CADW LISTED BUILDINGS REPORT

Authority : Gwynedd

Community: Llanfair

Locality: Llanfair

NGR SH57502880

NAME; LLANFAIR-ISAF FARMHOUSE

LOCATION : Set back from the W side of the A496.

RECORD NUMBER 4796

DATE LISTED 11/30/66 LAST AMENDED 10/24/03

GRADE II*

HISTORY

The development of the property at Llanfair Isaf shows a relatively straightforward sequence: at its core is a late C16 storeyed, end-chimney and cross-passage house of characteristic regional type. To this was soon afterwards added a large single-storeyed secondary dwelling of open-hall type. Some 2 hundred years later (c1 820)

a parlour wing was added at the rear of the main house, and a lofted cartshed extending the house in line to the S. At some time, too, a stable was added at the end of the secondary hall, but this had been converted to a dwelling by c1 950.

Some of the detail of this development is less clear: whilst the hall (confusingly now known as henyd) is clearly secondary to the main house (its gable wall obviously abuts it), its functional relationship to the house is less clear. Assumed to be a secondary dwelling it seems exceptionally large for such a purpose,

comprising a large open hall, a smaller room, and at best only a partial loft. There is a blocked window in the upper storey of the main range into this hall, seemingly too close to the corner to be plausibly original: was it inserted to look into the hall?

Perhaps the small size of the house plan which was becoming conventional in this area from the later C16 necessitated the establishment of a larger multi-purpose space here at the centre of a small estate.

The internal layout of the main house also displays a clear development sequence: the opposed entries were originally directly into the hall: the present entrance-and stair-hall represents a modification of this layout at some time during the C17 creating a centralised plan of 'renaissance' type. Presumably the present first floor layout was also created at this time.

Owned in the C17 by descendants of Reverend Owen Rowlands, rector of the parish. Following the death of Hugh Rowlands and his son Owen, in 1766 the estate was acquired by John Richards; as well as the house at Llanfair Isaf, there were 147 acres (59.5 hectares) of land and several properties within the parish.

EXTERIOR

An irregular T-shaped group in which the main range (with the added lofted cartshed) forms the stem and is aligned N-S. Abutting the NW corner of this range is the slightly later hall house or secondary dwelling (known as the hendy).

Projecting from the rear of the main range is the early C19 wing.

Main range is 2-storeyed, 2-room plan with near-central aligned doorways to through-passage. Rubble, roughly brought to courses; slate roof with end wall stacks that to upper end of massive dimensions. Entrance elevation faces W: doorway has riven stone voussoirs to arch; Windows are small-paned sashes (perhaps dating from the extension of house in early C19?): 20-pane sash to main room, 16-pane sashes elsewhere. Similar doorway aligned in rear wall, with 12-pane sash window on each floor to its left. C19 cart-shed addition is better-coursed stone, with hipped slate roof. It has 2 cart bays to ground floor, with slate lintels and central pillar. External stairs to first-floor doorway, with small window alongside and to loft above. Twelve-pane sash window to first floor in rear elevation, with blind-painted window below.

Hall range (Hendy) at right-angles to front of main dwelling. It is a simpler form of construction, virtually dry-stone with small packing stones in the joints; slate roof with single chimney on L-hand end. Near-central doorway, also with riven stone voussoirs to arch. Small windows to either side, small-paned with stone lintels.

Former stable (now cottage) attached to gable end of this range is 2-storeyed with external staircase to former loft against gable wall, central doorway in added porch flanked by 12-pane sash windows; small window above.

Georgian wing to E is finely coursed and dressed stonework, its slate roof with pronounced overhang, hipped on the R-hand side. Axial chimney. This range is symmetrical in its main elevation, hence it appears like an independent dwelling with central front door with traceried overlight, in porch with flat moulded cornice, and flanking 16-pane sash windows.

LISTED

Listed at grade II* as an exceptionally interesting domestic complex comprising a well-preserved sub-medieval house of regional type, with a similarly well-preserved secondary dwelling, and a virtually unaltered early C19 parlour wing. The buildings exhibit a remarkably clear development sequence - of a type characteristic of this region, and retain traditional character to an exceptional degree.

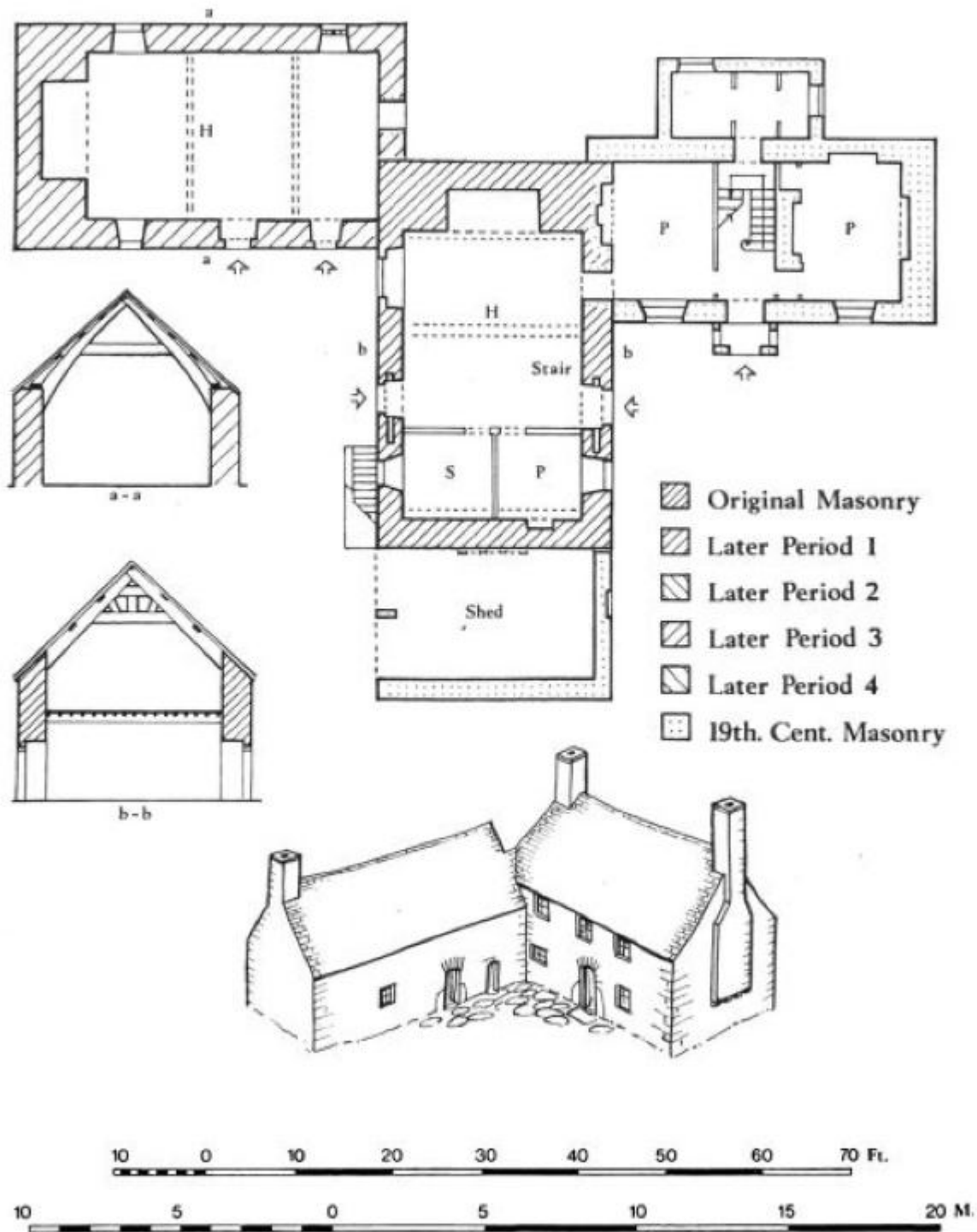


Fig. 87 This interpretation receives support from another development of the 'unit-system' where the two houses (this time built at right-angles) are not even inter-communicating, as in the first and second house at Llanfair-isaf (Llanfair, Mer.). Observe that when Llanfair-isaf was enlarged again, the addition formed a virtually independent unit. Note that it is the single-storeyed, raised-cruck house which follows the storeyed sub-medieval house. The perspective shows the pre-nineteenth century layout.

Grade II Listed Building

Lanfair-Isaf consists of two houses built corner to corner and a number of detached farm buildings. The structures appear to date from the early 17th to the mid 19th century.

The nucleus of the present house is a regional type A house built on a north-south axis to which has been added a single storeyed house at the M.il. corner shortly afterwards.

There are early to mid 19th-century additions to the E. side and south and of the first house, and to the W. gable of the second.

The original house which closely resembles Gareg Fawr, Waunfawr (Caerns. Inv.II, 1421), Braich-y-Saint Penllyn (Caerns. Inv. II, 1380), Ty Mawr, Criccieth (Caerns. Inv. II, 873), as well as Coed Mawr, Ilanbedr, (Journal of the Merioneth Record Society 1959, p. 275), and other houses in Merioneth, has opposite entries, one wider than the other each with a segmental head of late voussoirs, leading originally directly into the 'hall' or living room of the house. Alongside the entrance passage are two smaller zooms. There is a large fireplace at the hall gable end. The roof trusses of the collar beam type indicate that there were originally two rooms on the first floor each with an open roof truss over the centre and a partition-carrying roof truss between them. One original partition survives on the first floor consisting of post-and-panel construction with moulded posts and an ogee door head which has been recently reset. The remaining partitions on both ground and first floors have been reset when the house was remodelled to accommodate a well stair probably in the 18th century. There is no evidence of the earlier stair which may have been the winding by the main fireplace, or alternatively a ladder in the hall as is clearly the case at Dyffryn Mymbyr (Caerns.Inv. III, p. clxii) and by implication other houses without the winding fireplace stair

The main room of the house was reduced to make an entrance hall in the modern sense, and its eventual necessity became necessary to provide additional reception rooms and bedrooms in a 19th-century wing, whose squared ashlar and rather heavy detailing suggests a date of about 1840,

Although there is no date inscription, or known documentary evidence of date the combination of cross-passage and ogee door-head detail would make a date of ca. 1600 fairly safe, as after that a cross-passage would be getting rather old fashioned, or before 14 a renaissance feature such as an ogee door head not to be expected.

The second house is notched round the N.W. corner of the first, and therefore clearly of subsequent date, and is a "hall house" consisting of a larger and a smaller room both open to the roof, with two raised cruck roof trusses. It is curious that the earlier type of house should be the later of buildings

The building of two small houses corner-to-corner is common in the vicinity, and has been described by W.J. Hemp and C. Gresham as the "Unit System" (see *Archaeologia Cambrensis* 1943, pp. 98-112). The farm buildings were not closely examined. All except a stable (?) now converted to a cottage at the end of the second house were detached from the house. The principal buildings were the great barn which though not entered might well be the same age of the house. The "Dutch Barn" on stone columns, and open milking shed both probably date from the 1830s when the additions were made to the house.

Condition Good

Proprietor and Occupiers Captain Rolo Moore, R.N.

Visited P.S. 21 July 1965.

SI23 2HP.

XXXXXXX 4381/2

S.P. Stephen, Esq.
Môr Awelon.
LLANBEDR,
Merioneth.

M/ME/ME
9th August, 1972.

Annwyl Mr. Stephen,

Diolch an eich llythyr ac an yr hanes
yn ei gynnwys. Mai pob math o hanes lleol o ddiddordeb
mawr i mi, yn enwedig gwybodaeth ar hen adeiladau.

Mae'n dde cael gwybed fod bobl yn
diddordeb i yn y pwnc

Gobeithiaf y bydd y llyfr wedi ei orffen
y flwyddyn nesaf. Hyd Lhnni ni fedraf rhoi y pris gwerthi.

In gywir iawn.

P. SMITH.