



## NORTH WEST WALES DENDROCHRONOLOGY PROJECT

### DATING OLD WELSH HOUSES - Caernarfonshire

# Tŷ MAWR (formerly The Castle Inn)

2 and 4 Castle Street, Cricieth, Gwynedd (formerly Caernarfonshire)

**Parish:** Cricieth

**Grid Reference:** SH 5004 3785

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#### HOUSE DETAILS:

Tŷ Mawr is a substantial house of Snowdonian type presenting several features of mid/late sixteenth-century date including voussoir-headed openings, and two tiers of cusped windbraces. The timber is unusually well dressed with the removal of all sapwood. The principal chamber has a hooded fireplace and open archbraced truss. Published account in RCAHMW's Inventory, *Caernarvonshire, Volume II: Central* (1960), pp. 62-3, no. 873, with an additional survey commissioned by the NWWDP available in NMRW (NPRN 32) (Richard Suggett, RCAHMW).

**Cantref:** Dunoding      **Commote:** Eifionydd (*Atlas of Caernarvonshire* pp 69-71).

**Dendrochronology results:** *Felling date range: After 1527.* Lower purlin 1516; Beam (0/1). *Site Master* 1431-1516 gwyg2 ( $t = 7.1$  SKERHS2; 6.1 CEFNCAR1; 6.0 CROWLE2) (Oxford Dendrochronology Laboratory [ODL]). The removal of the sapwood precludes the determination of an exact date: at least eleven rings are missing.

#### SUMMARY:

Tŷ Mawr may be of greatest significance as one of very few sites in Wales definitely associated with an early modern practitioner of medicine: it was also known as 'Tu William feddig', the house of William the Doctor. Little is known of this man, but it is likely that he practised in the late sixteenth-early seventeenth century. It is not known whether Tŷ Mawr was built for him, or occupied by him later. The building is of a comparatively high standard for Cricieth, with well-dressed timber of very large section, and two substantial fireplaces in the original structure, one in the principal chamber on the first floor.

It seems to have suffered an episode of at least semi-dereliction: three of the four purlins in the NE bay and one in the SW bay have been replaced and some of the original ones have been displaced on the trusses, and the RCAHMW investigator thought that on the ground floor only the W cross-beam was original (though the remainder of this work does not look recent). Almost all the wind-braces have been lost. The SE principal of the SW truss has a large, curved area cut or worn out of its upper side. This dereliction may have been the result of temporary abandonment or of fire, though there is no obvious sign of the latter. The repair of this part of the house may have taken place at the same time as the addition of another bay to the SW, the present No. 4, which CADW ascribes to some time in the eighteenth century; it was certainly before 1837. Perhaps the insertion of the fireplace in the E ground-floor room, and the replacement of the stone



A report commissioned by The North West Wales Dendrochronology Project in partnership with The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales (RCAHMW).

stair with the present broad central one were part of the same campaign. This may have been between 1743, when Tŷ Mawr was used in some way as a warehouse, and 1771, by which date the house was again inhabited; by 1788, and probably earlier, it was an inn. Possibly much of this work took place in the 1750s, when the owner, Ellis Wynn(e), reorganized his estates, selling some of them; but a definite sequence of work, and dates, would be given only by further detailed investigation of the structure.

During the nineteenth century Tŷ Mawr was a public house called the Criccieth Castle or Castle Inn. In 1908 it was divided into two private houses when the licence was withdrawn. The larger of these, No. 2, had a bathroom added at the back around 1940. The house called 'Golwg y Môr' stands on land which was part of the garden of Tŷ Mawr until some time between 1930 and 1938.

The first documentary reference found to Tŷ Mawr is from 1685 when it was part of the inherited property of Griffith Wynn of Penyberth near Llanbedrog. He had married Margaret Ellis, the heiress of the Ystumlllyn estate, of which the main house is about 2 km to the north-east of Cricieth. It is not known how Tŷ Mawr descended to Griffith Wynn, but his family tree (uncertain as it is) is given in an appendix. When their grandson Ellis Wynn sold most of the Penyberth estate in 1754, Tŷ Mawr was retained along with the Ystumlllyn lands, possibly because it lay close to them. In 1838 the Ystumlllyn estate, including Tŷ Mawr, was purchased by Rowland Jones of Broom Hall, pa. Llanarmon. Tŷ Mawr remained part of the Broom Hall estate until 1930, when it was sold in two parts – No. 4 to the occupier and No. 2 to a local owner, who also built 'Golwg y Môr'. Since then both parts of the structure have continued to be used as independent private houses.

**Confusion of names:** There were at least two houses called Tŷ Mawr in Cricieth, two of them on either side of Castle St. The one on the north side (associated with the Brynhir estate, and later Gwynfryn, Llanystumdwy) seems to have been demolished after 1851, and stood where Nos. 5 and 7 Castle St are now. In this account '[N]' is added after references to it, and material relating to it (or where the reference is not certainly to Nos 2-4) is printed in *italic*. The inn on the land of that house may have developed into the present Brynhir Arms. The Tŷ Mawr which is our subject (sometimes referred to here with [S]) is marked as 'Tŷ Lawr' in the most detailed study of the development of Cricieth, but this name seems to occur rarely elsewhere; locally it referred instead to Tŷ Mawr [N] (Colin Gresham 'Tre Ferthyr and the development of Cricieth' *Transactions of the Caernarvonshire Historical Society* 27 (1966) [GTF]; RCI 63 n.1; EJ; RDC). The name 'Tymawr Pendre' is used in 1843, but it is not known for which house. The Ystumlllyn estate also owned a Tŷ Mawr or 'Ty mawr y lon' on the road from Cricieth to Pentrefelin; it was one of three cottages on the land of Bron y Gadair Bach, at about 521393. '[E]' is used here to distinguish this house. There is too a Tŷ Mawr at 538384 in Treflys, a parish also held by the Rector of Cricieth at some times, and people from that house may have appeared in the Cricieth parish registers. It is sometimes difficult to tell which of the houses is meant in a document.

Personal names are also duplicated, including Griffith Griffiths and Mary Jane Griffiths (see below, 1881-1965).

Information about those people and places that have no relation to 2-4 Castle St is included in the hope of avoiding future confusion.

**Spelling:** The spelling of names ('Crickieth', 'Stymlllyn' &c.) used in sources is generally preserved.

## Abbreviations used

- AS Pers. comm., Mrs Ann Stearns (née Little), Hooton cum Studley, Oxford 01865 351334 who visited with her daughter Lucy
- EJ Pers. comm., Mrs Eileen Jones, Cricieth (granddaughter of Griffith Griffiths Bodhywel and Mary Jane née Clarke), and Mr Arfor Jones
- GMLIG W.R.P. George *The Making of Lloyd George* London 1976
- GAD T. Ceiri Griffith *Achau rhai o deuluoedd hen siroedd Caernarfon, Meirionnydd, a Threfaldwyn* Talybont 2012
- GAS Gwynedd Archive Service
- GE Colin Gresham *Eifionydd* Cardiff 1973
- GP J.E. Griffith *Pedigrees of Anglesey and Carnarvonshire Families* Wrexham 2009
- GTF Colin Gresham 'Tre Ferthyr and the development of Cricieth' *Transactions of the Caernarvonshire Historical Society* 27 (1966)
- HD2 The owner's deeds to No. 2 Castle St.
- HD4 The owner's deeds to No. 4 Castle St.
- MI Memorial Inscription transcribed by Gwynedd Family History Society, available in Caernarfon Record Office and some local libraries
- MM Pers. comm., Meinir Moncrieffe, Cricieth (great-great-granddaughter of Griffith Griffiths Bodhywel and Mary Jane née Pritchard)
- NLW National Library of Wales
- NMRW National Monuments Record of Wales, at the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, Aberystwyth
- ODL Oxford Dendrochronology Laboratory
- PG Richard Haslam, Julian Orbach and Adam Voelcker *The Buildings of Wales: Gwynedd* New Haven and London 2009
- RCI Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales and Monmouthshire *An Inventory of the Ancient Monuments in Caernarvonshire, Volume II: Central* London 1960
- RDC Pers. comm., Mr R.D. Cadwalader, Cricieth
- TNA The National Archives, Public Record Office, Kew

### **Sketch-plan of Tŷ Mawr and its surroundings**

(See also the Building Survey for Tŷ Mawr commissioned by the NWWDP available in NMRW (NPRN 32), and as no. 16 at <http://datinggoldwelshhouses.co.uk/library/page6.htm>, as of 2013-01-19).