



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.



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DYDDIO HEN DAI CYMREIG

DATING OLD WELSH HOUSES

PROSIECT DENDROCRONOLEG
GOGLEDD ORLLEWIN CYMRU



NORTH WEST WALES
DENDROCHRONOLOGY PROJECT

NORTH WEST WALES DENDROCHRONOLOGY PROJECT

DATING OLD WELSH HOUSES GROUP

PEN Y BRYN, Edern, Pwllheli



Researched & collated by Eryl Lobley, Margaret
Dunn, Wally & Margaret Barr & Tom David

JUNE 2012

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).



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Dating Old Welsh Houses: North West Wales Dendrochronology Project

NORTH WEST DENDROCHRONOLOGY PROJECT

DATING OLD WELSH HOUSES GROUP– LLŶN

PEN Y BRYN

Edern, Llŷn, Gwynedd

NGR SH 2763 3944

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House Summary:

A small two-unit farmhouse of Snowdonian type with kitchen and parlour, both with end chimneys, on either side of the entrance. Gabled dormers light the upper storey. Service-rooms are located in a lean-to at the rear of the house. A date inscription on the front elevation dated 1790 is later. Tree-ring dating shows that the date inscription must commemorate a phase of rebuilding, possibly the addition of the rear service range. Plan and account: RCAHMW, Caernarvonshire Inventory III (1964), p.33 no. 1563; detailed survey (2010) commissioned by NWWDP deposited in the NMRW.

Dendrochronology results: EDERN, Penybryn (SH 276 394) Felling date: Winter 1743/49 Detailed survey (2010) commissioned by NWWDP deposited in the NMRW. Principal rafters 1743(32C), 1722(2), 1713(7); Cross-beam 1724(5). Site Master 1647-1743 LYNB (t = 6.6 BDGLRT5; 5.6 SCOTTS; 5.3 WHTOWR8).

CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY

Date	Summary of Information (reference in brackets)
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1609	Howell ap Robert & his son Robert ap Howell arrange a mortgage with local landowner & MP, John Griffith. Security and amount unclear. (James-Robertson's account, chap 1, p.1; Gwynedd Archives [GA] XM/5120/1).
Undated	Relationship developing between Robert ap Howell and Katherine, daughter of William James of Bodferin. NB see marriage settlement 1611 (James-Robertson's account, chap 1, p.1).

1603	Pen y Bryn farmhouse deeds are said to date from this year; probably on an adjacent site. (Historic Building Report 19/02/2009, based on information from owner: there is a reference in the deeds to the start of the reign of King James I).
?1609	William ap Robert ap Howell married Janet Griffith (James-Robertson's account, chap 1, p.3).
1611	Legal document (marriage settlement) proposing that William James would repay the loan of £35 that Howell ap Robert & his son Robert ap Howell obtained from John Griffith (possibly the mortgage of 1609). If the repayment was made in the following 6 years he could then entail the property to the children of Robert ap Howell and Katherine and to their descendants (James-Robertson's account, chap 1, p.2; GA XM/5120/3).
Undated	Birth of first son to Robert ap Howell and Katherine, named William ap Robert ap Howell (James-Robertson's account, chap 1, p.2).
?1618	Entailment of the property signed by Evan ap William ap James (Katherine's brother, because her father had died); signed with Howell ap Robert & his son Robert ap Howell. Entailment stipulated the property would pass to the first four sons and then to the first four daughters, then to any other sons and then any other daughters (James-Robertson's account, chap 1, p.3. The document is dated but is not listed by Gwynedd Archives).
Undated	William's name developed to be William Probert ap Howell (James-Robertson's account, chap 1, p.3).
Undated	Two sons born - John Robert and Humphrey Robert (James-Robertson's account, chap 1, p.3).
1693	Agreement between William Probert and William Jones to lease the former's lands for 21 years (James-Robertson's account, chap 1, p.3).
Undated	John Robert, first son, died childless before his father (James-Robertson's account, chap 1, p.3).
Undated	Humphrey Robert married Catherine Dempsey and had children (James-Robertson's account, chap 1, p.3).
Undated	Death of William Probert (James-Robertson's account, chap 1, p.3).
?1715	Original lease expired: 1693/4 + 21 years (James-Robertson's account, chap 1, p.3).
?1715	New 21 year lease negotiated between Humphrey Robert, living in Ireland, and John Thomas Griffith (James-Robertson's account, chap 1, p.3. Does not appear in Archives index, but SJ-R remembers seeing document).
Undated	Humphrey Robert had four children - William Roberts, Jane, Mary and Margaret (James-Robertson's account, chap 1, p.3).
Undated	Jane was the only child to marry. She married William Holdbrook, Currygein, Queen's County Ireland (James-Robertson's account, chap 1, p.3).
1742	Inheritance devolved to Jane (the first daughter) or possibly Jane and Mary, both living in Ireland, after deaths of Humphrey Robert, William Roberts and Margaret (James-Robertson's account, chap

	1, p.3).
1742	Jane Robert took counsel's opinion about her property in Edern, because the land had been leased. (GA XM/5120/17. SJ-R says this should be dated 1742, rather than 1792 as it is in the catalogue.)
1742	In June legal documents were signed breaking the entail, possible because Humphrey Robert was a life tenant. House, land, other messuages & tenements sold to Maurice Humphreys, mariner, for the sum of £240 (James-Robertson's account, chap 2, p.1). Maurice had been born 12th Oct 1679 (Megan Owen's grandmother's Apocrypha).
1745	Anthony Griffith & Griffith Thomas, both of the parish of Edern, began to build a house called Pen y Bryn in Edern on 8th June (Megan Owen's grandmother's Apocrypha; no other documents mention this.) (NB. This conflicts with references to deeds of Pen y Bryn existing from 1603, though references in the deeds before 1742 are to messuages rather than 'Pen y Bryn'.)
1767	Probate of will of Maurice Humphreys (GA XM/5120/19).
?1768	On the 24th September Maurice Humphreys died aged 88 (Megan Owen's grandmother's Apocrypha). House inherited by Thomas Humphreys, his eldest son (James-Robertson's account, chap 2, p.3). NB. Thomas may have been born 16th Jan 1732 (James-Robertson's family tree, p 1) or 16th April 1736 (Megan Owen's grandmother's Apocrypha, though this could be the date of birth of a younger sibling)
1775	A protestant meeting house was completed on Pen y Bryn land, & leased to trustees for 999 years for one shilling per annum (James-Robertson's account, chap 2, p.5. GA XM/5120/6, this lease, is erroneously dated 1725 in the Archives catalogue).
1782	Thomas Humphreys died, aged 50, leaving Pen y Bryn to Mary Williams, his maid servant, from Creigrir Goch in the parish of Llanengan (James-Robertson's account, chap 2, p.6; GA XM/5120/22; copy letter in his handwriting from John Jones to his brother Hugh in Georgia, USA) (NB. Thomas Humphreys' death was on 27th June according to Megan Owen's grandmother's Apocrypha).
1787	On the 19th June Mary Williams (aged approx 49) married itinerant preacher John Jones, aged 25 (James-Robertson's account, chap 3, p.2; Edern church register; note by John Jones in his Bible). (John was born 5th Jan 1762 in Llandwrog according to Megan Owen's grandmother's Apocrypha).
1790	Slate tablet (with Biblical text) set into Pen y Bryn wall above front door by Mary & John Jones (James-Robertson's account, chap 3, p.3 and visible on the house itself).
Undated	"Early in their married life" (?1787) Mary & John made a settlement agreeing that whichever of them should survive the other, would be free to leave the property to whoever they wished (James-Robertson's account, chap 3, p.5; GA XM/5120/24 and XM/5120/25).
1814	John Jones ordained & miniature painted of him by his niece, Ann (James-Robertson's account, chap 3, p.5).
1822	On the 9th August John Jones died; Mary remained in Pen y Bryn (James-Robertson's account, chap 3, p.5).

1824	On the 4th November Mary died leaving the field around the meeting house, Cae'r Capel, to the trustees of the chapel; the house Pen y Bryn & half the remaining land to her nephew, Evan Roberts, and the other half of the land to her late husband's surviving brother Evan Jones (James-Robertson's account, chap 3, p.5; GA XM/5120/34. Archives index records Evan Jones as Evan Roberts).																														
Undated	Evan Roberts married Catherine Griffith, who had a daughter Jane by her previous marriage (James-Robertson's account, chap 4, p.1; date in church register).																														
1828	(This entry relates to part of the land attached to Pen y Bryn rather than the house itself). In February 1828 Evan Jones secured a mortgage of £200 against his share of the land for a term of 500 years; four years later his widow & children extended this (James-Robertson's account, chap 4, p.1; GA XM/5120/37 and XM/5120/38; see tree of Evan Jones family).																														
1839	Pen y Bryn is said in the Edern Tithe Map to be a holding of 30 acres, owned by Margaret Jones & Evan Roberts & occupied by the latter (Historic Building Report 19/02/2009). Margaret Jones was the widow of Evan Jones, who died in September 1828 (GA XM/5120/34, XM/5120/38, XM/5120/44).																														
Undated	Details of changes to Pen y Bryn, though with no dates & by unknown persons, were as follows: outer walls roughcast; small lean-to room added at rear of house; main room divided after fire in 1942; etc (James-Robertson's account, chap 4, p.3).																														
Undated	Evan Roberts became a deacon of the chapel (James-Robertson's account, chap 4, p.3).																														
1841	Census: <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Jane Griffiths</td> <td>20</td> <td>F</td> <td>Farmer</td> <td>Caernarfonshire</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Robert Roberts</td> <td>35</td> <td>M</td> <td>Ag. Labourer</td> <td>Caernarfonshire</td> </tr> <tr> <td>William Parry</td> <td>15</td> <td>M</td> <td>Ag. Labourer</td> <td>Caernarfonshire</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Annie Williams</td> <td>15</td> <td>F</td> <td>Servant</td> <td>Caernarfonshire</td> </tr> </table>	Jane Griffiths	20	F	Farmer	Caernarfonshire	Robert Roberts	35	M	Ag. Labourer	Caernarfonshire	William Parry	15	M	Ag. Labourer	Caernarfonshire	Annie Williams	15	F	Servant	Caernarfonshire										
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1857	On the 13th February Evan Roberts died at the age of 87 & was buried in the new cemetery near the chapel. Through his will written 10 years previously he bequeathed £200 to Jane & his share of the property & all his furniture to his wife Catherine (James-Robertson's account, chap 4, p.5; GA																														

	XM/5120/40).																		
Undated	Catherine Roberts had the front of the simdda fawr at Pen y Bryn filled in & installed a kitchen range (James-Robertson's account, chap 4, p.5).																		
1861	Census: <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Catherine Roberts</td> <td>Head</td> <td>W</td> <td>Farmer</td> <td>64</td> <td>Caernarfonshire, Edern</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Maria Jones</td> <td>Servant</td> <td>U</td> <td>House servant</td> <td>22</td> <td>Caernarfonshire, Ceidio</td> </tr> <tr> <td>William Owen</td> <td>Servant</td> <td>U</td> <td>Farm servant</td> <td>16</td> <td>Caernarfonshire, Edern</td> </tr> </table>	Catherine Roberts	Head	W	Farmer	64	Caernarfonshire, Edern	Maria Jones	Servant	U	House servant	22	Caernarfonshire, Ceidio	William Owen	Servant	U	Farm servant	16	Caernarfonshire, Edern
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c.1862	Ellis James, who was born 21st Jan 1813 at Dyffryn Mymbyr, Capel Curig, & married Catherine's daughter Jane Griffiths on 10th July 1850 (Extracts from John Jones' booklet) bought back the mortgage & bond of the other half of the property in Edern from the heirs of Rev. William Williams (James-Robertson's account, chap 4, p.5; see 1828 mortgage p. 3; GA XM/5120/37 and XM/5120/38).																		
1871	No census record.																		
1878	On the 26th December Ellis James died intestate, before his wife Jane inherited Pen y Bryn (James-Robertson's account, chap 4, p.7).																		
1879	Catherine Roberts died intestate aged 83 & Pen y Bryn was inherited by Jane James, nee Griffiths (James-Robertson's account, chap 4, p.7).																		
1879	Jane James moved into the house taking with her various pieces of furniture & wall panelling - details given in the text (James-Robertson's account, chap 5, p.1).																		
Undated	Jane altered Pen y Bryn in a number of ways (James-Robertson's account, chap 5, p.1): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extended the small rear room by building a new kitchen the full length of the back of the house (using local brick); • the rear window downstairs & large window halfway up the stairs gave two large recesses on the living side & two cupboards in the kitchen; • a tall chimney was added at the end of the new kitchen to take the smoke from the cooking range; • another outside door was put in (later a wooden porch with slate roof was put on this); • alterations were made to the garden fences & paths; • two large slate water tanks were added outside the kitchen door to supplement water available from the well just inside the spinney; • a new brick building was erected on the opposite side of the drive from Pen y Bryn: the ground floor was a general purpose outside kitchen & the first floor was a granary. Attached to this building was a coach house. At the other end of the kitchen was a high stone wall with a gate to a kitchen garden; • close to Pen y Bryn on the north east corner a small stone building was renovated to be used as a dairy; 																		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> two ground floor front windows were enlarged to become French windows each side of the front door (James-Robertson's account, chap 5, p.2; after GA XM/5120/42). 																		
From 1879	Jane & her son Robert Ellis James let the land in Edern, field by field, to various tenants (James-Robertson's account, chap 5, p.4). After the death of Mary Jones in 1824, the land and cottages were always let, so that the rent could be divided.																		
1881	<p>Census:</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Robert Ellis James</td> <td>Head</td> <td>U</td> <td>Farmer of 39 acres</td> <td>25</td> <td>Caernarfonshire, Bangor</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Jane James</td> <td>Mother</td> <td>W</td> <td>Formerly farmer's wife</td> <td>62</td> <td>Caernarfonshire, Llaniestyn</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Catherine Jones</td> <td>Servant</td> <td>U</td> <td>General servant</td> <td>25</td> <td>Caernarfonshire, Nevin</td> </tr> </table>	Robert Ellis James	Head	U	Farmer of 39 acres	25	Caernarfonshire, Bangor	Jane James	Mother	W	Formerly farmer's wife	62	Caernarfonshire, Llaniestyn	Catherine Jones	Servant	U	General servant	25	Caernarfonshire, Nevin
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1884	Reference in text (to the mortgage) that we don't understand (James-Robertson's account, chap 5, p.6, (para 2). (GA XM/5120/37, XM/5120/38, XM/5120/42 and Evan Jones family tree.)																		
1891	<p>Census:</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Jane James</td> <td>Head</td> <td>W</td> <td></td> <td>72</td> <td>Caernarfonshire, Llaniestyn</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mary [?Gough]</td> <td>Servant</td> <td>W</td> <td>General servant</td> <td>59</td> <td>Anglesea, Gaerwen</td> </tr> </table>	Jane James	Head	W		72	Caernarfonshire, Llaniestyn	Mary [?Gough]	Servant	W	General servant	59	Anglesea, Gaerwen						
Jane James	Head	W		72	Caernarfonshire, Llaniestyn														
Mary [?Gough]	Servant	W	General servant	59	Anglesea, Gaerwen														
1899	In September Jane wrote her will leaving the estate in trust for her son Robert Ellis, his wife Louisa and then their daughter Dorothy (James-Robertson's account, chap 5, p.6). Robert Ellis's surname was changed to James by deed poll (Probate of will March 12, 1901).																		
1899	A water supply was arranged by the Cefn Amwlch estate in the form of a tap at the bottom of the village. For a small charge villagers could obtain their water from there instead of the traditional springs in the locality (James-Robertson's account, chap 6, p.1; recorded in various accounts of the village).																		
1900	Jane died (GA XM/5120/46). Robert Ellis (born 1855 according to James-Robertson's family tree, p 1) took over Pen y Bryn but used it only as a holiday home. The fields were let independently to different tenants & each November Robert & Louisa his wife gave a dinner at which tenants were able to bid between themselves for the following year's tenancies (James-Robertson's account, chap 6, p.1).																		
1901	No census record found.																		
Undated	Robert Ellis made a path through the woods breaching the back bank & leading to a new gate on the lane to the chapel. He did this to ensure privacy for Pen y Bryn as there was a prospect that he might lose some of the fields to the descendants of Evan Jones (James-Robertson's account, chap 6, p.1; Evan Jones' family tree).																		
1906	Following much bargaining with the descendants of Evan Jones a valuation was fixed for their share of the property. After the value of the partial mortgage that Robert Ellis held had been deducted, they agreed to receive one-sixth each of the remaining amount in full settlement of their claim																		

	(James-Robertson's account, chap 6, p.2; GA XM/5120/50).
1906	Robert Ellis sold Cil-Llidiart (11 acres) & some houses, all belonging to the Pen y Bryn estate (James-Robertson's account, chap 6, p.2; GA XM/5120/50).
1911	Census record not retrieved.
Before 1914	Robert Ellis used a large elm tree that had fallen in a gale to make a large seaworthy boat, which he named after the house (James-Robertson's account, chap 6, p.3).
Undated	Renovation of the barn next to the tumbled-down shippon at the bottom of the lane. A plot was taken from the field at the front of Pen y Bryn & pines were planted as a protection against the east wind, whilst down the side adjacent to the field a hedge of privet & beech provided shelter for an orchard (James-Robertson's account, chap 6, p.3).
During War of 1914-18	Tiles in the main room laid; walls cement-rendered; Chimney Fawr reopened; South window in alcove made (information from the owner).
1971	On the 19th October Pen y Bryn was listed as grade II (Historic Building Report 19/02/2009).

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Researched & collated by Eryl Loblely, Margaret Dunn, Wally & Margaret Barr & Tom David with much assistance from Struan James-Robertson.

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