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# Dating Old Welsh Houses Project

North west Wales Dendrochronology Project

## Dyddio Hen Dai Cymreig Prosiect

Prosiect Dendrocronoleg Gogledd Orllewn Cymru

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# House History Report

Number 10

**PENHYDDGAN**

**Includes**

**DENDROCHRONOLOGY RESULTS**



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June 2012

**NORTH WEST WALES DENDROCHRONOLOGY PROJECT  
DATING OLD WELSH HOUSES – LLŶN**

**PENHYDDGAN,**

**Ceidio, Gwynedd.      SH 3024 3867      Grade II**

**General Note:**

Penhyddgan is an intriguing house because of its name (which suggests it, or its landholding, was named when deer still roamed the land, because of its location (apparently on the swampy, wet boundary of a landholding) and because of the magnificence with which it was built or rebuilt in the C16th. There is a firm dendrochronology-derived date of 1573 for part of the main structure, which includes fine oak panelling. But documented history does not explain why someone lavished such attention to the building then.

**Name:**

Penhyddgan (the spelling in contemporary documents of 1756 and 1757) also appears hyphenated as Pen-hyddgan and as Pen-hyddgam and Penhyddgae (the latter on the OS map of 1839-41). There is a Penhyddgen (in Llŷn) in the Record of Caernarfon (see below) in 1480 (and also a Brynhyddgen) which, given the rarity of the name, may be assumed probably to be the same place. Penhydd is a name used elsewhere. Hyddgan is the name of an area on the slopes of Pumlumon in mid Wales made famous by the battle there in 1401 when Owain Glyndŵr first secured victory in the field.

Hyddgam was used as a name by Madog Hyddgam mab Madog of Llanfair, Meirionydd, in the C13th. I have found no other place name or family name using the combinations here. “Hydd” suggests deer, and if historical to the locality suggests fallow deer, perhaps hiding in the woodland around the area when the name was given. Hyddgan traditionally meant a herd of deer (literally a hundred deer). However, there is no evidence of woodland in the immediate area, and indeed that is less likely as the area to the north, east, and south of the landholding were – and still are – marshy and subject to flooding. Nor is that likely to have been much different many years ago, although the name may date back to the C9th or thereabouts when the indications are that the name was used for land given to the church by the then local prince. I am reliably informed that the name will not have heraldic significance (pen hydd) as that was not a naming practice (though one local prince had the head of a deer in his arms at the time of the Welsh wars, as can be seen at Plas Mawr in Conwy). Another suggestion is that it is a reference to a deer hide, but again it is not clear why.

**Location:**

Penhyddgan is in the parish of Ceidio in the hundred of Dinllaen in Gwynedd, formerly Caernarvonshire. It forms the NE corner of that small parish. [Puzzlingly, it was listed by a correction as in the parish of Bodean in the land tax return for 1910, but not in any other document.] The church itself is very small and very old, its name being attributed to St Ceidio (or Ceido). He was, according to Lives of the British Saints, the son of Saint Madrun, granddaughter of Vortigern, who fled with her son as a babe in arms from Gwrtheyrn place when it was destroyed to Carn Fadryn, the hill that towers over the SW side of the parish. [There is a romantic sculpture of the young princess with babe in arms now in Glyn y Weddw gallery, and I understand made for the then owner of Madryn]). He returned in later life to found the church that still stands on a small rise at the centre of the parish.

The parish is now merged into Tudweiliog. The chapelry was associated with Cymmer Abbey for many years and the land, as noted below, with the church at Clynnog.

The house is located on the northern slope of the rise with the church at the top. To the north and east the boundary of Penhyddgan is formed by the Afon Geirch and Cors Geirch, and the land is marshy to this day. On the 1880 OS map the land to the north of the house, in its holding, is marked *Liabte to floods* and the northern and eastern edges of the landholding are consistently marked as marsh.

The nearest adjoining property, Carreg Lwyd, is recent, not being marked on the 1839-41 OS map or included in the 1840 tithe settlement, and first appearing on the 1918 maps (OS 1918 XXXII 13). Recent development at that property has broken the old access to Penhyddgan, which was originally along the road to the west, where it fed into the old north-south roadway leading to the former and present sites

of Plasynghaidio. The current access route from the east (the main road that is now A497) is not marked on the 1840s maps (including the early OS map and the land tax map of 1840), but appears on the large scale 1880s maps. Comparison of those maps suggests an improvement also of the eastern access road at that time and the subdivision of some of the larger fields in the holding.

The N and E boundaries of Penhyddgan land also form boundaries of the civil parish of Ceidio (and its successor) from the parish of Nefyn. It also formed the boundary of the old constituency of Caernarfon Boroughs from the county seat. There is, however, a formerly detached part of the Nevin constituency and parish to the immediate south of the Penhyddgan landholding shown on earlier maps, including the neighbouring farm of Talysarn. This appears not to have been part of the Madryn estate, and suggests that the landholding of Penhyddgan historically was therefore as the outer NE edge of the Madryn estate and its predecessors.

#### History:

The history of the access indicates the older ownership of the farm. Penhyddgan, in common with most of the other farms of the parish, formed part of the Madryn estate, from at least the 1750s but suggestions are that the date was much earlier. The Tithe Map and Schedule of 1838-46 shows all the land in the parish of Ceidio belonging to the Madryn estate (then held by Sir Love Jones Parry) save for the small farm and holding of Ceidio Bach. Ceidio Bach does not adjoin the Penhyddgan landholding but was during the later C18th shown in the land tax returns as owned by the then tenant of Penhyddgan. Records show that Penhyddgan was offered for sale as an outlying farm of the estate in 1896. It was sold as part of the general sale of the estate in 1910 along with several neighbouring farms, including Ceidio, Ceidio Bach (which later fell back into the Madryn estate) and Maesoglen, Meillionen and other farms in Ceidio to the south. It has been a private home in various ownership since then.

## CHRONOLOGY

### Note:

*There is little mention of the house itself in official records before records improved in 1840s. Much of its history therefore remains obscure. The notes in this report have been checked against the National Archives, National Library of Wales holdings, and the Bangor University archives and Archifdy Caernarfon record holdings, the calendar of Wynn papers and similar calendars and the standard references, but the chronology remains weak.*

*It is believed that the land known as Penhyddgen was given by grant to the local church (Clynnog or an abbey?) by the prince in the C9th – named as Cadell son of Rhodri, in the citation in the next paragraph. There is no extant record of a house on the site of the present house prior to the current building, and no local tradition about this.*

- 1461 – 1483 Penhyddgen (in Lleyn) (and also a Brynhyddgen) listed as land held during that period by the church of St Beuno, Clynnog and as having been given to the church by Cadell mab Rhodri (Records of Caernarfon, 257, cited in Y Cymmrodor, vol 42 (1930) p 106.
- 1563 Kydeo returned in the church returns (British Museum Hart 594; copy in Bangor U) as 16 households; parson; 109 communicants (!!)
- 1573 Date given to key beam in house structure by dendrochronology dating.
- 1702-1755 Rent returns held in Yale papers for these years, originally listing Love Parry land holdings, but showing what appear to be acquisitions as years pass, contain NO Ceidio parish properties (despite several being in the separate rent books for 1754 and 1756 noted below. Did this start with the death of the first Love Parry in 1707? Did this exclude land other than land brought into the Love Parry estate on the marriage of the third Love Parry (1720 -1778) to Sidney, granddaughter of Owain Hughes (below)?
- 1708 Death of Owain Hughes (Yr Arian Mawr) who bought the Madryn Estate from William Madryn, younger brother of the last Thomas Madryn (d 1688). He left property in his will to William Bodvel. (WB was christened 1694 and High Sheriff of Caerns 1718-20). Other property was left to his sister Jane's daughter Sidney Lewis. She married the third Love Parry, who came to hold

the Madryn estate after William Bodvel. It then stayed with that family until 1910. Full geneology in Griffith, Madryn entry, p 224.

- 1742 *BILL OF COMPLAINT of William Roberts, late of Madryn, co. Caernarfon, yeoman, to the Lord Chancellor, Lord Hardwicke against William Bodvel of Madryn, Esq., and Hugh Williams, clerk. Recites how, in 1742, William Bodvel asked William Roberts to become his steward but he declined as he was not good at arithmetic, accounts, etc., having 'had but indifferent education'. Bodvel, however, was sure of his honesty and of his understanding of farm management and engaged him promising to manage a lot of the estate himself and ensure that a minimum of accountancy was necessary. His salary was £8 per annum with leave to keep 5-6 brood mares, 6-7 cattle and 40-50 sheep to enable him to make another £50 per annum. He was steward for over 8 years. During this time William Bodvel received the rents but as he was engaged with frequent visitors he often forgot to give receipts. While he stayed in London the money was sent to him either by bills of exchange or by drovers driving cattle from Caernarfon to London. These drovers were not given personal interviews but paid over the money to his agent or servants. Again the servants did not give receipts. In order to settle the accounts Hugh Williams, clerk, domestic chaplain of William Bodvel, took custody of all the accounts, receipts, etc. and refused to surrender them. Furthermore, a bill has been entered in court to force Willm Roberts to render account of his stewardship, accusing him of dishonesty. Gives further information on the case and asks for redress. AG: X/POOLE/4502.*
- 1733 Certificate that John Short of Penhyddgan was fit to act as a juror for the parish of Ceidio (Caerns QS). No other record located of this person. (NLW). [This is the first documentary record traced of the place linked with a specific person as resident there.]
- 1749 Death of John Meredith of Penhyddgan (will proved in Bangor), leaving no direct male or female heir; personalty passed to his widow and to brothers Evan and Hugh together with land in Llannor, but no real estate at Penhyddgan. His widow Martha was his executrix. Born 1705? Will dated 1748 with signature suggesting JM then frail. (but dates of JM shown as 1705 to 1740 in Griffiths *Genealogy*). This suggests that JM was either a tenant or that the property was owned by other members of his family.
- An inventory of 1749 shows items in three rooms above stairs, parlour, kitchen and dairy and farm stock and holdings (livestock and arable).
- JM was the second son of five (brothers Humphrey, William, Evan, and Owen according to Griffiths – inconsistent with his will) of Humphrey and Catherine Meredith (or Meredydd) of Pengwern. Humphrey the father (HM) died in 1746 or 1747 (will proved 1747). Humphrey was Sheriff of Carnarvonshire in 1734. He was High Sheriff of Caernarvon again in 1738, although the latter term seems to have been cut short (or been an error) as HM was appointed on 12 December 1738, but John Lloyd of Tyddynbychan was appointed High Sheriff on 21 December and was in office for the rest of the year (Calendars of Gwynedd). HM's mother, Mary, died at Pengwern in 1718. He was survived by one son, Meyrick, who died leaving a daughter, Anne, who married into the Mostyn family.
- HM was the son of John Meredydd of Monachdy and Pengwern. B. 1646 d. 1694, son of Hugh Meredydd (d. 1670) who married (1) Caroline d. of William Glynne of Glynllifon and (2) Gaynor d. of Sir John Wynn of Bodfean. Hugh was son and heir to Humphrey Meredydd of Clynnog who married (1) Elizabeth, oldest d. of Thomas Madryn and (2) Mary d. of Hugh Gwyn of Pennarth. HM was High Sheriff of Caerns in 1613-14 (listed in the Calendars as Humfrey Meredith of Clynnog) and died 1627.
- 1756 Will and inventory of Richard Evans of Penhyddgan dated 23 03 1756 (Bangor wills) with no mention of real estate and a small inventory of household goods. (NLW wills). This suggests that he was a tenant.
- 1756 Bond of William Williams of Ceidio and Elizabeth Evans of Penhyddgan to the Bishop of Bangor linked to the estate of the late Richard Evans, Elizabeth being administratrix of her late husband. (NLW wills)
- 1757 Rent books of William Bodvel's land (Yale Papers, Bangor U, FB11) shows Mrs Evans as tenant of Penhyddgan (rent £20) and Ffridd (rent £7). The returns list most of the farms in Ceidio parish as paying rent to the estate

- 1767 Death of Martha, widow of John Meredith, then living at Wernlas, Llanwnda (will proved in Bangor). Martha was previously wife/widow of John Hughes of Bodadon, with two sons John and Richard
- 1782 Rent books in Yale papers show Penhyddgan now tenanted by William Williams (rent £45). This is shown as part of the ordinary estate, rather than the land out of settlement or acquired land (each group distinguished in the rent returns). Was this the William Williams who entered the bond with Mrs Evans? He is no longer listed as tenant of Ceidio, now tenanted by a Thomas Griffiths. But see ...
- 1782 – 1819  
Land tax returns all show the owner of the land (valued at £1.4s. 0d) as Thomas Parry Jones (or Jones Parry as he changed his name), the owner of the Madryn estate. The tenant throughout was William Williams. He was one of the signatories of the land tax assessment for the parish (Ceidio) in later years. Wm Williams (the same name and abbreviation is used in both entries in each of the land tax assessments, including in those cases where he was a signatory to the document, so I assume the same person) is shown as owner of Ceidio – a reference clarified in later documents as being to Ceidio Bach – in the parish in most of the returns from 1782 through to 1818. Williams is described as a “Gent” in later returns.
- 1783 Date given as date of inclusion in Madryn estate in Listed Buildings database (but see entries above).
- 1784 Rent returns in Yale Papers give same information as 1782.
- 1790 Date of stone plaque on outbuilding at Penhyddgan with name T P Jones Esq (Thomas Parry Jones of Madryn, a promoter of the Porthdinllaen turnpike). The Dictionary of Welsh Biography identifies him as one of the promoters along with his brother in law. Were the substantial outbuildings (on one of which the plaque stands) built for purposes linked with opening the turnpike? It is believed locally that the plaque has been moved to the present building from another building, but there is no confirmed history of its original location.
- 1800 William Williams of Penhyddgan (the tenant) named as father of son of Grace Roberts of Aberhonddy Bodvean in bastardy proceedings (1800 Caerns QS)
- 1839-41 Tithe survey, map and schedule (held in Archifdy Caernarfon) show Penhyddgan as land in the occupation of Griffith Owen and the ownership of Sir Love Jones Parry. The holding was then 133 acres, mainly pasture but some meadow (the marshy area) and some arable. The landholding comprised all the contiguous fields and pieces of land in the north east corner of the parish, running to its boundary on the north, east and south sides (save on the south side for a small area of woodland in the occupation of the owner) and west to the north-south road save for the two field in the north west corner nearest Plas yng Nghedio which were occupied by the Plas. All adjoining land also belonged to Sir Love Jones Parry, and the woodlands were directly occupied by him. The produce of the parish (a total of 1048 acres) at that time was: oats 327 bushels; barley 227 bushels; wheat 128 bushels. The farm of Mochras, and land at Tynewydd were tenanted by a John Owen [no link with Griffith Owen established].
- 1841 Census return: tenant was Griffith Owen, 70, fmr, with two daughters both 20; Elizabeth Evans “indep”, 67, two female servants and 5 outdoor male servants.
- 1856 Schedule of fields of Penhyddgan forming part of schedules of land of Madryn estate (Bangor U: Yale papers)
- 1861 Census return: tenant was Robert Evans 61, born Llanengan, with Ann his wife (43), born Edeyrn, and five children (Evan, 13; Dorothy, 9; Thomas, 7; Robert, 4; and John, 2), six male and 2 female servants. The holding was 140 acres.
- 1881 Census return: Robert Evans still in occupation with Ann his wife and three sons (Evan, 34, born Llanbedrog, Thomas, 27, and Robert, 23 born Ceidio) and three servants.
- 1885 Death of Robert Evans of Penhyddgan, Ceidio, on 24 07 1885 aged 86
- 1896 Particulars of Penhyddgan offered for sale as one of a number of outlying farms of the Madryn Estate (Bangor U: Yale papers)

- 1901 Census showing Evan Evans, male, age 52, single, and John Evans, male, age 39, single, both born at home in Ceidio, but no other family members, with a housekeeper and a female servant and three male workers, all born in Caernarvonshire.
- 1910 Penhyddgan offered for sale, along with 14 other Ceidio properties, as part of the general sale of the Madryn Estate (Bangor U: Yale papers)
- 1910 Land tax assessment shows Penhyddgan owned by the executors of the Madryn estate and held by tenants Evan and John Evans. Evan and John are listed as sons in residence in the 1861 census, with Evan, then 34, also in residence in the 1881 census, so it would seem that they took over the tenancy from their father on his death.
- 1911 Census shows the Evans brothers still in residence, but with an odd error in age:  
*Evan Evans, head of family, farmer, b. C. 1849 age 62 single born Carnarvonshire; J o h n Evans, brother, b. c. 1892 age 19 single born Carnarvonshire –both Welsh speaking only (John’s age is clearly wrong)*  
 and four servants: James Evans, gwasg, 20, single; John Evans, gwasg, 17, single; Cathrine Williams, morwyn gyffredin, 44, single; Maggie Thomas, 17, morwyn, single – all born in Carnarvonshire – all Welsh speaking only.
- After this, the house and immediate landholding passed to owners who held it as a farm and then a private house; with much of the land being sold (it would appear) to adjoining farms including the new farm to the west.
- 1958 Oct 10: visit by RCAHMW (Vol 3, Mon. 1553, fig 58 and plate 46) House condition: good.  
 ?? Owner Mr Bell, farmer.
- 1980s Owner Mr Rockliffe
- 1996 Property purchased by Margaret Mason, and her husband from a Mr Rockliffe. He and his family purchased the property as a residence a decade before from farmers of the name of Bell, who ran the land for dairy farming. During this period some of the outbuildings were sold to the owners of the neighbouring farm, Bronallt.
- 2012 Property remains in the ownership of Margaret Mason following the death of her husband.

Researched by David Williams, Rhiw, Llŷn.  
 June 2012

## DENDROCHRONOLOGY RESULTS & NOTES

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# DATING OLD WELSH HOUSES PROJECT

## DENDROCHRONOLOGY RESULTS

### PENHYDDGAN

Buan, Llŷn, Gwynedd (SH 3024 3867)

**Felling date: Winter 1571/12**

Crossbeam ground floor 1571(35C); Collar (0/1). Struts (0/2).

*Site Master* 1453-1571 lyne4 ( $t = 6.1$  CGFA; 5.9 BDGLRT14; 5.8 BADESLY3; 5.7 PENIARTH).

Oxford Dendrochronology Laboratory

**HOUSE DESCRIPTION:**

A Snowdonian house of characteristic two-unit end-chimney plan but with the stair placed in a projection at the far cross-passage doorway. It is unclear if the stair belongs to the primary phase. The post-and-panel passage partition has the distinctive refinement of a guilloche moulding and had two doorways into the outer rooms. The first-floor chambers were originally open to the roof with the principal chamber having a multi-cusped central truss with raking struts. There are several guilloche-moulded partitions in north Wales all dating from between 1571-91, and Penrhyddgan is one of the earlier examples within this twenty-year period (cf. *Houses of the Welsh Countryside*, Map 38). Published account with plan: RCAHMW, *Caernarvonshire Inventory III* (1964), pp. 30-1; detailed survey (2010) commissioned by NWWDP deposited in the NMRW.

Richard Suggett, RCAHMW

The present list includes sampling commissioned by the North-West Wales Dendrochronology Project (in association with RCAHMW). The North-West Wales Dendrochronology Project (NWWDP) is a community-based project which aims to date historic houses throughout the historic counties of north-west Wales. Sampling in Gwynedd (Merioneth and Caernarfonshire) is often difficult because of fast-grown timber, but cross-matching has also suggested that Irish timber may have been imported for building in treeless Anglesey.

Medieval houses dating from before 1400 remain elusive. Hallhouses that have been dated are within the ranges already established for gentry and peasant halls. The apparently coeval fireplace and hall-truss at Tyn-llan, Gwyddelwern, suggests that some hallhouses may have had enclosed fireplaces in the early sixteenth century. The first generation of storeyed houses of Snowdonian type are surprisingly early, pre-dating the general insertion of fireplaces in hallhouses from about 1575. Several C15th and C16th town-houses were dated in Beaumaris, Caernarfon and Conway, and are a very useful addition to our knowledge of urban buildings. Detailed surveys of many of the houses sampled are available in the National Monuments Record of Wales (NMRW), the public archive of the Royal Commission.

The following buildings were sampled but failed to date: 16A/18 Palace Street, Caernarfon (SH 478 627), Tyn-twr, Bethesda (SH 6220 6690), and Felin Moelfre, Llanaelhaearn (SH 3992 4405) in Caernarfonshire; Daniel Miles, Michael Worthington, Martin Bridge, Richard Suggett, and Margaret Dunn