

# NORTH WEST DENDROCHRONOLOGY PROJECT

## DATING OLD WELSH HOUSES – LLŶN

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### 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 1790 date inscription on the front elevation is later. It may not refer to any change in the building, but simply proclaim the nonconformist commitment of John and Mary Jones. Plan and account: RCAHMW, *Caernarvonshire Inventory III* (1964), p.33 no. 1563; detailed survey (2010) commissioned by NWWDP deposited in the NMRW.

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**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)

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	<u>Pen-y-Bryn</u> 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).
?1610-11	William ap Robert ap Howell married Janet Griffith (James-Robertson's account, chap 1, p.3).
1610	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).

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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; <a href="#">Archives Index no. 5</a> ).
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) <u>by entailment</u> , after deaths of Humphrey Robert, William Roberts and Margaret (James-Robertson's account, chap 1, p.3). <u>(This and the previous five undated items are drawn from documents relating to the sale in 1742 to Maurice Humphreys – Archives Index no. 10.) Pen-y-Bryn may have been occupied in 1742 by Elen Roberts otherwise Jones, Pen-y-Bryn, Widow (perhaps of William Roberts) (Archives Index no. 11).</u>
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 ( <a href="#">see previous item</a> ). House, land, other messuages & tenements <u>were</u> 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; <a href="#">gravestone at Edern Church</a> ).
1745	Anthony Griffith & Griffith Thomas, both of the parish of Edern, began to build a house called <u>Pen-y-Bryn in Edern</u> on 8th June (Megan Owen's grandmother's Apocrypha; no other documents mention this.)

**Deleted:** or possibly Jane and Mary, both living in Ireland

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	(NB. This conflicts with references to deeds of <u>Pen-y-Bryn</u> existing from 1603, though references in the deeds before 1742 are to messuages rather than ' <u>Pen-y-Bryn</u> '.)	<b>Deleted:</b> Pen y Bryn
		<b>Deleted:</b> 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 – but Probate had been granted the previous year). House inherited by Thomas Humphreys, his eldest son (James-Robertson's account, chap 2, p.3). NB. Thomas <u>was</u> born 16th Jan 1732 (James-Robertson's family tree, p 1; <u>gravestone confirms</u> ).	<b>Deleted:</b> may have been
		<b>Deleted:</b> ) 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 <u>Pen-y-Bryn</u> 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. <u>1725 must be wrong, as Thomas Humphreys who built the meeting-house was not born until 1732, and his father did not purchase the property until 1742</u> ).	<b>Deleted:</b> Pen y Bryn
1782	Thomas Humphreys died, aged 50, leaving <u>Pen-y-Bryn</u> 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) (GA: XM/5120/76) (NB. Thomas Humphreys' death was on 27th June according to Megan Owen's grandmother's Apocrypha; <u>gravestone Edern church</u> ).	<b>Deleted:</b> Pen y Bryn
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). (John was born 5th Jan 1762 in Llandwrog according to Megan Owen's grandmother's Apocrypha; <u>note by John Jones in his Bible</u> ).	<b>Deleted:</b> ; note by John Jones in his Bible
<u>1787</u>	<u>"Early in their married life" (?1787) Mary &amp; 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).</u>	
<u>1790</u>	<u>Slate tablet (with Biblical text) set into Pen-y-Bryn wall above front door by Mary &amp; John Jones (James-Robertson's account, chap 3, p.3 and visible on the house itself).</u>	
1814	John Jones ordained & miniature painted of him by his niece, Ann (James-Robertson's account, chap 3, p.5).	<b>Deleted:</b> 1790
1822	On the 9th August John Jones died; Mary remained in <u>Pen-y-Bryn</u> (James-Robertson's account, chap 3, p.5; <u>gravestone Edern church</u> ).	<b>Deleted:</b> Pen y Bryn
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 <u>Pen-y-Bryn</u> & 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; <u>gravestone Edern church</u> ; GA XM/5120/34. Archives index records Evan Jones as Evan Roberts).	<b>Deleted:</b> Pen y Bryn
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 <u>Pen-y-Bryn</u> 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	<b>Deleted:</b> Pen y Bryn

	this (James-Robertson's account, chap 4, p.1; GA XM/5120/37 and XM/5120/38; see tree of Evan Jones family).																														
1839	<u>Pen-y-Bryn</u> 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 <u>Pen-y-Bryn</u> , though with no dates & by unknown persons, were as follows: outer walls roughcast; small lean-to room added at rear of house; 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 <u>Pen-y-Bryn</u> 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 <u>Ellis James's</u> 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).																														

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1871	No census record.																		
1878	On the 26th December Ellis James died intestate, before his wife Jane inherited <u>Pen-y-Bryn</u> (James-Robertson's account, chap 4, p.7).																		
1879	Catherine Roberts died intestate aged 83 & <u>Pen-y-Bryn</u> 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	<p>Jane altered <u>Pen-y-Bryn</u> in a number of ways (James-Robertson's account, chap 5, p.1):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>extended the small rear room by building a new kitchen the full length of the back of the house (using local brick);</li> <li>the rear window downstairs &amp; large window halfway up the stairs gave two large recesses on the living side &amp; two cupboards in the kitchen;</li> <li>a tall chimney was added at the end of the new kitchen to take the smoke from the cooking range;</li> <li>another outside door was put in (later a wooden porch with slate roof was put on this);</li> <li>alterations were made to the garden fences &amp; paths;</li> <li>two large slate water tanks were added outside the kitchen door to supplement water available from the well just inside the spinney;</li> <li>a new brick building was erected on the opposite side of the drive from <u>Pen-y-Bryn</u>: the ground floor was a general purpose outside kitchen &amp; 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;</li> <li>close to <u>Pen-y-Bryn</u> on the north east corner a small stone building was renovated to be used as a dairy;</li> <li>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).</li> </ul>																		
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	<i>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.)</i>																		
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> </table>	Jane James	Head	W		72	Caernarfonshire, Llaniestyn												
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	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) (Probate of will March 12, 1901).						Deleted: [?
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).						Deleted: ]
1900	Jane died (GA XM/5120/46). Robert Ellis (born 1855 according to James-Robertson's family tree, p 1; <a href="#">gravestone at Ederm chapel</a> ) took over <a href="#">Pen-y-Bryn</a> 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).						Deleted: . Robert Ellis's surname was changed to James by deed poll
1901	No census record found.						Deleted: Pen y Bryn
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 <a href="#">Pen-y-Bryn</a> 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).						Deleted: Pen y Bryn
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-Lliadiart (11 acres) & some houses, all belonging to the <a href="#">Pen-y-Bryn</a> estate (James-Robertson's account, chap 6, p.2; GA XM/5120/50).						Deleted: Pen y Bryn
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 <a href="#">Pen-y-Bryn</a> & 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).						Deleted: Pen y Bryn
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).						
<a href="#">1917</a>	<a href="#">Dorothi Catherine James married Frederic Stafford Robertson (SJ-R).</a>						
<a href="#">1920</a>	<a href="#">Robert Ellis James died at Pen-y-Bryn. Dorothi and Frederic changed name to James-Robertson by deed poll (SJ-R).</a>						
<a href="#">1922</a>	<a href="#">Robert Ellis James-Robertson born (SJ-R).</a>						
<a href="#">1923</a>	<a href="#">Mrs Louisa James died in Swansea. Dorothi and Frederic continued to live in Swansea and holiday in Ederm. (SJ-R).</a>						
<a href="#">1925</a>	<a href="#">Struan James-Robertson born (SJ-R).</a>						

<u>1928</u>	<u>Outside building extended with two garages and long room above (SJ-R).</u>
<u>1933</u>	<u>Family took up residence at Pen-y-Bryn after leaving Swansea (SJ-R).</u>
<u>1941</u>	<u>Robert Ellis James-Robertson joined RAF (SJ-R).</u>
<u>1942</u>	<u>Fire in Chimney Fawr. Converted downstairs into one room. Made door through original north end to build temporary extension (SJ-R).</u>
<u>1944</u>	<u>Struan James-Robertson joined Army (SJ-R).</u>
<u>1951</u>	<u>Struan James-Robertson returned after graduation to commercialise holding. Robert Ellis James-Robertson having started on a second degree (SJ-R).</u>
<u>1951-1966</u>	<u>Struan James-Robertson built up a production and retail business for Jersey milk and cream, renovating and enlarging the farm building (SJ-R).</u>
<u>1957</u>	<u>Frederic James-Robertson died (SJ-R).</u>
<u>1966</u>	<u>Struan James-Robertson closed the business, being unable to acquire enough extra land (SJ-R).</u>
<u>1967</u>	<u>Struan James-Robertson left for new career in Youth Work. Dorothea James-Robertson left to live with Robert Ellis James-Robertson in Worcester. Pen-y-Bryn became a holiday home again (SJ-R).</u>
<u>1969</u>	<u>Dorothea Catherine James-Robertson died. Property left to Robert Ellis James-Robertson and Struan James-Robertson for life (SJ-R).</u>
<u>1971</u>	<u>Modernisation and new north extension to the property. Insertion of slate tablet with completion of sentence in original inscription in exact same type (SJ-R). On the 19th October Pen-y-Bryn was listed as grade II (Historic Building Report 19/02/2009).</u>
<u>1990</u>	<u>Struan James-Robertson retired and took up residence again in Pen-y-Bryn (SJ-R).</u>

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Note: ‘Megan Owen’s grandmother’s Apocrypha’ refers to an old copy of the inter-testamental scriptures in which dates and events had been recorded. The original is no longer traceable, so the handwriting cannot be compared with other existing documents, although the dates tally. All items in Struan James-Robertson’s account were checked at the time of writing with other existing documents. ‘Archives Index’ refers to the Gwynedd Archives index to collection XM/5120.

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