

North West Wales Dendrochronology Project Pen-y-Bryn, Edern, Gwynedd



**EAS Client Report 2010/05
March 2010**

**Engineering Archaeological Services Ltd
Unit 2 Glanypwll Workshops
Ffordd Tanygrisiau
Blaenau Ffestiniog
Gwynedd
LL41 3NW**



Registered in England N° 286978

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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**Commissioned by
Margaret Dunn
For
North West Wales Dendrochronology Project**

March 2010

**By
I.P. Brooks and K. Laws**

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North West Wales Dendrochronology Project

Pen-y-Bryn, Edern

SH 27634 39436

NPRN 16711

Status: Grade II Listed

Introduction

This report details the recording of Pen-y-Bryn, Edern, undertaken to compliment both the dendrochronological sampling, undertaken by Oxford Dendrochronology Laboratory, and the documentary study undertaken by volunteers for the North Wales Dendrochronology Project. The fieldwork took place on 4th March 2010.

Methodology

The ground floor plan, produced by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales for the Caernarvonshire Inventory (1964), was used as the base for the study of this house. It was slightly adjusted to include modifications made after the survey. The first storey plan was made by direct measurement. The drawings of the timberwork were carried out by direct measurement at a scale of 1:20. Photographs were taken with a Nikon D80 digital SLR camera at a resolution of 10.2 mega pixels. Where practical all the photographs included a metric scale.

Survey Report

Pen-y-Bryn, Edern is located approximately 375 m south of the centre of the village of Edern at a height of approximately 31 m OD. The building recorded is the primary phase of a house with at least two major, later phases of extension. The earliest of these was a kitchen range, in a lean-to extension, to the rear of the property (Plate 3) and the second a single storey extension on the north end of the building. The primary phase consists of a storey and a half house (Plates 1 and 2) with a gable end chimney at each end. The house is built of roughly coursed rubble to front with a rendered southern gable end, under a roof of small slates. The chimneys are ashlar built. There are three gabled, half dormers, irregularly spaced on the front elevation. Two of these dormers occupy the northern half of the front elevation with only a single dormer in the southern half. The middle dormer is directly above the front door to the property. Between this dormer and the front door is a slate plaque (Plate 4). This has the initials I_M, the date 1790 and a biblical quote in Welsh. The full inscription reads:

I
I M
1790

Os barnasoch fy mod i
Yn ffyddlawn l'r Arglwydd
Deuwch i mewn l'm ty-
Act. XVI. 15.

In English this would be “If you judge me to be faithful to the Lord come inside my house.”

The widows in the dormer are relatively small, two pane casement windows with diamond leaded panes. The lower windows, however, have been replaced with pairs of six pane casement doors. The modification required to insert these doors is shown by the inclusion of granite blocks in the door surrounds (Plates 5 and 6).

Internally the ground floor now consists of a single room, although it was divided into two rooms separated by a transverse corridor to an earlier staircase in living memory (James-Robertson *pers. comm.*). Two original tie beams are present, both of which are chamfered and have plain stops (Plate 7). There is a third, much smaller tie beam which is relatively modern.

The southern fireplace (Plate 8) has a large, slightly arched bressumer with some chamfering. The rear of this beam is heavily damaged and has been repaired with cement (Plate 9). In the western side of the fireplace is a circular, brick lined bread oven with a recessed opening (Plate 10). There is also a niche adjacent to the bread oven in the southern wall of the fireplace. There are also two, more recent modifications with the insertion of a window in the south east corner of the fireplace and a recess for a bookcase in the eastern wall. The northern fireplace has been largely removed, although evidence from the roof space would suggest that it was considerably smaller than the main (southern) fireplace.

The door in the western wall which leads to the lean-to extension once occupied by the kitchen has a wooden lintel on its western side. This lintel has a marked upward curve, possibly suggesting that this door originally had a curved head (Plate 11).

The current staircase is basically a straight flight with a single step dog-leg at the top; however, this replaced an earlier staircase arrangement with a dog legged flight leading from a short passage from the front door (James-Robertson *pers. comm.*).

The arrangement of the first floor, with three bedrooms and small landing is modern; however the feet of three trusses protrude into this space (Plates 12 – 14). The foot of Truss 3, has been repaired by the addition of an iron strip, held in

place by bolts. The floor ceiling of the southern, master, bedroom has been heightened revealing the lower purlins in the ceiling of this room. Both of the purlins have a noticeable bend between Truss 1 and the gable wall of the building, possibly because of the weight of the roof with its small slates (Plate 15 – 16). In the roof space all three trusses proved to be similar with arched collars which extend beyond the line of the principal rafters (Figure 4, Plates 17 – 19). These are held in place by large wooden pegs, some of which appear to have square heads. All of the purlins are constructed of relatively short timbers, with each length only running from one truss to the next. Each length of each purlin is joined to the next with a splayed scarf joint (Plate 20) which is pegged into the principal rafters.

Dendrochronology Sampling

Five sample sites were recorded, two each from Trusses 2 and 3 and one from the southern tie beam on the ground floor. Of these the tie-beam, two samples from Truss 3 and one from Truss 2 were analysed.

Conclusions

Although subject to significant modification the core of Pen-y-Bryn, Ederm retains considerable elements of its original design. In particular the two tie-beams on the ground floor, the large southern fireplace, the bread oven and the three trusses appear to be original features. The original internal lay out, however has been lost. It would seem likely that the plaque on the front of the house marks the date of construction of the main element of the house, although it is possible that it replaced an earlier structure.

Acknowledgments

The recording of this building was commissioned by Margaret Dunn for the North Wales Dendrochronology Project and she also organised access to the building. The forbearance of the owner during the recording of the house is gratefully acknowledged.

References

Haslam, R., Orbach, J. and Voelcker, A. 2009 *The Buildings of Wales. Gwynedd. Anglesey, Caernarvonshire and Merioneth*. Yale University Press

The Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales and Monmouthshire 1964. *An inventory of the ancient monuments in Caernarvonshire. Volume III: west. The Cantref of Lleyn together with the general survey of the county*.



Plate 1: Front elevation

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).



Plate 2: Gable end looking south



Plate 3: Rear elevation

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Plate 4: Inscription

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Plate 5: Southern ground floor window

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Plate 6: Northern ground floor window

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Plate 7: Tie beam, looking north west



Plate 8: Southern fireplace

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Plate 9: Cement repair to back of bressumer



Plate 10: Bread oven, looking south west



Plate 11: Western doorway, looking east



Plate 12: Base of Truss 1, looking SE

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Plate 13: Base of Truss 2, looking south



Plate 14: Base of Truss 3, looking north



Plate 15: Lower, front purlin, looking south



Plate 16: Lower rear purlin, looking south



Plate 17: Truss 1, looking south

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Plate 18: Truss 2, looking south

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Plate 19: Truss 3, looking north

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Plate 20: Splayed scarf joint on upper purlin, looking NW

Appendix 1: Sources

Listing Description

Pen-y-bryn

Street Name and Number: ,

Listed Building Reference: 4370

Grade: II

Date Listed: 19/10/1971

Date Amended: 18/06/1998

Co-ordinates: 227634,339436

Locality: Edern

Community: Nefyn

Council: Gwynedd

National Park: No

Location

Situated to the W of a drive running N off Lon Rhos some 400m S of the centre of Edern.

History

C17 farmhouse deeds of which are said to date from 1603. There is an inserted plaque above the door dated 1790 with initials of John and Mary Jones. In 1839, the Edern Tithe Map shows Pen-y-Bryn as a holding of some 30 acres (12ha) owned by Margaret Jones and Evan Roberts and occupied by the latter.

Interior

Not inspected but said to have hewn stop-chamfered curved beam above wide fireplace, chamfered beams and curved collars to roof trusses.

Exterior

Farmhouse, roughly coursed rubble to front and rendered to sides and rear. Grouted roof of old small slates to front with original ashlar chimney stacks at each gable, square and capped. Two storey, three window front. Small gabled half dormers with coped gables, 2 right of centre, one left of centre as facade is offset to right. Dormer windows are leaded casements with stone slab lintels. Ground floor windows altered to 6-pane casement doors. Boarded door to centre right below central first floor window. Plaque inscribed IM I 1790 with initials. Gable end to left has single pane window on ground floor. To right is C20 single storey extension, slate roof to front, flat roof to rear. C20 front, side and rear doors with C20 fenestration. Rear of main house has modern slates down to catslide roof which joins onto an early gabled outbuilding to right. C20 casement windows. Roughcast walls.

Reason for Listing

Included as a rare example of a C17 farmhouse with well-preserved front elevation.

References

Information from owner; National Library of Wales, Edern Tithe Map, 1839; Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments, Caernarvonshire, Vol III West, 1964, Item 1563.

The Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales and Monmouthshire 1964. *An inventory of the ancient monuments in Caernarvonshire. Volume III: west. The Cantref of Lleyrn together with the general survey of the county.*

(1563) Pen-y-bryn (Fig. 60, Plate 45), a single rectangular block of two storeys, the upper lighted by three dormers on the E. front. The walls are of roughly coursed rubble, partly rendered, with an original ashlar chimney stack at each

gable, square and capped. Though almost every ground-floor opening has been altered, the dormer windows are original and suggest that the house was built late in the 17th century.

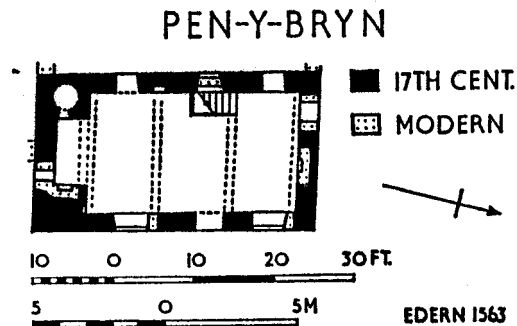


FIG. 60

The interior forms one room on the ground floor without any trace of former subdivision; the entry in the N. gable is modern. The ceiling beams have plain chamfers and stops. At the S. gable the wide fireplace has a cambered and chamfered bressummer, and beside it a brick-lined circular oven. The arrangement of the upper floor is modern. The three roof trusses have arched collars pegged to the principals and projecting beyond them.

An inserted tablet over the E. doorway is inscribed I/I M¹ with the date 1790 and a Biblical quotation.

¹For John Jones the preacher and his wife Mary, the heiress of Pen-y-bryn, *Dict. Welsh Biog.*, p. 476.

Condition: good.

SH 27633944

2 V 57

35 S.E.

Haslam, R., Orbach, J. and Voelcker, A. 2009 *The Buildings of Wales. Gwynedd, Anglesey, Caernarvonshire and Merioneth*. Yale University Press. 368

PEN-Y-BRYN, ¼ m. SW. Farmhouse, dated as late as 1790, with three gabled, coped half-dormers irregularly spaced and modern lower windows.