

EXPLORATION TYWI!

'House Detectives' at Lan Farm, A Standing Building Survey



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TYWI A RIVER THROUGH TIME



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'House Detectives' at Lan Farm, A Standing Building Survey

Gan / By

Will Steele

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1.0 SUMMARY

Lan is a forgotten longhouse situated in the community of Manordeilo and Salem, some 2.5 kilometres north of Llandeilo, NGR SN61382546.

As part of the ongoing 'Exploration Tywi!' community research project a programme of archaeological building recording was undertaken by the "House Detectives"; a group of members of the community led by staff from the Dyfed Archaeological Trust.

Visiting Lan, the house detectives were following in the footsteps of one of the great historians of Welsh buildings; Iorwerth Peate, poet, scholar and founder of the Welsh Folk Museum (St. Fagans, Cardiff). Peate visited Lan in the 1930s whilst researching his book "The Welsh House"; the first comprehensive study into Welsh vernacular houses (those belonging to ordinary people built in a traditional local fashion using local materials), and still a key text in their understanding today. In retaining its upper dwelling end, cross passage and downslope byre, thatched roof and wattle and daub chimney, Peate considered Lan to be one of the then better surviving examples of a Welsh longhouse. It was thought lost until its rediscovery as part of the Exploration Tywi! project in December 2010.

Derelict and isolated, Lan survives today as a fascinating window on the past, giving us an insight into an early style of house and regionally distinctive building styles which have long since fallen out of use.

Despite a later phase of modernisation where the thatched roof was lost, wattle and daub chimneys were replaced and the downslope byre was remodelled, Lan retains many diagnostic features, from its little altered floor plan in the dwelling end to "clom" or earth walling, wattle and daub, a ladder stair and evidence of cruck framing. These features together indicate early origins, probably somewhere between the 17th and early 19th centuries.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are given to the Exploration Tywi! participants who assisted with the building recording, Simon Bowkett and son Caleb Bowkett, Christine Heidler, Celia Parsons, Sarah Orr and daughter Carmen Orr, Nell Hellier of Tywi Afon Yr Oesoedd and Alice Pyper of the Dyfed Archaeological Trust who provided support. Special thanks are offered to Eric Evans for permission to record the building.

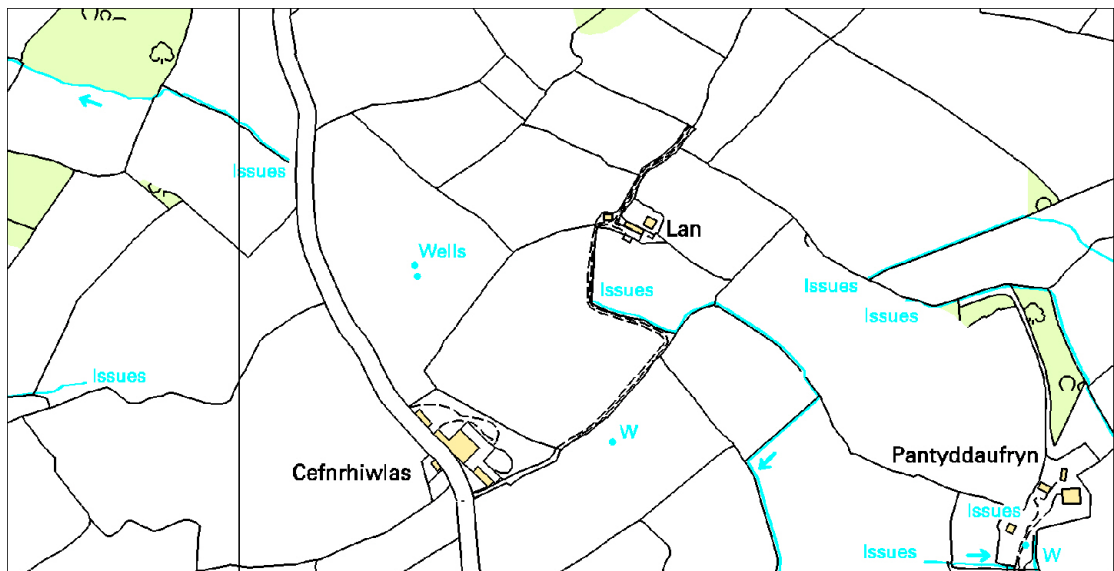
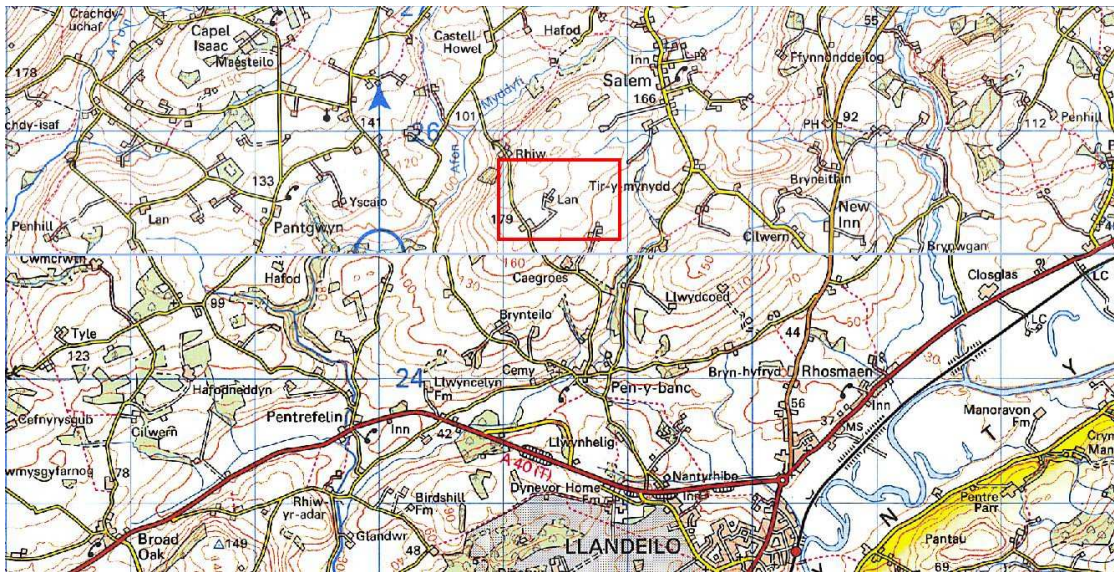
2.0 INTRODUCTION

Project Background

Exploration Tywi! is part of the Tywi a River Through Time Landscape Partnership Project focusing on the middle reaches of the Tywi valley between Llangadog and Dryslwyn. The four main project partners are Carmarthenshire County Council, National Trust, Countryside Council for Wales and Menter Bro Dinefwr. The project has secured funding from Heritage Lottery Fund, Rural Development Plan, Welsh Assembly Government, Countryside Council for Wales and National Trust.

'Exploration Tywi!' is a community research project exploring the historical and natural processes and events which have contributed to the outstanding landscape of the Tywi valley, through historical, geological and archaeological investigation.

Site Location



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3.0 Methodology

The following sources were consulted relating to the historical background of the farm:

- Dyfed Archaeological Trust Historic Environment Record
- Historic cartographic sources; tithe map & apportionment (1841), Ordnance Survey 1st edition (1887), Ordnance Survey 2nd edition (1906)
- Historic census records; 1871, 1881
- Oral history

The building record included the following elements:

- The drawn record comprised measured elevations, a measured cross section and a measured plan. Drawings were made to a scale of 1:50.
- The photographs were taken on a digital SLR camera and have been downloaded in the TIF format. For the purposes of the report they have also been converted to JPEG format. Images included general views of the building in its wider setting, the building's external appearance, the overall appearance of the rooms, other external and internal detail relevant to understanding the buildings construction, building contents and ephemera relevant to understanding the buildings history. A selection of these have been annotated and included within the report.
- The written account underpins all other elements of the record by providing location information together with context, description and interpretation.
- The methodology for the project loosely corresponds to the Level 3 guidelines as specified in English Heritages "Understanding Historic Buildings: a guide to good recording practice", 2006.

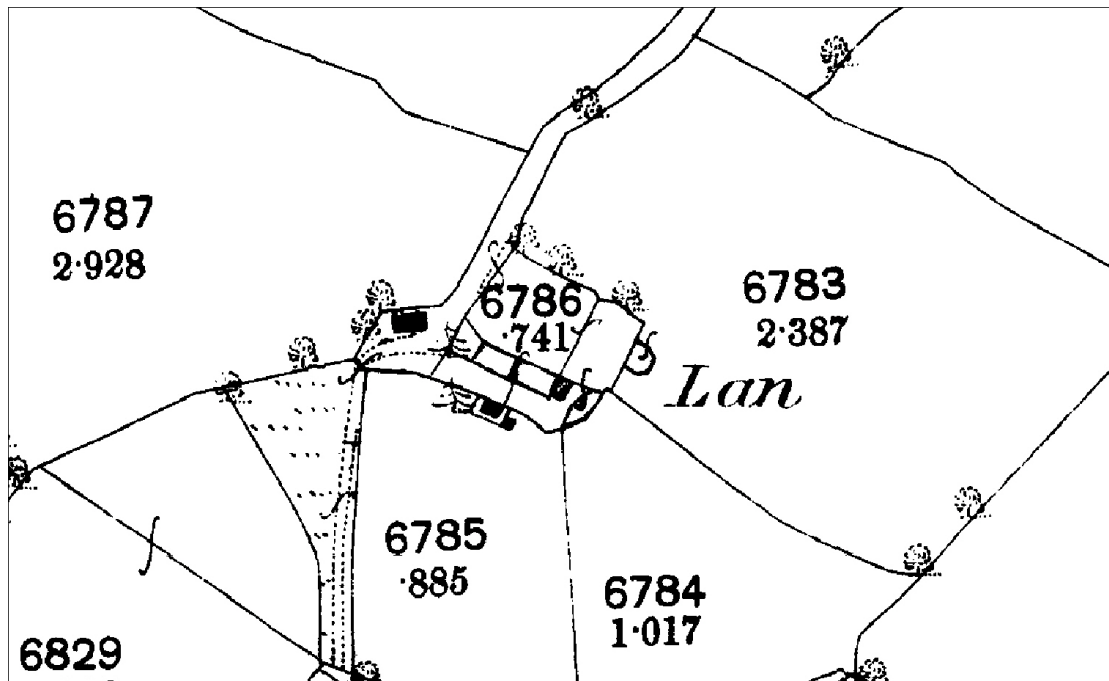
The project archive will be collated and catalogued in accordance with the National Monuments Record (NMR) guidelines and recommended procedures and will be deposited within the NMR with a copy in the regional Historic Environment Record.

4.0 HISTORIC BACKGROUND

Lan is centred on NGR SN61362545 lying within an area of undulating countryside above Llandeilo which drains into the Tywi via the Nant Gurrey-fach.

The earliest available detailed map of the area is the two inches to one mile Ordnance Survey drawing of 1813 which identifies the farmstead of *Cefnrhiwlas* at the same location as that of Lan today. *Cefnrhiwlas* moved to a new (present) location on the roadside some 280m to the south-west (NGR SN61212525) sometime during the 19th century (Ordnance Survey 1st edition 1887). Further details on this transition are lost to us since the tithe map for Llandeilo-fawr (1841) is damaged and the apportionment number illegible.

The first information we have on the inhabitants of Lan appears with the Census records of 1871 when Morgan Morgan, his wife Elizabeth and children Elizabeth, Thomas and Mary are recorded as living there. The 1881 records record Elizabeth Morgan as widow, the then head of the household, with the three children still present. Both censuses record the farm at 23 acres.



Lan in 1887 (Ordnance Survey 1st edition)

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Lan later passed to the Lewis family; first under Michael and his wife Elizabeth and then to their son Morgan Lewis who died in December 1973 at 74 years. Morgan established a market garden there whilst Hannah ran a productive dairy in the building opposite the house.

The final occupants were the Hemmings who bought Lan in 1966 but only stayed for a few years, before moving to a larger property. It was then brought by the father of the present owner.

Since its abandonment, Lan and its land have been subsumed into a larger neighbouring farm. The farmhouse has been used for storage and maintained in a weatherproof condition by the present owner.

Lan achieved notable mention following its visit by Iorwerth Peate in the 1930s. Peate was founder of the Welsh Folk Museum (St. Fagans, Cardiff) and author of "The Welsh House" the first comprehensive study into Welsh vernacular houses

(those belonging to ordinary people built in a traditional local fashion using local materials), and still a key text in their understanding today. The house plan and illustration he left behind give us a privileged insight into its layout and appearance at the beginning of the 20th century.



Lan in its original form with thatched roof, probably in the early 20th century (after Peate 1940).

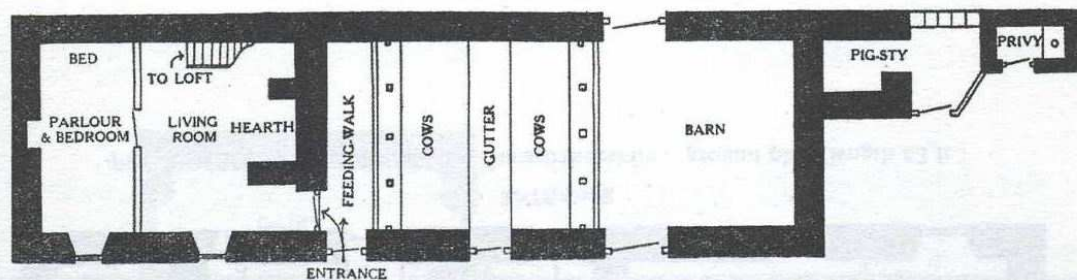


Fig. 8. Lan, Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire : ground plan (length 90 ft.).

Floor plan of Lan published in "The Welsh House" (after Peate 1940).

5.0 DESCRIPTION

In the down the slope siting, upper dwelling end with downslope byre and central chimney with hearth entry Lan conforms to the classic longhouse type. The former thatched roof, scarfed crucks, ladder stair, wicker hood and partitions and clom walling are all features which were once characteristic of the area and add to the interest of the farmhouse.

The Dwelling End

The dwelling end is accessed via a doorway in the front (S-facing) wall into the former feed passage then turning left up a step past the large *simne fawr* or inglenook fireplace. This first room was the kitchen/living room. The room has a black and white quarry tile floor and a cast iron kitchen range with bread oven (D.R.Davis, Llandilo) now filling the fireplace. The room is lit by a double hung small pane (six over six) sash window in the south wall. The lack of horns on the upper sash indicating a c.pre-1840 date.

A step up leads from the living room through a central doorway to the parlour bedroom. It is lit by a sash window in the south wall, (identical to that in the living room) and has a fireplace in the end wall with hob grate set in brick. The two rooms were originally separated by a wattle and daub partition although this has been replaced with a wooden plank partition on the side to the right (north) of the door. The floor consists of a coarse gravel mix of rammed lime mortar.

The loft is approached via a ladder stair from the kitchen/ living room just to the left (north) of the fireplace through a small gap in the floorboards. It is entirely within the roof space, the floor being level with the wall plate and the ceiling restricted by the slanting sides of the roof. A tongue and groove partition separates the two rooms and the ceilings are lined with tongue and groove boarding. The upper gable walls are of red brick construction with red brick chimney shafts at either end of the building. The larger eastern flue above the kitchen/living room would have replaced the earlier wicker hood recorded by Peate and visible in his photograph. Brick chimneys today surmount both of the shafts.

The present roof is made up of insubstantial A-frame trusses and corrugated iron. All evidence for the former thatch has been removed. The base of one of the cruck trusses can be seen downstairs where the lime plaster has flaked off the walls in the kitchen.

The Cross Passage

Between the dwelling end and the downhouse are two small rooms; a lobby through which the dwelling end is accessed, and a pantry behind. The rooms are divided by brick partitions. A pantry window in the rear (N) wall is a later insertion. These rooms replace the feed passage indicated on Peate's plan.

The Down House

The former cow house on Peate's plan is, in its current form a stable, evidenced by hay racks on the left (west) and right (east) walls with concrete setts covering the floor. To the right of the present door opening is a straight joint indicating the line of a former doorway. Peate's plan indicates that the former doorway led into the centre of the cowshed with cattle stalled facing along the building to either side. The red brick door surround and concrete setts indicate an early 20th century date for these alterations.

Stepped down the slope from the stable is a cow house. No original fixtures or fittings survive internally although the floor layout gives clues as to the original

arrangement. Accessed through the main doorway is a cross passage with opposing doorways in the front and rear walls. The cross passage would have served as a feed passage and to the right of it is the concrete base of a manger. Manure build up today obscures the floor although it can be envisaged that cattle would have been stalled facing the manger (along the building) with a gutter behind. The gutter drains through a doorway in the front wall which butts up against the lower gable end of the building. Comparison with Peates picture indicates that this doorway is a later insertion. His plan indicates that this lower part of the building was formerly a threshing barn, the current feed passage being the former threshing floor. Rick stands where the straw would have been stacked can be traced in the grass behind the building to the north.

A straight joint visible externally half way down the front wall of the down house likely indicates the former limit of the building from an era before the addition of the threshing barn. Correspondingly on the inside curved masonry and a wall thickening indicate the position of the former cross wall.

Attached to the lower end of the building are a pigsty and privy. These are present on Peate's plan although were not examined in detail due to their presently overgrown state.

6.0 DISCUSSION

Despite later alterations Lan retains many features characteristic of the long house tradition. The down-the-slope site indicates a long house with former cross passage in the present entry position. However it is likely that the lower downhouse was altered when the classic house and byre arrangement was extended to incorporate a threshing barn. Dating this change is problematic due to the absence of roof trusses or any other diagnostic features although the change had already occurred when the Ordnance Survey 1st edition map was published in 1887. Peate drew and photographed this same layout during his visit to Lan, probably in the 1930s.

Probably not long after Peate's visit the house and environs were subject to a major programme of improvement when the thatched roof, wicker chimney, cruck trusses and clom gable walls were removed at first floor level and replaced. The new roof was of corrugated iron over light A-frames with brick chimneys at either end. The upstairs was remodelled internally with the insertion of a new upper floor, tongue and groove partition at first floor level, and tongue and groove ceiling. It is not certain if the hardwood ladder stair, a surviving early feature, remains in its original location or was moved at this time.

The same period of improvement saw the cross passage converted into a lobby and pantry whilst the downhouse was also remodelled. Brick door surrounds reflect these alterations, indicating those doorways which were moved or inserted when the cow house was converted to a stable and the threshing barn turned over to a cow house.

A newly built detached calf loose box behind the house and dairy in front reflect a shift in emphasis towards small scale dairying at Lan at the time.

Lan's abandonment in 1966 has served to protect it from later changes leaving it today as a fascinating window to a style of building which was once common in the region but is now becoming increasingly rare.

7.0 SOURCES

Historic Environment Record for Carmarthenshire

Maps

Tithe Map and Apportionment for Llandeilo-fawr Parish 1841?

Ordnance Survey 1st edition (1887) Carmarthenshire Sheet 33.07, 25"

Ordnance Survey 2nd edition (1906) Carmarthenshire Sheet 33.07, 25"

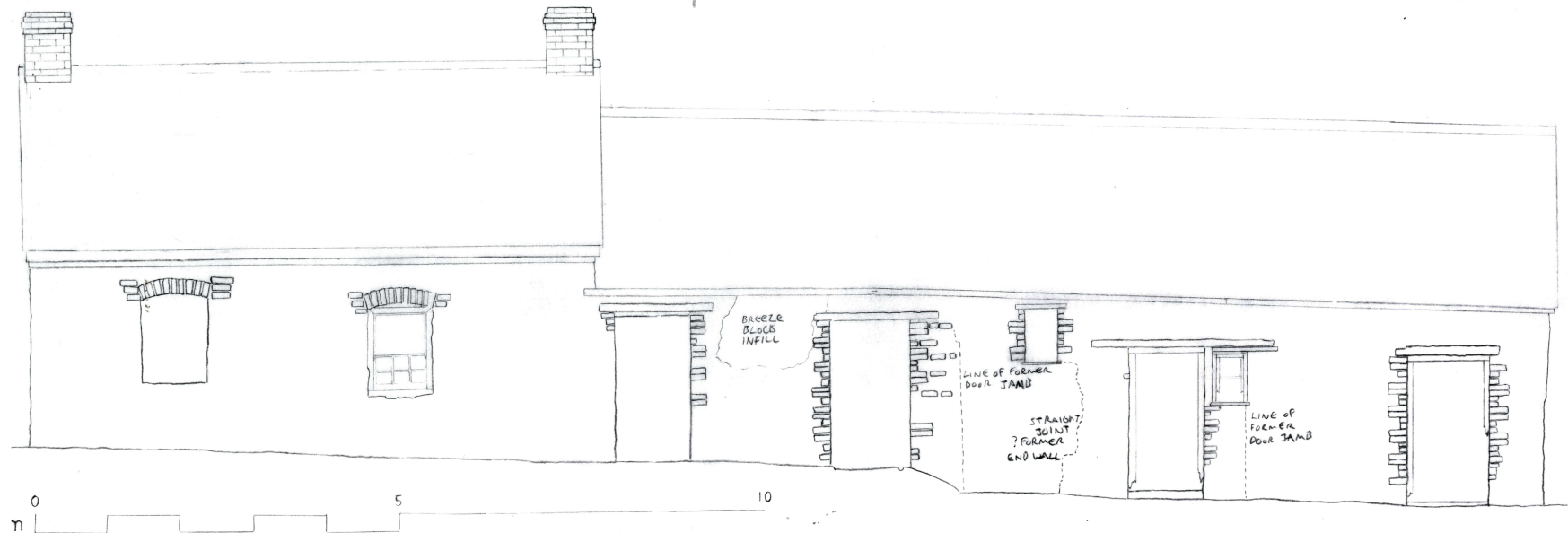
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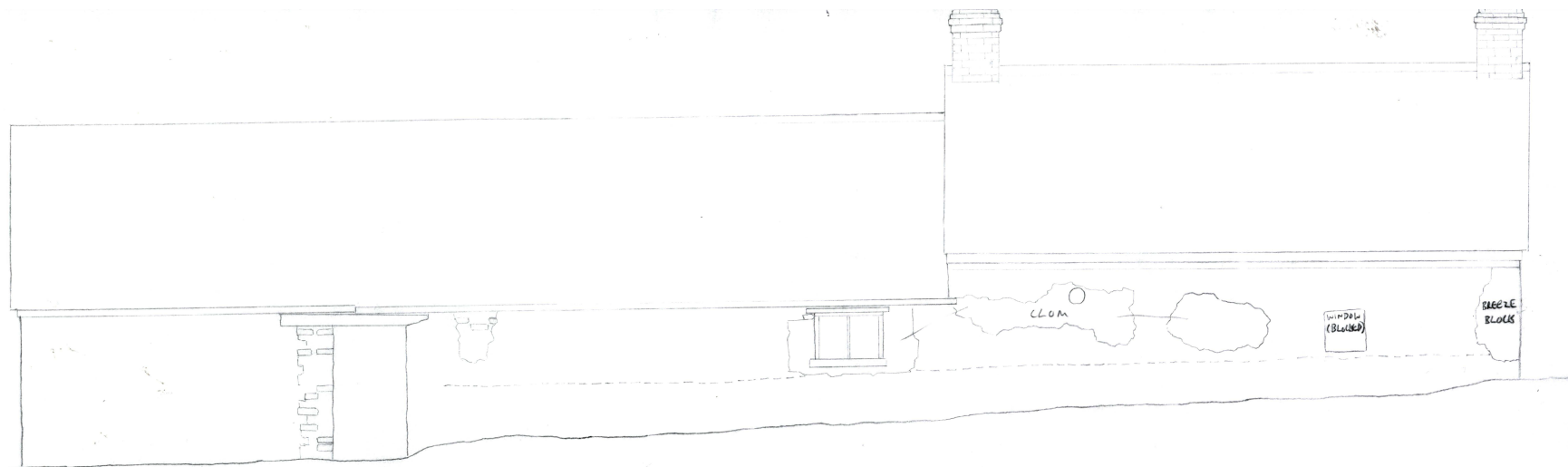
Peate I 1940. The Welsh House: A Study in Folk Culture. Llanerch Press, Lampeter

English Heritage 2006. Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice. English Heritage, Swindon.

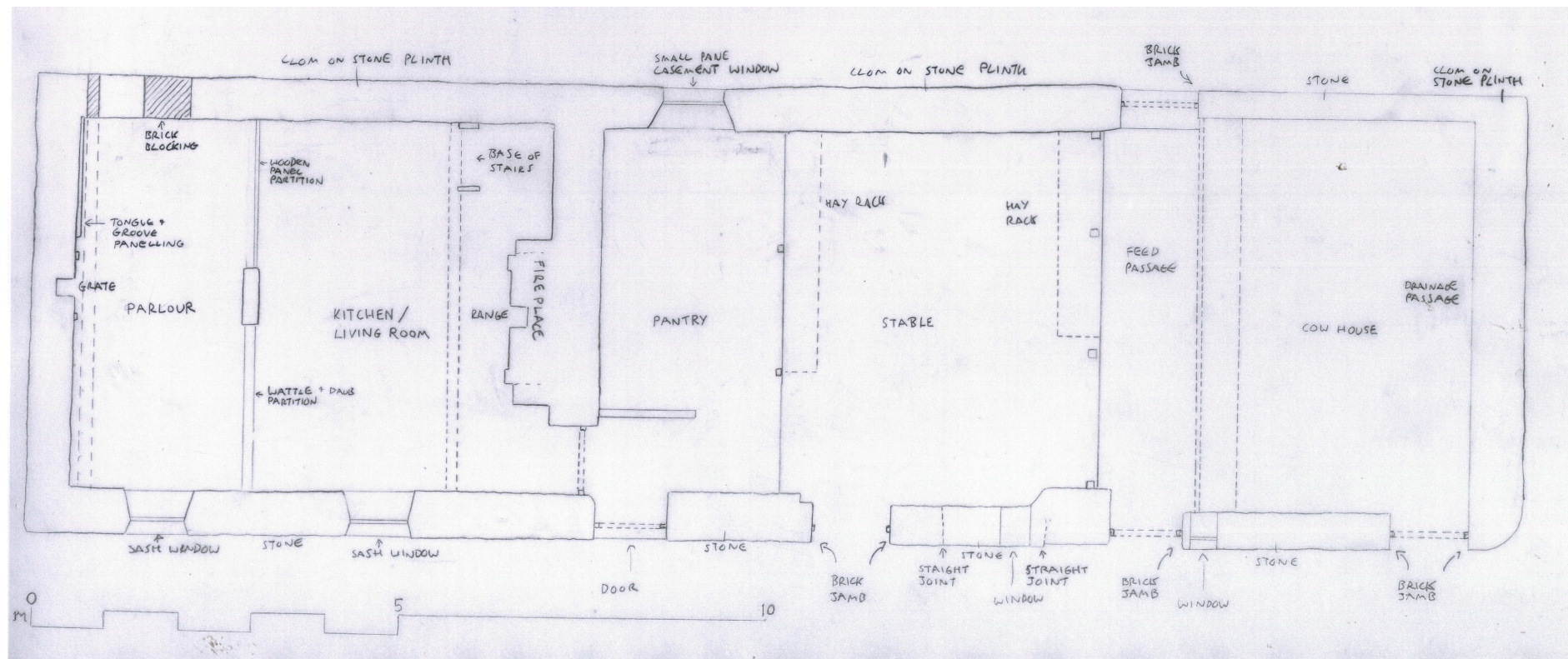
9.0 ILLUSTRATIONS



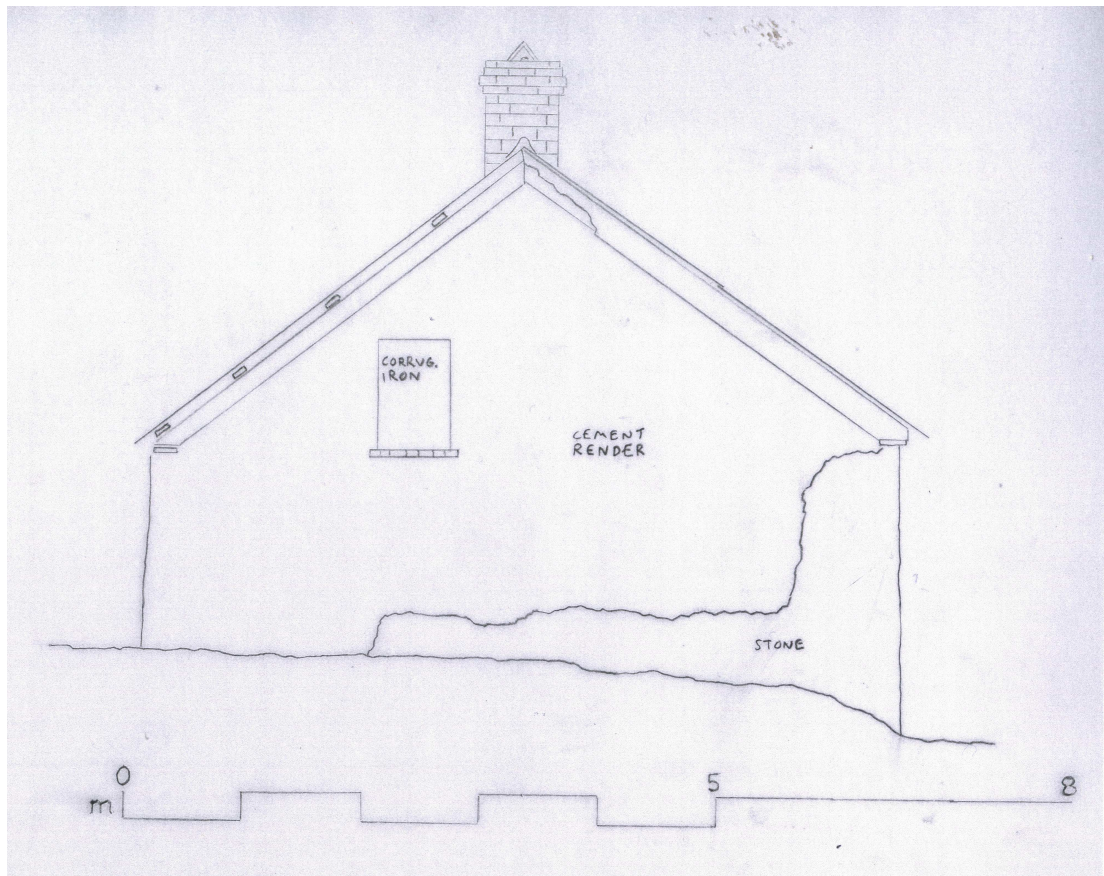
Front Elevation of Farmhouse



Rear Elevation of Farmhouse



Floor Plan



Upper Gable End

10.0 PHOTOGRAPHS



General view of the longhouse from the west



Facing south east along the rear (north) wall



General view from the north – dwelling end.



General view from the north – cow house. Modern calf loose box in foreground.



The front (south-facing) elevation of the dwelling end.



Facing east along the front elevation of the down house.



The lower (east-facing) gable wall of the down house.



The cast iron kitchen range in the main fireplace – "D.R. Davis, Llandeilo"



View from the kitchen/ living room to the cross passage and external doorway.



Part of a cruck truss visible in the front (south) wall.



Inside the kitchen/ living room facing towards the ladder stair.



Sash window – the absence of horns probably indicates a c. pre-1840 date.



The brick chimney shaft above the main inglenook fireplace replaced an earlier wicker hood recorded by Peate.



Early 20th century stable fixtures within the downhouse. Originally this would have been part of the byre.



The house detectives.

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Paratowyd yr adroddiad hwn gan / This report has been prepared by

Will Steele

Swydd / Position: **Project Manager**

Llofnod / Signature ..
2011



Dyddiad / Date 19th April

Mae'r adroddiad hwn wedi ei gael yn gywir a derbyn sêl bendith
This report has been checked and approved by

Alice Pyper

ar ran Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Dyfed Cyf.
on behalf of Dyfed Archaeological Trust Ltd.

Swydd / Position: **Project Manager**

Llofnod / Signature ...



..... Dyddiad / Date 19th April 2011

Yn unol â'n nôd i roddi gwasanaeth o ansawdd uchel, croesawn unrhyw sylwadau
sydd gennych ar gynnwys neu strwythur yr adroddiad hwn

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