



# **Penrallt W/11/3523**

## **Tir Gofal Farm Visit Historic Environment Report**



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Penrallt  
Tir Gofal Call Out Visit Report

By

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### **CALL OUT VISIT**

Following a visit to Penrallt by the Tir Gofal project officer, a call out visit was requested of Cambria Archaeology. This was specifically to provide advice on the maintenance and restoration of the three surviving traditional agricultural buildings within the farmstead.

### **GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF FARM**

Penrallt (SN43594733) consists of two holdings to the north of Pont-Sian in Ceredigion. Land here consists of improved pasture divided into irregular small to medium sized fields. The farmstead lies in the north of the main holding.

The farmstead is first shown on the 1834 1 inch to 1 mile Old Series Ordnance Survey map, and buildings are shown on the northwest and southwest sides of a rectangular farmyard. Additional detail on the form of the individual buildings is obscured by the small scale. The 1846 tithe map provides a larger scale representation, although it is somewhat stylised and accuracy is questionable. Two buildings are shown facing each other across a farmyard, with an additional building in a field to the north. The relationship between these buildings and the earlier buildings described above is not entirely clear.

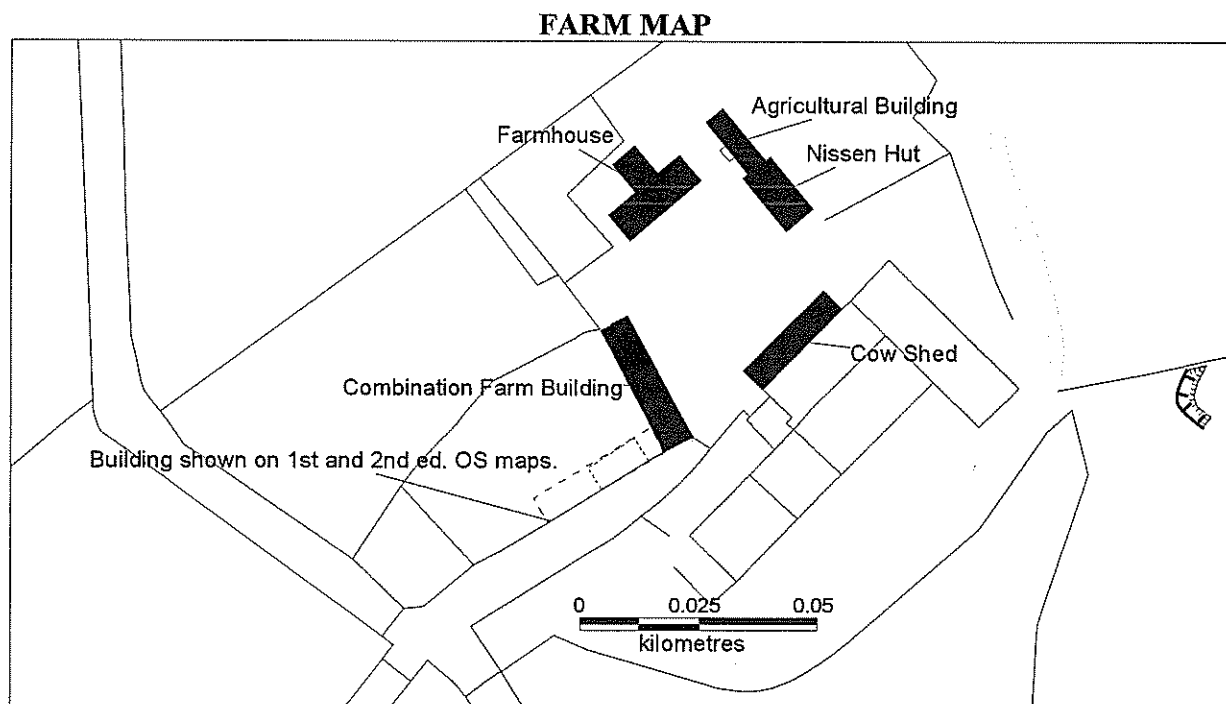
Penrallt farmstead is depicted in accurate detail on the 1891 6 inch to 1 mile Ordnance Survey map. The farmstead is shown at the end of a kilometre long drive, with the buildings arranged around a square farmyard. The farmhouse is situated at the upper (northwest) end of the farmyard, which is defined on all other sides by agricultural buildings. Opposite the farmhouse at the lower end of the yard is a long, rectangular building, which was identified during the archaeological farm visit as a cow shed. This may be consistent with a building shown at this location on the 1846 tithe map. The northeast side of the yard is flanked by a range of two rectangular buildings. These are

absent from earlier map sources. Only the northwestern of these buildings survives today, and its neighbour to the south has since been replaced by a nissen hut.

A large L-shaped range is shown opposite, defining the southwest extent of the yard whilst also flanking the north side of the yard entrance. The rectangular building facing onto the farmyard is the only part of this range to survive today, and was identified during the archaeological farm visit as a cart shed, threshing barn and stable building. The figure 1873 carved into a roof truss tie beam provides a credible date for this building, which is supported by the map evidence. No above ground evidence for the building to its southwest survives.

The building shown on the tithe map to the north of the farmyard is absent from the 1891 Ordnance Survey map. A complex of modern agricultural buildings have since been added to the southeast of the original farmstead.

The surviving historic buildings may relate to several stages in the development of the farmstead. Although they may post-date the original planning of the farmstead, they do nevertheless continue the farmyard layout first shown on the 1834 Ordnance Survey map. Their significance as historic buildings in their own right is added to by their contribution to the group value of the farmstead as a whole.



(produced from Ordnance Survey, Licence number: GD272825G)

### COMBINATION FARM BUILDING

This cart shed, threshing barn and stable building survives as part of an L-shaped range first identified on the 1891 Ordnance Survey map, and forms the southwestern boundary of the farmyard at Penrallt. The adjoining building was formerly situated to its southwest and flanked part of the entrance to the yard. No evidence of this part of the range survives above ground.

The surviving building follows a southeast-northwest alignment and measures approximately 27 by 7 metres. It is of stone rubble construction with roughly squared quoins, and a pitched slate roof. Its lower storey is divided into three cells; a stable to the southeast, a central threshing floor, and a cart shed to the northwest.

Concrete stall platforms and stall partitions, with halter bars indicate that the southeastern cell of the building formerly served as a cow shed, although it may originally have been a stable. It is accessed through a heavy wooden framed doorway in the centre of the northeast (front) wall. Heavy wooden framed windows are equally spaced on either side. An upper storey loft, for the storage of hay remains intact. A square wooden framed pitching hole is situated in the centre of the front wall. Opposite this is a heavy wooden framed loading door.

Neighbouring this to the northwest is a central threshing floor- the largest bay within the building. It is accessed through a pair of large wooden doors in the front wall. Opposing this, across the threshing floor is a narrow doorway, although this has since been blocked off with breeze blocks. A narrow doorway at the northwest end of this cell provided further access to the threshing floor, and storage space from the farmyard. A loft occupies the northwestern portion of the granary set, and would have provided additional storage space. It now holds redundant farm apparatus. A loading door is situated in the rear wall.

The northwestern cart shed bay, is accessed by a wide cart entrance, with a low stone arch in the front wall. A small window opening is situated to the left of this. Access is provided from at the rear of the building by a narrow doorway, with heavy wooden frame. This part of the building is now in use as a stable. A loft is accessed by a narrow doorway in the centre of the northwest gable end at the top of an external set of stone steps. This would also have served as a granary. A narrow doorway in the partition wall links this to the loft in the granary set. A heavy wooden window opening is situated in the centre of the front wall.

An inscription on a roof truss tie beam in the granary gives the figure 1873. These are the original timbers and there is no reason to doubt this as a date for the completion of the building. It is currently in a reasonable condition, although some maintenance works are necessary if it is to be kept in a stable condition necessary for its long-term survival.

The roof is a particular concern, and several early signs of instability have been identified. Its condition at the southeast end of the granary is perhaps the principal area of concern. Several of the battens on its eastern pitch are broken, and displaced, and the tiles have slipped. Water is entering the building through the apex of the roof, running down the rafters and promoting rot in the timbers, which is further undermining stability. Some of the purlins are showing evidence of rot, and it has also become established at the base of one of the trusses.



Plate 1-The unstable granary roof.



Plate 2-Rot has become established at the base of one of the roof trusses.

The area above the loading door in the granary loft is also showing early signs of instability. A wall plate spanning the door has broken, and the rafters are no longer supported. The roof is visibly sagging, and this is putting pressure onto the roof timbers and displacing some of the slates. Accompanying this is the threat of loss of slates and damage to exposed roof timbers.



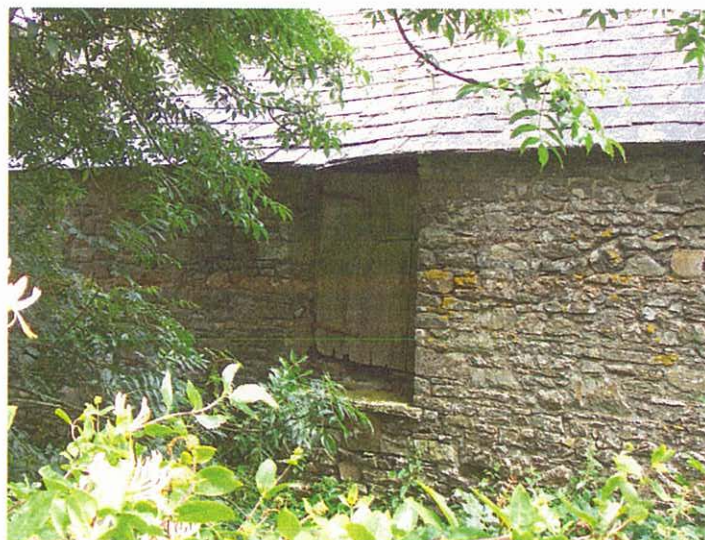


Plate 3-Instability in the roof above the granary loading door.

Weakness has been identified in the northwest gable end of the building, where water ingress through the upper storey loading door opening is promoting rot in the floor joists, which exert an important binding influence on the structure. The walls appear sound, although would benefit from some selective re-pointing. These areas include the interior of the cow shed, and parts of the southwest lateral wall. An eaves board is missing from the northwest gable, and water ingress is washing out masonry bonds and weakening the wall structure.

This building is a typical example of its type, built primarily of local agricultural materials in response to contemporary agricultural demands. It has experienced few modifications from its original construction, and in this sense is a particularly fine example. It is a fundamental element to the historic character of the farmstead, and is an important characteristic of the wider historic landscape as a whole.

### **Management Recommendations**

Although several areas of weakness were found in the roof, much of it remains in a sound and weatherproof condition. Repairing and replacing the damaged elements described above will be necessary if the building is to be returned to a stable condition in the long-term. Roof sections above the cart house and stable appear to be in reasonable condition and re-roofing these areas may not be necessary. The door in the northwest gable end of the building should be replaced in order to prevent water from further damaging floor joists. Unstable areas of the walls should be re-pointed and reconsolidated as necessary. Ideally, this should be followed up by a more general programme of re-pointing. Building materials used should be compatible with those of the original construction.

A preliminary archaeological record of the building was made during the call out visit. This comprised notes, an annotated sketch plan and some digital photos. It is recommended that further recording should be made before and after the restoration works in order to enhance the existing record of the structure. Some guidelines on the general photographic survey of buildings are attached.

### **COW SHED**

This cow shed defined the southeastern extent of the farmyard at Penrallt. It follows a northeast-southwest alignment and measures approximately 7 by 25 metres. It is of stone rubble construction, with roughly squared quoins and a pitched slate roof. It has been modified from its original appearance to permit access for agricultural vehicles, and the southwest gable end has been partially re-built with breeze blocks. A wide entrance with an iron lintel now provides access for machinery. None of the original internal partitions survive, and a line of stalls against the southeast lateral wall indicate its most recent agricultural use as a cow house. The original door and window openings remain visible in the northwest lateral wall. Four narrow doors and four windows remain visible in the northwest lateral wall, although one of the doors and one of the windows have since been blocked up with breeze blocks. A small window opening, slightly offset from centre in the northeast gable end is the only other original opening. Three wide, low doorways in the southeast lateral wall are later additions. The exact date of this cow shed is not known, although it may be consistent with a building first identified at this location on the 1846 tithe map. An earlier nineteenth century date is therefore possible. It is well maintained and in a good condition. The only structural concern is in the southwest gable end of the building, where some of the masonry bonds have become unstable and breeze blocks and masonry are working loose.

### **Management Recommendations**

The building, which is an important element of the historic farmstead, should continue to be maintained using materials and techniques, which are compatible with those presently used. Unstable areas of masonry should be re-pointed and re-consolidated.



Plate 4- The cow shed at Penrallt



### **AGRICULTURAL BUILDING**

This ruinous building lies in the northern corner of the farmyard at Penrallt, approximately 10 metres to the northeast of the farmhouse. It follows a southeast-northwest alignment and measures approximately 17 by 6 metres. It is of stone rubble construction, with a pitched corrugated asbestos roof. Of particular interest are the curved corners at the northwest gable end of the building, which corbel outwards to square off at approximately 1.5 metres. These are absent from the southeast gable end. The building is accessed by four narrow doorways spaced out along the length of the southwest lateral wall. One of these retains a wooden lintel, whilst three have brick lintels, which may be later additions. A small rectangular window opening in the northwest gable end, is the only other opening in the building. None of the historic internal arrangements survive with which to interpret its original function, although it may have served as a cow shed.

Stylistic signatures, with which to date the building are few, and it has been re-roofed in the past. It is absent from map sources before 1891 and is likely to be of a nineteenth century date.

It is currently in a ruinous condition and near to collapse. Parts of the northeast and southwest lateral wall have already fallen and remaining walls, particularly at the northwestern end are leaning outwards and unstable. The roof is also sagging inwards without the full support of the walls and is also in a precarious state. This is a stylistically distinctive and unusual building, and it would be a great loss to the farmstead and wider historic landscape if it were to collapse completely.

### **Management Recommendations**

The building is currently in a ruinous and unstable condition. The splayed out walls will need to be replaced, and a general programme of masonry consolidation and re-pointing undertaken if it is to be brought back into a stable condition. Ideally, the building should be brought back into active use following restoration.

A preliminary archaeological record was made during the call out visit. This comprised notes, an annotated sketch plan and some digital photos. It is recommended that further recording should be made before and after any restoration works in order to enhance the existing record of the structure. Some guidelines on the general photographic survey of buildings are attached.

If restoration works are not to be undertaken, the building should be retained in its present condition. Due to its vulnerable nature, it is recommended that a detailed building record should be made. It may be possible for this to be undertaken by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales.



Plate 5-Looking east towards the building in the northern corner of the farmyard at Penrallt.

#### REFERENCES

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**W/11/3523**

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1<sup>st</sup> August 2003

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Signature W. L. Steele Date 7/08/03

This report has been checked and approved by Louise Austin on behalf of Cambria Archaeology,  
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Position Principal Archaeologist (Heritage Management)

Signature Louise Austin Date 7/08/03

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