

THE 'OLD HOUSE' AT TREFENTY FARM, ST. CLEARS, CARMARTHENSHIRE

PHOTOGRAPHIC BUILDING RECORD



Prepared by Dyfed Archaeological Trust
For: Mr Thomas



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Gan / By

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THE 'OLD HOUSE' AT TREFENTY FARM ST. CLEARS, CARMARTHENSHIRE PHOTOGRAPHIC BUILDING RECORD

SUMMARY

Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services was commissioned by Mr E Thomas of Trefenty Farm to undertake an archaeological scheme of works at the 'Old House' at Trefenty Farm St. Clears, Carmarthenshire (at NGR SN 2985 1362) to fulfil a condition placed on planning permission.

A photographic record of the site was made before renovation started, and before scaffolding was erected. The need for a watching brief on associated groundworks has been discounted.

Trefenty was the caput of the Medieval Lordship of Osterlow which lay between the Rivers Cynin and Cywin. Nearby there is a motte-and-bailey castle, and the former parish church. The castle had probably been abandoned in favour of Trefenty House by the later Medieval period, but the visible fabric of the present house is 18th century

The 'old house' was associated with an earlier range of farm buildings which were demolished when the farm was re-developed at some time between 1841 and 1888. The quoins of the building are finely dressed stone blocks and were found to include re-used stones. One stone may be part of a gravestone similar to those in the nearby churchyard, others are dressed and decorated stones from an earlier building which was presumably either located on the same site, or nearby.

Various changes had been made to the building, including alterations to window openings and the insertion or replacement of chimney stacks. These later changes appear to have destroyed most evidence of the original form of the building, to the extent that its original function is uncertain.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services was commissioned by Mr E Thomas of Trefenty Farm to provide an archaeological scheme of works to address the potential impacts of building renovations (Planning application number W/21878) at the 'Old House' at Trefenty Farm, St. Clears, Carmarthenshire (NGR SN 2985 1362).

1.2 The condition was placed on planning consent for the development because the building is Grade II Listed and because it lies in close proximity to an important medieval moated site (PRN 13355¹) and a motte and bailey castle (PRN 5068). The proposal was therefore considered to have the potential to expose, damage or destroy any archaeologically significant remains that may be present within the development area.

1.3 The condition states that:

'No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the planning authority'.

1.4 A written scheme of investigation or specification for the work, proposing a basic photographic record of the building prior to the commencement of works, and a watching brief on any associated ground-works was approved by the Archaeological Advisor to Carmarthenshire County Council.

1.5 The written scheme included the following tasks and objectives:

- Provision of a written scheme of investigation to outline the methodology by which Dyfed Archaeological Trust will address the planning condition placed on the proposed development;
- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits;
- To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed ground works.
- To appropriately investigate and record any archaeological deposits to be affected by the ground works.
- A photographic record of the building made prior to any work;
- Production of a report and archive on the archaeological work undertaken.

¹ PRN – 'Primary Record Number' unique identifying numbers used by the Regional Historic Environment Record, as held by Dyfed Archaeological Trust, The Shire Hall, Llandeilo, SA19 6AF

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 The planning application was to renovate the existing building for domestic accommodation. Although derelict, the roof was until recently relatively intact and the building fabric in reasonable condition. The exterior of the building was free of render and ivy, allowing evidence of repairs and re-builds to be clearly seen. The first stage in the project is to re-roof the building, to prevent further deterioration. The photographic record was therefore made before scaffolding was erected, and the existing roof was removed. It is apparently intended to re-render the exterior of the building at a later stage in the renovation.

2.2 In the interior of the building, however, the walls were to a large extent still plastered, and the first floor was inaccessible. It is considered that sufficient evidence of the development of the building is discernable from the exterior, and that an additional visit to examine the interior would be unnecessary.

2.3 Similarly, a proposed watching brief on the excavation of service trenches is also considered unnecessary, partly due to uncertainty when this might happen, and partly because the works are unlikely to reveal any significant archaeological evidence. In the event that anything interesting is revealed, the landowner is sufficiently interested in the history of the property, to report any discoveries that may be made.

2.4 Since the form and fabric of the walls is likely to remain unaltered, a photographic record of their appearance is considered an appropriate level of record.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL and HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The following information is included to provide an archaeological context for the building described in this report. It is not intended to be an exhaustive history of the site. Further research would undoubtedly identify more sources and more detailed information on the history of Trefenty.

3.1 Listed Building Description

3.1.1 The building was listed as an example of a traditional Carmarthenshire farmhouse. It forms part of the group of other listed buildings at Trefenty, including the double-pile Farmhouse and the Farm outbuildings which together form this important gentry farm.

3.1.2 The listing description is as follows:

Former estate farmhouse of 2 storeys, in whitewashed rubble stone with large quoins to angles, red brick heads and dressings to openings, slated roof and red brick end stacks. Long façade with two gabled dormers breaking eaves at sill level. Paired casements to left, missing to right. Ground floor has central door with window each side under attic dormers and a third window to extreme right. All openings boarded or replaced with late 20th century 12-pane windows. Evidence of upper storey windows being raised as blocked openings are visible below the present slate sills. Right (north) gable has blocked ground floor doorway left (east) of centre.

3.2 Historic Landscape description

3.2.1 Trefenty Farm is part of the Trefenty Landscape Character area - itself a constituent of the Taf and Tywi Estuary Registered Historic Landscape Area. The following is based upon the description of the Trefenty Historic landscape Character Area:

3.2.2 Trefenty was the caput of the Medieval Lordship of Osterlow (Ystlwyf) which mainly lay between the Rivers Cynin and Cywin. There is a fine motte-and-bailey castle, and the former parish church. The castle had probably been abandoned in favour of Trefenty House by the later Medieval period, but the visible fabric of the present building is 18th century. Ystlwyf was a possession of the Anglo-Norman lords of St Clears until 1171 when it was acquired by Rhys ap Gruffydd, who granted the area to the Cistercian Abbey at Whitland in 1214, as part of the large Osterlow Grange (Williams, 1990). The remainder of the lordship became amassed within the Marshal inheritance during the earlier 13th century and was a member of the Earldom of Pembroke until the mid 16th-century, when it was acquired by the Perrot lords of Laugharne (Jones 1987, 185).

3.2.3 It is likely that in common with most other granges, land was let and farmed by tenants, who established the precursors of modern farms. Topography in the form of ridge and furrow east of Trefenty indicates that at least some of the land was cultivated by an open- or strip-field system. However, a 15th century valuation notes that cheese and sheep/wool composed the greater part of the value of the grange, with oats providing a small proportion (Benson 1996), suggesting a degree of enclosure at this date. The parish church also lay on a putative pilgrimage route to St David's (Hartwell Jones 1912, 372). Sir John Perrot added to his Ystlwyf holdings at the Dissolution in 1539 when he acquired the grange. His son, Thomas, married Dorothy sister of the Earl of Essex, and their daughter, Penelope, married Sir William Lowther, a well-known astronomer,

who died at Trefenty in 1615 (Jones 1987, 185). Benson (1996) considers Lowther's association with the estate as of the utmost importance for landscape history, as he suggests that it was he who was responsible for establishing the long straight boundaries that divide the area into large compartments, and are such a characteristic feature of the landscape. Later 17th century leases name 'the Great Division', 'Chief Line' and 'thwarte hedges' which indicate that this major compartmentalisation of the landscape had by then taken place. It is not entirely clear whether the subdivisions of the landscape are pre- or post-dated by the long straight boundaries, but it does seem that by the mid 17th-century all the present day elements of the historic landscape were in place.

3.2.4 An alternative explanation is that the system may be much earlier in date. The division of the landscape into enclosures that average 700 metres square may be significant in that the rigid Roman land division of centuriation was laid out to a grid of square enclosures whose sides each measured 20 actus, the equivalent of 710 metres (Potter 1987, 101). Centuriation was usually, but not exclusively practised in the vicinity of coloniae in order that each veteran would receive an equal share, but it does represent a system of rapid land division that could be imposed on other unenclosed areas; however no further evidence has come to light that it was practised in Britain (Rivet 1964, 101). Trefenty Farm passed through the Drummond and Plowden families before being acquired by its present owners, the University of Wales (Jones 1987, 185).

3.2.5 Earlier landscape features include three possible round barrows, two possible standing stones, and a burnt mound from the Bronze Age. The motte-and-bailey at Trefenty, a Scheduled Ancient Monument, exhibits no evidence for masonry. Other archaeological features comprise a Post-Medieval clay-pit which represents the only other economic activity in the area.

3.2.6 Between 1841 (the date of the Tithe map) and 1888 (the date of the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map) the farm was re-developed, all the farm outbuildings were demolished, leaving only the main house, and the building now called the 'old house'. Figure 2 shows the layout of the farm buildings before it was redeveloped, as recorded on the 1841 Tithe map. A new range of farm buildings was built on new ground to the north as shown on the 1906 Ordnance Survey map of the area (Figure 3).

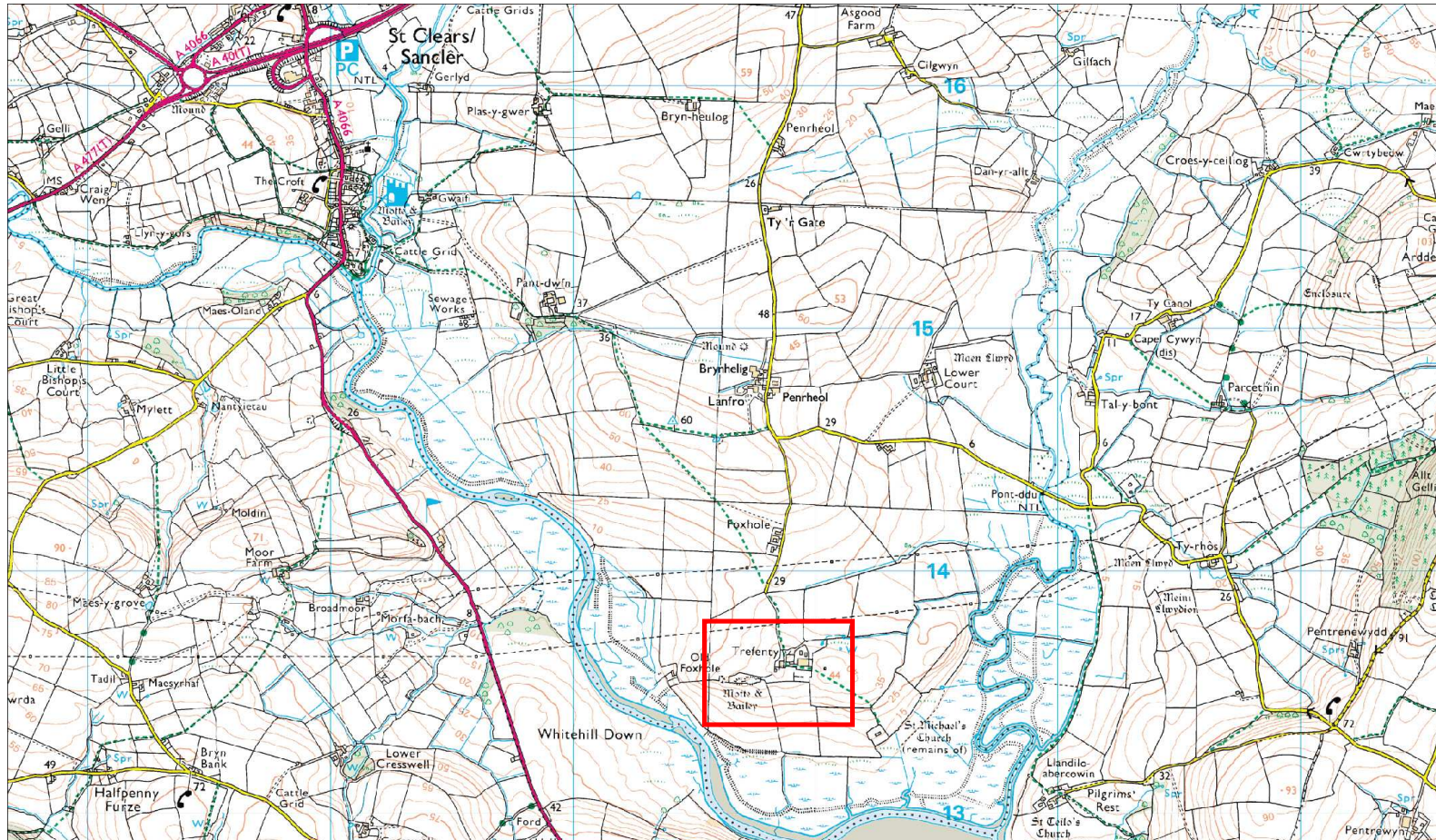


Figure 1: Location plan of Trefenty Farm, based on Ordnance Survey

Reproduced from the 1995 Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 scale Landranger Map with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown Copyright Dyfed Archaeological Trust Ltd., The Shire Hall, Carmarthen Street, Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire SA19 6AF. Licence No AL51842A

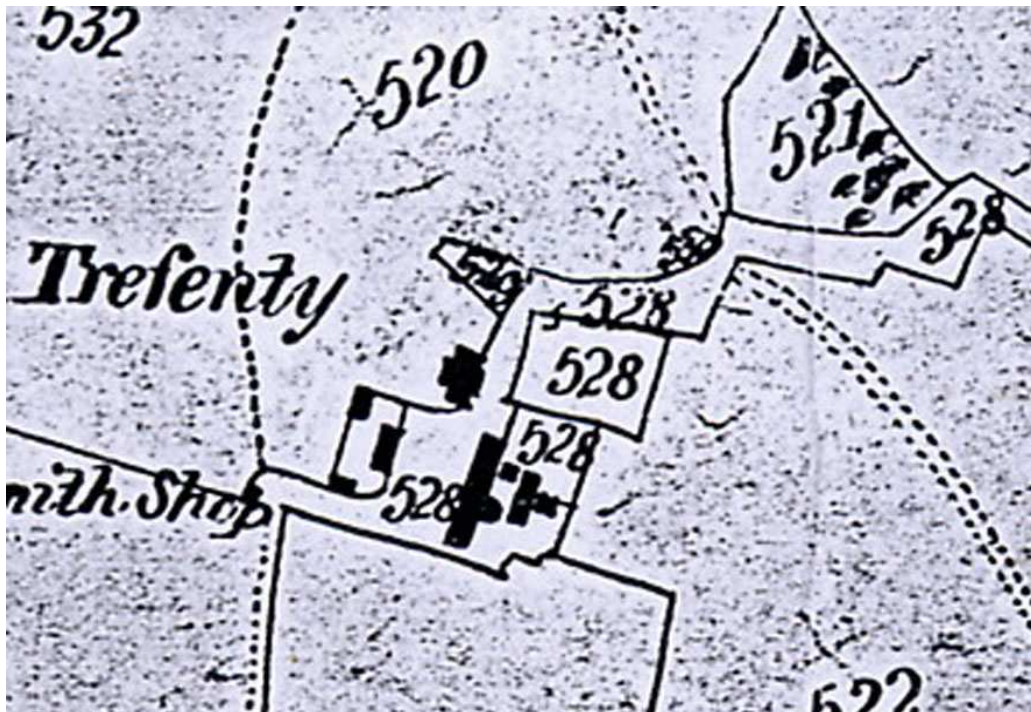


Figure 2: Llanfihangel-Abercywyn parish Tithe map of 1841, showing earlier farm buildings (now demolished)

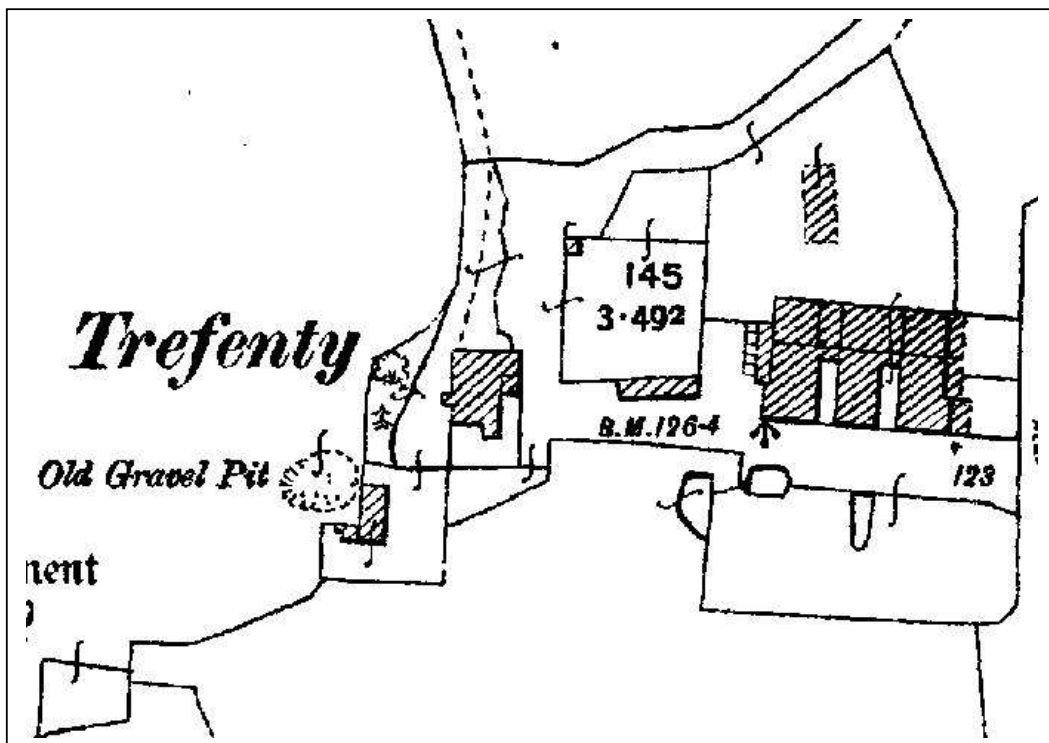


Figure 3: Ordnance Survey 2nd edition map of 1906, showing the old farmhouse in relation to the new farm outbuildings

4 BUILDING DESCRIPTION

4.1 Exterior

4.1.1 The fabric of the building is lime mortared roughly dressed quarried stone, with occasional river rounded stones. The quoin stones at the corners of the building are finely dressed stone blocks of varying dimensions. Some, of these stones show evidence of decoration and other working to suggest that some, if not all, of these stones are re-used from an earlier building presumably either located on the same site, or nearby. The roof and chimneystacks are later additions; what they replaced is uncertain.

East facing elevation

4.1.2 The main façade of the building faces east (Photo 1). Although uncertain, the existing ground floor doorway and window openings (and the blocked first floor openings) are possibly later modifications to a building of earlier origin. Although there is no clear surviving evidence of any openings associated with this earlier building, these are likely to have been destroyed by the later modifications, blocked openings on the western wall, however, may be associated with this earlier phase of the building.



Photo 1: East facing façade

4.1.3 The three window openings and the doorway on the ground floor are all constructed from red brick. There is no surviving evidence to suggest they replace earlier (and smaller) openings in the same locations. There may, however, be evidence to suggest this on the inside of the building. There is no evidence for a blocked fourth window, to the south to present a symmetrical frontage.

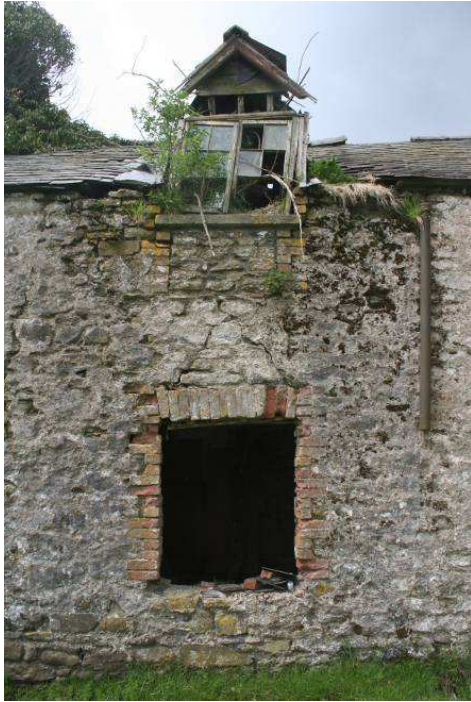


Photo 2: Window openings in the eastern wall, southern side



Photo 3: Window openings in the eastern wall, northern upper

4.1.4 Two blocked first floor window openings are apparent, located above the windows flanking the ground floor doorway (Photos 2 & 3). There is no apparent evidence for other blocked first floor window openings.

4.1.5 The blocked first floor windows have been replaced by two gabled dormers, the sills of which are set into the top of the wall, within the area of the earlier blocked windows (Photos 2 & 3).

External south facing elevation



Photo 4: South facing gable end

4.1.6 Although there are two reasonably large cracks in the masonry, the south facing gable end elevation (Photo 4) shows no evidence of any repairs, rebuilds or blocked openings. The masonry is roughly coursed, and some stone is dressed and decorated and has presumably been re-used from a nearby earlier building (Photos 5 & 6). The chimneystack is a later, brick-built modification.

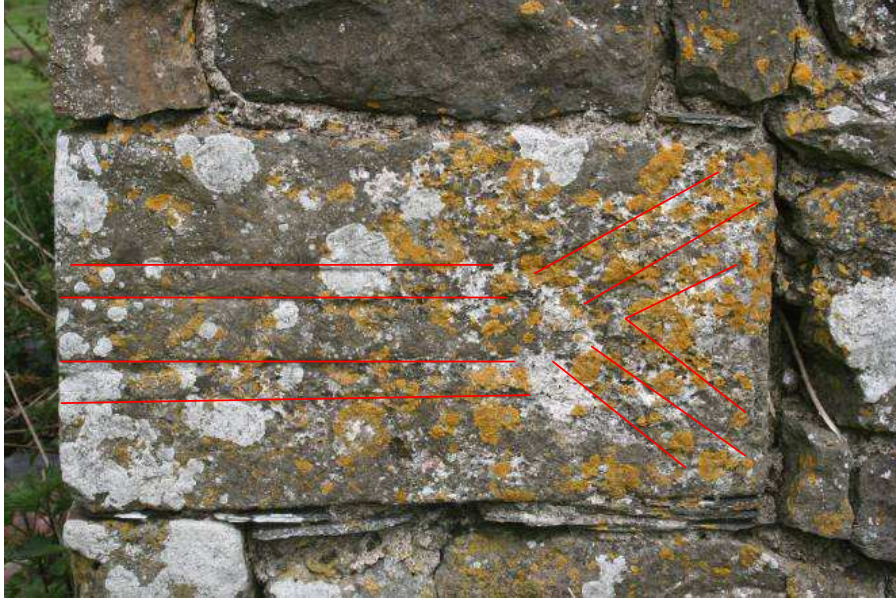


Photo 5: Stone with carved decoration. It is thought this stone may have been part of a grave, but this is by no means certain.



Photo 6: Stone with carved moulding. This stone may be part of a former window opening

West facing external elevation

4.1.7 The west facing elevation now contains only one opening on the ground floor and one on the first floor (Photo 7). The elevation also shows more evidence of rebuilding and alteration to the building.



Photo 7: West facing façade

4.1.8 The brickwork surrounding the window openings suggests they are contemporary with the with the blocked first floor windows on the east façade. It is apparent, however, that the two windows are differently proportioned and slightly offset, perhaps suggesting that there may have been earlier (smaller) windows in at least one of these locations. To the right of the upper window, a small blocked window opening is visible (photo 8 top right).



Photo 8: West facing façade middle section

4.1.9 A straight joint (bottom left in photo 8) is partial evidence of another earlier opening. A slight difference in the stonework to the right of this joint may suggest a blocked opening.

4.1.10 There is also clear evidence of a mostly brick surrounded window opening blocked with stonework (Photo 9) on the northern end of the façade. This window is of different construction style and dimensions to those on the east façade. The south side of the opening is, however, not built of brick, suggesting there may have been an earlier and smaller opening in this location.



Photo 9: West facing façade northern section

4.1.11 A levelling course is visible at first floor level (Photo 10). The presence of the blocked opening suggests this is an early construction detail, rather than a later re-build. The levelling course is not visible at the north end of the façade. The crack in the wall (Photo 10) does not appear to follow the line of a repair or rebuild.



Photo 10: West facing façade southern section

4.1.12 At the south corner (right) a number of the quoin stones are dressed masonry re-used from another building. Several of them show evidence of having held probable iron fittings (Photos 11 & 12). It is possible that some of the hidden faces of the blocks would show other such features.



Photo 11: A dressed block with a block with part of a socket



Photo 12: Another dressed possible shallow socket

North facing external elevation



Photo 13: North gable end

4.1.13 The north Gable end is constructed of roughly coursed, rough dressed stone and mortar, and has an inserted brick built chimneystack, presumably contemporary with the brick openings on the east façade (Photo 13)).



Photo 14: Blocked doorway in north gable end

4.1.14 On the east side of the chimney, is a blocked doorway opening with a wooden lintel (Photo 14). The function of the doorway is uncertain, although it is perhaps significant that previous ground works at this end of the building revealed a deep rectangular feature cut into the natural subsoil. This cut (now backfilled), had vertical sides and was the same width as the building (Photo 15). It was of unknown function and no evidence of a lining was apparent (Mr Thomas pers. com).



Photo 15: The area of disturbed ground indicates the location of the backfilled rectangular cut at the end of the building.

4.2 Interior

4.2.1 The interior of the building was derelict and had not yet been cleared out at the time of the recording visit. In addition, the majority of the walls were still covered with plaster. In places, however, the plaster had fallen to reveal the underlying masonry. There was no access to the first floor, although it was partially visible through holes in the floor. The interior of the building appears to have been entirely re-modelled at one time. Two exceptions to this are the blocked doorway in the north gable end, and the blocked upper window in the western elevation (Photo 16), both of which were blocked with stone on the interior, rather than brick, suggesting these alterations happened at a different (possibly earlier) time.



Photo 16: Former first floor window in west wall blocked with stone (see also Photos 8 & 10).

4.2.2 No fixtures and fittings relating to either phase of the building were apparent. There were no surviving stairs to the first floor and their former location was not entirely obvious. They may have been located opposite the entrance, built against the brick partition wall, in the southern room, although this is by no means certain.

4.2.3 The ground floor is divided into two rooms, by a wall constructed of red brick (Photo 17). Access from the front door, is directly into the southern room. The main fireplace built from red brick was constructed against the south wall, with an alcove on its east side (Photo 18).



Photo 17: Ground floor dividing wall, constructed of brick



Photo 18: Fireplace against south wall, constructed from brick.

4.2.4 An old range within the main fireplace may be contemporary with the brick alterations to the building (Photo 19). A smaller fireplace constructed from red brick was inserted into the north wall (Photo 20).



Photo 19: The old range within the main fireplace



Photo 20: North wall, showing inserted brick fireplace and chimneystack and doorway to right, with wooden lintel and blocked with stone.



Photo 21: Ground floor and first floor windows at south end of east wall.



Photo 22: Ground floor windows in the east wall of the northern room



Photo 23: Brick-blocked window at the north end of the western wall (see also Photo 9).

4.2.5 The rough faces of the stonework of the window reveals on the interior of the east wall, may suggest there were originally smaller openings that have been enlarged (Photos 21 & 22). The blocked window at the northern end of the western façade was visible (Photo 23), and clearly demonstrated that it was brick infilled on the interior with a stone fronting on the outer façade.

4.2.6 The roof timbers did not appear to be of great age, and no evidence of any earlier roofing was visible.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 The dressed and carved masonry blocks that have been used for the quoins of the building have been re-used from an earlier building. This may have been an earlier building on the same site as the current building, or another nearby medieval building of which no trace is now apparent. The stone is, however, most likely to have come from the medieval building that forms the core of the main house at Trefenty, which has itself undergone numerous alterations.

5.2 The evidence of blocked openings in the west and north walls would appear to relate to the original construction of the building. On the tithe map its location in relation to the other farm buildings, suggests it may have been a farmhouse. As a result of the later alterations, however, it is difficult to ascertain what the form of this building would have been. There is no surviving interior evidence of room divisions or fireplaces. It is therefore possible that the building had a non-domestic function.

5.3 The building was substantially re-modelled by the probable replacement of earlier openings with larger doors and windows, and the blocking up of other openings. At this point its function was definitely residential.

5.4 In addition, any original hearths that may have existed were replaced by red brick fireplaces and chimneystacks. Most of this work is likely to have been undertaken when the entire farm was re-modelled, some time between 1841 and 1888.

5.5 The two dormer windows are a later modification.

5.6 The building survey has provided evidence of the buildings history and development. The proposed renovation works will retain the existing fabric of the structure and thus any further evidence of its development will be preserved. The building survey is considered to have provided an appropriate level of recording of the structure.

6. SOURCES

The Regional Historic Environment Record, housed with Dyfed Archaeological Trust in Llandeilo.

Dyfed Archaeological Trust web site.

Carmarthenshire County Council Planning Services web site.

Llanfihangel-Abercywyn parish tithe map and apportionment 1841.

Ordnance Survey 1st edition map 1888. 1:25,000

Ordnance Survey 2nd edition map 1906. 1:25,000

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Llofnod / Signature Dyddiad / Date

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

James Meek

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

Swydd / Position:

Llofnod / Signature Dyddiad / Date

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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