

The National Trust Archaeological Survey

THE TUDOR MERCHANT'S HOUSE

(Tenby)

South Wales

SMR 83161

John Latham

&

Emma Plunkett Dillon

December 1988

The huge disproportioned Chimneys, it has been observed were so substantially erected, as frequently to outlive every other part. They rose in the form of turrets, cones, and of pyramids; and within there was sufficient space for a large family to seat themselves

(Charles Norris 1812, 73 - 74)



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1 Summary of Management Recommendations

The house is at the present time (December 1988) being redecorated and refitted and would appear to be in good stable condition. It is not an archaeological site in the accepted sense neither is it in any way threatened - quite the opposite in fact though every care should be taken not to destroy features during restoration. It is taken as read that the structure will be maintained. It has a rather complicated history and its various stages of use have not been fully worked out. No good structural analysis has been undertaken and this could make an authoritative interpretation for the general public difficult. The present writer thinks it unwise to attempt too simple or glib an interpretation of the house for any booklet or leaflet that might be produced. Also given the uncertainty over the original date of the building care should be taken not to imply a date from the refitting earlier than about mid 16th century.



2 Summary Table

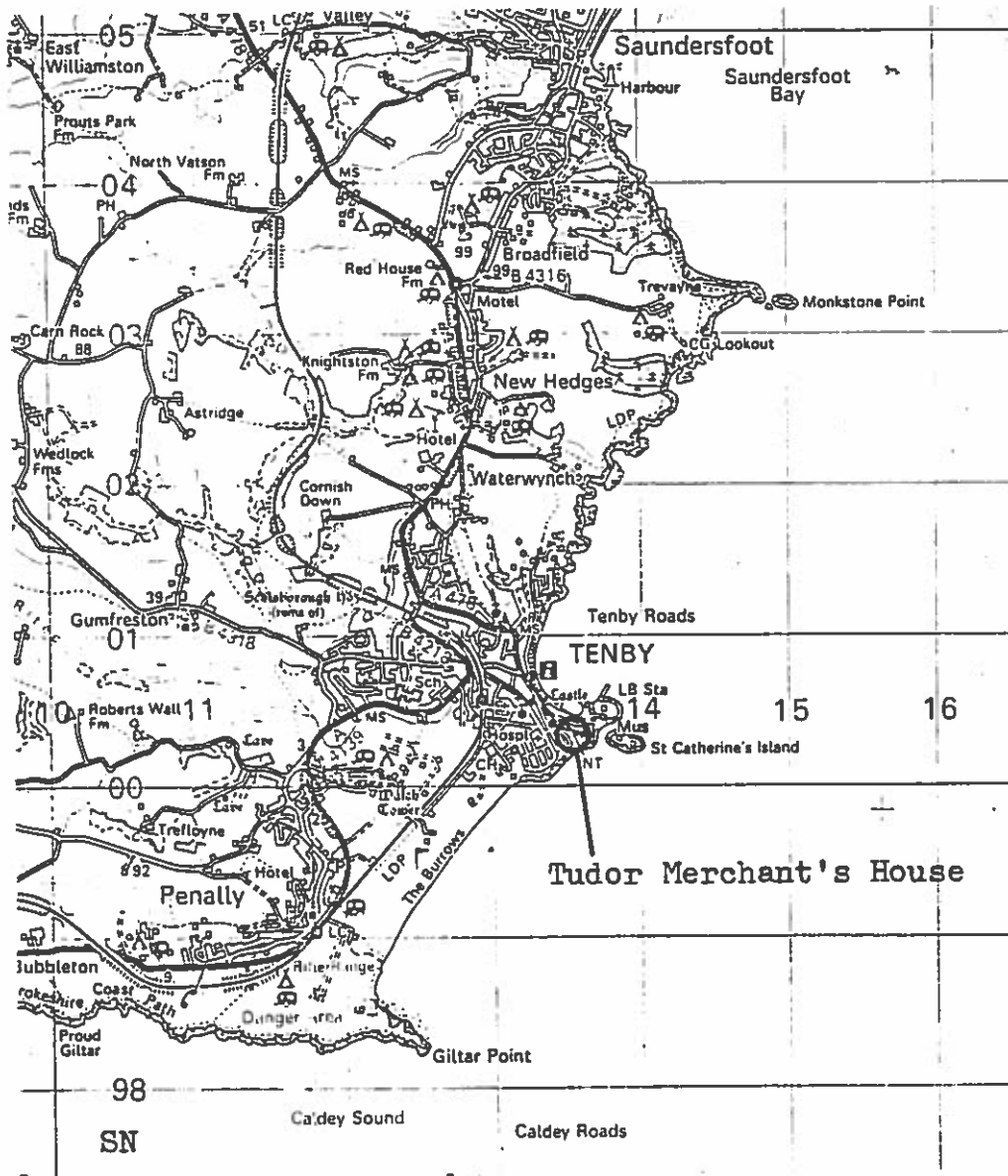
<u>N.I.</u> <u>Site</u> <u>no.</u>	<u>Site or</u> <u>area</u> <u>name</u>	<u>National</u> <u>grid</u> <u>reference</u>	<u>1:10 000</u> <u>map</u> <u>sheet</u>	<u>Feature</u>	<u>Period</u>	<u>Status</u>
83161	Tudor Merchant's House	SN 1358 0040	SN 10 SW	House	Medieval/ Post Medieval	Listed II*



THE TUDOR MERCHANT'S HOUSE

Tenby

Location of the Property



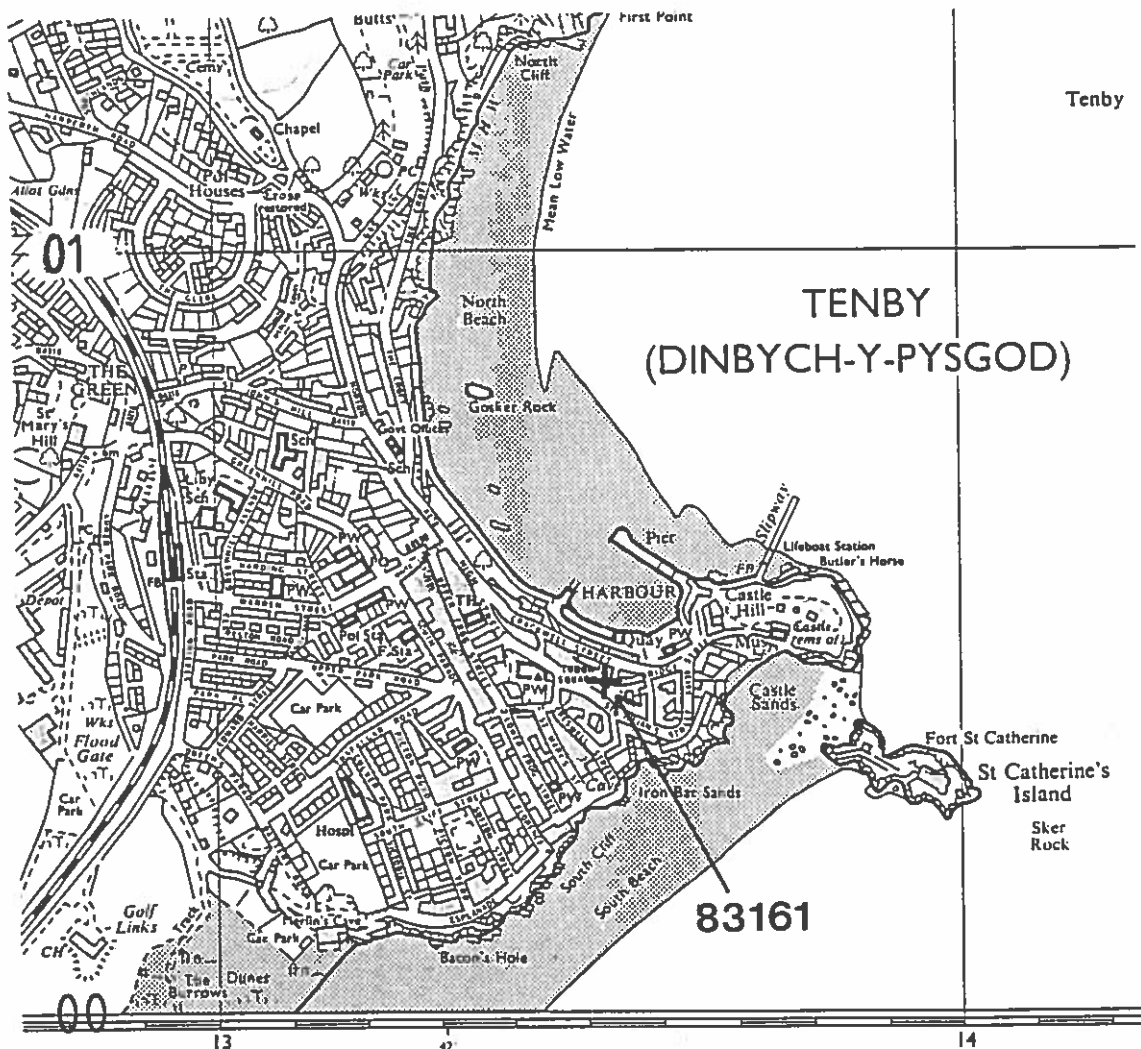
From sheet 158 1:50 000 Second Series

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TUDOR MERCHANT'S HOUSE

SMR No 83161



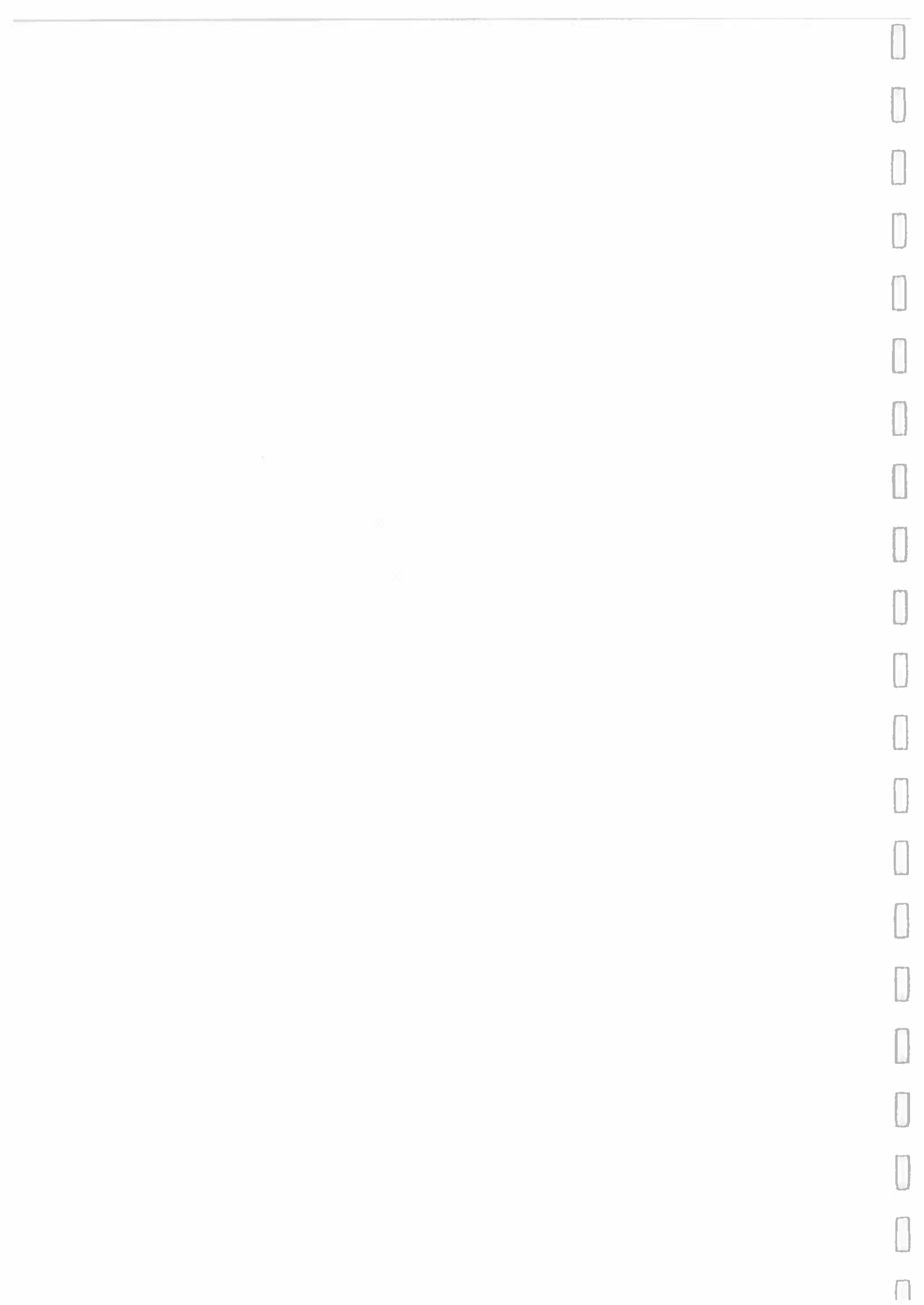
O.S. Map (1:10 000): SN 10 SW (1:500 scale plan - Appendix F)

Key:

- + sites
- linear features
- /// areas
- property boundary

The National Trust Archaeological Survey Sites and Monuments Record
South Wales 80,000 - 89,999

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5 Site Inventory

83161

National Importance

Bridge Street/Quay Hill, Tenby:

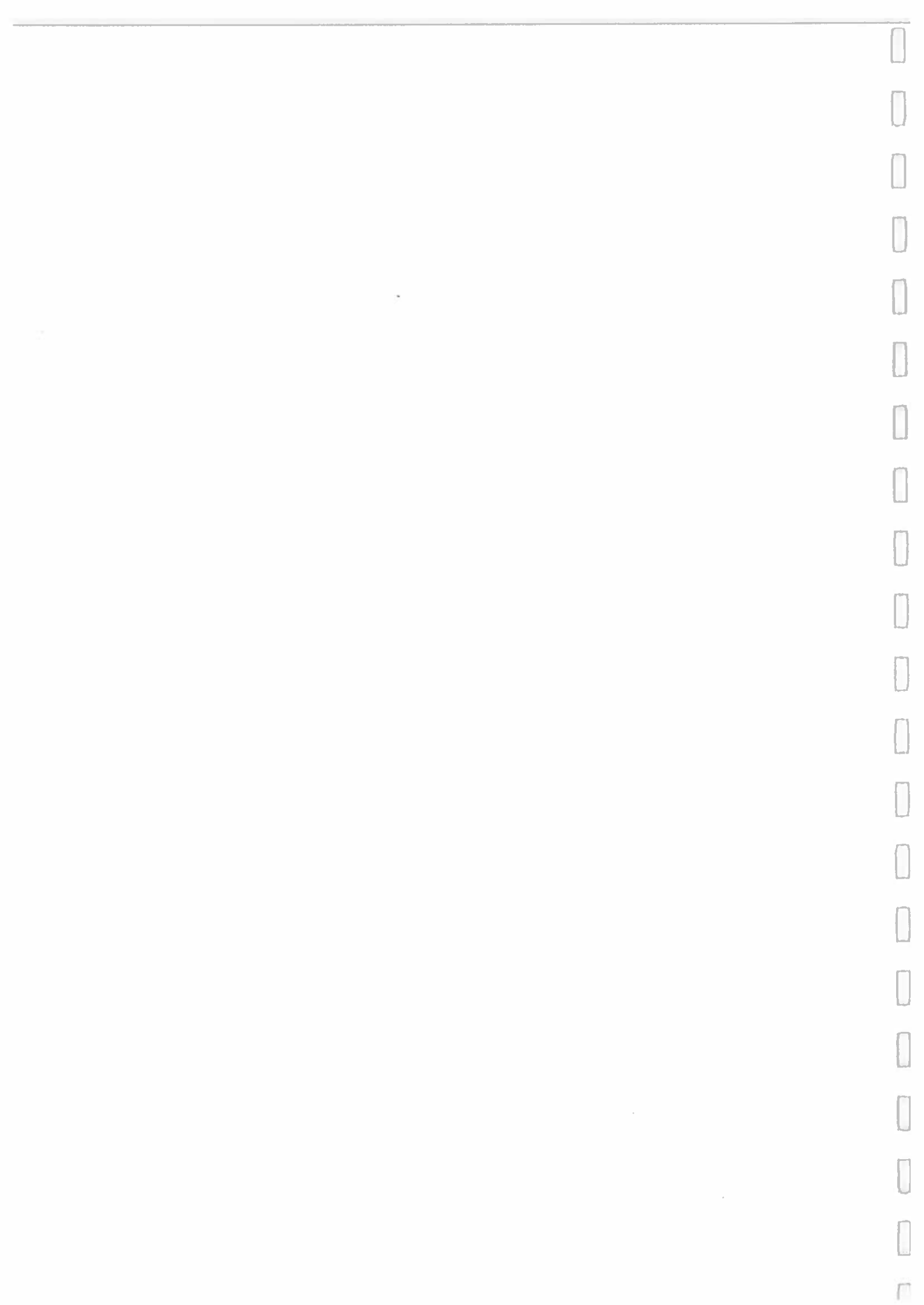
Tudor Merchant's House or The Old House

SN 1358 0040

Description: A substantial stone built house, probably dating from the mid - late 16th century though perhaps earlier. It is built in three stories with pitched roof set gable end fronting onto the street. Basically it consists of three large rooms, one on each floor. Each has its own fireplace and separate chimney. The ground floor is partitioned into two rooms and on this internal partition is the remains of a decorative design painted on plaster. The fireplace on the ground floor is the more notable and the largest. It projects to the rear (NW) of the house forming an inglenook about 1.75m x 2.8m and has a substantial stack with a square shaft. The fireplace on the first floor is set in the NE side and its stack like that on the second floor appears to be slightly jettied out from the walls. It continues up as a tall round stack. The second floor fireplace is at the front (SE) of the house and is jettied out along with a double window with pointed arch to one side. One or the other is an addition or alteration to the structure. The jetting is supported on five corbels and gives the house a certain character apparently indigenous to the town. Similar houses of much the same date were demolished prior to about 1830 (see section 6 and Appendix D). The stack itself is square.

The ground floor is poorly lit by a window at the front set in an opening which has been altered at some time and one at the back to the left of the fireplace. The first floor has the largest, a three light window in the NE side, a three light window at the back with round top arches over, both corbelled out and one other window at the front. The second floor has a two light window with pointed arches set beside the fireplace at the front, two smaller windows in the NE side and another small window at the back. A latrine turret serves all three floors, and juts out from the building at the N corner. It is lit by a small opening on first floor. All the window frames are modern replacements and there are no original mullions. The roof is supported on four collar beam trusses resting on large corbels. These are visible from the second floor room which is now open to the roof. The roof is now slated but it has been suggested that the gables suggest the roof may formerly have been thatched (Thomas, 324).

There are several blocked doorways. One on the ground floor N side may have been the original entrance from outside to this room, a further blocked door near the present staircase at the W communicated with the building to the S. On the first floor a blocked door with pointed arch may have provided the main



access to the first floor 'hall' via a flight of external stone steps, and a blocked door above the present staircase and above the blocked door on the ground floor also communicated with the building to the S. Dating the house is not easy given that it has undergone many modifications even if the basic shell appears to be little altered. The roof trusses, which presumably are original, are of a type which have no local parallels though one similar example surviving in Somerset is thought to be 14th century (A. Parkinson, pers. comm). The few pointed arches used in the house are not true two centred 'gothic' arches neither do they quite resemble the later flattened 'Tudor' arch, a type encountered in vernacular gentry houses in late Tudor times. However, as already noted the stone window mouldings are almost certainly all replacements and the rear window on the first floor has rounded arches (see Appendix E). Old photographs show the upper front windows to have round-top arches. Barnwell's illustrations (Appendix E) show 'true' gothic style lancet windows at the front and round top arches at the rear. Various restoration programmes would seem to have compromised on the final shape.

Dimensions overall - plan 10.6m (12.2m inc stack) x 6.7m (8.8m inc latrine turret) height 10.5m to top of gable. Average dimensions within each floor space, about 8.8m x 5.5m., 25m above O.D.

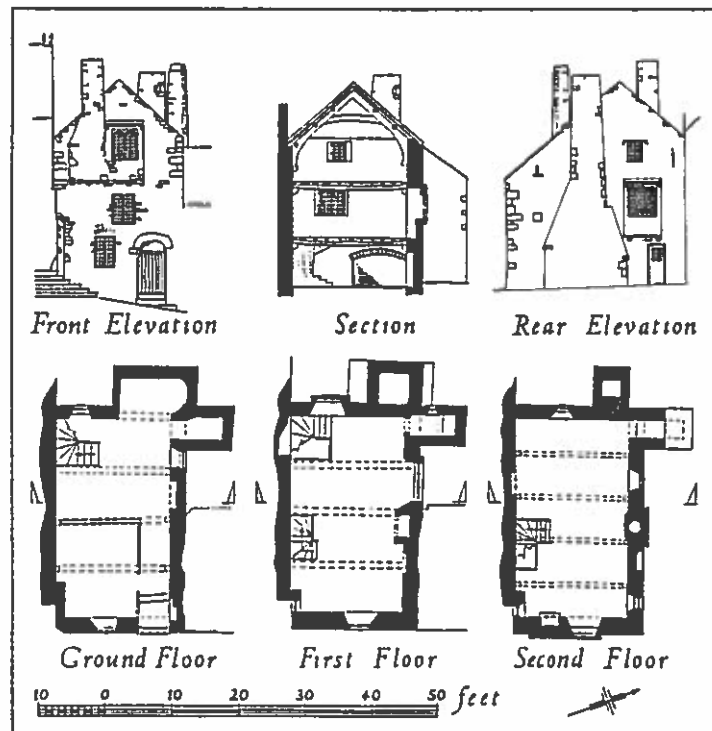


Fig. 4. The Old House, Quay Hill, Tenby
(Based on plans kindly provided by the National Trust)

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Condition and Management Recommendations: The house is currently being redecorated and refitted and is in good stable condition. It is not an archaeological site in the accepted sense and neither is it in any way threatened - quite the opposite in fact, though every care should be taken not to destroy features during restoration. It is taken as read that the structure will be maintained. It has a rather complicated history and its various stages of use have not been fully worked out. No good structural analysis has been undertaken and this makes interpretation for the general public difficult. The present writer thinks it unwise to attempt too simple or glib an interpretation of the house for any booklet or leaflet that might be produced. Also given the uncertainty over the original date of the building, care should be taken not to imply a date from the current refitting earlier than about the mid 16th century. Historical records point to the town having something of a period of prosperity during the late 16th century when trading activity would be at a peak. This time would seem most appropriate for any recreated interiors. Visited 8.12.88.



6 History

The Old House in Quay Hill, Tenby which has come to be known as the Tudor Merchants House was once one of several broadly contemporaneous dwellings in the town. Few if any have survived though some still exist well hidden by later façades. Complete examples of these survived until the early 19th century and some are recorded and illustrated in Charles Norris's book of 1812. He noted their unique character: "The habitable Buildings which are strictly Flemish, however much they may differ from each other, have hardly any thing in common with those of equal age elsewhere. The huge disproportionate Chimneys, it has been observed were so substantially erected, as frequently to outlive every other part" (Norris, 73). The Old house is the only more or less complete survivor of its type. The rest of the domestic architecture of Tenby from the late medieval period was apparently either demolished or was substantially altered during the rebuilding of Tenby as a fashionable resort in the 19th century.

Barnwell writing in 1867 recorded the house in some detail. He noted that it was then as now the only more or less complete survivor of its type: "There is, however, remaining one house, the exterior of which is tolerably perfect; and although it is not of any considerable antiquity, yet as being the last entire remnant of Tenby, of the fifteenth or sixteenth century, deserves notice". At that time the ground floor room is described as "so completely gutted that the original arrangements are not easily ascertainable, except that a large hall ran through the depth of the building, having at its extremity, but not in the centre, a large fireplace surmounted by a huge chimney" (Barnwell, 363). The wood and plaster partition with its revealed painted decoration must have been in position by the mid 19th century but was not commented on by Barnwell which rather conflicts with the statement that the ground floor room was 'gutted'. However most of the other features remaining today were noted by Barnwell. Though he failed to identify the latrine turret for what it was. He quite correctly rubbished the Flemish connection, a link made almost entirely due to the survival of many round chimneys in an area where Flemish people had lived - even though these also exist in purely Welsh parts of the county (Allen, 1). The so called 'Flemish' style is almost certainly a notion invented by Norris (see above). The house is built using elements from a local South Pembrokeshire indigenous style. Its features, though no doubt influenced by external factors show no similarities to the building style of Flanders, and are thought more likely to derive from castle building techniques adapted to domestic structures (Howells, 423).



The structure would seem to be a first floor hall house, a type built by wealthy merchants and traders at a time when the style had gone out of fashion with the upper classes (Murphy, 4). It is evident from only a cursory inspection of the structure that it has undergone a number of modifications throughout its history. The building on the S side which is thought to be equally old has at some stage been incorporated into it. This is shown by blocked doorways on the ground floor and first floor. The blocked opening on the first floor N side may have been the original entrance, by way of an external flight of steps (Murphy, 3 - 4) which was a common feature of such houses and noted by both Barnwell and Norris. The ground floor room was probably entered by a door also in the N side, behind or beneath these steps. The following is a summary possible building sequence for the structure:

a. Three story building with separate ground floor serving as kitchen, warehouse and/or shop, entered by door on N side. This room divided by wooden partition into two compartments. A first floor 'hall' entered via the pointed arch doorway on N side by way of a flight of stone steps. Access to second floor by means of ladder or simple wooden stair. Probably built around 1550.

b. Building on the N side led to change of layout with inclusion of existing building on S side. Access from ground floor to rest of house perhaps by means of staircase within building to S. Possible later conversion of structure, including parts of the building to the S., into tenements.

c. Reversion of structure to vertical layout as at present with doorways to S building blocked and staircase inserted from ground to first floor (not the present stair which is a late replacement). Ground floor wooden partition replaced by present wood and plaster partition, creating a front 'parlour' and 'hall' between back room with fireplace and street door in perhaps late 18th - early 19th century - date reinforced by pottery remains (Murphy, 8).

A history of the building itself cannot really be separated out from the fortunes of the town. It was probably built during a relatively short lived period of prosperity in the mid - late 16th century. An earlier date is possible but difficult to prove. A mid to late 15th century date was thought highly likely. This date, however would coincide with what has been described as "...a severe decline in Tenby's prosperity (which) took place (from) about the middle of the fifteenth century..." (Walker, 313).

Tenby was probably a Welsh settlement before the Norman invasion. Its name evidently derives from Dinbych, meaning "little fortress". The *galanas* of the *maer* or bailiff of Dinbych is referred to in the laws associated with Hywel Dda of the 10th century. Tenby Castle was built by the Earls of



Pembroke probably as a subsidiary fortress and not developed to the same degree as Pembroke. Neither the castle nor the Town defences are that strong and have several basic weaknesses. What survives of the Town walls are from the 13th century. These walls were substantially reinforced when Jasper Tudor, Earl of Pembroke conveyed the defences to the mayor, burgesses etc., empowering them to make the walls 6 feet thick and to provide a continuous wall walk...undertaking to bear half the cost himself (Walker, 295) Tenby grew slowly during the middle ages but was never very large, a fact noted upon by Leland. The detailed survey of burgages in 1585 showed that there were 256 burgages of which 56 were extra-mural (Walker, 311). In 1548 the chantry commissioners reported that the town had 900 'houceling people'; and in 1565 the town was estimated to contain 200 households, compared with 100 in Pembroke and 328 in Carmarthen (Walker, 313)

Prosperity in the town depended very much on trade, helped largely by means of the town's good harbour, and its ships (Walker, 313). Leland found it: "very welthe by marchaundyce" (Leland, 61 - quoted in Walker, 313). Trade however was increasingly dependant on Bristol and direct continental contacts were in decline in the 16th century. Prospects by the 1580's were not too bad: "By the last decades of Elizabeth's reign Tenby was sending out more and larger ships... and exploiting a profitable new export, oysters (Walker, 318). It is quite likely that the house owes much of its present character to this period, though it could have been built earlier as noted above. Only a more detailed analysis of the structure may demonstrate this (see section 7). Every period likes to think its surviving structures are older than they actually are. The Tudor Merchant's House is no exception. Archaeological Dating of the house is not straightforward but no pottery earlier than that of the late 16th century has been found in the lowest floor deposits (Murphy, 8).



7 Recommendations for further research and survey

Not every source was checked for this report, either because of lack of time or inaccessibility. However, extensive research was done for the town of Tenby by Arthur Leonard Leach. Much of this was published in 'Leaves from a Notebook' in the Tenby and County News between 1930 and 1931, with further articles in 1937. Much if not all of his material is kept at Tenby Museum and was extensively studied by R. Walker for his contribution to "Boroughs of Medieval Wales". Obviously much of Leach's work is concerned with aspects of the town other than the Tudor Merchant's House. A survey of 1585 is mentioned, this has not been referred to save indirectly, neither has Cooling's map of the town made in 1811, and there are no doubt other sources that the present writer has totally failed to uncover. In some ways all this is incidental to the task in hand which is, for the archaeologist at least, to reveal the history of the structure from a study of its fabric.

Some work has been done by the Dyfed Archaeological Trust on the floor layers of the house. An attempt was also made at the same time at a possible interpretation of the phases of use of the building as a whole, which given the lack of other good interpretations, this report has endorsed. What ought now to be done is a measured survey of the standing structure and its features. Unfortunately work has begun on redecoration of the house and an opportunity has been lost, for the time being, to record every nuance of the various modifications that have taken place. The Vernacular Building Surveyors hope to produce a survey with sections early in 1989. This should go some way to rectifying the present situation.

Additional Information (6.1.89)

Since this report was written some additional information has come to hand which might have influenced what has been stated here. An unpublished environmental report on the excavated contents of the cess pit has revealed important information on diet and on parasitical infestation. Also, a report has been published recently on the pottery from the floor layers of the house - the result of the 1984 excavation. Some of this pottery is earlier than implied by the present writer in section 6 of this report which was based on an early draft of the now published report. (K. Murphy & Cathy O'Mahoney, 1985. 'Pottery from the Tudor Merchant's House, Tenby', *Medieval & Late Pottery in Wales*, 8.). A further useful source has also been located, this is: E.A. Lewis (ed.) *Welsh Port Books 1550 - 1603* (Cymmrodorion Record Series, 12 (1927)). Both the environmental report and the pottery report would provide very useful material for publicity purposes and these and all other relevant material should be consulted prior to the production of leaflets and other information for the public..

8 Bibliography

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Boys Smith, J., 1855. *An Historical Sketch of the Town of Tenby*. Tenby.

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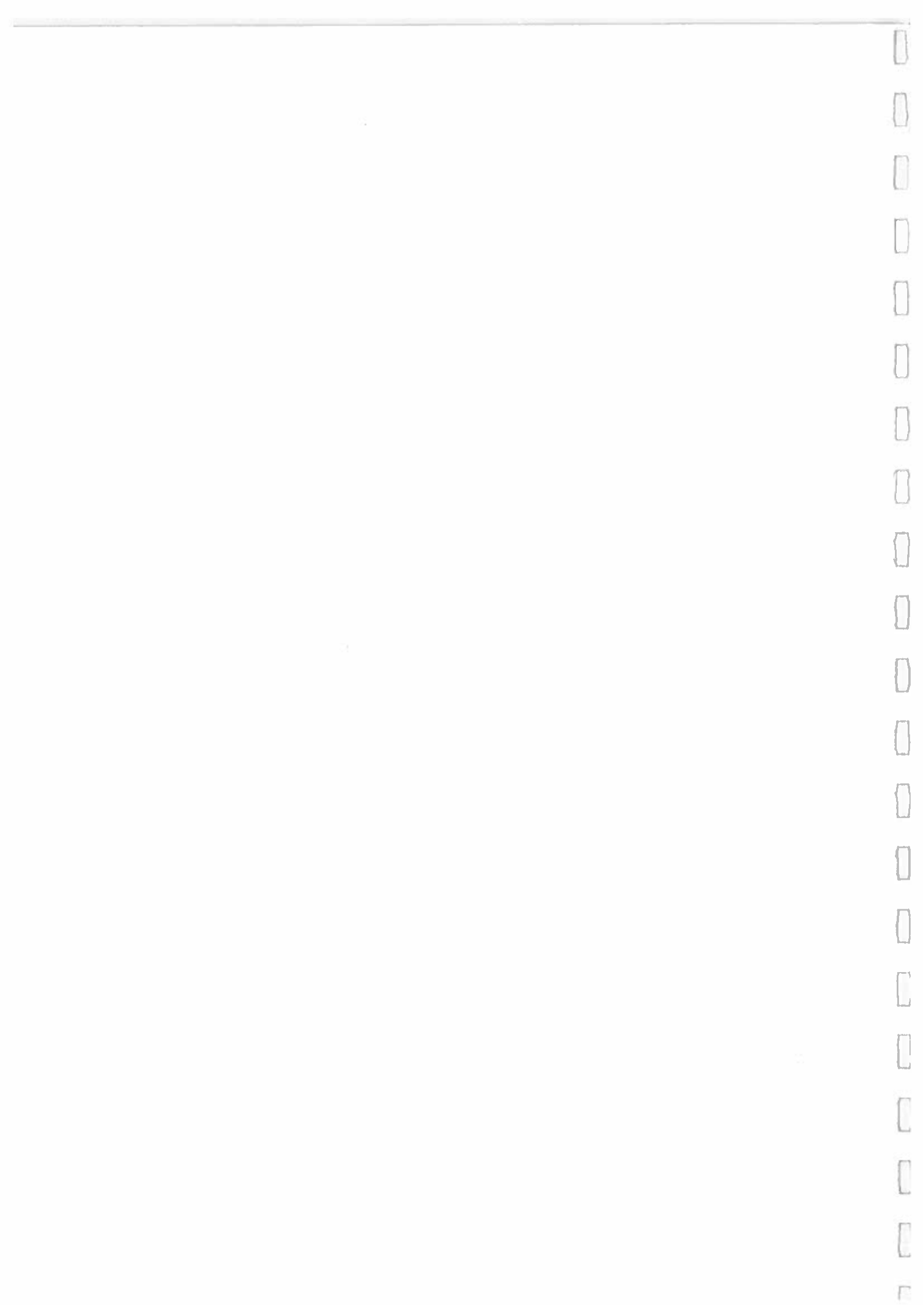
Rayner Wood, A.C., 1938. 'Tenby Report', *Arch. Camb.*, XCIII. 278 - 306

Romilly Allen, J., 1902. 'Old Farm-Houses with Round Chimneys near St. David's', *Arch. Camb.*, II, part I, 1- 24.

Soulsby, Ian, 1983. *The Towns of Medieval Wales*. Chichester.

Thomas, W. Gwyn, 1962. 'Summer Meeting at Tenby', *The Archaeological Journal*, CXIX, 308 - 318.

Walker, R.F., 1978. 'Tenby' in R.A. Griffiths (ed): *Boroughs of Medieval Wales*, 288 - 320.



Appendix A

Information on Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Listed Buildings and Other Sites not Protected by Statute.

Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM's)

A Scheduled Ancient Monument is one designated by statute as a site of national importance, and is protected by current ancient monuments legislation:

The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, as amended by the National Heritage 1983.

By law, any proposed work affecting such sites requires Scheduled Ancient Monument Consent from CADW in Wales.

The Trust's archaeological advisers are available to help on any matters relating to Scheduled Monuments, and would appreciate notification of any such works to keep their records up to date.

Non Scheduled sites

Work affecting non-scheduled sites, unprotected by statute, should be referred, where appropriate, to the Trust's archaeological staff.

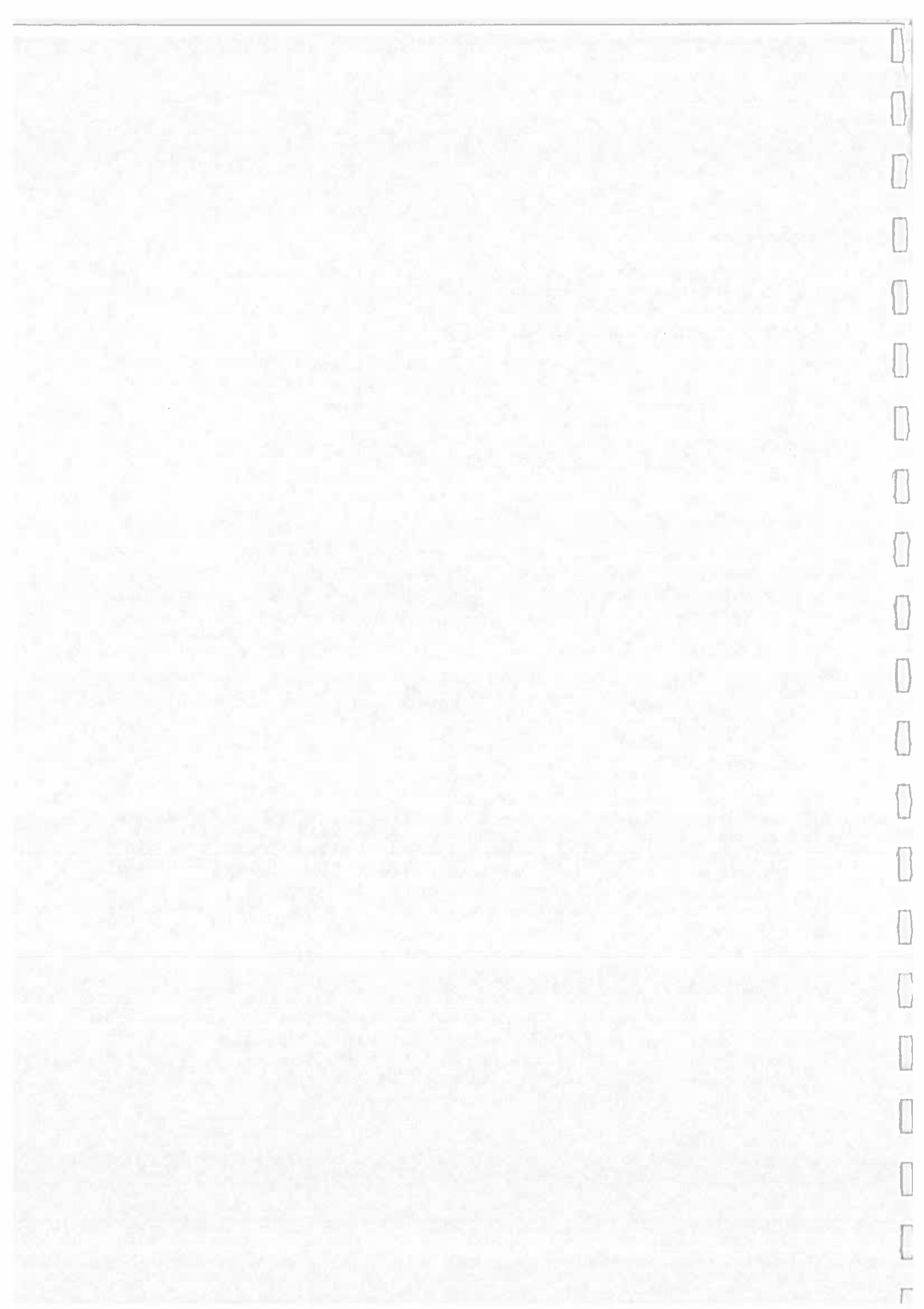
Metal Detectors

(a) Scheduled Ancient Monuments

It is an offence for anyone to use a metal detector on a Scheduled Ancient Monument without the written consent of CADW in Wales. A further more serious offence is to remove, without permission, an object found by a metal detector on a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Damage caused in removing a 'find' may constitute a third offence. All such cases should be reported to the police.

(b) Non-scheduled sites

It is the Trust's policy that metal detectors should not be used without permission on its properties. Digging as a result of using a metal detector is a contravention of the Trust's byelaws under Section 2 (a).



Listed Buildings.

The Secretary of State for the Environment is required to compile lists of buildings of special architectural or historic interest, for the guidance of local planning authorities in the exercise of their own planning functions under the:

The Town and Country Planning Act 1971.

There are three grades of listed building:

Grade I A building of exceptional interest (ca 1% of the total)

Grade II* Important buildings (ca 4% of the total)

Grade II Other buildings of special interest.

Listed building consent is needed by anyone who wants to demolish, extend or alter a listed building in any way that affects its character.

Consent must usually be obtained from the local planning department of the county, but in Wales this is obtained from CADW.

CADW
Brunel House
2 Fitzalan Road
Cardiff
CF2 1UY

Telephone (0222) 465511

NB

The Tudor Merchant's House, Tenby is a Grade II* listed building.

Appendix B

Extract from "Listed Buildings in Tenby, Pembrokeshire"
(National Monument Record).

1.
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QUAY HILL
West side

The Tudor Merchant's
House

5/140 19.3.51
SM 1300 GV

II*

2.
C15 to early C16. Rubble. The house was restored by the National Trust in consultation with former HM Office of Works having been given to the National Trust in 1937 by the Corporation of Tenby. 3-storey house with narrow gabled elevation to Quay Hill and to rear court. Quay Hill elevation with a pair of narrow lights set in a panel on 2nd floor with a chimney stack with square shaft to left hand, both window and stack projecting from wall face and supported by corbels. Doorway with curved head on ground floor to right hand. Large chimney breast against rear gable facing west. North-west latrine-turret. Collar-beam truss roof. See "The Archaeological Journal" Vol CXIX, p 324, "The Old House," by W C Thomas. Scheduled Ancient Monument.

No 1 Quay Hill, the Tudor Merchant's House, Plantagenet House and the building occupied by the Caldey Abbey Shop form a group with the Lifeboat Tavern in St Julian's Street, with the Pam-Pam Restaurant in Tudor Square and with the following buildings in Bridge Street: nos 1 to 4 (consec) Bridge Street, nos 1, 1A and 2 Harbour View, building formerly occupied by the artist Charles Norris, Sparta House Flats and Pier Flats.

This group includes some of the oldest buildings in Tenby apart from the Church of St Mary in Liberty.

Appendix C

Property outline and methods of survey

"An example of a merchant's house of the late fifteenth century, with a fine Flemish chimney. Remains of early wall paintings in fresco on three interior walls. Given in 1937 by the Corporation of Tenby. A small strip of land added in 1938" (Properties of the National Trust).

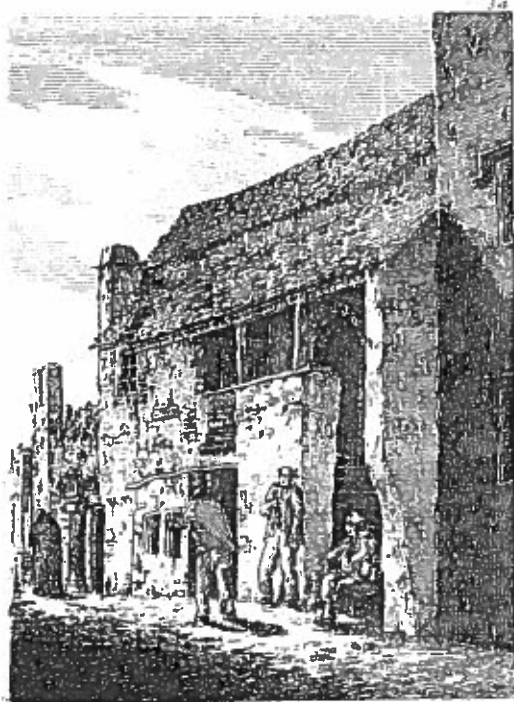
The property consists of the three story house and a small narrow yard at the rear (see Appendix F). A certain amount of research has been done since the brief description above was written, rendering it now somewhat innacurate.

The house is well known and was not 'discovered' during fieldwork. Archival research produced a fair amount of material, some, but not all had been used by previous writers. Some potentially useful material was not seen except as summarised by other writers. This preliminary work was followed up with a visit, and a meeting was arranged with the custodian and the Vernacular Building Surveyors on site. The account of the structure in this report is a summary one pending a full survey and analysis which has been recommended.

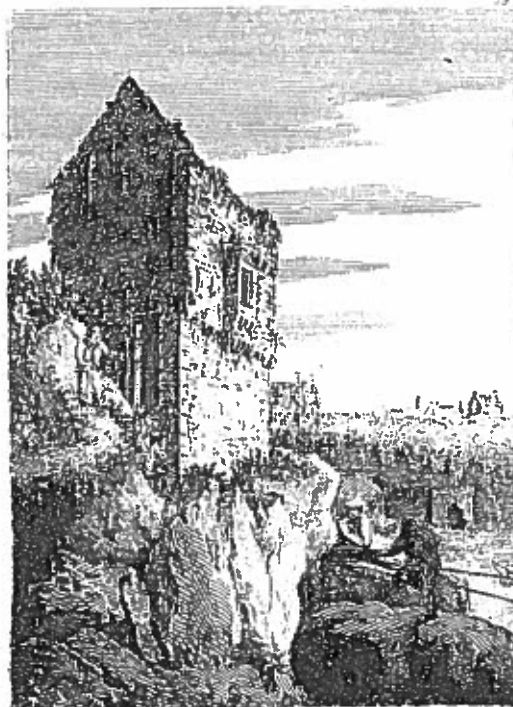


Appendix D

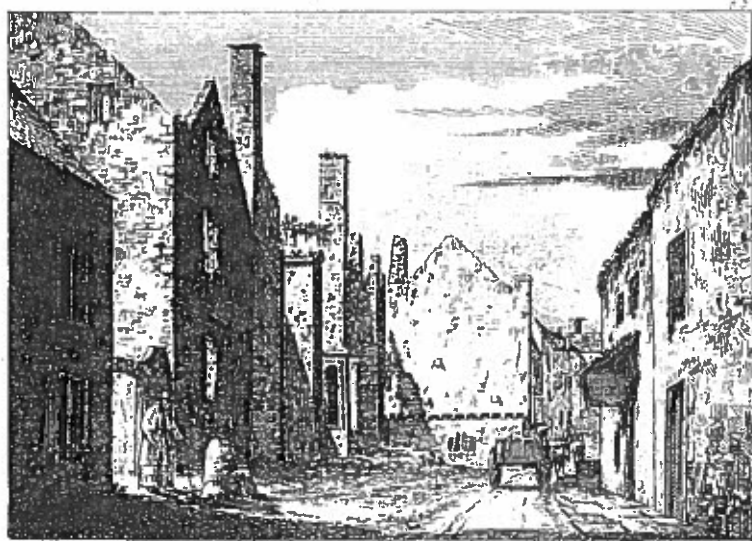
Reduced copies of four of the houses illustrated in Charles Norris's "Etchings Of Tenby".



Ancient Cottage adjoining Walter's house
Charles Norris del. 1851



Ancient Building on the Shore
Charles Norris del. 1851



Walter's House from the East
Charles Norris del. 1851

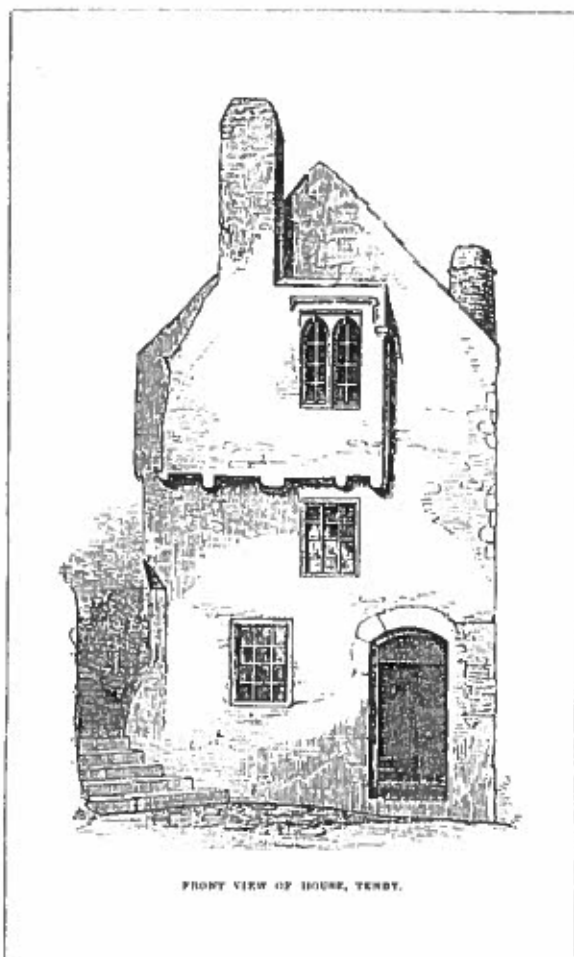


Ancient Cottage near the Market Place
Charles Norris del. 1851

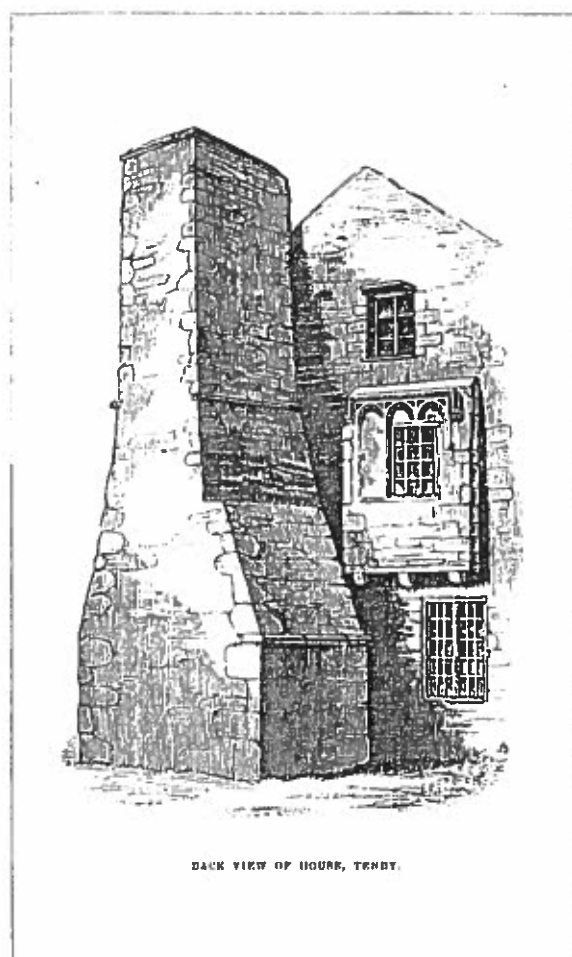


Appendix E

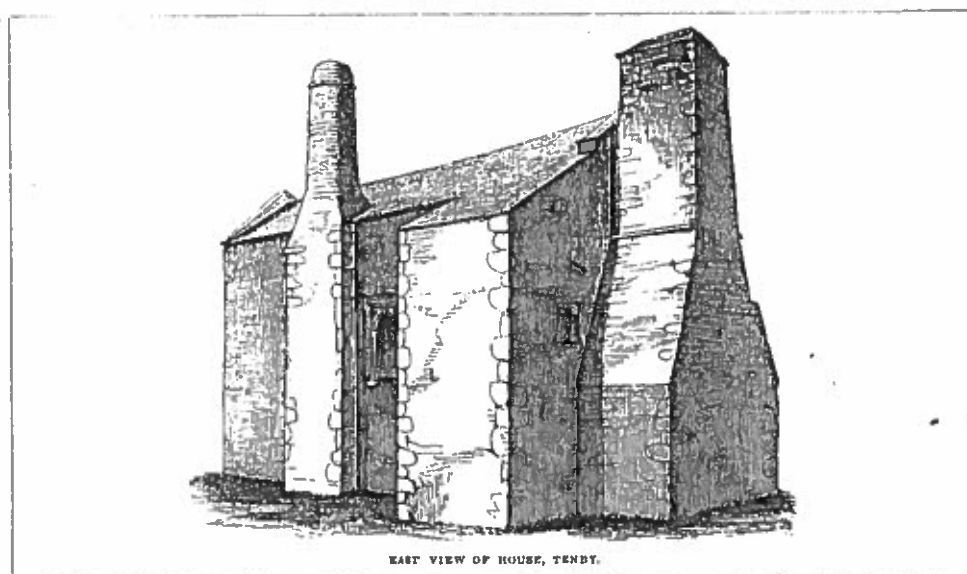
The Tudor Merchant's House as illustrated in Barnwell's article in *Archaeologia Cambrensis* (1867)



ARCH. CAMB. VOL. XIII.



ARCH. CAMB. VOL. XIII.



ARCH. CAMB. VOL. XIII.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Appendix F

The Tudor Merchant's House as shown on the 1:500 scale Town Plan (ca 1890).

