

CAMBRIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECTS

GELLI-GRON, TREGARON

Archaeological Watching Brief

By Richard S Jones, MA



**Cambrian
Archaeological
Projects Ltd**

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 The site of Gelli-Gron (*Fig 1*) lies in the heart of the historic town of Tregaron, within an area which is known to have been at the core of Medieval settlement. The *origins* of the town are believed to date back to at least the early medieval period, Tregaron possibly being the burial place of Caron, a 3rd century Welsh ruler.
- 1.2 The buildings and gardens in the central core of the town have been previously identified as having high archaeological potential, particularly in and around the area of the Tregaron Market Square, which inevitably has Medieval and Post-Medieval settlement remains which may relate to the initial occupation and development of the town over a fairly long period of time.
- 1.3 Following submission for conservation area consent to the National Assembly for Wales for the demolition of the property of Gelli-Gron (SN 68105968), The Square, Tregaron, Ceredigion, consent was granted subject to an archaeological condition. In the main the planning proposal was for the purpose of a road widening scheme, as Gelli-Gron is situated at a point where the Abergwesyn road narrows to a mere four metres, making vehicle passing and access very awkward and unsafe, particularly with reference to large loaded vehicles, such as lorries which have in the past caused considerable problems and damage to properties close by, including that of Gelli-Gron..
- 1.4 The 'Threatened Buildings Section' of the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales identified the need to record the standing structure prior to demolition. The RCAHMW themselves performed this initial recording (*RCAHMW Report. G. A. WARD 2000. A copy of the illustrations is included in this work*).
- 1.5 Accordingly, the Curatorial Section of Archaeoleg Cambria Archaeology (*hence forth ACA*), acting in their capacity as archaeological advisors to the local planning authority of Ceredigion County Council, requested that the works be also monitored as an archaeological Watching Brief, during demolition and during the construction of a landscaped area. This was to be carried out so as to compliment and amend the recording of the standing building as performed by the RCAHMW, by noting any further hidden features such as those behind and within the wall fabric as well as other potentially archaeologically significant features. This done, a further assessment of the potential for the survival of important buried archaeological remains within the area of the proposed works was also required.
- 1.6 The specifications and design for the Watching Brief were carried out in response to the requirements and guidelines set out in the design brief (dated 7/01/00) prepared by Louise Austin, Development Control Officer for the ACA – Heritage Management Section, otherwise known as the Dyfed Archaeological Trust. The Archaeological Watching Brief was carried out by Richard S Jones of Cambrian Archaeological Projects Ltd. The work was performed as part of an Environmental Improvement Scheme, as directed by the Highways, Property and Works Department of Ceredigion County Council. The agent or contractor performing the demolition and landscaping was Howell Jones Civil Engineering.

Summary of Watching Brief requirements:

- Watching brief and recording during demolition of the building.
- Assessment and recording of landscaping levels.
- Watching brief during further ground works and digging foundations of wall.
- Production of an illustrated report.

2 Nature of the development (*see Figs 2 & 3*)

- 2.1 The planning proposal included the demolition of the eastern part of the building block with the retention of the western end, the Talbot Hotel's 'bottle store'. Once demolished a foundation trench approx. 40cm deep by 1 metre wide was to be dug for the construction of a wall along the new wider

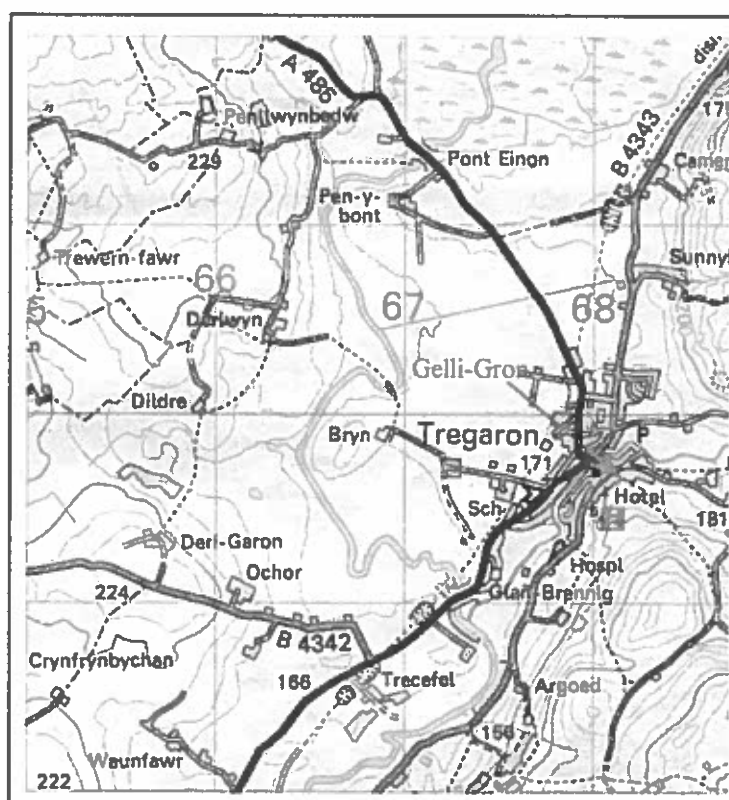


Fig 1 Location of Gelli-Gron, Tregaron (1:50000)

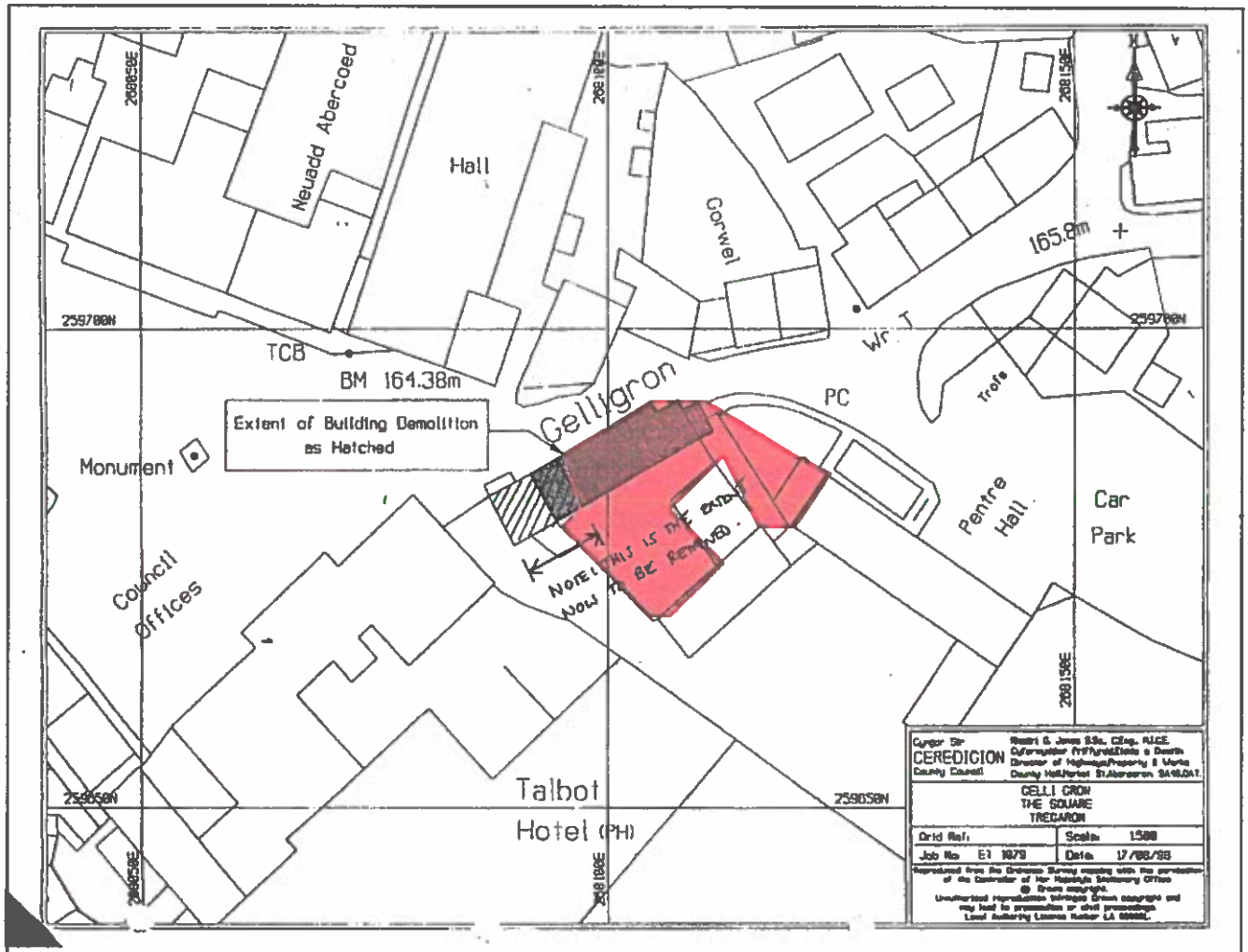


Fig 2 Map supplied by Ceredigion County Council showing building for demolition and area for development of Gelli Gron and garden.

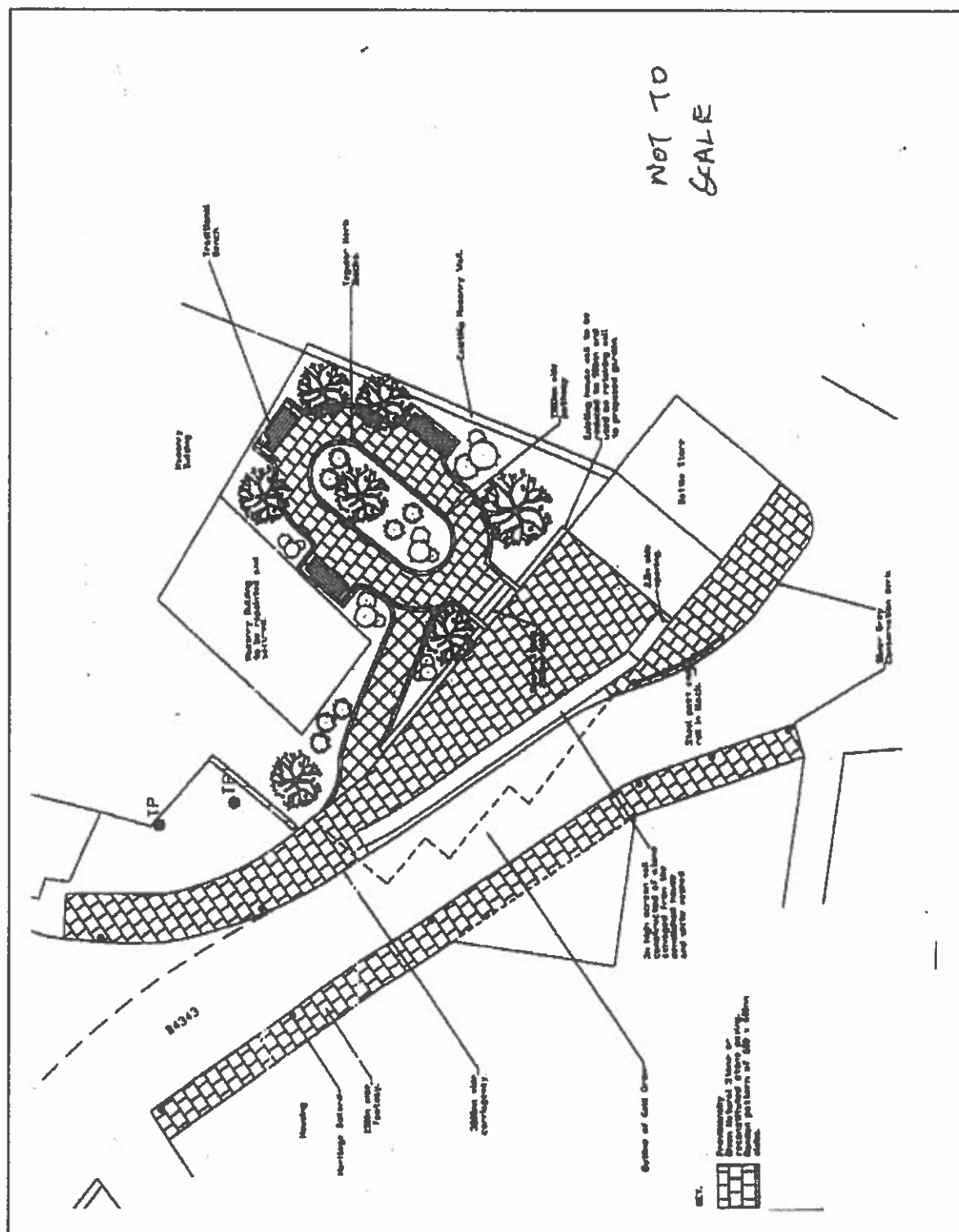


Fig 3. Architects plan showing development proposal of landscaped area once Gelli-Gron is demolished.
Note position of new boundary wall (*Plan supplied by Ceredigion County Council*)

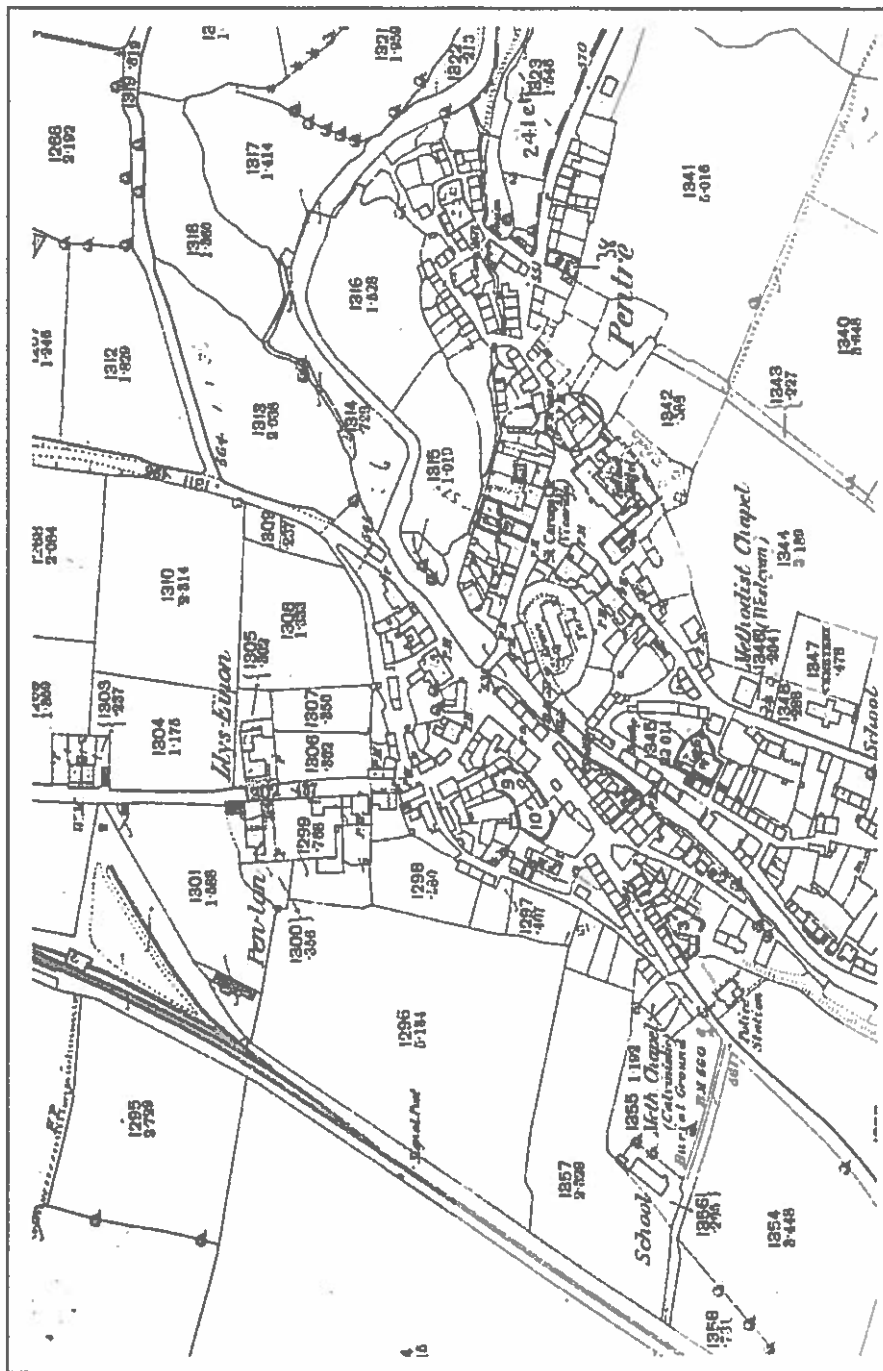


Fig 4 OS 1st edition map 1889 showing Gelli-Gron in relation to Tregaron and Corn Mill.

frontage of the area approx. 3 metres high. Once this wall was in place low level landscaping was to be performed on the remainder of the plot. (see Fig 3).

3 Site Location (See Figs 1 & 4)

- 3.1 The building of Gelli-Gron (SN 68105968), formerly known as 'The Ivy Bush Hotel' or 'Llwyn Iorwg' was prominently situated at the eastern edge of Tregaron Square, at the edge of the Abergwesyn Road exit. Prior to demolition, as already mentioned, the point at which Gelli-Gron and the Abergwesyn road meet, narrowed to a mere 4 metres in width. Immediately to the south-west is the 'Talbot Hotel', separated from the buildings of Gelli-Gron only by a track that leads to a wide parking area at the back of the 'Talbot'. This track continues to the east into a farm complex. This area is known on earlier Ordnance Survey maps as 'Pentre', Hamlet or Village.
- 3.2 Directly adjacent Gelli-Gron, to the north are the stone built houses in the area known as 'Gorwel' and a village hall. To the east the Abergwesyn road, otherwise the Old Drover's Road, continues north-easterly passing by the Pentre Hall and Public car park with public toilets. These are situated immediately south and east of Gelli-Gron. To the west by only 400 metres is the church of St. Caron situated atop its Norman mound.

4 Topography & Geology

- 4.1 The house of Gelli-Gron was situated approx. 170 metres above sea level at the edge of the flat market square of Tregaron. An early bench mark is marked on the house opposite, 540.6 ft, as depicted on the OS 1st edition map of 1889 (Fig 4). At the back of the house was a small approx. 1m wide walkway stretching the length of the house. Approx. 1.50m above this walk-way is the raised garden. From here the ground level gently slopes upwards to the south-east until it reaches the extent of the garden bounded by a garden wall and farm outbuildings. The ground here was predominantly compact alluvial gravel with top soil or rich garden soil overburden.
- 4.2 To the north-east, after passing Gelli-Gron by 4-500 metres, the Abergwesyn Road rises gently and then continues to the east whereupon it follows the water course of the Afon Breninig, which is fed by the Afon Berwyn, or the 'Foaming River' from the east, and the Afon Groes to the north-east. The Berwyn is fed from the lake by the same name some 7 km to the east. The Afon Groes emerges from 'Carn-Gron', the mountain that rises from within the moorland landscape known as Rhos Gelli-Gron, some 5-6 km from Tregaron. Further north by about 5-6 Km is Tregaron Bog or 'Cors Caron'.
- 4.3 It is along the Afon Breninig that the old Tregaron Corn Mill was situated, fed by a sluice channel from the Breninig. The mill was situated only approx. 200 metres to the north-east from Gelli-Gron or the earlier 'Ivy Bush Hotel' (see Fig 3). Geologically the area is predominantly of Carboniferous limestone.

5 Site Description (see Fig 5)

The Main Gelli-Gron Complex

- 5.1 Essentially the building was a late 18th century/early 19th century 2-storey, stone built structure, with two end chimneys. The main part of the house/inn was divided into two units, the Parlour and Kitchen with central-entry-stair-passage plan.
- 5.2 To the east of the main building was added a later extension with a further chimney. This building abutted the earlier main building and was accessed through a doorway in the east wall. This extension was later extended further by the addition of a small lean to building, stone built with a tiled roof and back door to the south that gave access to the garden and outbuildings to the rear. The west end of the building was abutted by another stone building, presently used by the Talbot Hotel as a bottle store. This building was formerly the stable and cart-house.

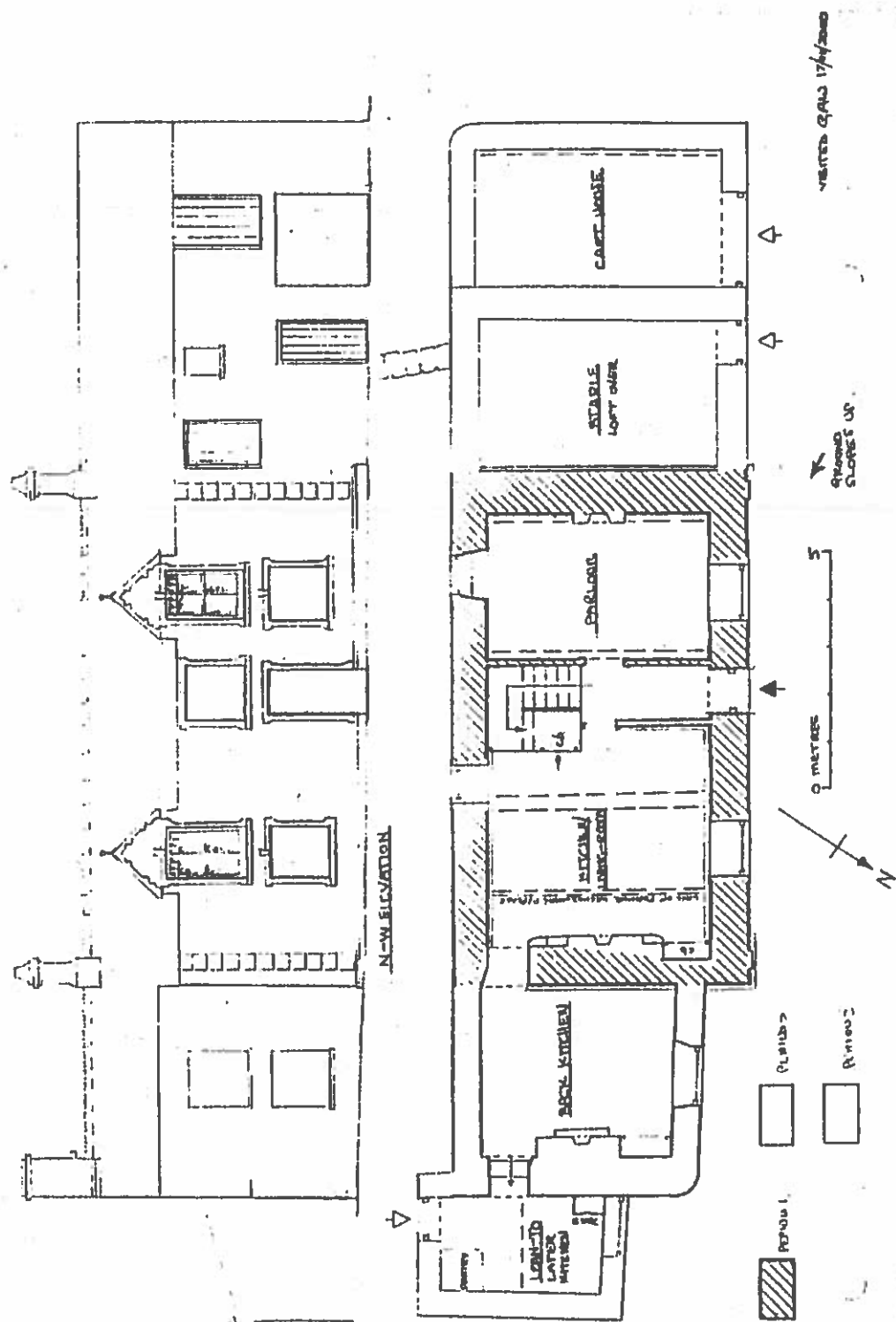


Fig 5. Elevation and ground plan of Gelli-Gron as recorded by RCAHMW survey (WARD 2000)



Fig 6. The Ivy Bush Hotel, with Rees Morgan landlord in carriage in background.
Photo c. 1890-1900

- 5.3 The back of the house or Inn was accessed from the east, between an outbuilding or stable block, part of Pentre Hall. Before demolition and landscape clearance the garden area was covered in dense vegetation.. The back wall of Gelli-Gron was also covered extensively in Ivy from floor to roof. Along the edge of the back wall ran a narrow walk way with a retaining wall some 1-1.5 metres high. This walk way finished abruptly at the point of the rear wall of the bottle store. The lime-washed back wall of the house was punctuated by two windows, one into the kitchen, the other into the parlour. Along the west end of Gelli-Gron, at the junction of the bottle store, runs a wall that separates the garden from the Talbot Hotel rear parking area. This wall is still present and stands approx. 1.5 metres high. At the far south end of the garden runs another farm building, whose back wall faces Gelli-Gron. At the time of the watching brief this building was in a state disrepair with much of the walls fabric collapsing at the far north end.
- 5.4 To elucidate further on the building itself the following extract is from the *RCAHMW Survey report* on Gelli-Gron (NPRN: 300275), written and surveyed by G. A. Ward 2000;

Exterior

The present building range has a rendered facade with the parlour & kitchen/living-room part defined by rusticated quoin strips. This part has raised surrounds and key-stone to main windows and door openings, with inscribed motif to key stones. The chimney stacks to parlour and kitchen /living-room are of yellow brick with orange bands and clay pots, while the back-kitchen chimney retains its original stonework. The roof is slated with scalloped ceramic ridge tiles, and there is a cement plinth to the main facade. The north corner of the back-kitchen is rounded to the height of passing carts.

The fenestration retains the original position of openings, but most frames are mid-late C20th replacements.

At first-floor two gabled-dormer sash-windows of early C20th have small coloured glass panes in part of the top sash.

A photograph of ca1900 shows a lime-washed facade, stone chimneys and the earlier sash framed fenestration with 6-light panes. There is an inn sign between first-floor windows to right of the main doorway, and there are stone steps to the doorway over the stable. These steps are shown the OS 25"map of 1899. The windows in the back-kitchen part have taller sashes indicating it is an addition.

Interior

The front doorway has an early-mid C20th door frame, which leads into the passage with re-built late C20th stair and doorways to parlour and kitchen/living-room. The parlour has a partition of lathe & plaster with an early C19th moulded surround to the doorway, a plaster ceiling and an early splayed window opening to the rear wall. The partition is set under a boxed ceiling-beam, with similar beam at the gable-end over a modernised fireplace.

The kitchen/living-room partition is boarded with modern doorway leading into a room with central transverse ceiling-beam and early-mid C20th brick fireplace with shelves and cupboard. An earlier fireplace of wickerwork construction is indicated by the position of a narrow beam set 1 metre from the present fireplace wall. This room has half-height tongue & groove boards to its walls with plaster walls above and a plaster-board ceiling, probably formerly open to the joists. The front window here and in the parlour have been widened with modern frames. A doorway to right of fireplace leads to a mid C19th addition (back-kitchen) with 1950s tiled fireplace, 9" cherry and black tile floor (set diagonally) and a plaster ceiling. There is a glazed and boarded cupboard to left of fireplace and doorway to right leading to an added C20th lean-to (later kitchen) with sink and pantry and back doorway.

At first-floor there are 2 lapped & pegged collar roof-trusses which support double side-purlins and a vertical ridge. The principles & collar are roughly squared, while other timbers are sawn square, all timbers being of pine. The ceilings are of plaster board, while the principles have been lime-washed. The slates under sides have been plastered between lathes and rafters. At each gable-end the sawn-off ? ends of timbers under the top purlins set into the wall may relate to former supports for wickerwork hoods.

From G.A. Ward 2000. RCAHMW Gelli-Gron Survey Report(NPRN: 300275).

- 5.5 With regard the Talbot bottle store or the earlier stable building abutting Gelli-gron, which was too be retained, at the time of the watching brief this building was being used for storage. The interior includes a hay loft and stores over head. The photo of c.1900 (*Fig 6*) shows the possibility of a chimney in the south rear wall of this building, although this appears to have been removed later by the addition of a later bottle store building. The stable and hay-loft building also has evidence for a blocked in doorway at the north-east end.

6 The Archaeological and Historical Background

- 6.1 The old market town of Tregaron finds itself within the parish of Caron which covered, according to the tithe records of 1839/42, an area of 39,138 acres. Prior to 1730 Tregaron had its own borough with accompanying council. The town was supposedly named after a 3rd century Welsh chief called Caron, who as legend has it is buried somewhere in the Tregaron region. The mountain landscape to the east of Tregaron is extensively covered in bronze age cairns of all forms.
- 6.2 The Church of St. Caron, only 400 metres to the north-west of Gelli-Gron sits atop a mound similar to that of the church at Llandewi-Brefi, the village some 5 km to the south. Both the churches at Llandewi-Brefi and that of St.Caron mark the monks route toward the now ruined remains of Strata Florida Abbey just outside the village of Pontrhydfendigaid some 7 km to the north-east.
- 6.3 Before the arrival of the railway in 1867 Tregaron had been a market town noted for its cattle droving trade, being a place where cattle were both collected and shod prior to being driven over the mountains toward the English towns. Tregaron was noted also for its woollen goods, especially stockings which were sold regularly at local and regional markets and fairs (WARD 2000).
- 6.4 A building or homestead in the position of the later 'Gelli-Gron' is marked on the 1839/42 tithe map showing the town of Tregaron. The building is also marked on the 1889 Ordnance Survey 1st edition map, marked as a Public House. Between the years 1830-1850 the 'Ivy Bush Hotel', as it was then called, was landlord'ed by one Timothy Davies. Within the travel-writer George Borrow's book 'Wild Wales' there is no mention of the 'Ivy Bush Hotel' or public house, just that of the Talbot Hotel, which was a far more recognised hotel establishment for passing visitors, especially that of 19th century tourists. By the 1880's one Rees Morgan, a horse dealer had taken over the Inn with his wife Mary Ann. This Rees Morgan is depicted in a photo of c. 1900 showing Gelli-Gron (see Fig 5) along with his family. Rees Morgan is supposedly the figure in the horse drawn carriage, who it said was an extremely large gentleman known locally for his exceptionally large shoe size (*pers comm.*).
- 6.5 The Ordnance Survey 1st edition map shows in the garden area of the Ivy Bush Hotel a wall that appears to divide the Gelli Gron from the hay-loft building, with a dog-leg to the west in the area of the walkway. At the time of the watching brief this wall was not evident, only the wall further to the west that divided the garden from the old stable or cart house.
- 6.6 The Ivy Bush Hotel apparently continued to flourish until 1934 when the Inn became a private home. It is at this time that the house adopted its name 'Gelli-Gron', named after the mountainous moor-land to the north. The house eventually became abandoned in the last decade after the owner died.

7 The Watching Brief

The Methodology

- 7.1 Demolition of Gelli-Gron began on the 25th May 2000. Initially all window frames, along with all quarry floor tiles and purple Welsh roofing slates were removed and salvaged. Following removal of these all roof supports were then removed, tie beams, purlins etc, along with floor boards and floor tie beams. With this work in progress the bottle store wall, that which was to be retained, or the Gelli-Gron south west wall, was removed of plaster back to the original stone work. Following this the same wall was re-pointed and the brick blocked fire-places were unblocked and then re-blocked for aesthetic reasons with stone. At the same time as this work was in progress the floor boards in the parlour were uplifted and removed and the vegetation in the garden was cleared, scraping back only 5 cm of the over burden or top soil.
- 7.2 Once all removal of roofing material, ground floor partitioning,, floor level and all other wooden features were completed, demolition began mechanically on the stone fabric of the house. Initially the chimney stacks were brought down into the clearing of the house interior, followed by the walls, each demolished into the centre of the cleared house interior.
- 7.3 The front and rear wall of the house were only demolished initially to a height of approx. 1 metre. Reasons for this were so as to utilise the stone from the remains of the earth & stone wall to construct the new 3 metre high enclosure wall that marked the new road width. With the house demolished to this state, the resulting rubble was then machine removed and stock-piled in the area of the garden. Following this the foundation trench for the new wall was dug mechanically using a flat 1m wide bucket. This trench extended across the diagonal extent of the former Gelli-Gron building, a distance of approx. 18 metres. Trench was dug approx. 1.60 metres wide and 40 cm deep. With this trench dug, work began on the construction of the new wall, using both the stone stock piled in the garden as well as that of the remains of the front wall.
- 7.4 Whilst the wall construction was in progress the watching brief for the assessment of the garden area was delayed for several weeks until the stone stock piling was removed.
- 7.5 During the whole of this work all features noted were recorded using pro-forma context forms and a comprehensive photographic record was appropriated of all work being performed as well as all significant archaeological features. This report compliments the survey done by the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, Aberystwyth. The results of this watching brief are as follows.

7.6 The Ground Floor

- The Parlour & Kitchen/living room -

i) The ceiling

The ceiling of the parlour and kitchen/living room was constructed of two main oak tie beams (20cm x 20cm) running SE to NW across the building. Both were equally spaced from each other and symmetrically placed across the buildings width, the front entrance way being staggered a metre further west toward the parlour. Both tie beams showed evidence for former floor boarding, as former slots were evident. Some of these slots however had been used by a later flooring. Iron nails and hooks were evident across both tie beams lengths. The later floor (likely 1950's) above the parlour continued upto the point of the second tie beam, which marked the position of the extent of the kitchen/living room. The floor/ceiling above the kitchen/living room area was the original 19th century floor with contemporary tie beam.. This was evident by the fact that both the floor and the tie beam were both covered in remnants of a local and regional 19th century newspaper. An acceptable date of 1895 was found on one fragment.

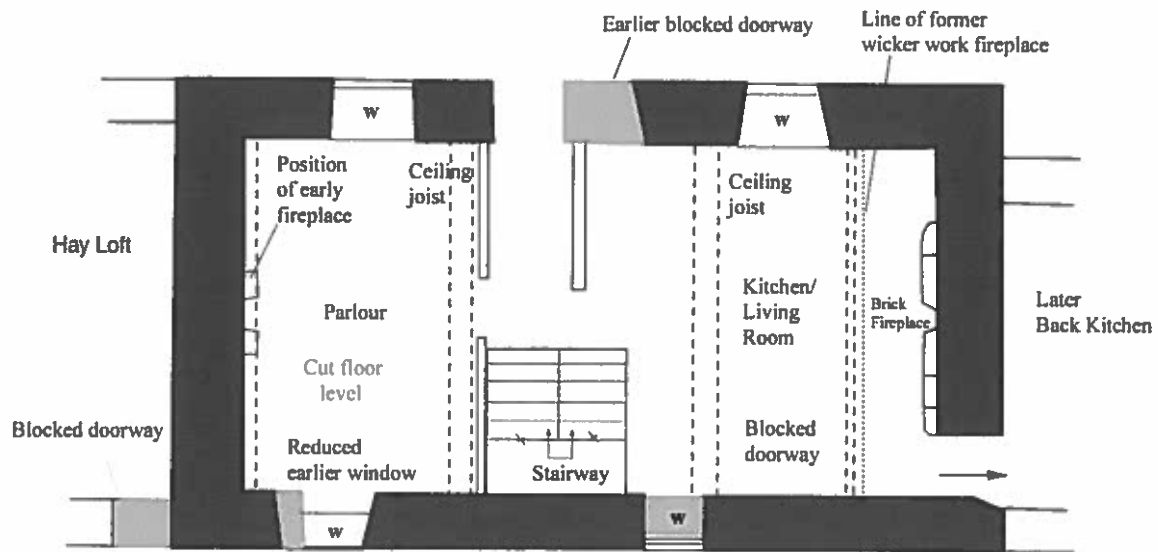


Fig 7. Ground Floor plan at Gelli Gron, Tregaron.

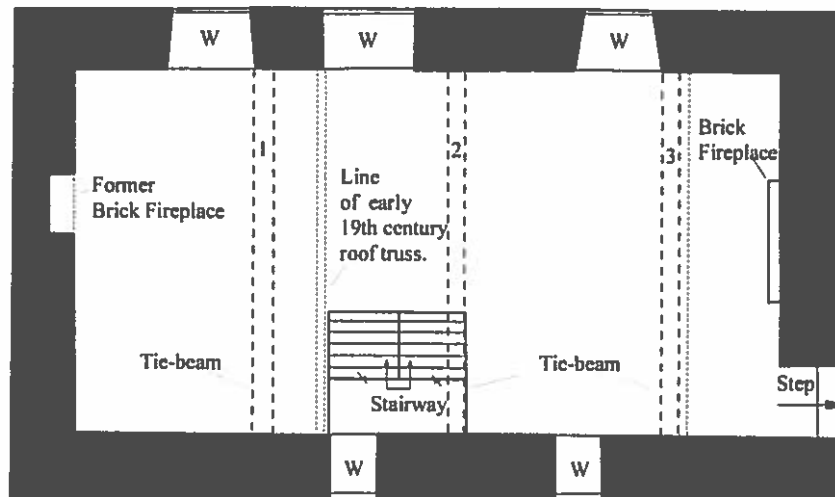


Fig 8. Upper Floor at Gelli Gron, Tregaron.

Further to this newspaper covering, the ceiling/floor was also covered extensively by 3 subsequent layers of flowered wall paper, all evidently post dating 1895. This kitchen ceiling ended at the point of the termination of the second tie beam's eastern edge. From this point to the wall or chimney the flooring had been replaced by modern pine boards sitting on a modern reinforced steel joist that ran parallel and butting up to the tie beam. This area is that as indicated by the RCAHMW survey report, the area of a former wicker work fireplace (see Figs 5 & 7). Scorching was evident at the north-east end.

ii) Floor (see Figs 11 & 12)

The floor of the parlour was covered in wooden floorboards running east-west across the room. These boards at the time of the watching brief were covered in ceiling and wall plaster work and other refuse and debris. On removal of boards although much of the surface debris fell into the floor space below, a partial assessment of the level below was possible, although the whole of the floor below the floorboards was filled with a soft and dry dark brown earth, similar to garden soil. The floorboards appeared to have been placed on top of a series of rafters, the framework of which was found to be resting on a series of large sub rounded boulder size stones, each varying in size from approx. 30cm x 40cm to 40cm x 50cm. Six stones were found equally spaced along the eastern end of the floor. The depth of the cut for this floor was approx. 50cm, the base of which was found to be a compact alluvial gravel. At the centre of the floor, running east-west was a low wall like structure, approx. 40cm wide x 40cm deep. This low wall was constructed from limestone and a light grey ash, charcoal, sand and lime mix mortar. This feature appears to have functioned as a floor supporting wall and was covered in the same dark brown earth as the rest of the parlour room floor. Toward the top of this deposit, in an area made accessible for investigation, was found late 19th century refuse that included fairly small glass bottle sherds, a very worn Victorian penny dated 1877, tips of clay pipe stems and other pipe bowl fragments. On lifting three of these stones further 19th century debris was evident, including glass bottle sherds, pipe stem fragments, a bone button and what appeared to be a fragment of a further bone carved item, whose function was uncertain (possibly a napkin ring). The item was circular in form, approx. 3.5cm in diameter, appearing to be a sawn slice through a bone. The boulder stone lay directly on top of the natural alluvial gravel layer. All of this late 19th century material likely fell through gaps in the floorboards.

During the digging of the new wall foundation trench this floor level was partially cut through at the west end. On investigation of this area a Victorian sixpence was discovered toward the top (approx. 3cm) of the same dark soil deposit, dated 1895.

The soil in the garden was identical in make-up to that found beneath the floor boards. This being the case the soil was likely imported from the garden and placed beneath the floor for reasons of sound and heat insulation. As 19th century material, inclusive of the Victorian penny and sixpence, was also found toward the top of this deposit it would be fairly safe to suggest that the cut for this floor was made at some time prior to 1877. No other earlier material was found within the accessible areas of this deposit and no dateable material was found within nor upon the readily exposed natural alluvial gravel deposit.

Only parts of the parlour room floor were accessible during the watching brief, the rest of the floor being covered extensively in demolition debris. After demolition of Gelli-Gron the floor of the parlour room became filled further by rubble and will remain preserved in situ beneath the landscape development.

iii) North wall

The front façade or north wall of Gelli-Gron revealed no hidden features in the external face. Reasons for this being the presence of a hard cement render that completely covered the building. However on inspection and removal of most of the plaster and thick white limewash from the inside of the north wall, a metre to the east of the present front entrance, a blocked in feature was discovered indicating the presence of a former central access. Only one edge of block-in was evident, as other end would appear to have been either removed or replaced by the present entrance. The block-in went all the way to the

floor and the revealed edge was angled outward with a thin layer of daub with limewash along inside edge. This feature was complete with a long smoothed lintel stone which measured 90cm x 40cm across the exposed face. From the base of the lintel to the floor the height of the former central doorway was 2.10m high and 1.19m wide to the eastern edge of the present entrance. The depth of this entrance and indeed the width of the whole wall was approx. 80cm.

Both windows in the north wall were mid 20th century additions and considerably enlarged from the originals. No evidence for any other hidden features were found in this wall at ground floor level. During and after demolition of the north wall the fabric and core of the wall was seen to be of dry stone construction with earth wadding. Occasional traces of straw and wattle were found at each corner, toward the position of an earlier roofline, indicative of a former straw thatch roof.

iv) *South wall*

The back or south wall, once much of the thick lime and horse hair plaster had been removed in certain chosen positions, revealed two blocked in features. At the west end of the south wall removal of plaster revealed that the present tapered window had been 40cm wider than that present at the time of the watching brief. The former width of this window at the widest point on the interior was 1.50m. At its narrowest point, at the point of the fenestration, it was 1.20m wide. Only the western edge of the window had been reduced however, the other side revealed no evidence of any reduction or block-in.

In the position of the central window in the back wall removal of plaster revealed a former blocked in doorway, indicating a rear access to the rear walk-way. The fabric of brick, stone and mortar used for this block-in appeared to be fairly modern, possible 1930's/50's. With regards alignment with the former blocked in entrance in the north wall, the back doorway was staggered approx. 1m to the east.

The fabric and core of the south wall was of dry stone and earth wadding with, again, occasional traces of straw thatch in the areas around the former or earlier late 18th/early 19th century roofline. No other hidden features were discovered within the fabric of the south wall at ground floor level internally or externally, except for the blocked in doorway at the rear into the ground floor of the hay-loft building next door.

v) *East wall*

The only significant feature in the east wall at ground floor level was that of a brick fire-place, with small anthracite and wood burner set into the brickwork. The plaster over the whole of this wall was very hard and compact and fairly modern, possibly 1930's/50's. Removal of part of this plaster revealed that the brick fireplace had replaced an earlier brick fireplace. This reduction had likely been performed at the time the wood burner was put in. The bricks for this fireplace, both earlier and later were of the same type as those used in the chimney stack in this wall. This brickwork continued up the whole length of the east wall right up to the chimney stack itself, indicating that this chimney and fireplace had been put in later, replacing an earlier hearth and wattle and daub chimney and hood. This was evident as the rear side of the wall, the once external east wall, now the back kitchen, still had its original stone fabric construction other than that of brick. A chimney stack is evident in the photo of c. 1900 in this position.

The opening or doorway into the back kitchen at the south end of the east wall. The height of this doorway was approx. 2 meters and the width approx. 1.20 metres.. The doorway had at head height a line of 5 wooden beams acting as support lintels and fitted transversely across the width of the doorway. The first of these oak beams was approx. 25cm wide, the other four smaller at approx. 12cm in width. All lintels were covered in wall paper with 3 consecutive layers. Evidence for 'keying' in of back kitchen extension into south wall was not easily evident because of plaster work. This entrance way was likely a later addition contemporary in date with the construction of the back kitchen extension, mid-late 19th century.

Apart from the addition of the brick chimney the rest of the fabric and core of this east wall was of dry stone and earth wadding. Demolition revealed that this wall had no foundations and was built directly on top of a compact alluvial gravel surface.

vi) *West wall*

This wall was the back wall of the earlier hay loft which was to be retained and re-pointed. The plaster work was removed from the total front of this wall. Removal of plaster revealed that the present brick fireplace filled a former stone lined fireplace, some 80cm wide x 1.60m high. The earlier fireplace had two large lintel stones, one above the other. The larger of the two lintels, the one at the top was 49cm x 36cm in size. The smaller lintel below was 1.17m x 22cm in size.. The depth of this former fireplace was approx. 40 cm. As part of the development work the brick in-fill was removed and the opening refilled with stone. Both lintel stones were left in place.

At the base of the west wall, at the far south end, removal of plaster revealed a course of brickwork, about 45cm above the wooden floor level. Bricks were pale pink in colour with their faces painted with lime-wash, all were approx. 20cm x 10cm in size. Once the floorboards were removed this course of bricks appeared to be lying directly upon large foundation stones, smoothly rounded at their edges.

The west wall appeared to be the only wall in the whole fabric of Gelli-Gron that had stone foundations with accompanying trench. The brickwork appeared to be repair work in the lower part of the wall, as much of the dry stone in this area was very loose. Straw and rushes were found in the core work of this repaired area.

According to a few old locals the 'Ivy Bush Hotel' once had a cellar which was blocked up in the early 20th century. No evidence was found for the presence of this cellar, however as a suggestion if there were a former cellar then this area would seem a likely position. Access for further investigation of the foundations of this wall was not possible because of demolition debris, however none of this area was touched by any of the development work and as such any features that may be present within this area will remain preserved in situ.

- *The back kitchen –*

i) *Ceiling*

The ceiling of the back kitchen at ground floor level was pine floor boards with relatively modern 4" x 2" rafters. No tie beams were present for support of the floor level, this was performed by standing walls.

ii) *Floor*

As the RCAHMW Survey Report recorded, the back kitchen floor was covered in 8 inch square red and black quarry tiles. When these were removed accessible areas of the exposed ground surface below revealed an earthen floor, with evidence for an earlier hearth in the same relative position of the later brick fireplace. In areas not obstructed by demolition debris, the ground surface was troweled back for any archaeological remains, none was found. The floor appeared to have a thin layer of brown soil, c 2-3cm thick, with round and sub-rounded pebbles, all between 1-8cm in size.. Below this deposit was an alluvial gravel layer with river pebbles, c 0.3-1cm in size. This layer was only 3-4cm in thickness. This layer appeared to be the same as that present in the kitchen/living room, however not as compact. Below this the alluvial deposit became more substantial in respect of stone size.

iii) *North wall*

The north wall of the back kitchen at ground floor level was characterised by one large window front with gently splayed sides. This window appeared to be a later insertion, an enlargement of the window depicted in the photo of c. 1900. No other hidden features were discovered in the fabric of this wall.

iv) *South wall*

The south wall of the back kitchen was covered extensively in hard plasterwork which had been painted blue. Beneath this paint was a red paint, which appeared to be the earliest painted coat. No hidden features were evident within the fabric of this wall internally or externally.

v) *East wall*

The east wall was characterised by a small brick fireplace, likely late 19th/early 20th century. This fireplace appeared to be the in-fill for a larger fireplace, which had been approx. 1.06m wide and 1 metre high. The only other feature in this wall was the doorway into the later lean-to kitchen to the east. This wall was approx. 80cm in thickness. No other hidden features were discovered in this wall during demolition.

vi) *West wall*

The west wall had previously been the external wall of Gelli-Gron or the 'Ivy Bush' as it would have been known at that time prior to the back kitchen extension. The face of this west wall was covered extensively in hard plaster, but stone work of dry stone walling was evident. No other hidden features were exposed during demolition of this wall.

- *The later lean-to Kitchen –*

i) *Floor*

The floor in the lean-to kitchen was of modern concrete. On removal of this the ground surface was the same natural alluvial gravel deposit. Once mechanically scraped back no finds nor features were evident.

ii) *North wall*

The north wall of the lean-to kitchen was of dry stone similar to that used in the construction of the main Gelli-Gron complex however knowingly of c. 1950's construction. This wall was punctuated by a wide modern window. No hidden features were discovered in the fabric of this wall.

iii) *South wall*

This wall was characterised by the back door which was of 1950's/70's construction. Like the north wall the fabric of this wall was of dry stone. No hidden features were discovered in the fabric of this wall.

iv) *East wall*

This was the back wall of the lean-to kitchen and was of dry stone construction. No hidden features were discovered in the fabric of this wall.

v) *West wall*

This was the external wall of the back kitchen until the construction of the lean-to. This wall was covered up to the roof line of the lean-to in hard plasterwork. No stone fabric was visible, however externally above the lean-to roof line, the wall was of dry stone construction with earth wadding. This wall was approx. 50cm thick. No hidden features were discovered in the fabric of this wall.

7.7 The Upper floor

- *Parlour & Kitchen/Living room or the Bedroom Area* -

i) *North wall*

The north wall of the upper floor was characterised by the inclusion of two 20th century dormer windows, one each side of a central window. No evidence for the former late Victorian fenestration was evident. As this upper floor was a result of a late 19th century roof heightening improvement no earlier features nor block-in's were evident.

ii) *South wall*

The south wall was characterised by a small window to the east of the stairwell. Removal of plaster work around this window did not reveal any former window feature or block-in.. To the west of the stairwell however after removal of plasterwork was discovered the remains of one of the former roof line trusses, still embedded in the wall at floor level of the upper floor, and sawn off flush to the wall. The angle of this truss remnant reflected the angle of the roof line shown in the west wall. No other features were discovered in the fabric of this upper wall.

iii) *East wall*

This wall was characterised by a brick fire-place utilising the same chimney as the fireplace below. The plaster on the walls in this area was very hard and removal was almost impossible, however from further evidence across the whole of the building it was safe to suggest that this upper part of the east wall was a later late 19th century addition with regard roof height improvement. The brick fireplace in this position however did appear to have been a reduction of a former brick fireplace. This fireplace replaced the earlier wicker-work fireplace .

iv) *West wall*

The west wall or the wall that was the back of the bottle store to be retained was characterised by the inclusion of a bricked up fireplace and the marking of a previous steep roofline. The initial fireplace appeared to be a late insertion, likely done when the roof height was extended at some time in the mid-late 19th century. This opening had been bricked up or reduced with red bricks with the name 'FETTONS' stamped into their fabric. No lintel stone was present in this fireplace.

The other feature in this wall was the marking of the previous straw thatched roof line, whose eaves dropped at a steep angle of approx. 45 degrees. The apex of the wall had been heightened slightly by the addition of a few courses of brick work. The roof height had been made higher by making the eaves less steep. Apart from these two features no other hidden features were evident in this wall.

- The Back Kitchen or Bathroom -

All of the walls in this room were completely covered in plasterwork so no hidden features were evident. All that was noted was the addition of a course of bricks for the brick chimney stack and extra roof height.

7.8 The Roof Area or Upper Floor (see Fig 8 & 9)

i) The Parlour & Kitchen/Living Room

The roof at the time of the watching brief appears to have been an extension floor performed at some time in the mid to late 19th century. The extent of this roof heightening was plainly evident from the mark of the previous roof line on the south-west wall, the retained wall of the bottle store. This previous roof line appears to have been fairly steep, with an overhang that finished at the level of the upper floor. This extension was likely done at the time that the earlier sash windows were put in. The only other evidence for this previous roof line was a remnant of a previous strut or truss diagonal discovered behind the plaster work near the stair-well. This truss had been sawn off flush to the wall and was indicative of a roof heightening phase.

The 19th century roof extension area for Gelli-Gron consisted of 3 'A'-frames, each with an oak tie beam. The tie beam in position (1) was a replacement modern 4" x 2" which was coach bolted into each upright truss. The trusses for this A-frame were also of oak both still with their bark showing. The original 19th century tie beam marks were still evident at the time of the watching brief, revealed only by its chamfered edges for the positions of the trusses. Both trusses had fitters marks 'II' at their apex. The Apex was crossed and pegged with a baton support for roofing frame.

The tie beam in position (2) appeared to be the original 19th century oak tie beam coach bolted at either end into the trusses. The Apex was wooden pegged. Each truss was bark covered. No fitters marks were evident. Both the trusses of A-frame (1) and (2) appeared to be contemporary in date, accepting the addition of the modern tie beam in position (1).

The tie beam in position (3) was of oak (10cm x 12cm) and was coach bolted at either end into each truss. Both diagonal trusses had chamfered slots in their lower ends, with holes for wooden pegs. Both trusses were keyed into each other and wooden pegged with one peg only. No fitters marks were evident. The A-frame in position (3) was characterised by soot and scorch marking, which mainly appeared on the northern strut or truss. Because of the chamfered trusses and the evidence for soot and scorching it would seem likely to suggest that this A-frame marked the position of a former wicker work fireplace with hood. No wicker work nor daub however was evident in any area of this A-frame, suggesting that it was removed at some time in the late 19th century when the brick chimney was put into place. Evidence from this A-frame compliments the evidence of the replaced flooring in this area, both suggestive of a former wicker work and clay daubed fireplace and hood. No fitter's marks were evident.

ii) The Back Kitchen

Roof space in bathroom above back kitchen appeared to have been replaced fairly recently as all roofing materials were fairly modern in form, both the purlins and battening. No tie beam or A-frame was present as support was supplied by both walls.

iii) The later lean-to kitchen

Roof in lean-to later kitchen was as the Back kitchen, a fairly modern roof with modern 4" x 2".

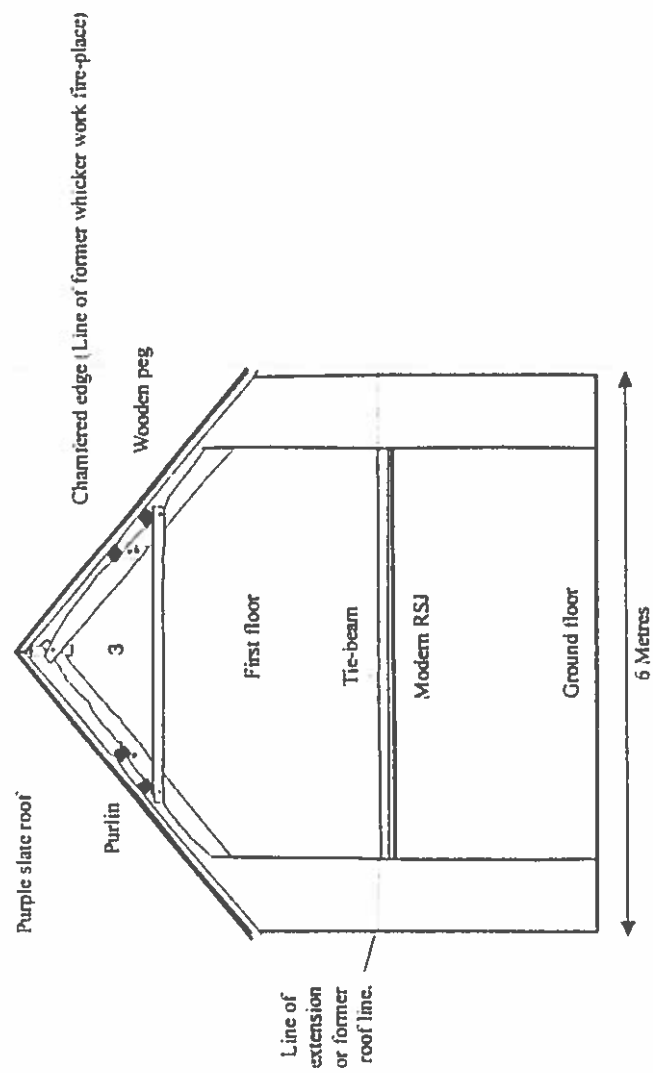


Fig 9 Gelli-Gron, Tregaron. Cross-section of roof elevation, showing A-frame and chamfered edges of former whicker work fireplace..

Non-Technical Summary

As part of a road widening scheme conservation consent was granted by the National Assembly for Wales for the demolition of the property known locally as 'Gelli-gron', The Square, Tregaron (SN 68105968). The demolition of the property however was subject to an archaeological condition. The Curatorial Section of Archaeoleg Cambria Archaeology, acting in their capacity as archaeological advisors to the local planning authority of Ceredigion County Council, requested that the works be monitored as an archaeological Watching Brief, during demolition and during the construction of a landscaped area.

Summary of Watching Brief requirements:

- Watching brief and recording during demolition of the building.
- Assessment and recording of landscaping levels.
- Watching brief during further ground works and digging foundations of wall.
- Production of an illustrated report.

The watching brief and recording of the demolition of Gelli-gron, formerly 'The Ivy Bush Inn', revealed that the property was likely first established at some time in the mid-late 18th century. At this time the building would have been a single-storey earth and dry-stone structure with a central doorway and passage, implying a '*renaissance*' style floor-plan, typical of the region and this period. The property also had a thatch roof with a wicker-work fireplace. Structurally the property appears to have undergone most of its improvements or alterations in the early-mid 19th century.

The watching brief during the further ground works and the digging for the foundations of the new boundary wall, revealed nothing of any archaeological significance, apart from the fact that the property had been built directly atop the natural alluvial gravel surface with no foundation trench, adding also as an earthen floor. The cutting of the trench exposed no archaeological features nor finds whatsoever, implying that no earlier structure than the mid-late 18th century seems to have occupied the space under investigation.

The assessment and recording of the landscaping levels of the house and the garden area only partially exposed an old boundary bank running north-south across the area of the garden, as marked on the 1889 OS map. No other features were exposed in the garden as only a required 10-20cm depth of top soil was removed, still keeping any potential archaeology beneath unexposed and hence preserved in situ beneath a further 20-40cm of garden soil.

The only significant artefacts recovered from the watching brief were those discovered beneath the floorboards in the Parlour room. These included 19th century clay pipe fragments, a Victorian sixpence dated 1895, a Victorian penny dated 187?, a 19th century bone button, a possible 19th century bone napkin ring, and 19th century glass bottle fragments or sherds. Any further archaeology in this area remains preserved in situ.

The watching brief found no artefacts any earlier than the late 19th century throughout the whole of the ground works. All other finds were 20th century in origin.

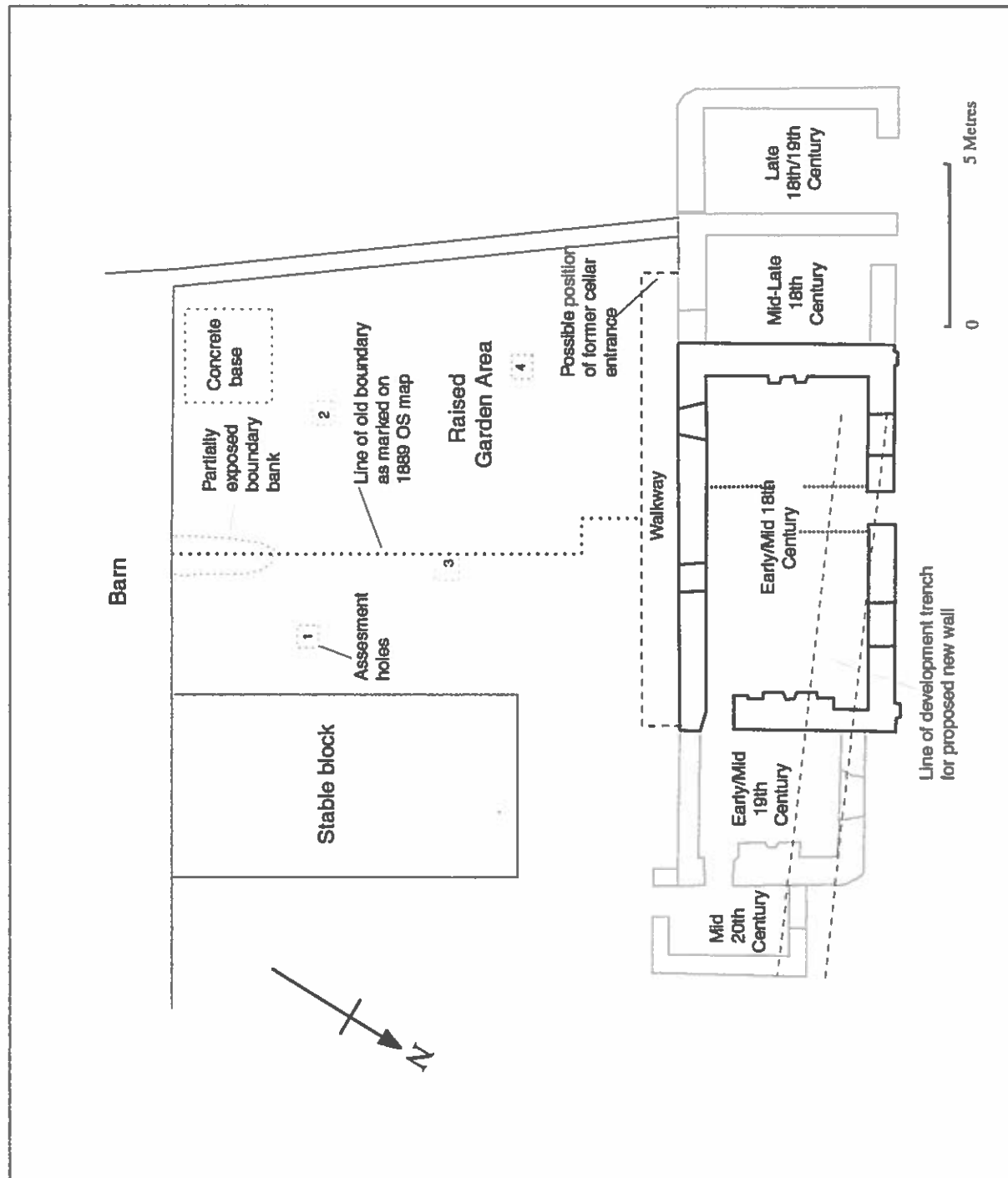


Fig 10. Ground Plan of Gelli-Gron & garden area
 Showing location of proposed development trench for proposed new wall, assessment holes, line of late 18th - mid 19th wall and phasing

7.9 Foundation Trench for new wall (see Figs 3 & 10)

Trench for new boundary wall was approx. 1.60 m wide, 18 metres long and averaged 40 cm deep. At the far west end the trench partially cut through the former parlour floor rafter wall that butted up against the south-west wall. Across the whole of the stretch of this trench the ground surface was of compacted alluvial gravel, with rounded and sub-rounded stones varying in size from pea/gravel grit to stones some 30cm x 20cm in size, however these only made up 5% of the whole of the fill of the trench. No features were revealed in any part of the cutting of this trench, nor did any of the section edges reveal any features whatsoever. The trench only revealed that the house appeared to have been built directly on top of the compact natural alluvial gravel surface, with no evidence for any foundation trench. No finds were discovered during the digging of this trench nor any once it was hand scraped back for assessment purposes.

7.8 The Garden area (see Fig 10)

As already mentioned the garden area behind Gelli-Gron was covered in dense vegetation. Initially this was removed so as to enable stock piling of demolition rubble for the construction of the new boundary wall. Once the vegetation in the garden had been scraped back it revealed a dark brown top soil with occasional 20th/late 19th century domestic refuse inclusions.

As stock piling of rubble was to occur on top of the garden area, the opportunity was taken to sink 4 small assessment holes (50cm x 50cm) through the top soil so as to ascertain its depth as well as to assess the potential and character of any significant archaeology below. The depth of the top soil was approx. between 30-40cm in the chosen areas in the centre of the garden, in the area of the wall as marked on the OS 1st edition map. This deposit lay directly upon an orange alluvial gravel deposit identical to that found as the floor surface in the parlour and kitchen/living room. Immediately above the surface of this natural layer was discovered in one evaluation hole one roofing slate with occasional corroded iron nails.

A small concrete base approx. 1.5m square was also revealed at the same level as the top of the top soil toward the south end of the garden, directly next to the rear of the southern farm building. This Base may have been a former outside toilet.

A small square feature is marked in the southern area of the garden to the east of this concrete base. This area at the time of the watching brief was occupied by an area of collapsed rubble from the partial collapse of the southern farm building.

With this quick assessment in place the demolition rubble was piled onto the garden directly on top of the exposed top soil. The removal of this stone was delayed for several weeks by the construction of the new boundary wall. However once this rubble was eventually removed, the area of the garden was scraped back by machine, removing only the remains of rubble debris and the initial 10-20cm of top soil. As such any possible presence of any significant archaeology that may be below the immediate remaining 20cm of garden soil remains preserved in situ beneath the proposed landscape development. This depth was considered adequate for landscaping.

The only feature worth mentioning however was revealed at the far south end of the garden, in the position of the documented old boundary 'wall'. The scraping back of the top soil in this area partially exposed what appeared to be a natural 'bank' or boundary of orange alluvial gravel, and not as had been presumed a stone boundary wall. Only a length of approx. 2 metres of this boundary was exposed, as further downslope the top soil covered the boundary's likely continuation. On either side of this 'natural' banking was the same dark garden soil, which could suggest that these areas had at sometime been reduced in height when compared to the height of the boundary bank.

Further to the north-east near the area of the public toilets and the back of the Pentre Hall and the stable building in the same area, a small corrugated tin shed was present in a state of total disrepair.. This was also demolished and the top soil scraped back to a suitable depth for landscaping. The demolition of this structure and the partial removal of the top soil revealed no significant archaeology, except for 20th century and late 19th century refuse, inclusive of pot fragments and glass bottle sherds. With regard the old stable block in this area this building was to be retained and consolidated.

8 Summary of Phasing

i) *Mid-late 18th century*

No prehistoric, medieval or late medieval remains were discovered during the demolition of Gelli-Gron. Also as no evidence of early to mid 18th century archaeology was discovered it would seem likely that Gelli-Gron, or the 'Ivy Bush', if it was initially called this at this early time, was initially built at some time in the mid to late 18th century, more than likely the latter. This is evidenced by the earliest cottage ground plan of the building, indicative of a Renaissance plan, a central doorway with two rooms either side, a kitchen and a parlour room. With two small front windows. At this early phase the building most likely had a crog-loft above the parlour, the kitchen area having been open plan with a low straw thatch roof with beams exposed and a wicker work fireplace with *louvre* or hood. This interpretation is also supported by the dry stone fabric and earth wadding of the walls with no foundation trench, typical of late 18th century Welsh cottages. The Hay loft butting up to the cottage was likely also built around this time, however may have been a late early 19th century build. The house at this time was unlikely to have been an Inn but more likely just a private cottage with small outbuilding

ii) *Early 19th century*

Likely very little change from the early construction at this time, apart from the possibility of the construction of the hay-loft.

iii) *Mid-late 19th century*

This period would seem to mark the main period of change and improvement, reflecting the arrival of the railway. Likely the beginning of the 'Ivy Bush Hotel', c. 1830, that served as an Inn for not only *alien* visitors but mainly for passing Drovers. During this period the back kitchen was likely built, as was the roof heightened and the wicker work fireplace removed and replaced by red brick chimney. The sunken floor for the inclusion of a wooden floor in the parlour was also likely done during this period, as evidenced by the dateable evidence. The cutting for the fireplace in the upper floor west wall was also likely done during this period. The construction of the stable or cart house was also likely started at this time, with the roof heightened later. With regard the blocking in of the central doorway this was likely done at this time, c. 1850-60, so as to increase the size of the kitchen area and move the stairwell. This period likely also was responsible for the cutting of the rear back door in the south wall, which gave access to and from the hay loft, which may have served as accommodation, hence was used for domestic purposes. The cart house was also likely built toward the late 19th century.

iv) *Early- late 20th century*

1934 marked the period in which the Ivy Bush Inn fell into private use solely as a home and changed its name to that of Gelli-Gron. This period marks the construction of the lean-to kitchen at the far east end, likely done during the 1930's or even 1950's. The fireplaces appear to have been reduced at this time, and the front windows enlarged with the addition of the dormer windows. This period also likely marks the rendering of the front of the building, and the blocking up of the rear entrance into a window, hence denying access to the hay-loft or store house, whose own doorway was also likely blocked at about this time.

v) 21st century

Present demolition of Gelli-Gron and landscaping of garden area.

9 Conclusions

- 9.1 The demolition of Gelli-gron revealed little of great archaeological significance, apart from a series of architectural changes. With regards the walls fabric the watching brief recorded the presence of an earlier blocked in central doorway, the earliest entrance, likely mid/late 18th Century. This central doorway and central passage is indicative of a 'renaissance' style ground plan.
- 9.2 Other than this feature the only other fabric features observed and recorded were the reduced and enlarged fenestration at the front and rear of the house and the rear doorway being changed into a window. This previous rear doorway was likely public house related, that gave not only access to and from the rear walkway, that likely led to a possible cellar at the rear of the hay loft/stable window, but likely also gave access to an outside toilet.
- 9.3 The watching brief also recorded the existence of a much larger fire-place in the west wall that appeared to have been reduced on two separate occasions. With regards the presence of a former wicker-work fire-place in the east side of the 18th/19th century house, the watching brief revealed several indicators that pointed to its previous existence, scorching on the roof A-frame and tie beam, wooden peg-holes in the trusses, the presence of a reinforced steel joist and the extension of the upper floor with new floor-boarding.
- 9.4 As would have been expected for a welsh house of this period, the cottage was originally a single storey structure with a thatched roof. During the watching brief this was evident by the remains of a lower truss exposed in the south wall at the west end of the house and the remains of straw found in the top corners of the north and south walls.
- 9.5 With regards the floor of the house, removal of the floor boards in the parlour exposed a cut or sunken floor driven through the compacted earthen floor of natural alluvial gravel. On inspection of the soil filled floor, artefacts or finds discovered beneath were glass bottle sherds, clay pipe and bowl stems, one bone button, one Victorian penny, c. 187?, one Victorian sixpence dated 1895, a bone hoop, possibly a napkin ring. As this sunken floor was filled just to the level of the floor-boards with what appeared to be dark garden soil and reached the adequate height for landscaping, rescue was considered unnecessary as the archaeology beneath would still be preserved in situ. With regard the rest of the floor of the house, inclusive of the back kitchen and the later lean to kitchen, the watching brief revealed that Gelli-gron had originally in the 18th century had an earthen floor of compact alluvial gravel. Neither during the removal of the floor tiles nor during the levelling of the site for landscaping were any artefacts discovered on the surface of this floor. The same was true also for the cutting of the new wall trench, which revealed no archaeological features or indicators of any period whatsoever. The cutting for the new wall foundation essentially only established that the compacted floor appeared to be the earliest archaeological layer and that the earth and dry-stone walls of Gelli-gron had no sunken foundations and had been simply constructed directly on the surface of the alluvial gravel.
- 9.6 Clearance of the top soil within the garden area for landscaping revealed no significant archaeological features, apart from the partial exposing of a boundary bank as marked on the OS 1st edition map of 1889 dateable. Any potential archaeology in the garden area still remains preserved in situ beneath the remaining 20cm of garden soil.
- 9.7 From the results of the watching brief it can quite safely be suggested that the earliest house that was to later evolve into the 'Ivy Bush Hotel' and later still 'Gelli-gron' was first established at some time in the mid/late 18th century. The single storey house had an earthen floor of compact alluvial gravel, a chimney

in the east wall with a wicker work hood or louvre, a central door and passageway with two small windows either side and a thatched roof. It is very likely that regionally and indeed locally this small welsh cottage likely acted as a small guest house for any passing drovers to and from the Tregaron market. By the late 18th to early 19th the cottage had established an accompanying stable and hay loft or 'byre'. By the mid 19th century, the now established 'Ivy Bush' further extended with the creation of a back kitchen and 'bottle store'.

- 9.8 Other than the 20th century and late 19th century material discovered in the garden top soil and below the floorboards in the former Parlour room, no further finds of any date were discovered during the groundwork's. Nor were any faunal remains discovered.

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Other Sources consulted

- i) Title map of the Parish of Caron 1839/42
- ii) OS 1st edition map of 1889.
- iii) Photograph of c. 1890-1900

Acknowledgements

Thanks to the local residents who I encountered during the watching brief who told me many local stories and tales with regards the Ivy Bush Hotel, and especial thanks to the lady who loaned me the old photograph of Gelli-Gron. Thanks also to the contractor Howell-Jones Engineering for being helpful and understanding during the archaeological investigation.

Appendices:

Small finds discovered in area of Parlour room floor

- i) Two tips of late 19th century clay pipe stems.
- ii) Fragment of late 19th century clay pipe bowl.
- iii) Victorian sixpence dated 1895.
- iv) Victorian penny dated 1877.
- v) Mid-late 19th century bone button.
- vi) Fragment of carved bone hook or hoop. Possible napkin ring. Function uncertain.
- vii) Small fragments of 19th century glass bottle.

Finds discovered in assessment of garden area.

- i) Small fragment of clay pipe stem
- ii) Fragment of late 19th century glass bottle
- iii) Purple roofing slate (approx. 20cm x 30cm)

* All small finds will be deposited with the local museum.

Archive contents

- 1 Photographs and photographic record sheets
- 2 Context sheets
- 3 Ground plans of ground and upper floor
- 4 Roof cross section drawing

** The full archive will be kept at Cambrian Archaeological Projects, Waen Old Farmhouse, Llidiaitywaen, Llanidloes, Powys.



1. Gelli-gron prior to demolition



2. West view showing modern lean to and vegetation cover



3. West view showing width of road



4. Gelli-gron looking north-east



5. Roof removed



6. Vegetation removed from back of house

Fig 11. Photographs of Gelli-gron during demolition work



7. Blocked fireplace, ground floor parlour



8. Parlour fireplace unblocked



9. Repaired lower section of east wall in parlour, at floor level



10. Roof A-frame at west end near former wicker work fireplace



11. Gelli-gron demolished and garden area cleared of vegetation



12. Cleared raised garden area at rear of house

Fig 12. Photographs of Gelli-gron during demolition work



13. Gelli-gron during final phase of demolition



14. Gelli-gron during final phases of demolition work



15. Gelli-gron during final phases of demolition



16. Foundation trench for new boundary wall



17. Foundation trench for new boundarywall, looking east toward the Market Square



18. Foundation trench for new boundary wall, looking west.

Fig 13. Photographs of Gell-gron during demolition and cutting of foundation trench for new boundary wall.