

TREMADOG TANNERY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

REPORT NO. 47

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Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

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Tremadog Tannery, Factory Place, Tremadog

Background

Tremadog

Tremadog has the distinction of being the only Georgian planned town in Gwynedd. It was built between 1805 and 1811 by William Madocks (1773-1828) on land reclaimed from the estuary known as Traeth Mawr, which divided the old counties of Caernarvonshire and Merionethshire. Madocks went on to enclose the whole of Traeth Mawr between 1808 and 1811, some 3000 acres in all, by building the Great Embankment (known locally as the Cob) which was 1600 yards long and 21 feet high. The embankment also served as a dry road across the Traeth, connecting Caernarvonshire with Merionethshire. This ambitious and successful engineering project became one of the Wonders of Wales in its day.

Tremadog was conceived as both an aesthetic and functional unit, with the Snowdonia mountains to the north forming an impressive background. The town was sited below a 100 foot high cliff on the Caernarvonshire side of the Traeth, close to the spot where travellers from Merionethshire arrived in Caernarvonshire. The town was also well situated as a local market centre, catering for the scattered hill farms of the surrounding uplands, which were also a ready source of wool for the factory Madocks was to build. As well as being a market and centre for rural industry, the town was also on Madocks' proposed route between London and Dublin; in the late eighteenth century there were no easily travelled routes between the two capitals. Madocks wanted to develop the harbour of Porthdinllaen on the north coast of the Llyn Peninsula and build a road connecting it to Tremadog and beyond. In the event Holyhead was chosen as the preferred harbour and the main route was sited along the north Welsh coastline to Chester.

Tremadoc was built as a 'T'-shaped unit based around a large square, with London Street running north to join Dublin Street running west and High Street running east. A Town hall was built across the top of the 'T', with a coach house and Inn to the west and a house and shop to the east. On either side of the square are houses, shops and inns. Industrial buildings included a fulling mill, woollen mill, corn mill, saw mill and tannery. Madocks also built a church and chapel, and began a tree plantation. Building stone was quarried locally and slate was obtained from a quarry on nearby Moel-y-Gest. Today the town still retains the essential characteristics of the original with some more recent developments, such as the laundry building, partly obscuring some features, particularly Factory Place.

Factory Place

Factory Place was originally conceived as a unit within the framework of the town and as such the buildings form a group, comprising Nos. 9, 11, 13 and 19 Factory Place, together with Ty-Gwyn, Bronhaul, Madoc Tannery (the old cloth factory) and Mill House (Ty Felin 1 and 2). Ty-Gwyn, Bronhaul and the tannery are Grade II listed buildings.

The five storey stone-built factory forms the focus for the group, and originally had had several water-powered carding engines and up to sixty handlooms. Water was supplied from a stone-built dam high above Tan-yr-Allt (Madock's house) which fed a smaller reservoir about 50m above the factory. This fed both the mill and the factory pools via a series of leats, culverts and sluices. The factory was completed in 1805, and Madocks instructed that the building be *well yellowed* and the windows painted *dark green*.

The factory was probably the first of its kind in North Wales, the nearest equivalent being in Montgomeryshire, and undertook all stages of cloth production, carding, spinning, weaving and fulling. When the factory was put up for sale in 1810 (at a price 'not to exceed £3,500') it was described as being capable of producing 30 'ends' a week of 'mixed and medley cloth, kerseymeres, woollen cords, coatings, flannels and woollen goods of every description'.

At some stage in the last century the site was converted into a tannery, and a number of tanning pits were dug under what is now a concrete yard. By the turn of the century a laundry business was also in operation, initially occupying a building to the south-east of the tannery building. The tannery eventually closed and the site was taken over by the laundry business. The laundry closed about twenty-five years ago and some of the buildings were subsequently used as a garage and store for spare parts. The site has been unused for at least five years.

The Historical Importance of Madoc Tannery

This Grade II listed building is important in its own right and as a component of an early nineteenth-century rural industrial complex.

The tannery is a very good example of a purpose-built industrial structure and may well have been the first of its kind in North Wales.

It is a rare example of its type within Gwynedd and has particular value and should be given special consideration as an integral part of the Georgian planned town of Tremadog, the core of which survives relatively unchanged.

The building has considerable industrial architectural value and its place within the context of Georgian Tremadog gives it a particular social historical importance as well.

On-Site Assessment

The site comprises several early nineteenth century stone-built industrial and domestic buildings, and the remains of associated structures such as culverts. To the south-east of the factory building is a nineteenth century building of stone and brick, possibly the site of the original laundry. Built onto and around the early structures are a series of brick buildings with corrugated iron and slate roofing, supported by timber and iron roof trusses, most of which relate to the laundry building. Vegetation is encroaching in the north-east of the site, and the front of Bronhaul is entirely obscured.

Description of features (see plan for location of features)

1. The Factory

The factory is also known as 'the manufactory' or 'the tannery'. The building is built of rubble stone and has a slate roof. The building is largely obscured from the road by the large laundry building (no. 5). Originally the building had five storeys each with five elongate windows. Above each window is a 'false' slate lintel, and the windows of the upper storey have wooden louvres. Some of the windows at the back of the building have been partially or wholly blocked. The original five storeys have been converted, with the bottom four storeys being made into two. The roof has hipped gables with a shallow pitch and deep eaves. In the centre of the building are two low gablets, probably acting as ventilators. There are two tall chimney stacks, one at either end of the building. The building is partially built into the slope behind and the entrance on this side leads onto the present second storey.

Internally the building is divided into three storeys. The ground floor is entered through a brick lean-to (No. 7). There are a few features relating to the laundry such as water pipes and water tanks or boilers. The stairs leading to the second floor are concrete. The second floor is more interesting because parts of the driving machinery are still in place, and there are several pieces of equipment relating to the laundry (old ironing board and sewing machine). There are also receipt books and leaflets from the 1960s. The stairs leading to the upper floor are wood and very unsafe. The floor is sagging badly and could not be investigated. The tie-beams are supported in places and one is cracked.

2. Bronhaul

Bronhaul is built against the west gable of the factory, and is a two storey house constructed of rubble stone and with a slate roof. The house is well proportioned with sash windows and a gabled porch. The front of the house is obscured by vegetation. The garden has been encroached upon by a brick building relating to the laundry and garage (no. 6), which hides the house from the road. Internally the house is very dilapidated, and the upper storey is largely unsafe.

3. Loading bay

A brick built structure with stone foundations and a corrugated iron roof supported by cracked timber trusses. The building is built onto the south-west corner of the factory and there is access between the two.

4. Lean-to

An unroofed stone lean-to built against the east gable wall of the factory. The building is secondary because the impression of an earlier gabled roof line (no. 8) can be seen on the factory gable wall above the line of the lean-to roof.

5. Laundry Building

A large multi-phase building dominating the site. The 1901 Ordnance Survey 25" map shows a smaller rectangular building on this site. On the north side of the building is a stone and brick wall which may be the remains of this structure. Generally the building is single storey with a high roof, brick built with iron girders supporting a timber roof frame with corrugated iron roof. An addition on the west side has two storeys and a slate roof.

6. Garage

A rectangular brick-built structure with a corrugated iron roof, most recently used as a garage. The structure is built in the garden of Bronhaul and obscures the house from the road.

7. Lean-to

A brick-built single storey lean-to running the length of the south side of the factory and building no. 4.

8. Roof Line

The line of a gabled roof above the roofline line of no. 4 on the east gable of the factory.

9. Workshop

A stone-built building with a collapsing slate lean-to roof. Shelves containing spare parts and a work bench.

10. Toilets

Brick-built with a corrugated iron roof.

11. Platform

Raised stone-built roofless platform. A single course rectangular brick foundation may mark the site of a lightly constructed building. Probably part of the early phase of the site, use

unknown.

12. Culvert

Massively built stone culvert with slab roof, probably constructed in two phases. One of the roofing slabs is cracked. At the rear of the culvert is an iron pipe. On either side of the culvert run two smaller culverts. The culvert probably relates to the original use of the site.

13. Stone Foundations

Stone-built foundations, probably relating to the culvert. Part of the foundations incorporated into the wall of building No. 16.

14. Water tower

Tall iron water tower to the east of no. 13.

15. Revetment Wall

A high, slightly curved revetment wall built in steps. There is an opening in the north-east corner of the wall, about two metres above the present ground level. A later wall abuts the revetment from the west. The area in front of the wall is covered with small trees.

16. Boiler House

Boiler house with 'Chieftain' boiler *in situ*. The walls are of stone and brick and the roof corrugated iron. Part of the north wall includes the foundations of no. 13.

17. Tank House

Tank house with hot water tank *in situ*. Stone-built wall. To the rear of the building is a small yard area that may contain features relating to the early phase.

18. Revetment wall

A high stone-built revetment wall with three openings, one of which is blocked. A continuation from no. 15.

Recording Work

Preliminary recording work to be carried out before any building or site work commences. Man-days are indicated in brackets.

1. General photographic record related to a plan and brief notes. (2)
2. Hand clearance of vegetation and debris, particularly in front of Bronhaul and areas 13 - 15. This could be achieved using contractors' labour under supervision. Cleared areas to be photographed. (4 - 5)
3. EDM survey of building outlines and foundations. Annotation of survey and hand drawn detail of particular features. Some additional survey work outside the study area is needed to complete the picture of the complex. These features include a quarry to the north-west of the site, a leat system and a reservoir. The other buildings in Factory Place could be included in this survey. (3 for site, a further 2 for extra areas)
4. Selected building interiors to be cleaned and photographed. (see below).

The Factory

1. Ground plan of each floor at a scale of 1:50, hand drawn and related to EDM survey of site. Written description. (3)
2. Photographic record of internal and external elevations and detail of special features, relating to the ground plan above. (1)
3. External and internal elevations drawn at a scale of 1:50. Some detail may need to be added using scaffolding when erected. (4)
4. Internal roof construction to be photographed and drawn where possible. Extra work may arise if the floor is stabilised or scaffolding erected. (1)
5. Some of the equipment may be worth saving, certainly the belt driving machinery is a feature worthy of preservation. The paperwork relating to the laundry business could be deposited in the Gwynedd Archives.
6. The building to be cleared and cleaned for further architectural photography. (2)
7. Additional recording work may be required if any features of interest are uncovered during the contract.

Bronhaul

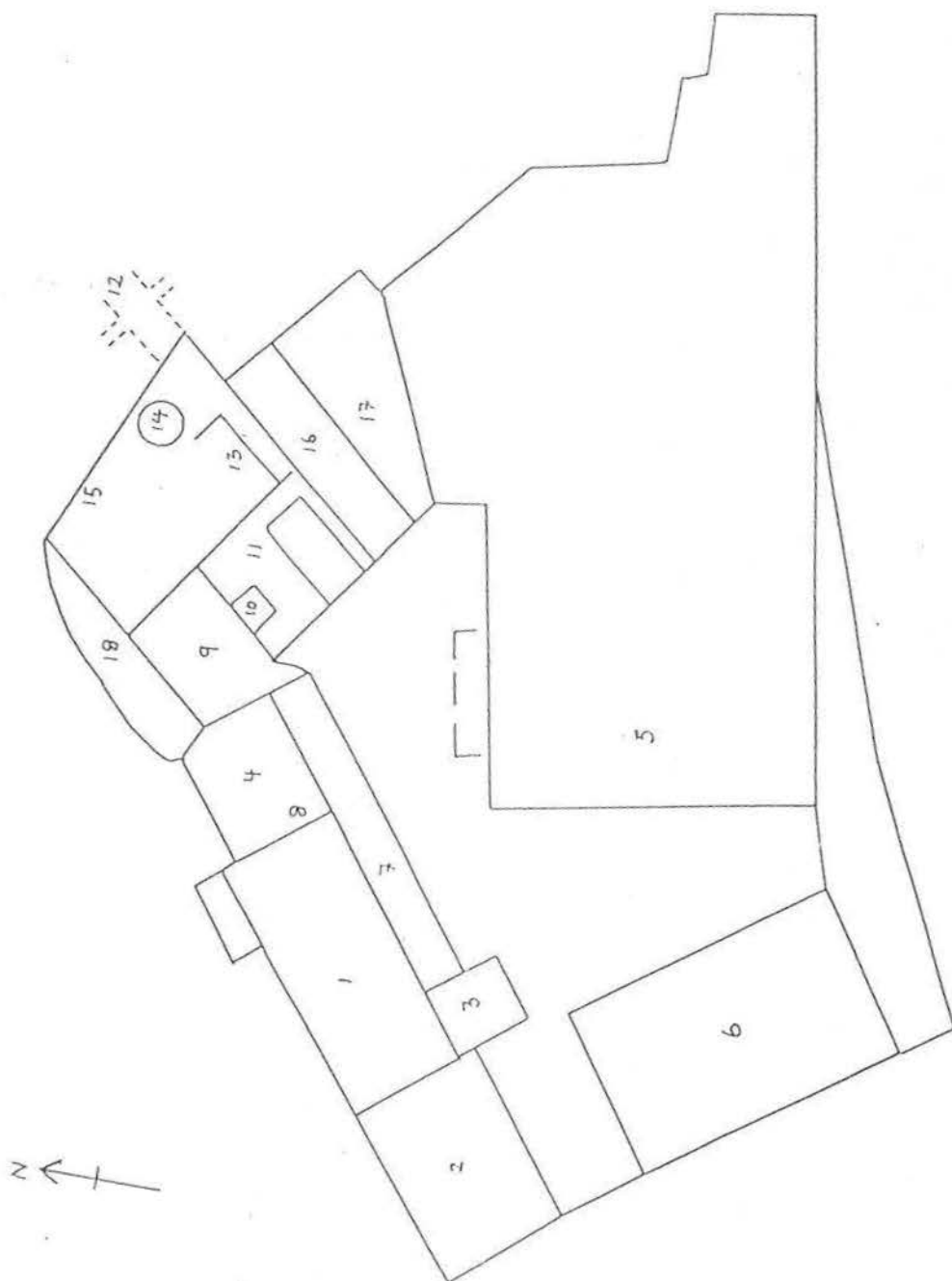
1. Clearance of vegetation and debris from the front of the house.
2. Ground plan of each floor at a scale of 1:50, hand drawn and relating to the EDM survey of the site. Written description. (1)
3. Photographic record of external elevations, detailed photographs of select features. General interior photographs relating to the plan. (1)
4. External front elevation drawn at a scale of 1:50. (1)
5. Further work may arise during the contract, for instance more photography if building 6 is demolished.

Other features

1. The culvert (no. 12) needs to be fully recorded by plan and photograph. Advice is needed on the safety of the culvert. (2)
2. The laundry building (no. 5) needs a phased plan to identify early elements. (3)
3. The revetment and openings (nos. 15 and 18) need detailed recording. (3)
4. The foundations (no.13) need clearing and recording. (5)

Work during contract

The results of the preliminary recording work should have some bearing on the building work to follow, for instance identifying early or important features. It is inevitable that during the contract work features will be uncovered, particularly tanning pits under the concrete yard. Provision should be made for recording these features in the contract.



TREMADOG TANNERY

SCALE APPROX 1:500

