

# Conservation Area Appraisal Maentwrog



Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd  
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust



# Conservation Area Appraisal

## Maentwrog

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 General Introduction

The following document constitutes an assessment of the Maentwrog Conservation Area (Figure 01), undertaken by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust on behalf of Snowdonia National Park Authority. The area is centred on NGR SH 6648 4042.

The aim of the appraisal is to describe & explain the historic character of the settlement in order to inform & support positive conservation & regeneration programmes. This will help improve the quality of planning advice, & contribute to local interpretation strategies. The survey will define the distinctive historical character of Maentwrog, & identify the variety of character within it. The aims of the survey are based upon the

understanding that the variety of character identified during the survey is fundamental to local distinctiveness & pride of place, & these are to be seen as assets within the process of regeneration.

## 1.2 Acknowledgements

Mr Gwilym Jones, Snowdonia National Park Authority instigated the project and generously provided help and information. The staff at Gwynedd Archives, the National Library of Wales, Bangor University Archives and the National Monuments Record, Aberystwyth are gratefully thanked for their help and for the provision of archive material relevant to this project.

# 2. Methodology

## 2.1 Introduction

A brief was provided by Snowdonia National Park Authority. The methodology employed to answer the brief is based upon that developed by Cadw following initial urban characterization projects undertaken by Welsh

Archaeological Trusts. These in turn were based upon a methodology developed in England for urban characterization and assessment, and also include English Heritage guidelines for Conservation Area Appraisal.<sup>1</sup>

The following methods were used to achieve the stated aims:

### Data Collection

This phase included the collection of data from regional and national historic environment records, including those kept at Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, RCAHMW, Cadw and National Museums and Galleries of Wales. Archive records were obtained from Gwynedd Archives, University of Wales, Bangor and National Library of Wales. The records were entered onto a database that was compatible with the regional Historic Environment Record, and their location identified through a geographical information system (MapInfo). Additional records and information sources were identified from historic maps, prints and photographs, and literature sources, including early antiquarian works.

### Characterisation

The characterisation process combined the understanding gained from the desk-based phase with comprehensive fieldwork and a visual assessment of the surviving historic fabric. The development of the topography of the settlement was noted, & phases of historic change identified. Distinctive architectural forms, materials & significant elements of town & streetscapes were recorded. This process allowed the identification of areas of distinctive character, & these formed the basis of the character areas presented in this report. Site visits were conducted on three separate occasions in January 2011 by representatives of the Trust.

**Right:**  
Plate 03 -  
The village is  
situated at the  
foot of a steep  
hillside over-  
looking the Vale  
of Ffestiniog



## 2.2 Principal Sources

The resources of the county record office at Dolgellau, the National Library of Wales and the University of Wales

Bangor were assessed. Aerial photographs were examined at the National Monuments Record, Aberystwyth.

## 2.3 Previous Archaeological Work

Little previous archaeological work has been carried out within the current Maentwrog Conservation area. The archaeology of the quays & shipping has been studied by Michael Lewis.<sup>2</sup> A history of the house & family at Plas Tan y Bwlch

were the subject of a monograph.<sup>3</sup> The work of the church architect, John Douglas has been studied in detail.<sup>4</sup> The architecture of the village is described in the recent Pevsner volume for Gwynedd.<sup>5</sup>

# 3. The Planning Process

## 3.1 Introduction

Details of the planning process and how it affects management of the conservation area can be found in Appendix I.

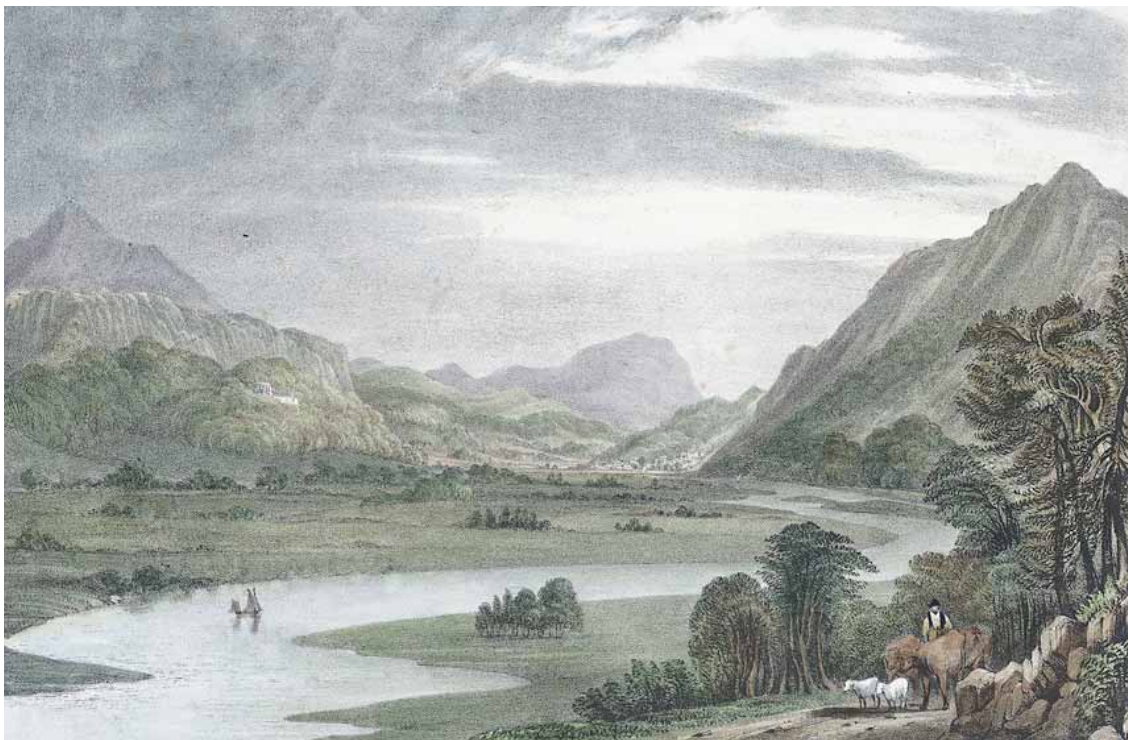
## 3.2 Statutory & Non Statutory Protection

Maentwrog is completely located within the Snowdonia National Park. There are 43 listed buildings within the Conservation Area itself or immediately adjacent to it, all of which are listed at Grade II (see Appendix 4). There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments within or immediately adjacent to the Conservation Area.

Plas Tan y Bwlch is a registered Historic Park & Garden (PGW(Gd) 31 (GWY) at grade II\*, as a 'more or less intact example of a mid-Victorian landscaped estate of house, garden, wooded park, valley & estate village, set in the magnificent scenery of the Ffestiniog area of North Wales. From the house & its garden terrace there are outstanding views across the landscape & conversely the house & garden form a conspicuous and picturesque object within it.'<sup>6</sup>

Maentwrog is not located within a landscape of Outstanding or Special Interest in Wales, as defined by (Cadw/ICOMOS 1998, 91).





**Left:**  
Plate 02 -  
Looking over  
Maentwrog  
to Plas Tan y  
Bwlch visible in  
the centre on  
the wooded hill-  
side

## 4. Landscape & Setting

### 4.1 Extent Of Area

The extent of the area included within this study is shown on figure 01. It includes the conservation area and surrounding farmsteads.

### 4.2 Landscape Setting

Maentwrog is located in the Vale of Ffestiniog, a valley long regarded as one of the classic North Wales beauty spots. The river winds through a wide valley with steep tree-covered slopes either side framed by high mountains. Samuel Lewis says the 'surrounding scenery is richly diversified with verdant meadows and luxuriant groves, beautifully contrasting with the barren and precipitous mountains by which this portion of the vale is enclosed'.<sup>7</sup> The valley bottom was drained in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and the river constrained with flood banks by William Oakeley of Plas Tan y Bwlch, for which he received a gold medal of the Society of Arts in 1797, but prior to that much of the valley bottom would have been a wide tidal estuary, and the environment one of salt marsh and mud flats. (Plates 01 & 02)

The valley runs west-east from the coast to the foot of the hills below Ffestiniog, a distance of approximately

seven kilometres. Some five kilometres from the sea the village of Maentwrog is situated on a narrow north-south shelf on the south side of the river at the foot of a steep hillside. This was the highest navigable point, and a convenient crossing point, where the Roman road from Tomen Mur crossed the valley, and where subsequently a bridge was built over the Dwyryd to carry the north-south road. It was the highest convenient navigable part of the river, and exports of timber and later slate are regularly recorded from Camlyn (south-west of the village) in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Lower down the river lay the quays used by the Ffestiniog slate quarries prior to the construction of the Ffestiniog Railway.

The house of Plas Tan y Bwlch on the north side of the valley looks south across the river, with clear views east to the village and church of Maentwrog lying at the foot of a 120m high wooded hill. The village is, in the main, a creation of the estate, developed in picturesque style to frame the view from the house. Whilst the parish church, built in Arts and Crafts style by John Douglas, is in centre view, the non-conformist chapels are built in locations not visible from the Plas, reflecting the Anglicanism of the family in a gentrified landscape of authority.<sup>8</sup> (Plate 03)

## 5. Historical Development

### 5.1 Prehistoric & Roman Origins

No prehistoric or Roman sites are known from within the village of Maentwrog, although a possible early prehistoric flint knife has been found nearby at Penglannau (PRN 4348). A Bronze Age palstave (axe-head) has been found south of the village (PRN 3903; NGR SH 66004000 A). This find suggests prehistoric activity within the area, and the location of the present settlement on a narrow shelf of land just above the former tidal limits means it would have been a suitable area for settlement. On the higher ground to the north there is surviving evidence of prehistoric funerary and ritual activity of probable Bronze Age date, with a cairn at Carnedd Hywel (PRN 1530; SH 64974147) and cist burial at the suggestively named Bedd y Soldiwr (PRN 6114; SH 66004175). The stone of Twrog, outside the church, may well be a prehistoric standing stone in origin.

An earthwork north of Maentwrog (PRN 83; SH 66104065) is of unknown but possibly late prehistoric date, and may represent

a small enclosed farmstead within the Dwyrdd valley. However its location on low lying land suggests that it may be more recent in date, post-dating the reclamation works. Clearer evidence for late prehistoric settlement can be found to the south east of the village with a hut group at Penglann (PRN 1813; SH 67563925) and a possible hut circle (PRN 1815; SH 68353919).

No sites of Roman date are known from within the area, although an inscribed stone built into the wall of the Grapes Hotel in Maentwrog is thought to be from the Roman Fort at Tomen y Mur, 4.4km to the east (PRN 5080). The Roman road from the fort at Tomen y Mur to Segontium ran east-west, and is located about 500m north of Pont Maentwrog (PRN 17,544; SH 66374124). This suggests that Roman activity is likely to be focused in the area north of the Afon Dwyrdd, and Roman pottery has been found at Ty Coch, about 500m north of Pont Maentwrog. (Plate 04)

**Right:**  
Plate 04 -  
Roman in-  
scribed stone  
built into The  
Grapes Hotel.





## 5.2 Medieval Development

Maentwrog is included in the Merioneth lay subsidy rolls of 1293-4, which uniquely within the county records the presence of a hosteler, suggesting that it was already by this time a stopping point for travelers in the region. The township of Maentwrog was composed of 29 free gafaelion, though, despite being of free tenure, the occupiers owed suit of mill to the crown mills at Taltreuddyn. To what extent the boundaries of the township of Maentwrog are co-terminous with the parish boundary is not known, though such a relationship is very possible. The church, originally dedicated to St Mary, was founded in medieval times, and though no medieval work survives, the present church built in 1896 lies on the site of the earlier building.

The first reference to Tan y Bwlch comes in 1429, when it is referred to as being in the 'township of Ffestynyok'.<sup>9</sup> The estate itself probably began as a modest holding in the possession of Ieuan ap Iorwerth ap Adda, who died in about 1530,

with much of the land in Maentwrog being added to the estate as a result of the marriage of Robert Evans to Lowry Price, the granddaughter of Edmund Prys, Rector of Maentwrog.

Maentwrog appears in the fourth branch of the Mabinogi, a prose tale thought to have been written down in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. After crossing Traeth Mawr, fleeing south from the army of Math, Pryderi is killed in single combat by Gwydion at Felinrhyd (which survives as a place name one mile to the west), and was subsequently buried at Maentwrog. Another legend concerns Twrog casting a huge boulder off the cliff - the stone now stands next to the church tower and gives its name to the parish. (Plate 05)



**Left:**  
Plate 05 -  
The name  
'Maentwrog' is,  
by tradition, de-  
rived from the  
stone of Twrog,  
which is located  
at the south-  
west corner  
of the parish  
church.

**Right:**

Plate 06 -  
The church of  
St Mary and St  
Twrog designed  
by Douglas and  
Fordham in  
1896. It occu-  
pies the site of  
the medieval  
parish church



**Far right:**

Plate 07 -  
Plas Tan y  
Bwlch from  
Maentwrog



### 5.3 The Picturesque Landscape

The history & development of the village is closely tied to the estate & family of Tan y Bwlch. The house at Plas Tan y Bwlch is, in origin, an 18th-century house with contemporary gardens. It is thought that there has been a house on the present site since 1748, built by the Griffith family & possibly replacing a house on the nearby site of the Oakley Arms, though the original site is not known with certainty. In 1789 the heiress Margaret Griffith married William Oakeley, & they instigated a period of considerable investment in buildings and estate improvement. William was awarded a gold medal from the Society of Arts in 1797 for his work constraining the river and draining the valley. Investment was continued by their son William Griffith Oakeley (1790-1835) who remodelled parts of Plas Tan y Bwlch. In 1823 William Griffith went to live in Berkshire, and appointed his cousin, another William Oakeley (son of Sir Charles Oakeley, 1<sup>st</sup> Baronet of Shrewsbury) to run the estate for him. William Oakeley lived at the Lodge, which he renamed Glan William. The Lodge is where the writer Thomas Love Peacock stayed for a year in 1810-11, when he described Maentwrog as containing seven houses<sup>10</sup> (the house is now known as the Old Rectory, after it was offered for use to the church in 1900, and it remained the rectory until the 1970's, when it became a hotel).

William Griffith died in 1835, a year after William Oakeley had died. The estate was left to WG's wife, Louisa Jane, and eventually in

1873 to William Edward Oakeley, nephew of WG, and son of William Oakeley. William Edward, like his father, stayed initially at Glan William when at Maentwrog, but when Louisa Jane moved out in 1868 he went to live at the Plas.

Many of the earlier surviving buildings in Maentwrog date from the period of investment by W G Oakeley, and in particular from the 1820's and 1830's when working with his cousin and nephew. These included building a new church (1814, later rebuilt 1896), the Grapes Hotel, and the houses along the south side of Bull Street adjoining the Grapes (built 1834). Many buildings date from the middle of the century, but to what extent these were under the direct patronage of Louisa Jane Oakeley, or were instigated instead by her nephew William Edward, isn't known. However, from 1868 to his death in 1912, William Edward, though short of money in later years, was responsible for continued investment in the village, including rebuilding many of the houses, building the new school in 1871-2, and rebuilding the church in 1896. He had married, in 1860, Mary Russell, daughter of Commander John Russell and Sophia Coussmaker, Baroness de Clifford. Mary's memorial records that she was responsible for the oak carving in the church, revealing an interest in arts and crafts which may well also indicate influence in decisions regarding the design of the gardens and buildings. The rebuilt



**Left:**  
Plate 08 -  
Maentwrog  
from the terrace  
at Plas Tan  
y Bwlch

church was designed by Douglas & Fordham, and it is possible Douglas also helped redesign the house; he certainly designed the Top Lodge, but whether he had any influence on the designs of the village buildings is not known.<sup>11</sup> (Plate 06)

During the early 19<sup>th</sup> century the economy shifted from a primarily agricultural base to an industrial one, as a result of the development of the slate quarrying industry at Blaenau Ffestiniog. The Oakeley's benefited from this through increased income, which was ploughed back into estate improvements. River trade also increased until the Ffestiniog Railway was opened in 1836. Eighteenth century wharfs existed at Cemlyn, and possibly at Glanwilliam, and later larger slate quays were built lower down the river. The quay at Gelli Grin, in addition to exporting slate, was also used to load stone from Gelli Grin quarry which produced long square columns of schist, found in many of the buildings at Maentwrog.<sup>12</sup>

An insight into the workings of the river trade is given by Richard Fenton who visited the area in 1804 and stated that he 'strolled under Tan y Bwlch House as far as the estuary, and returned along the embankment on the opposite side of the river wharf, on which lay vast quantities of a delicate blue slate of all sizes, ready for shipping. Vessels of 200 tons come up the river to be loaded at spring tides, and the slates are sent down in boats from the wharf to them'.<sup>13</sup> (Figure 05)

In 1836 the Festiniog Railway was opened as a horse-drawn line, its route running through the grounds of Plas Tan y Bwlch. Steam locomotives started to operate in 1863. It closed in 1939, but was re-opened as a tourist line in the 1950's, since which time it has developed into a major tourist attraction, with a halt still at Tan y Bwlch.

Following the death of William Edward Oakeley in 1912, and his wife two years later, the estate was divided between their son and daughter, Edward and Mary Caroline, the former inheriting the house, and the latter the lands south of the river, including the village. Edward's lands were bought by Hilda Mary Inge, daughter of Mary Caroline, who inherited sufficient wealth from her father to keep the estate as a summer home, whilst her main home was elsewhere. Her mother outlived her, however, and died in 1961, when the estate was sold to pay death duties. There is little evidence for investment in the village by the family during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1975, following eventual purchase for the Snowdonia National Park, Plas Tan y Bwlch was opened as a study centre. The views from the terrace of the house overlooking Maentwrog are similar to those enjoyed by the occupants of the house a century earlier, and are still painted, photographed and appreciated by the residents attending courses at the centre. (Plate 08)



## 6. Present Settlement Character

### 6.1 The Topographic Development

The village of Maentwrog is located at the foot of a west facing bluff, on ground sloping down to the estuary. The shelf on which the village is located is narrow, with steep slopes behind. The single main street, Bull Street, curves around the bluff and leads eventually along the Afon Dwyryd and then south towards Harlech. Bull Street occupies a terrace some 10m above Ordinary Tides, and close to the edge of the estuary, whilst the church is lower down, and very close to the tidal limits of the river.

The north end of the village is defined by the former 18<sup>th</sup> century toll house, Cedrwydd, at the south end of Pont Maentwrog. From here the main street runs south, passing The Old Rectory (formerly Glan William), and the Grapes Hotel, which is at the north end of a terrace, of which the former co-op is dated 1834, and a later extension to the Grapes is dated 1853. These lie to the

west of the road on sloping ground, and are of two storeys at street level, but with a lower storey at the rear. At this point the steep cliffs and slopes prevent any development east of the road. This seems to have been the limits of the settlement in 1834, though it quickly developed both to the south and south-east, where there was now space for development. To the south the houses of Pen y Bryn, Llys Twrog and Cartref were built. Llys Twrog was interestingly sited at right-angles to the road to create an open space alongside the road close to the church entrance. (Plates 09, 23 & 24)

On the east side of Bull Street the first development may have been Tan Lan, a tall four storey building with a renewed timber verandah. The building housed the 'Oakeley Reading Room'. South of Tan Lan are a group of buildings of similar date, consisting of three Georgian houses

**Right:**  
Plate 09 -  
Bull Street with  
Llys Twrog at  
right-angles at  
the top of the  
street.



accessed by attractive stone steps from Bull Street. A second parallel set of steps leads to Bryn, a series of apartments built alongside. (Plates 11 & 25)

To the south again the road divides, going south and west to Harlech, and south and east to Gellilydan (Plate 10). The Old School House, early 19th century in date, lies at the foot of the Gellilydan road. Behind and



above the Old School House are the late 19th century terraces of Fron Goch and Fron Fair. Capel Gilgal, not built until 1919, lies further along the Gellilydan Road. Ty Capel and Ty Nant mark the edge of the village limits in this direction. (Plates 11 & 30)

Development on the Harlech road includes the second school to be built (late 19th century) and two pairs of semi-detached contemporary houses. After crossing a small stream, there is a small estate of 20th century houses (Coed Camlyn). Derlwyn, a small late 19th century estate cottage on the south side of the road with a hay barn opposite effectively marks the south-west end of the village – these are marked ‘store houses’ on the 1900 OS map, and must be associated with the quay of Cemlyn, which lay a short distance west. A pair of late 19th century cottages, Dolwaen, and a roadside house called Cemlyn, lie outside the present village limits, and closer to the site of the quay. These currently lie outside the Conservation Area. (Plates 12 & 29)

**Far left:**

Plate 10 -  
Towards the south end of Bull Street the road divides



**Left:**

Plate 11 -  
Penlan lies set-back and above the east side of Bull Street



## 6.2 Present Settlement Character

The village has a very clear late Georgian estate character which is continued well into the Victorian period. Examples of Victorian architecture appear in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the church and lych gate provide a good example of the Arts and Crafts style.

Stone is the primary building material, rarely rendered, and varying from a light to dark grey. However this may not always have been the case, as in his tour of 1798 John Evans writes 'the village of Maentwrog, with its white-washed cottages, is truly picturesque'<sup>14</sup>, suggesting a settlement of smaller, white-washed houses pre-dating the building of the Grapes Inn & Bull Street terrace. The use of the term picturesque, which in 1798 was in the process of being redefined as an aesthetic ideal by writers & land-owners such as Gilpin, Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight suggests the manner in which the village was perceived not only by visitors but presumably also by the Oakeley's.

At the north end of the village the old 18<sup>th</sup> century bridge is now only used for traffic heading north, and the village is entered by an approach road which lies at the east end

of the modern concrete bridge which carries the A487 over the Afon Dwyryd (Plates 12,14). The approach road meets the old road by the former toll house, which, of local stone varying from dark to light grey, & decorated with rectangular window labels & projecting eaves sets the tone for the village. The road through the village is a well-used 'A' road, which carries heavy loads, & this does make it difficult to appreciate the village whilst walking through, & even more difficult whilst driving through. Nonetheless, there are many buildings of individual character which contribute to the overall effect of Georgian vernacular. The first of these, going south from the toll house, is the Old Rectory, the former home of William Edward Oakeley, which was remodelled and enlarged in the 1830's. This is the house of greatest architectural status within the village, proclaimed not just by size but by the coursed masonry blocks, central pediment with oculus and very deep eaves. The stone chimneys rising from the ridge are in two pairs, each pair linked by stone arches. The stables, renovated to a high standard, lie further along the road towards the village centre (Plates 13 & 37).

**Right:**  
Plate 12 -  
The 18th  
century bridge  
currently carries  
traffic out  
of the village  
heading north







**Left:**  
Plate 13 -  
The Old Rectory, formerly  
Glan William.



**Left:**  
Plate 14 -  
The modern  
bridge carries  
the A487 traffic  
across the Afon  
Dwyrdd

The Grapes Hotel lies at the north end of a significant terrace of three houses dated 1834, and with the exception of the toll house and the Old Rectory these are some of the earliest surviving buildings in the village. The hotel, originally known as the Maentwrog Inn, had been renamed 'The Grapes' by 1854, when George Borrow stayed there.<sup>15</sup> The inn and terrace are

built in coursed grey stone blocks (the middle house in a darker stone), of two storeys facing the main street, with overhanging eaves, solid transverse stone chimneys and 12-pane sash windows. Bwlch y Maen, the northernmost house, & formerly a co-operative, has large shop windows on the ground floor. There are several indicators to suggest the inn and terrace

**Right:**  
Plate 15 -  
The east front  
of the Grapes  
Hotel



**Right:**  
Plate 16 -  
The rear of Bull  
Street showing  
variation in the  
style and align-  
ment of the ma-  
sonry





are not all of a single build, though the solid front of coursed masonry does not indicate any clear breaks between the buildings. The rear of the terrace is built of uncoursed rubble stone, and shows a number of variations in the masonry. The old stables of the inn, to the north, lie partly alongside the road, and are in a dilapidated condition. (Plates 15-18)

Opposite the terrace is Tan Lan, a tall four storey building, of smaller stone perhaps originally meant to be rendered (the north gable is still rendered) with a striking two storey verandah which served, at first floor level, the Oakeley reading room. Beyond Tan Lan is a small open space housing the war memorial. (Plate 19)



**Far left:**  
Plate 17 -  
The former  
stables of the  
Grapes Hotel

**Left:**  
Plate 18 -  
The former toll  
house at the  
south end of the  
bridge



**Left:**  
Plate 19 -  
Tan Lan is of  
four storeys,  
with a rebuilt  
wooden veran-  
dah

To the south again, Llys Twrog is typically Georgian vernacular, double fronted with three sash windows at first floor level, gabled porch and end chimneys. Its location at right angles to the street with no development in front makes it particularly striking, & formerly created a village square, though this is now less evident. Set back from the street, at right angles to Llys Twrog, are two other houses, formerly commercial buildings (shop and inn) with gabled dormers.

John Douglas's lych gate links the northern house of these houses (Pen y Bryn) with Neuadd Llywelyn at the south end of the terrace – half-timbered with a pyramid clock turret. (Plates 20-22)

Opposite Llys Twrog, but higher up the slope & reached by stone steps, are the houses at Penlan & Argraig, again typically Georgian vernacular, though Penlan has overhanging eaves. Dominating to the south is the tall four storey block of Bryn, seemingly built as apartments, with little

**Right:**

Plate 20 -  
The half-timbered lych gate between Pen y Bryn and Neuadd Llywelyn



**Right:**

Plate 21 -  
Llys Twrog at right-angles to Bull Street formed a village square in front



**Far right:**

Plate 22 -  
The square was more of a feature in the early 20th century than it is now.





architectural detail, but in keeping with the character of the remainder. The main steps leading to Penlan are supplemented by a parallel smaller (lower status) steps leading to Bryn (Plate 23).

A group of buildings on the lower road to Harlech are typical of late 19<sup>th</sup> century development, consisting of the school & two pairs of contemporary cottages (Glan-dwr). These feature decorative patterned slate roofs, the school has a central spire, whilst the houses have dominant central chimney

stacks. Half dormer windows are a feature, in the case of the school they are hipped, with decorative barge boards. The houses have a front verandah, & are set back from the road behind a low stone wall with iron railings. South of this group is a 20<sup>th</sup> century housing estate, Coed Camlyn, set back from the road, & south again is Derlwyn, Cemlyn & Dolwaen, formerly associated with the quay at Cemlyn (Plates 24-27). Dolwaen, with its window labels & extended eaves, echoes the toll house at the north end of the village.



**Far Left:**

Plate 23 - Steps leading up to Penlan and Argraig - note the parallel narrower steps to Bryn

**Left:**

Plate 24 - Late 19<sup>th</sup> century former school (Yr Hen Ysgol)



**Left:**

Plate 25 - The cottages south of Yr Hen Ysgol at Glan-dwr.



**Far left:**

Plate 26 - Dolwaen at the south-eastern edge of the village.

**Left:**

Plate 27 - A hay-barn at Derlwyn, at the south end of the village

The Gellilydan road is initially built up on the north side only, the south side being too steep. The old school with round central doorway, roughly coursed rubble masonry and half-gabled dormers with strong coping slabs and ball finials is early 19<sup>th</sup> century in date, as presumably is the small school

house alongside, currently (2011) under renovation. Higher up the hill are Frongoch and Fron Fair terraces, the latter reached by a track which runs along the hillside back to Bryn. Fron Fair consists of five two-storey cottages with casement windows, and solid stone chimney stacks. Frongoch

**Right:**  
Plate 28 -  
The Old School  
House



**Right:**  
Plate 29 -  
Capel Gilgal  
(built 1919)





is similar, but with gabled dormer windows. Higher up the hill is Capel Gilgal (1919), unusually for Maentwrog built in gothic style, and also unusually with light sandstone dressings. (Plates 28-32)



**Far Left:**  
Plate 30 -  
Looking south  
along the Gelli-  
lydan road past  
Frongoch Ter-  
race to Glasfryn

**Left:**  
Plate 31 -  
Frongoch Ter-  
race



**Left:**  
Plate 32 -  
Fron Fair Ter-  
race

**Right:**

Plate 33 -  
The east front  
facing Bull  
Street is of  
coursed stone  
with long schist  
lintels. The ga-  
ble and rear  
of the build-  
ings are of un-  
coursed rubble



**Right:**

Plate 34 -  
The Old Rec-  
tory is built of  
coursed schist  
blocks from  
the Gelli Grin  
quarry





## 6.3 The Character Of Building

### 6.3.1 Wall Materials & Finishes

Maentwrog is a village of stone, the majority of it locally derived, consisting of dark to light grey igneous stone. Most buildings are rubble built, either coursed or uncoursed, and of relatively large stones, whilst others are of coursed blocks. Considerable use is made of the schist columns or slabs derived from the Gelli Grin quarry, which form lintels, columns, gat-posts and sills. The Old Rectory is built entirely from this stone, but in other buildings it is more

typically used for lintels which are so long they form a nearly continuous horizontal course across the building. Tan Lan, opposite the Grapes Inn, is of much smaller, browner stone, and one wonders if this was originally designed to be rendered. The front of the Grapes Inn and the attached terrace is built of coursed grey stone blocks, with schist lintels. As is often the case, the rear of the inn and houses are of uncoursed rubble. (Plates 33-37)



**Left:**  
Plate 35 -  
Tal-yr-Bont is  
built of small  
stone, perhaps  
originally meant  
to be rendered



**Far left:**  
Plate 36 -  
The terrace on  
Bull Street is  
again of small-  
er stone, but  
darker than Tal  
y Bont



**Left:**  
Plate 37 -  
The former  
Glan William  
Stables is built  
of larger stone  
blocks

### 6.3.2 Roofs

Roofs consist of standard quarried slate. Llys Twrog has earlier graded slates, but the majority of the other buildings are roofed in standard sizes, suggesting many of the earlier buildings may have been re-slatted. The late 19<sup>th</sup> century former school & adjoining houses have patterned slate roofs. Many of the roofs use long slabs of Gelli Grin schist as coping stones down the edge of

the roofs (Plates 38 - 40. Some of the roofs, of which the Old Rectory is the clearest example, have overhanging eaves, a feature found more in the south of Gwynedd than in the north. (Plate 34) Chimney stacks are of stone, and their height and mass mean they are often visually dominant. The chimney on the former toll house is set diagonally. The two pairs of chimneys

**Right:**

Plate 38 -  
Late 19<sup>th</sup> century patterned roof slates and half dormers at Glan-dwr



**Far right:**

Plate 39 -  
Large stone chimneys, often with dripstones, are a feature of many of the roofs



**Right:**

Plate 40 -  
Small slates at Llys Twrog





on the Old Rectory are each linked by stone arches. The large rectangular chimneys on the Grapes are set transversely. Many of the chimneys have protruding stones (dripstones) to shed the water off the chimney, and protect the joint between stack and roof. (Plates 34 - 40) Gabled dormers, in particular half-dormers, are a

feature of many houses, such as Pen y Bryn (next to the lych gate) and Fron Goch terrace. Yr Hen Ysgol has hipped dormers. (Plates 38, 41 & 43) Spires can be found on the church tower, lych gate and later 19<sup>th</sup> century school. (Plates 42 & 43)



**Left:**

Plate 41 -  
Note the coping stones and half dormers at Pen y Bryn



**Far Left:**

Plate 42 -  
The half-timbered lych-gate with spire



**Left:**

Plate 43 -  
Hipped dormers and spire at Yr Hen Ysgol

**Right:**

Plate 44 -

The stone steps and moulded hand rail from Gelli Grin stone at Pen Lan and Bryn



#### 6.3.3 Architectural Detail

The majority of the buildings are relatively plain and unadorned. However this ignores some important peculiarities of style. The Old Rectory front has a central pediment with single round window. The former toll house has rectangular window labels of slate. The Old Schoolhouse has a round arched central doorway, and ball finials on gabled dormers. Prominent verandah's can be seen at Tan Lan and Glan-dwr, the former mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, and the latter late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The majority of the windows are small pane sash windows, of which there are many good examples. The windows in Fron Fair terrace are casement opening.

#### 6.3.4 Boundaries

The boundaries are generally a mixture of stone walls & hedgerows. Great use is made of the Gelli Grin schist for gateposts, and in particular on the stone steps up to Pen Lan for both the steps & the central dividing wall, where the wall is topped with a shaped coping with rounded central ridge. Good examples of iron railings can be found in front of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century school & the adjoining houses. (Plate 38)

Within the drained part of the Dwyrdd valley flood embankments are noted, some of which date back to the drainage work of the Tan y Bwlch estate in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century (Plate 45).

#### 6.4 Building Types

Nearly all buildings are now domestic, many of them holiday homes, either let out or second homes. The two former schools are both converted, as are the former shops. The Grapes survives as an inn. The church is in regular use, and Capel Gilgal appears to be in use, though this

was not confirmed. The former Methodist chapel north-west of the village has been converted. The houses along Bull Street are typically detached and originally of higher status than the terraces which lie to the south-east. The exception is the terrace of three houses adjoining the Grapes.





**Left:**  
Plate 45 -  
Banks lined  
with trees are  
a feature of the  
reclaimed estu-  
ary, but stone  
boundary walls  
feature more  
prominently  
within the vil-  
lage

## 7. Archaeological Resource

It is possible that evidence for medieval settlement survives around the church. The road through the valley is an ancient route and with the river crossing would have provided a focus for settlement. Much of the reclaimed land adjacent to the river is unlikely to have high archaeological potential, although there is evidence for prehistoric and Roman activity within

the wider area, particularly close to the former river banks. The area to the north of the Afon Dwryd is likely to have some potential for Roman activity, as it lies close to the route of the Roman Road from Tomen y Mur to Segontium. There is good potential for the survival of industrial archaeology at Cemlyn Quay.

## 8. Statement Of Significance

Maentwrog is a settlement of medieval origin, lying on the route of a Roman road at the first major crossing point of the Dwryd estuary. Very few pre-19<sup>th</sup> century buildings survive, and the present settlement should be seen as an estate village of early 19<sup>th</sup> century origins, but with strong estate patronage and investment continuing to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The very high percentage of listed buildings provides an indication of the significance of the built heritage, which contains good examples of Georgian architecture, both relatively formal, as at the Old Rectory and The Grapes, but also in more vernacular style both as

detached houses and in terraces. The late 19<sup>th</sup> century school and Glan-dwr cottages reflect the Victorian period, whilst the church and lych gate by Douglas and Fordham are good examples of the Arts and Crafts style of the 1890's. The buildings are sited to provide a picturesque view looking up the Vale of Ffestiniog from Plas Tan y Bwlch, in a partly created landscape of reclamation and drainage, but with a backdrop of wooded hills and mountains. The settlement is a good example of a 19<sup>th</sup> century picturesque estate village created under the patronage of improving landlords who moved in influential social circles.

## 9. Management Recommendations

### 9.1 Conservation Area Boundary (Figure 01)

Alterations to the conservation area boundary are recommended, and these are shown on Figure 1. To the south of the church yard it is recommended that the Conservation Area be extended to incorporate two farm buildings adjacent to the cemetery. It is also suggested that the conservation area boundary be extended to the east to include Ty Nant and the former

tannery, which form an integral part of the village. The reclaimed land to the west of the settlement is also recommended for inclusion as it includes an area of improvement and flood defences initiated by William Oakeley in 1797 and to include Cemlyn and the listed Dolwaen on the Harlech road to the west of the village.

### 9.2 Other Recommendations

Significant quantities of revetment walling, in the local Gelli Grin shale survive, particularly in the centre of the village. This adds much character to the village and needs to be retained. The War Memorial area provides a valuable public space and seating within the centre of the village, and this should be retained and perhaps improved as an amenity.

There has been considerable retention of historic sash windows within the village and where windows have been replaced this has generally been done in a sympathetic fashion. There are a few examples of uPVC windows present, and this should be discouraged.

The bus stop in the centre of the village is of a less appropriate design than the stop at the north end of the village, and contrasts unfavourably with it. The centre stop is constructed of an intrusive brick with poor quality stone cladding. This forms an unsympathetic group with a modern style telephone kiosk and consideration should be given to improvements to this area

There are few problems at Maentwrog with intrusive street furniture, however some minor landscape improvement could with advantage be carried out in the area of the Sewage Pumping Station and Treatment Works .



## 10. Bibliography

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## Endnotes

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- 2 Lewis 1989 Sails on the Dwyrdd
- 3 Hughes 1989 House on a Hill
- 4 Hubbard 1989 The Work of  
John Douglas
- 5 Haslam et al, 2009 Gwynedd
- 6 Cadw/ICOMOS Register of  
Landscapes, Parks and Gardens  
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Wales-Conwy, Gwynedd & The  
Isle of Anglesey 1998, 275
- 7 Lewis 1833 Topographical  
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- 8 GAT 2003 Historic Landscape  
Characterisation-Vale of Ffestiniog
- 9 Hughes 1989 House on a Hill
- 10 Madden 1987, 229; Joukovsky  
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- 11 Hubbard 1991, The Work  
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- 12 Haslam et al. 2009 Gwynedd;
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Evans 1804, 137
- 15 Borrow 1862

# Appendix I: The Planning Process

## Conservation Areas

The 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act places a duty on every local planning authority to determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. The Act defines a conservation area as 'an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. The Act also states that the local planning authority should, from time to time, formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these conservation areas. The location and extent of the Nant Peris Conservation Area is shown in Fig. 1.

## Local Plan Policies

Current regional and local plan policies are defined in Gwynedd Structure Plan (adopted 1993) and, for the National Park, Eryri Local Plan (adopted 1999). The plan can be consulted in the offices of the National Park, or online at [http://www.eryri-npa.co.uk/images/eryri\\_local\\_plan/elp\\_english.pdf](http://www.eryri-npa.co.uk/images/eryri_local_plan/elp_english.pdf). Policies concerning archaeology, including historic towns, are given in section 5, policies AR 1-4. Policies concerning the built heritage, including listed buildings and conservation areas, are given section 6, policies TA 1-12.

## Heritage & Local Planning Context

**Snowdonia National Park Authority**  
The Cultural Heritage Section within the Planning and Cultural Heritage Service works to protect and enhance the archaeology, historic buildings and culture of the National Park. The Section provides advice to the public on which buildings are listed, and on any proposed alterations requiring Listed Building Consent or Planning Permission. Advice on Conservation Areas and the Built Heritage is given by the National Park Planning Department through their Building Conservation Officer. Advice on the management of the archaeological heritage is provided by the National Park Archaeologist. Together they contribute to the decision making processes to inform on the likely impact of development on the historic environment and how best to mitigate the impact.

The local Planning authorities are recognised and identified as having the key role in protecting our archaeological heritage. Government advice and planning case law clearly establish archaeology as a 'material consideration' in the planning authorities' assessment and determination of a planning application. This is seen both in national and regional policy documents and guidelines.

The protection of the vulnerable historic environment falls into two broad categories: Statutory protection and non-statutory protection.

Statutory protection is provided by the following Acts and Orders:

- The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, as amended by the National Heritage Act 1983
- The Town and Country Planning Act 1990
- The Planning and Compensation Act 1991
- Statutory Instrument 1199, the Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988
- Statutory Instrument 1995 No. 419, The Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995

Designations arising from these Acts and Orders are Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas.

Non-statutory protection is provided by national policies and guidelines contained within:

- Planning Policy Wales, March 2002
- Welsh Office Circular 60/96, Planning and the Historic Environment: Archaeology, December 1996
- Welsh Office Circular 61/96, Planning and the Historic Environment: Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas, December 1996.

## Archaeology and Local Planning Context

### Relevant Extracts from Welsh Office Circular 60/96

Archaeological remains are a finite, and non-renewable resource, in many cases highly fragile and vulnerable to damage and destruction. [Paragraph 3]

Archaeological remains are part of our cultural heritage, not least in terms of the information they provide about the past, valuable both for their own sake, and for their role in education leisure and tourism. [Paragraph 3]

The key to the future of the great majority of archaeological sites and historic landscapes lies with local authorities, acting within the framework set by central government, in their various capacities as planning, highways, education and recreational authorities. [Paragraph 7]

Local planning authorities should expect developers to provide the results of such appraisals, assessments and/or evaluations as part of their applications for sites where there is good reason to believe there are remains of archaeological importance. [Paragraph 14]

Authorities will need to consider refusing permission for proposals which are inadequately documented. [Paragraph 14]

When planning applications are made without prior discussion with the local planning authorities, the authorities should seek to identify those applications which have archaeological implications, and to assess their likely impact by consulting the local authority Archaeological Officer, National Park Archaeologist or regional Welsh Archaeological Trust. [Paragraph 15]

In the case of a development proposal that is likely to affect the site of a scheduled ancient monument, planning authorities are required to consult the Secretary of State (Cadw). [Paragraph 15]

Where nationally important archaeological remains, whether scheduled or not, and their settings, are affected by proposed development there should be a presumption in favour of their physical preservation in situ i.e. a presumption against proposals which would involve significant alteration or cause damage, or which would have a significant impact on the setting of visible remains. [Paragraph 17]

It may be possible to preserve important archaeological remains where developers prepare sympathetic designs using, for example, foundations which avoid disturbing the remains altogether or minimise damage by raising ground levels under a proposed new structure or by careful siting of landscaped or open areas. [Paragraph 17]

Archaeological investigations such as excavation and recording should be carried out before development commences, working to a project brief prepared by the planning authority (with reference to their archaeological advisers). [Paragraph 20]

It is open to the local planning authority to impose conditions designed to protect a monument. [Paragraph 22]

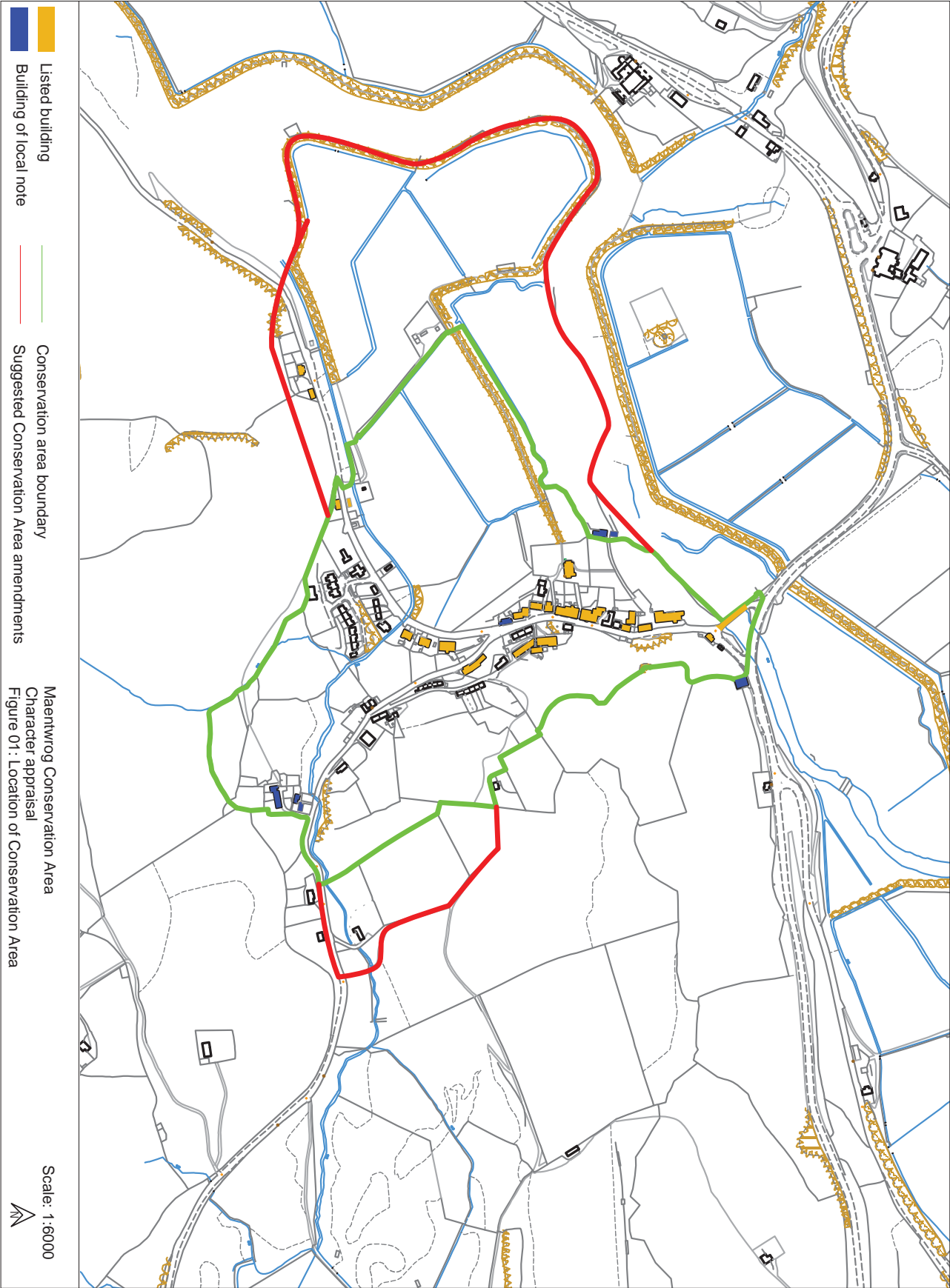
## Appendix II

Gazetter of listed buildings within and adjacent to the conservation area

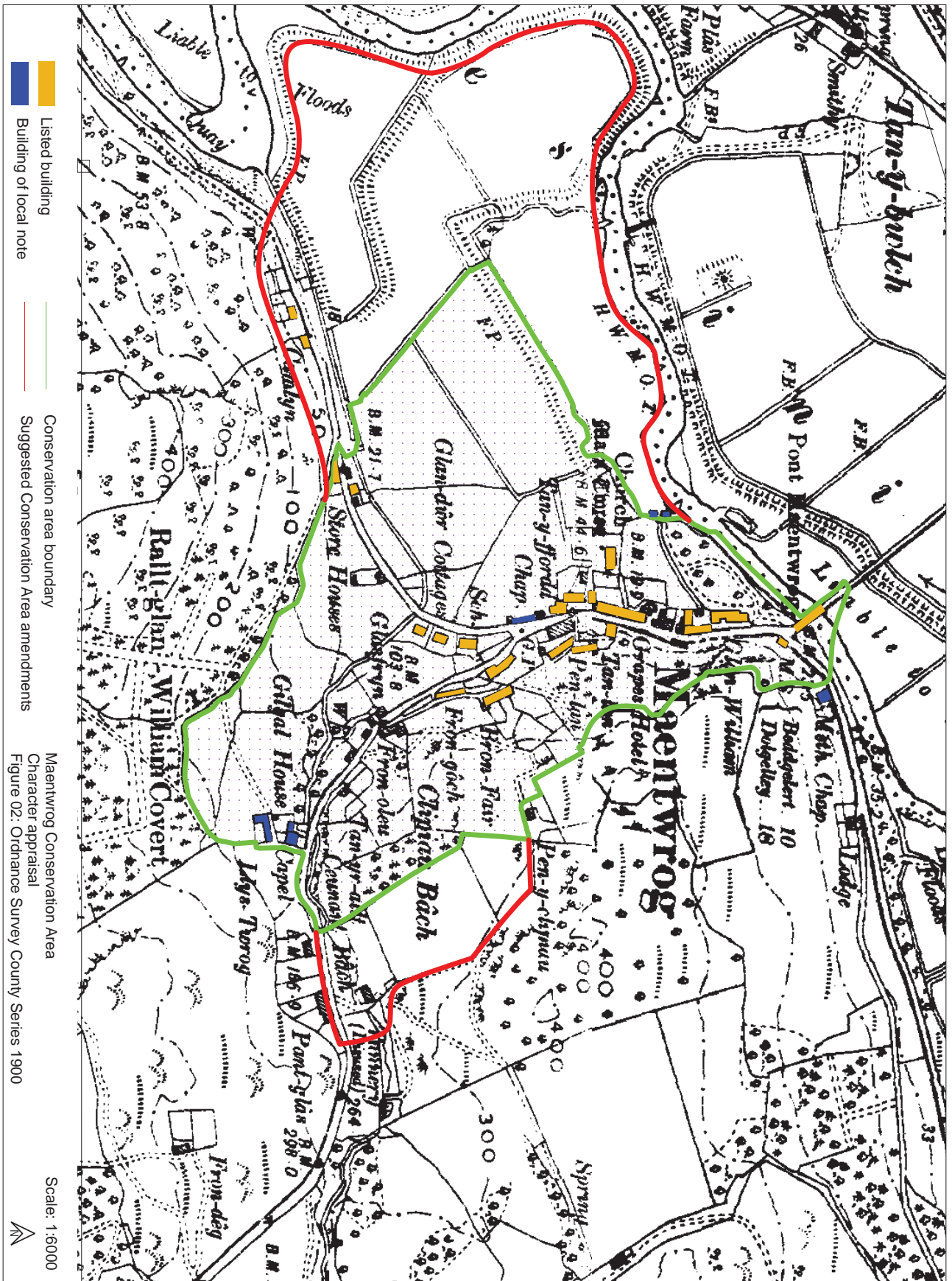
No.	REFERENCE	NAME	SIDE	EASTINGS	NORTHINGS	GRADE
4776	BA	The Old Rectory	W	266476	340671	II
4820	BF	Glan Dwryrd	W	266467	340544	II
4821	BG	Neuadd Llewelyn	W	266465	340536	II
4822	BE	Bwlch Y Maen - Former Co-Operative Shop		266469	340554	II
4823	BD	The Grapes Hotel	W	266473	340573	II
4824	AA	Pont Maentwrog		266477	340751	II
4825	AD	Tan-Lan	E	266485	340547	II
4826	AE	Penlan Including Attached Cottage Formerly Known As Dwyfor.	E	266502	340523	II
4828	AG	Argrraig		266514	340506	II
4829	CA	Old School House	E	266522	340436	II
4830	CB	Dolydd		266530	340427	II
4831	BM	Cartref		266470	340483	II
4832	BL	Llys Twrog		266465	340492	II
4833	BK	Bron-Y-Wern	W	266458	340503	II
4835	BJ	Pen-Y-Bryn	W	266461	340522	II
83966	AC	Tollgate Cottage Aka Cerdwyd	E	266502	340721	II
83967	AR	1 Dolwaen	S	266159	340220	II
83968	CC	1 Fron Fair Terrace	NE	266555	340434	II
83969	CH	1 Fron Goch Terrace		266552	340383	II
83971	AK	1 Glandwr Cottages Including Garden Wall & Gates	SE	266501	340368	II
83973	AS	2 Dolwaen	S	266154	340219	II
83974	CD	2 Fron Fair Terrace	NE	266557	340429	II

No.	REFERENCE	NAME	SIDE	EASTINGS	NORTHINGS	GRADE
83975	CI	2 Fron Goch Terrace	E	266552	340376	II
83977	AL	2 Glandwr Cottages Including Garden Wall & Gates	SE	266500	340362	II
83979	CE	3 Fron Fair Terrace	NE	266559	340423	II
83980	CJ	3 Fron Goch Terrace	E	266553	340370	II
83982	AM	3 Glandwr Cottages Including Garden Wall & Gates	SE	266492	340346	II
83983	CF	4 Fron Fair Terrace		266562	340417	II
83984	CK	4 Fron Goch Terrace.	E	266555	340365	II
83985	AN	4 Glandwr Cottages Including Garden Wall & Gates	SE	266490	340340	II
83986	CG	5 Fron Fair Terrace	NE	266564	340408	II
83987	CL	5 Fron Goch Terrace	E	266556	340358	II
83990	AH	Bryn Or Penlan Flats	E	266510	340490	II
83993	BH	Church Of St. Twrog	W	266413	340547	II
83996	AO	Derlwyn		266327	340261	II
83997	FM	Folly At Tan-Y-Bwlch		266127	340672	II
84003	BN	Haybarn Opposite Derlwyn	N	266325	340275	II
84004	AJ	Hen Ysgol	E	266506	340391	II
84008	BI	Lychgate To Church Of St. Twrog	W	266467	340528	II
84011	AB	Milestone At Pont Maentwrog		266503	340737	II
84018	BC	Stable Block To N Of The Grapes Hotel	W	266483	340607	II
84019	BB	Stable Block To S Of The Old Rectory	W	266488	340618	II
84021	AF	Steps Up To Penlan, With Flanking Walls	E	266486	340504	II

Appendix III: Figures







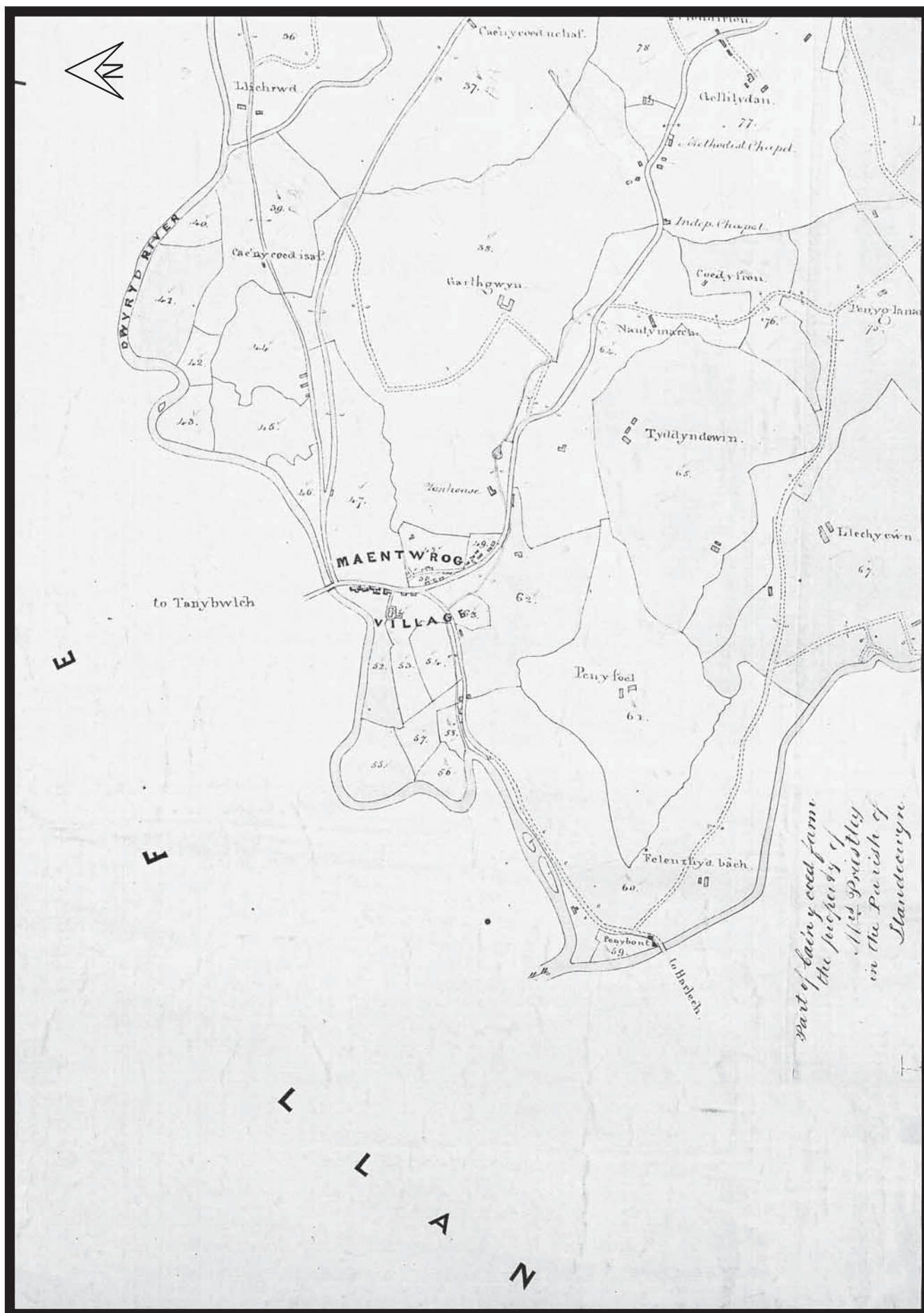


Figure 03: Tithe map of the parish of Maentwrog 1841







Figure 05 - The quay at Camlyn in the early 19th century with Maentwrog behind.







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