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superseded - see revised report.*

A470(T) BLAENAU TO CANCOED IMPROVEMENTS

RECORDING OF HOUSES AT SALEM PLACE

REPORT NO. 192

G1372

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

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RECORDING OF HOUSES AT SALEM PLACE

prepared for Wyn Thomas Plc

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Welsh Office is proposing to upgrade the A470(T) north of Blaenau Ffestiniog; as part of the scheme a number of houses at Salem Place, Blaenau Ffestiniog, are to be demolished. Gwynedd Archaeological Trust were contracted to undertake the recording of two of the houses prior to demolition.

The archaeological recording was carried out on the 15th of January 1996 by two members of trust staff.

2.0 BACKGROUND

An archaeological assessment of the proposed improvements was carried out in 1995 and the results published in Gwynedd Archaeological Trust report no. 161, *A470(T) Blaenau Ffestiniog to Cancoed Improvement - Archaeological Assessment*. Within the assessment report London House and the adjacent dwelling, known as Bryn-yr-onnen, on the south side of Salem place, were recommended for archaeological recording prior to demolition.

3.0 METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

3.1 The photographic record All photographs were taken on 35mm black and white film (Kodak Tmax 400 ASA). General views were taken to place the feature/structure within its setting. Where appropriate all external elevations were taken as close to a 90 degree angle to each elevation as possible; a 28mm shift lens was used to minimise the affect of vertical parallax. Detailed views were taken of features where appropriate; all detailed views contain a scale. The location and direction of all views have been marked on a 1:2500 scale map, and a catalogue of the photographs is appended to this report. Selected views have also been taken on slide film (Kodachrome ASA 200).

3.2 The written record Written descriptions were made of the buildings, giving an overall concise and objective description, with measurements and sketch plans where appropriate.

4.0 DESCRIPTION

PRN 58453

4.1 London House and Bryn-yr-onnen

London House and Bryn-yr-onnen are situated at the south side of Salem place, on the west side of the present A470(T) on the corner with the junction of the minor road leading from Salem place. The buildings form the east end of a street of mid to late 19th century houses and are separated from the adjacent terrace by a narrow slate-slab paved passageway which gives access to the rear of Bryn-yr-onnen.

4.2 Exterior descriptions

London House and Bryn-yr-onnen are of 2 storeys and are set at right angles to each other to form an "L" shaped plan; the buildings are of one build, and were formerly internally linked on the ground floor; the part known as London house is on the east, Bryn-yr-onnen to the west. The construction is of slate rubble with large stone block quoins at the angles. London House is some 11.34m north - south by 6.68m east - west with white painted elevations.

Bryn-yr-onnen measures 8.12m east - west by 6.65m north - south and is double-fronted with gable-end stone stacks; the eastern stack is cement rendered and has a slate drip-slab protecting the junction between the roofs of Bryn-yr-onnen and London house, the western stack has a central slate drip-slab on its west face, perhaps indicating the original intention of building directly against the west gable.

The fenestration and external doors are all 20th century replacements, these are presently boarded to prevent trespass. Both buildings are under pitched slate roofs, with ceramic ridge tiles, that over London house is at a higher level, and slightly less pitched than Bryn-yr-onnen and has serrated barge-boards and projecting eaves; the roof is projected beyond the line of the gables, carried on 4 projecting purlins, the ends of which are shaped as console-brackets. London House also has a large lateral stone stack on its east side, this and the corresponding, opposite gable-end stack of Bryn-yr-onnen are linked to the main roof by small pitched gables.

The north gable front elevation of London House at ground floor level has a plain tripartite shop-front of large plate-glass windows flanking central entrance containing small-paned glass double doors, with fixed small-paned rectangular over-light (16 panes). The shop front frame is of red-painted wood topped by a glass panel with the name LONDON HOUSE. At second floor level are two rectangular windows with projecting slate sills and slate lintels. The north front elevation of Bryn-yr-onnen is double-fronted, with central doorway, flanked by single window openings with slate lintels and projecting sills. The door has rectangular over-light with the name BRYN YR ONNEN picked out in a dull gold. The first storey has 3 windows with matching details to those on the ground floor, above is a plain fascia-board.

The east side elevation, which faces onto the A470(T), the Crimea road, is built into a slight slope. On the ground floor is a central window, again with slate lintel and projecting sill. High in the floor level is a small, horizontal window with thin slate sill. There are two possible blocked windows at first floor level, one located towards the south end of the facade, the other below and offset to north of the existing opening. These are visible on the exterior of the building only, as rectangular areas with less pointing material. The west side elevation has two small low rectangular openings at ground level which light a cellar. Above the facade is pebble-dashed rendered to the base of the stack. At the gable there is a wooden barge board which is flush with the wall and interrupted by the stack.

The rear elevation of London House has two narrow windows on the first floor, at ground floor level is a rear entrance and single rectangular window. The rear elevation of Bryn-yr-onnen is similar to the front, though pebble-dashed, the first floor level is without the central window and on the ground floor a single window west of the door.

A largely dry-stone, single storey, lean-to out-building with single stone stack at its south end is situated in the angle between London House and Bryn-yr-onnen and now contains the present kitchen of London House. The slated lean-to roof has a two-paned skylight at the centre. There is a large slate lintelled window in the west elevation of the lean-to, and a smaller opening in the south elevation, which has been rebuilt in brick.

Fronting both buildings are two rectangular walled fore-courts, that in front of London house has been re-built in brick and breeze-block. The original slate rubble wall remains in front of Bryn-yr-onnen, though the entrance, originally at the centre, has been blocked and moved to the east end. The low slate slab-capped rubble wall to the east of London House once extended round to the front, as is shown on a photograph of c.1870. To the rear of the building are two slate-paved yards, surrounded by high slate-rubble dry-stone built walls, that to the rear of London House is now partly roofed over at its west end.

4.3 Interior descriptions

The interiors of both London House and Bryn-yr-onnen have both been modified, leaving only basic original features intact. The ground floor of Bryn-yr-onnen is divided into two - a parlour with a slate flag floor to the east and kitchen to the west, leading off a central passage

which also contains a straight stair to the upper floor. The main upright posts of the stair have chamfered angles. The former kitchen chimney breast contains its original Victorian cast-iron range of ROGERS & JACKSON WREXHAM, set within a slate surrounded recess. The parlour fireplace has been replaced by a 20th century slate hearth, though the original slate flag floor remains. The joists are revealed in both rooms. All windows are recessed internally from window head to floor and have splayed reveals. A rear lobby area mirrors the arrangement to the front, but has a curved stone stair leading down to the cellar beneath the west half of the building. Original tongue and groove latched door, set at an angle leads to parlour from rear lobby. In the upper storey four rooms lead off a central landing which runs north - south across the building, one of these is now a bathroom. The two rooms to the front retain slate slabs for bedroom fire places, now blocked.

The interior of London House has a ground floor divided approximately centrally into two rooms, each with fireplaces in the east wall. The room to the front is now sub-divided into two by a modern partition. Near the south-west corner of the front room a blocked doorway, which would have originally connected London House with Bryn-yr-onnen is visible in the west wall. Both ground floor rooms are accessed off a passageway from the rear entrance, this runs along the western side of the building as far as the central division. A part dog-legged stair with turned main angle balusters is situated between the passage and the west wall of the building. Under-stair and over-stair cupboard storage is situated on the ground and upper storey, tongue and groove latched doors. A doorway has been inserted at the base of the stairs through the west wall to allow access to the lean-to kitchen. The layout of the upper storey has been extensively re-arranged, with the creation of an upstairs bathroom and the sub-division of the rear bedroom into two. The original arrangement would probably comprised two large rooms. The windows are recessed as in Bryn-yr-onnen, with splayed reveals. All internal timbers, including joist and roof timbers are of sawn soft timber.

4.4 Results of archive search

The present settlement of Rhiwbryfdir does not appear on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1838; an earlier settlement, originally situated a short distance to the north-west, is shown. It is known that the earlier settlement had been abandoned by the 1870s and was subsequently consumed by slate tipping. The land formed part of the estate of the Oakley's of Plas Tan-y-Bwlch as is illustrated by the Tithe map of the 1840s, however the same map offers no information about the location of the settlement of Rhiwbryfdir at the time.

The Census returns of 1851 makes mention only of the old settlement of Rhiwbryfdir; London House first appears on record in 1861, when named in the Census returns of that year. At the time a draper, Thomas R Williams, aged 25, his wife Grace and lodger Ellen Griffiths, a house servant were living at the address. The Census return for 1871 informs us that a Richard Williams, a 35 year old shopkeeper, his wife Ellen and their two daughters and two sons then lived at the property, also mentioned are Margaret Jones, general servant, Elizabeth Richards, assistant, and a lodger David Jones, quarryman. It is possible that London House and Bryn-yr-onnen were originally one building known as London House and that the servant and assistant lived over the shop and the main family lived in what is now Bryn-yr-onnen. This is supported by the lack of contemporary references to Bryn-yr-onnen. Although there is no direct evidence to date the construction of London house, it is most likely to date from the mid to late 1850s.

5.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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5.2 Published sources

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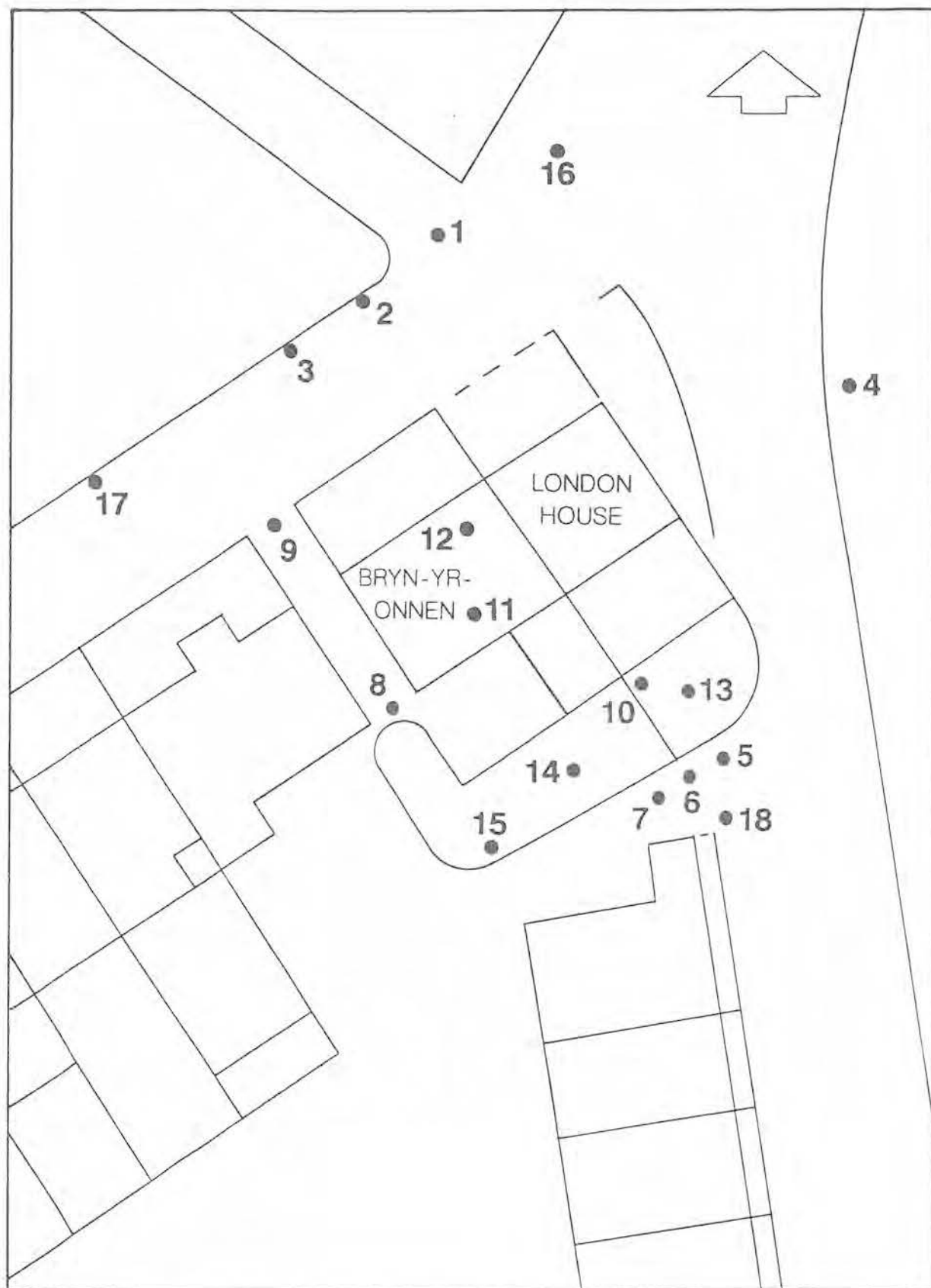


Fig. 1 Location plan of photographic stations around Bryn-yr-onnen & London House.

(SCALE OF PLAN 1:250)

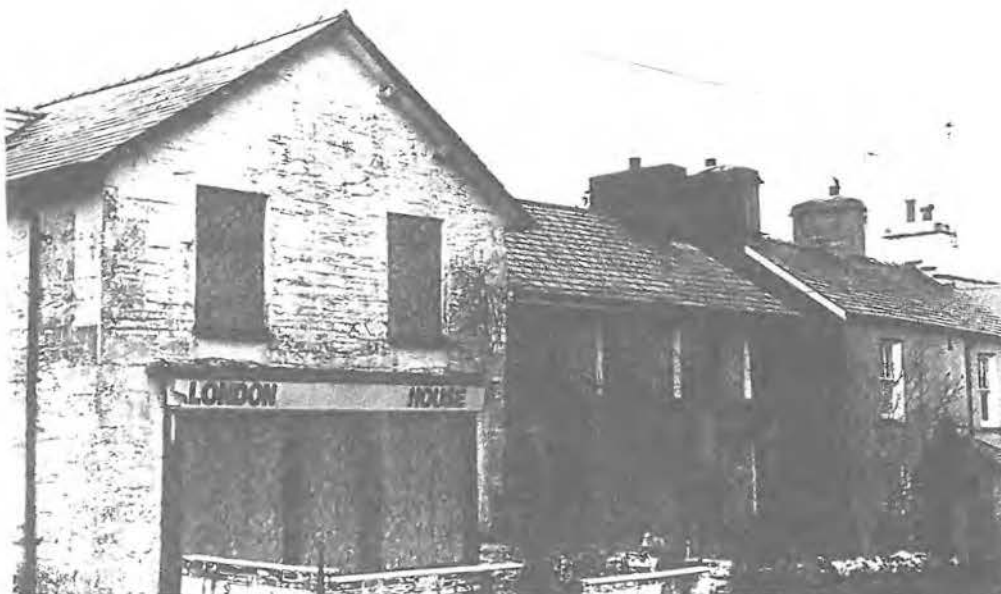


Plate 1 London House & Bryn-yr-onnen, N front (G1372/3/21)



Plate 2 London House, E side elevation (G1372/2/10)

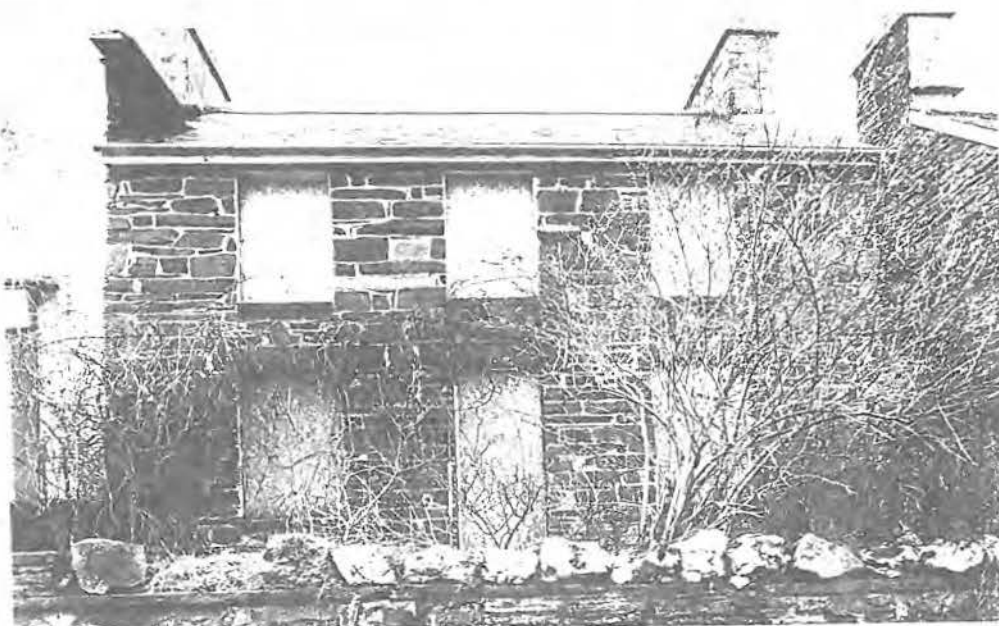


Plate 3 Bryn-yr-onnen, N front (G1372/2/07)



Plate 4 Bryn-yr-onnen, S rear elevation (G1372/3/06)

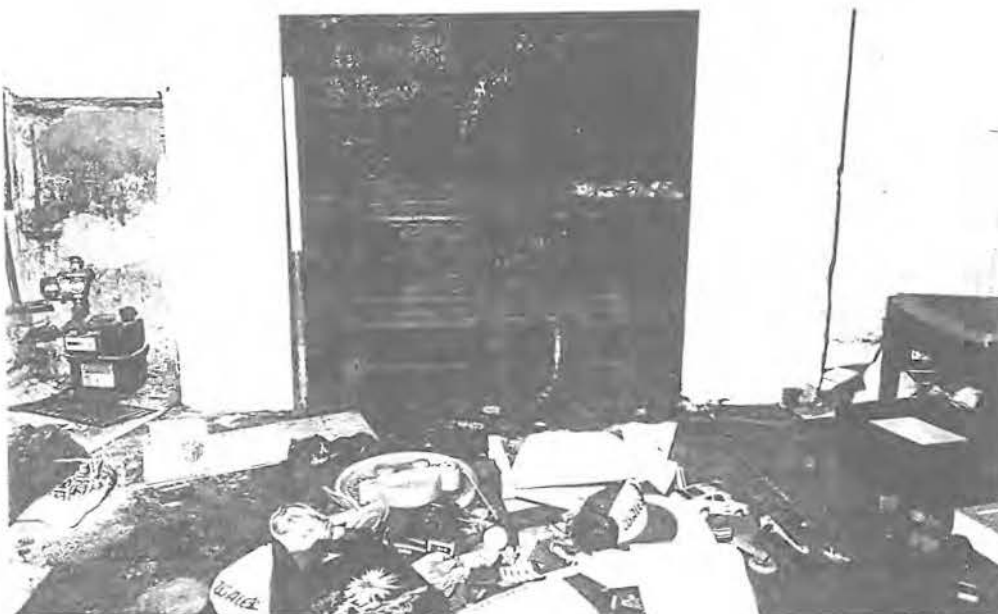


Plate 5 Bryn-yr-onnen, cast-iron range (G1372/3/07)

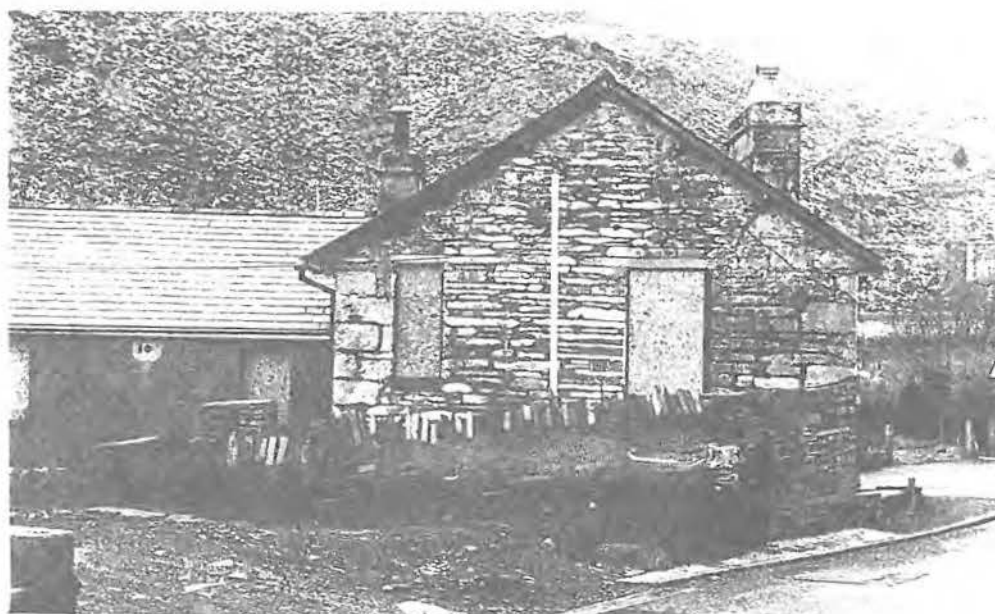


Plate 6 Rear of both buildings (G1372/3/26)

APPENDIX I

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

Colour slides (ASA 200)

| Film | Archive No. | Description | Location |
|------|-------------|--|----------|
| 1 | 01 | London House, lower part of N front | 1 |
| 1 | 02 | London House, lower part of N front | 1 |
| 1 | 03 | London House, upper part of N front | 1 |
| 1 | 04 | London House, upper part of N front | 1 |
| 1 | 05 | N front, junction of London House with Bryn-yr-onnen | 2 |
| 1 | 06 | Bryn-yr-onnen, lower part of N front | 3 |
| 1 | 07 | Bryn-yr-onnen, N front | 3 |
| 1 | 08 | London House, E side elevation | 4 |
| 1 | 09 | London House, E side elevation | 4 |
| 1 | 10 | London House, E side elevation | 4 |
| 1 | 11 | London House, E side elevation | 4 |
| 1 | 12 | London House, S rear elevation | 5 |
| 1 | 13 | London House, S rear elevation | 5 |
| 1 | 14 | Bryn-yr-onnen, S rear elevation | 6 |
| 1 | 15 | Bryn-yr-onnen, S rear elevation | 6 |
| 1 | 16 | Bryn-yr-onnen, S rear elevation | 7 |
| 1 | 17 | Bryn-yr-onnen, S rear elevation | 7 |
| 1 | 18 | London House, lean-to at W side | 8 |
| 1 | 19 | Bryn-yr-onnen, back yard | 8 |
| 1 | 20 | Passage to rear of Bryn-yr-onnen | 9 |
| 1 | 21 | London House, covered rear-yard | 10 |
| 1 | 22 | London House, S wall of covered yard | 10 |

Black and white film (ASA 400)

| Film | Archive No. | Description | Location |
|------|-------------|---|----------|
| 2 | 01 | London House, lower part N front | 1 |
| 2 | 02 | London House, upper part of N front | 1 |
| 2 | 03 | London House, upper part of N front | 1 |
| 2 | 04 | London House, lower part of N front | 1 |
| 2 | 05 | N front, junction of Bryn-yr-onnen and London House | 2 |
| 2 | 06 | Bryn-yr-onnen, lower part N front | 3 |
| 2 | 07 | Bryn-yr-onnen, N front | 3 |
| 2 | 08 | London House, E side elevation | 4 |
| 2 | 09 | London House, E side elevation | 4 |
| 2 | 10 | London House, E side elevation | 4 |
| 2 | 11 | London house, E side elevation | 4 |
| 3 | 01 | Bryn-yr-onnen, S rear elevation | 6 |
| 3 | 02 | Bryn-yr-onnen, S rear elevation | 6 |
| 3 | 03 | London House, S rear elevation | 5 |
| 3 | 04 | London House, S rear elevation | 5 |
| 3 | 05 | Bryn-yr-onnen, S rear elevation | 7 |
| 3 | 06 | Bryn-yr-onnen, S rear elevation | 7 |
| 3 | 07 | Bryn-yr-onnen, cast-iron range | 11 |
| 3 | 08 | Bryn-yr-onnen, slate ledge/shelf | 12 |

| | | | |
|---|----|--|----|
| 3 | 09 | London house, W side elevation | 8 |
| 3 | 10 | Bryn-yr-onnen, back yard | 8 |
| 3 | 11 | London House, covered yard | 10 |
| 3 | 12 | London House, covered yard | 10 |
| 3 | 13 | London House, S rear entrance | 13 |
| 3 | 14 | London House, entrance to covered yard | 14 |
| 3 | 15 | London House, rear & W side | 15 |
| 3 | 16 | London House, rear & W side | 15 |
| 3 | 17 | Bryn-yr-onnen, S rear elevation | 15 |
| 3 | 18 | London House, London House back yard | 15 |
| 3 | 19 | London House, curved wall - back yard | 15 |
| 3 | 20 | London House, N & E elevations | 16 |
| 3 | 21 | London House & Bryn-yr-onnen, N front | 16 |
| 3 | 22 | Bryn-yr-onnen, N front | 1 |
| 3 | 23 | Both buildings from NW | 17 |
| 3 | 24 | Both buildings from NW | 17 |
| 3 | 25 | Rear of both buildings | 18 |
| 3 | 26 | Rear of both buildings | 18 |