

MELIN TY'N Y NANT
MAENTWROG
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY



Report No. 268

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY (G1487)

prepared for Snowdonia National Park

July 1997

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Archaeological survey

Introduction

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (Contracts Section) were contracted by Snowdonia National Park to carry out a measured survey of the mill and kiln at Melin Ty'n y Nant, Maentwrog. The survey was to consist of a ground plan, section drawings of the kiln, and a basic photographic survey.

Methodology

A topographical survey was carried out by E.D.M., and plotted out at a scale of 1:20. Additional measurements were added by hand, and the final drawings were compiled from a combination of the two surveys. Some of the internal detail is represented in diagrammatic form, particularly the kiln floor sequence, and the details of the north room. This is partly because much detail is obscured by rubble, and partly because the objectives of this initial survey did not warrant a full record of all details. The drawings are held in digital form in Micrografix format, but are capable of being output in DXF format. Additional detail, as it becomes available, can easily be added to the existing drawings.

A rapid photographic survey was carried out. Each elevation of the two structures was photographed, and photographs were taken of specific details. The photographs were taken on 35mm 200 ASA colour print film.

Location

The mill is situated at SH69193960 in the parish of Maentwrog. It lies in a hollow immediately below a sharp break of slope and alongside the junction of two main roads, where the Betws y Coed and Ffestiniog road meets the Dolgellau to Penrhyndeudraeth road. It is thus well situated both for power and transport. The stream which drives the mill is a small tributary of the Afon Tafarn-Helyg, which flows north into the Afon Dwryd. The mill leat ran through the woods north-west of the mill, and into a mill pool immediately north and above the mill. The site of the leat was not examined, but the pool no longer exists. Access to the mill could be gained from both roads, although the principal access was probably from the west, as that from the south necessitated the crossing of a foot-bridge.

History

A full search for references of this site has not been carried out, and what follows is of necessity fairly sketchy.

Historically the mill is closely linked with the adjacent house and farm of Tyddyn Du, and it is often referred to as Melin Tyddyn Du. Tyddyn Du is well known as being the former home of Edmwnd Prys (1544 - 1623), who moved to Tyddyn Du after being made Archdeacon of Merioneth in 1576. Edmwnd Prys is best known for his book *Salmau Cân*, a translation of the psalms into Welsh in a metre well suited to musical adaptation. (Dictionary of Welsh Biography pp 804-5). The granddaughter of Edmund Prys and heiress of Tyddyn Du, Lowry, married Robert Evans, ancestor of the Griffiths and Oakleys of Plas Tan y Bwlch (Dictionary of Welsh Biography pp 217-18). See also the marriage settlement on the son of Lowry Evans in 1670 (Z/DV/4/29), and her settlement of lands including Tyddyn Du and Melin y Tyddyn Du on her son in 1671 (Z/DV/3).

The Inquisitio Post Mortem after the death of Edmwnd Prys in 1625 includes one grain mill, as does the Inquisitio Post Mortem of his son in 1632, when it was in the tennancy of John Caddor and Griffin Lloid (Evans Ven. A O 1922, p 117).

The earliest references so far found within the Plas Tan y Bwlch papers at the Dolgellau Record Office are two documents of 1611 which refer to "*Tyddyn du in Tal pont y velin*" (DRO Plas Tan y Bwlch 121, 122). A third document, a quitclaim of 1648, refers to: "*the brooke or water arising and springing forth and out of the Lake or puddle called yr Oerfa near my Lande called Tomen y Mur, scituat in the parish of Maentorog in the said County of Merioneth and now and for many yeares heretofore together from time to time alweies serving and turning the water corn mylne of the said Robert Evans called Melin y Tythin du...*" (DRO Plas Tan y Bwlch 124).

The Tithe assessment of 1842 shows that the mill still belonged to the Plas Tan y Bwlch estate at that time. However, it was sold in 1910, when sale catalogue refers to the "*Old corn and Grist Mill known as Tyddyn Du (Famous in local History) together with an old kiln and ground*" (DRO ZF/25) which suggests the mill was no longer in use by that date.

Earlier descriptions

The site was visited by the RCAHMW in 1914, and described as follows:

"In this mill, now known as Melin Tyddyn du, is a long oaken beam above one of the doorways, in which is sunk a small panel bearing the letters IOIO of the early 17th century. They are believed to represent an impossible date, and to denote the year when the beam was set up, but are probably the initials of some such names as John Owen, Jane Owen."

The site was visited again by the RCAHMW in 1971 (this time by A J Parkinson), and drawings and photographs of the site made at the time are held at the National Monuments Record. In addition, the NMR have two photographs of the mill taken in 1951, which show it still roofed and with the water wheel in place.

A single pair of stones and hurst frame was still in place in 1971, although the water wheel was no longer extant. The letters IOIO were reinterpreted as 1610. The date 1676 was scratched alongside the plaque. The beam supporting the machinery floor bore the date M G 1775, and an external quoin bore the same date and letters. A fallen roof truss was bolted, and therefore considered to be of 19th century date, thus probably dating the raising of the mill walls (see below).

The kiln was much as it now is, although parts of the roof were still present. A stone bearing the date 1799 was noticed on the west wall.

Description

Mill

A ruinous structure, of which the majority of the walls survive to eaves height, although the south wall has collapsed to foundation level in the centre, and the roof gables no longer survive on the end walls. Differences in the stonework both in the south wall and in the end walls show that the height of the mill was increased, probably in the 19th century: the line of the former roof gables is clearly visible in each of the end walls. There is a date stone on a quoin on the NE corner inscribed "M:G 1775". The plaque bearing the date 1610 on the inside of the lintel is no longer present, although a depression marking its former existence is visible.

The wheel pit is on the west side of the building. It is 1.2 m wide, and at about 2m deep, suggesting a wheel between 3m and 4m in diameter. The axle hole through the wall is 90cm high and 70cm wide. An iron object, which appears to be a mill rynd attached to a mill stone is visible through the hole under a pile of stone rubble. This suggests that the stone and hurst frame as described in 1971 are still present but collapsed.

Kiln

This structure is also now roofless, although it is considerably more complete than the mill. The walls are of slate blocks and local stone. The slate blocks are only present in the upper levels of the walls, but there is no obvious evidence for more than one phase of construction as in the mill. However, just

to the right of the east door are broken kiln tiles built into the wall, implying that this is not the first kiln structure on the site.

The kiln is a three unit structure, consisting of a central kiln, flanked by two end rooms, one to store the incoming grain (the north room) and one to store the dried grain (the south room). A chute leads down from the drying floor onto a stone shelf alongside the east wall of the south room. The north room appears to contain a similar raised shelf, but rubble collapse from the inner cross-wall obscures much of the detail in this room. The north room is entered through a door in the gable wall, whereas the south room is entered through a door in the east wall. Access to the fireplace was through the southern room.

The kiln floor is of square clay tiles each measuring c. 1ft square by 2" thick. 30cm by 5cm. Two different patterns of tile were noticed, but both relied on a deep hole in the underside which did not penetrate to the upper surface, but which was carried through by a pattern of small holes. The tiles are supported on iron "T" shaped rails, which were in turn supported on iron bars 2" by 3/4" thick. These floor was supported by two slate beams, running north south, which were held up by four upright slate pillars. The building design reflects the necessity of avoiding the use of flammable materials for construction.

The brick fireplace is in the centre of the kiln, and rising up at an angle from the fireplace to the outside walls are slate slabs, angled to carry the heat from the fireplace to the floor above. The space beneath the angled slabs is traditionally used for fuel storage (Jones and Major 1973, pp 135-6).

A stone on the west wall bears the date 1799. This may be the date of the present structure: it is unlikely to be much earlier because of the presence of the clay tiles and the iron floor supports.

Summary

This site contains an interesting complex of mill and corn drying kiln. A range of datestones from 1610 to 1799 are documented, and the mill has interesting historical associations dating back to the 16th century.

Although the structure of the mill is in relatively poor condition, one set of millstones with the collapsed machinery floor appear to survive at the east end of the building.

The kiln is surprisingly well preserved, and no immediate parallels have been found, although others are reputed to exist. Studies of kiln types are relatively sparse, but it would appear from work carried out in the 1970's (Jones and Major 1973, pp135-41) that the 3 unit kiln type is peculiar to mid and north Wales, although not Anglesey. A drawing of a similar kiln from Montgomery, but with a metal rather than tile floor, is illustrated in Jones's work (Jones D H 1971, p 332). The kiln at Ty'n y Nant, with its intact floor and slate supports, the datestone, and the related mill and house, form an extremely interesting and rare complex.

Bibliography

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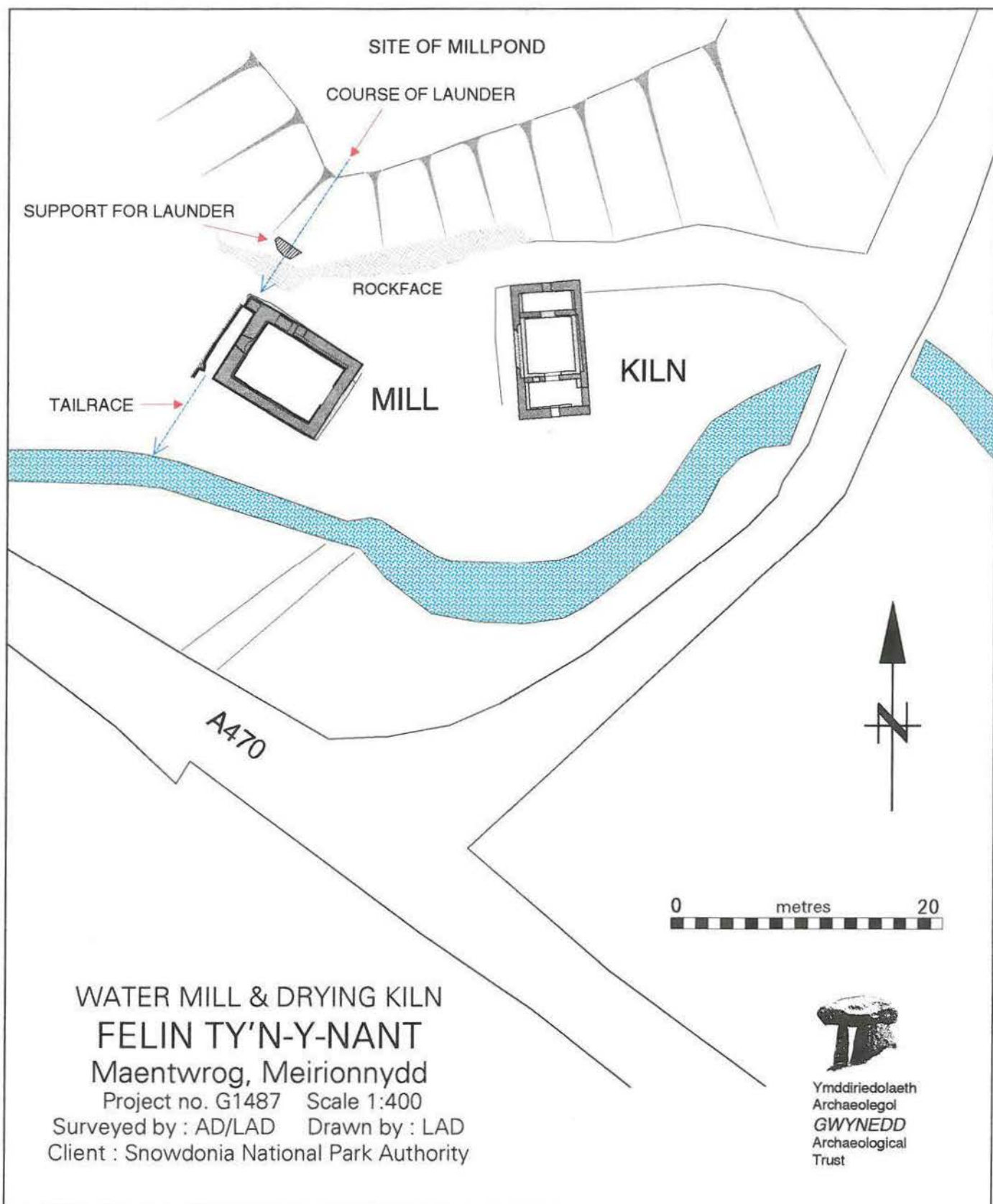
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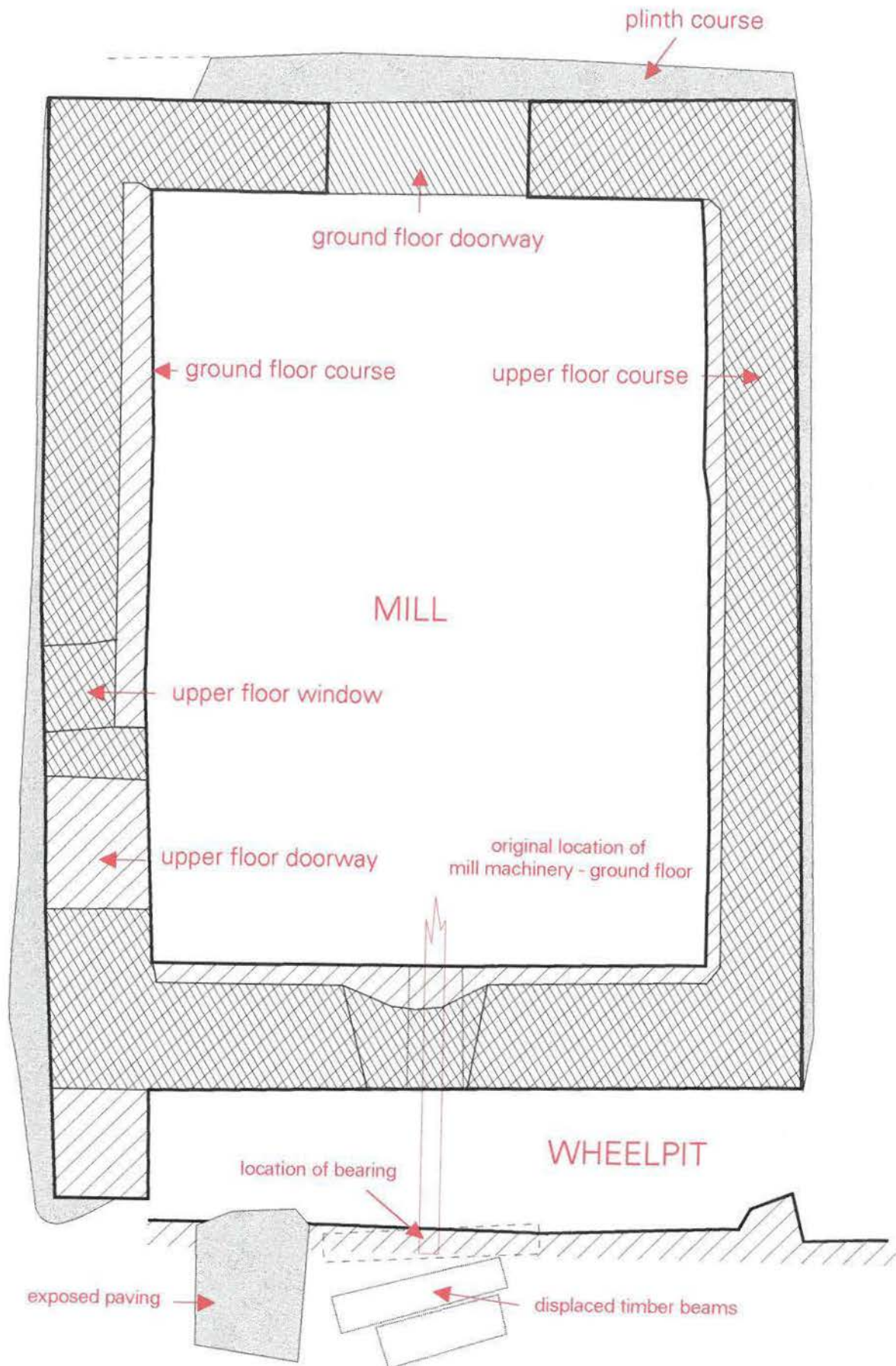
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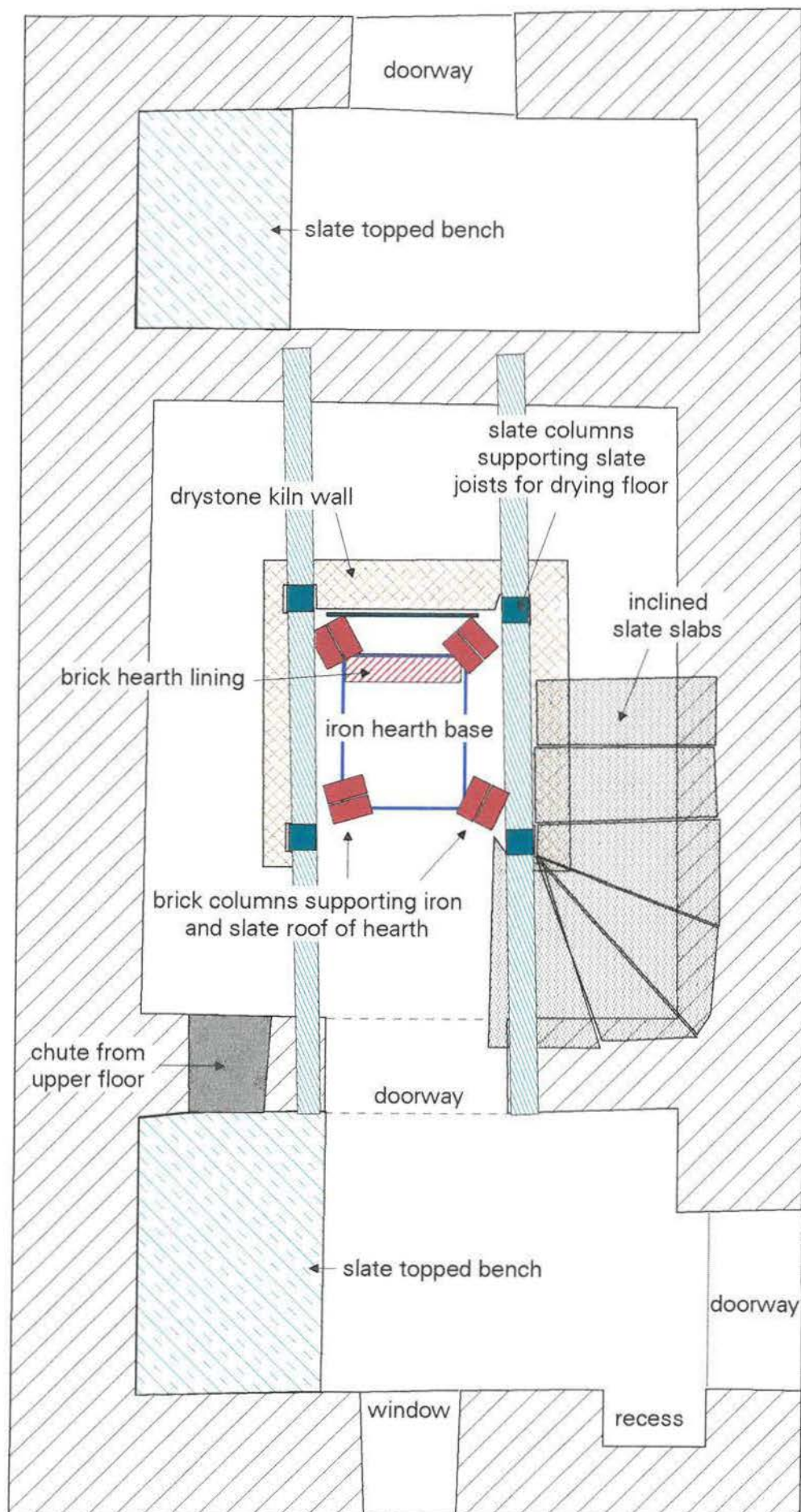
Acknowledgements

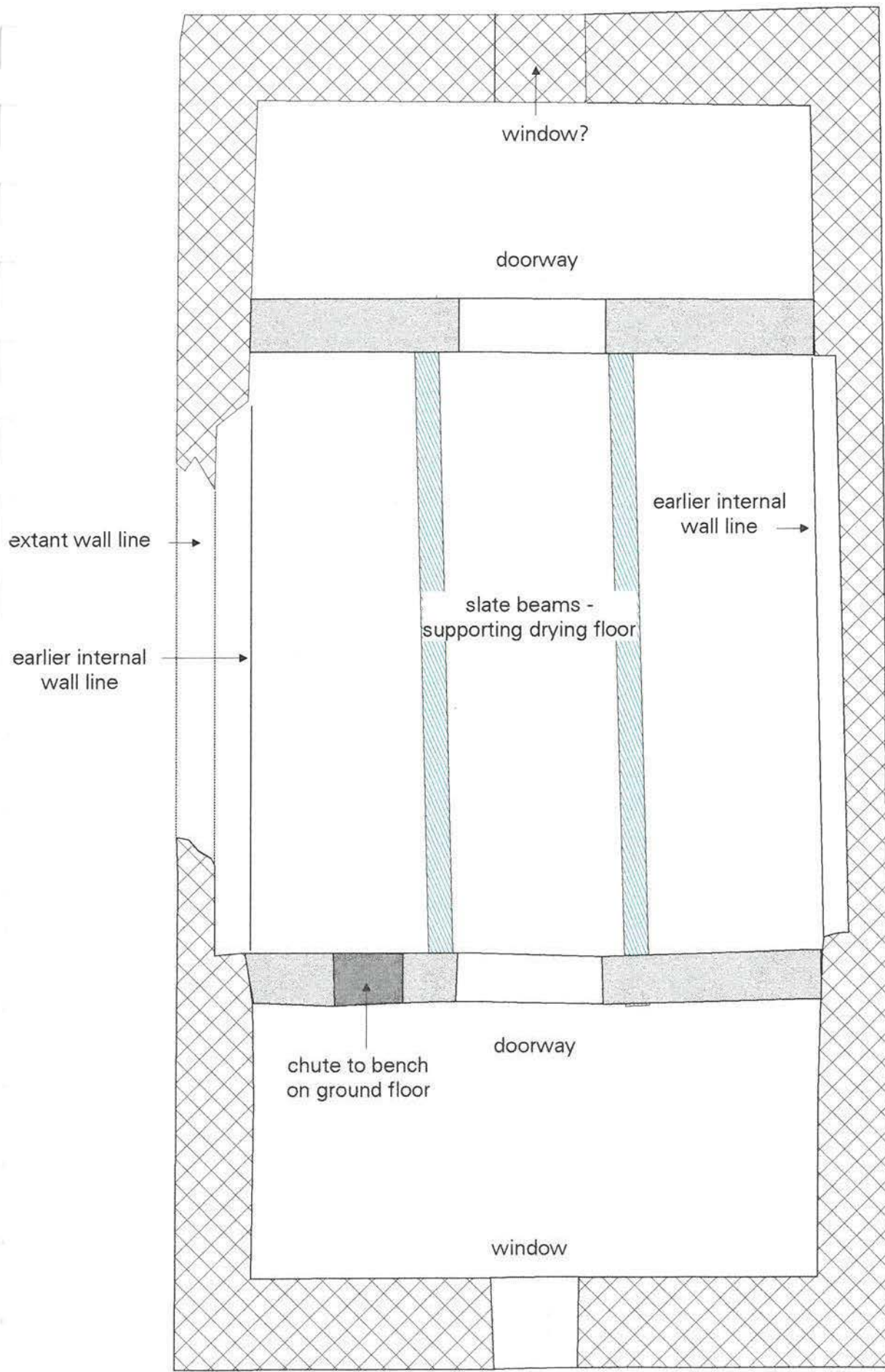
Help and advice were received from Gerallt Nash, Welsh Folk Museum, St Fagans, and staff at the National Monuments Records (particularly Rosemary Jones) and Dolgellau Record Office.

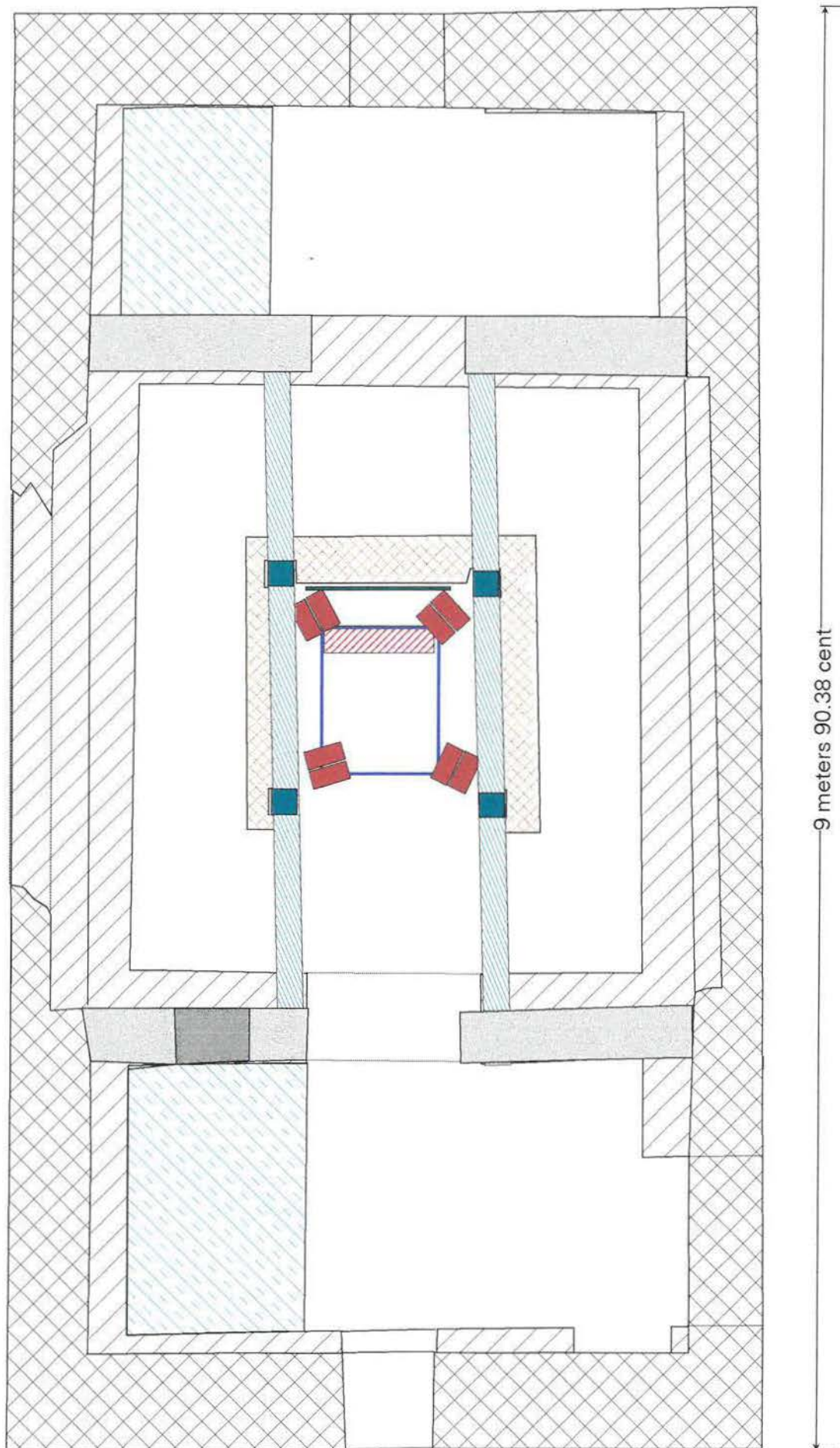




WATER MILL - FELIN TY'N-Y-NANT - Maentwrog, Meirionnydd
 Project no. G1487 Scale 1:50 Surveyed by : AD/LAD Drawn by : LAD
 Client : Snowdonia National Park Authority

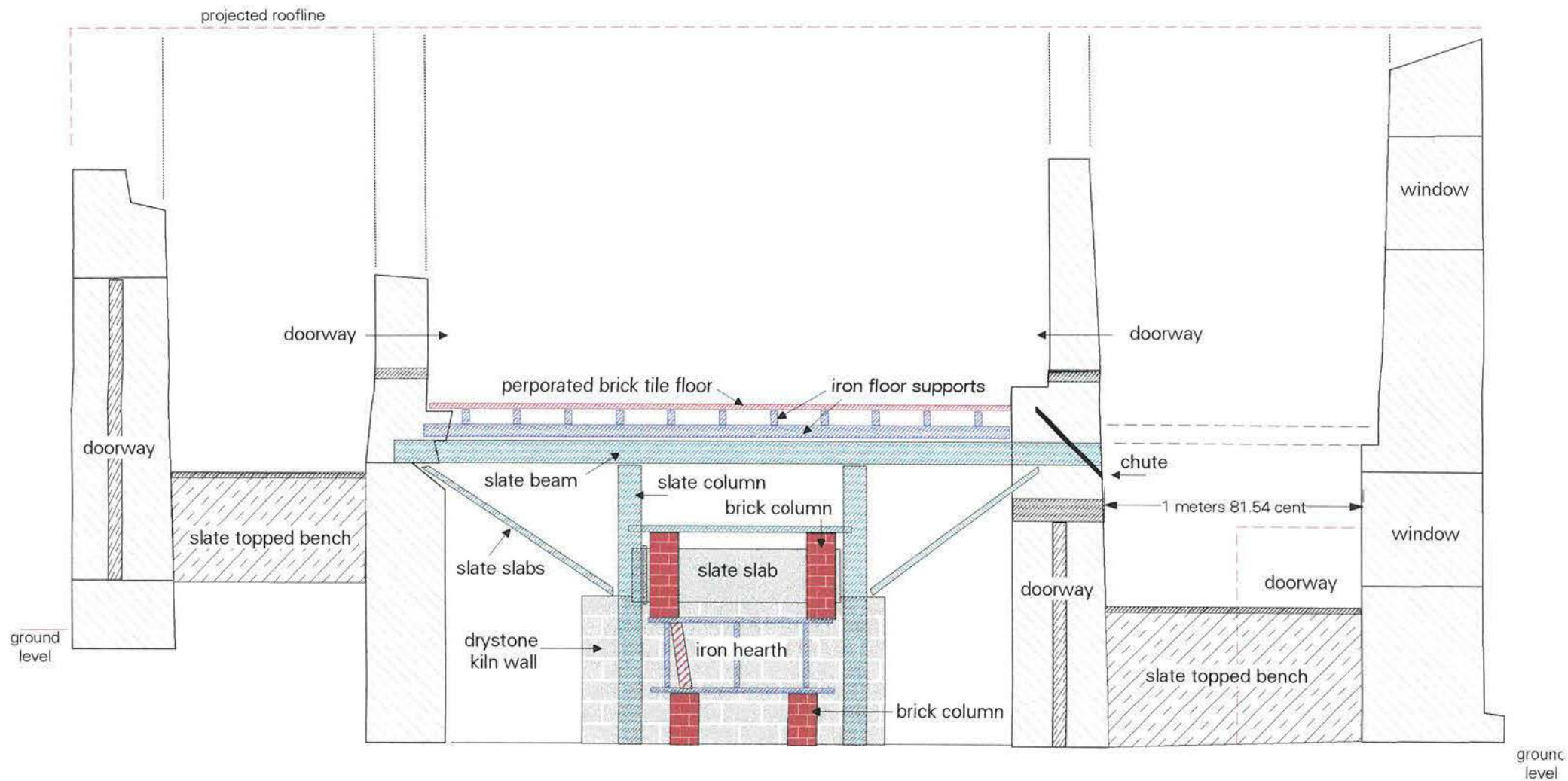






DRYING KILN - FELIN TY'N-Y-NANT - Maentwrog, Meirionnydd
 Project no. G1487 scale 1:40
 Surveyed by AD/LAD Draw by LAD Client: Snowdonia National Park Authority

COMBINED GROUND &
 UPPER FLOOR PLANS

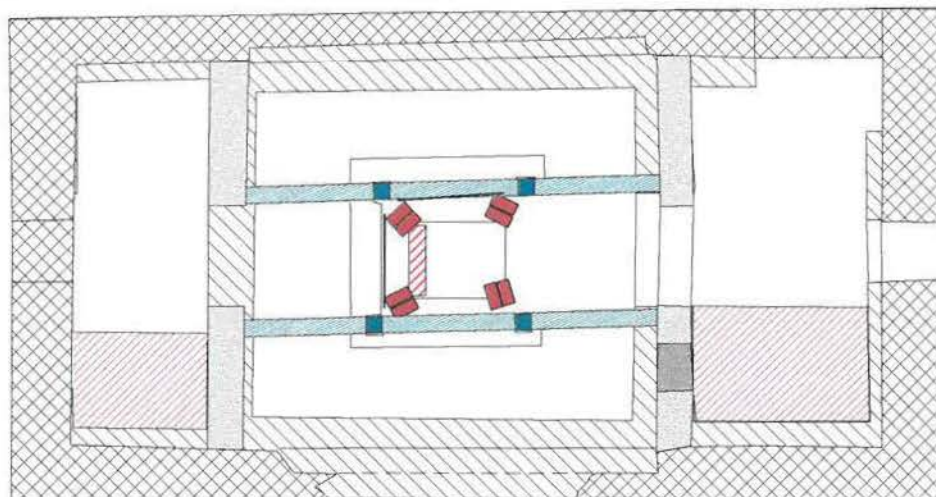
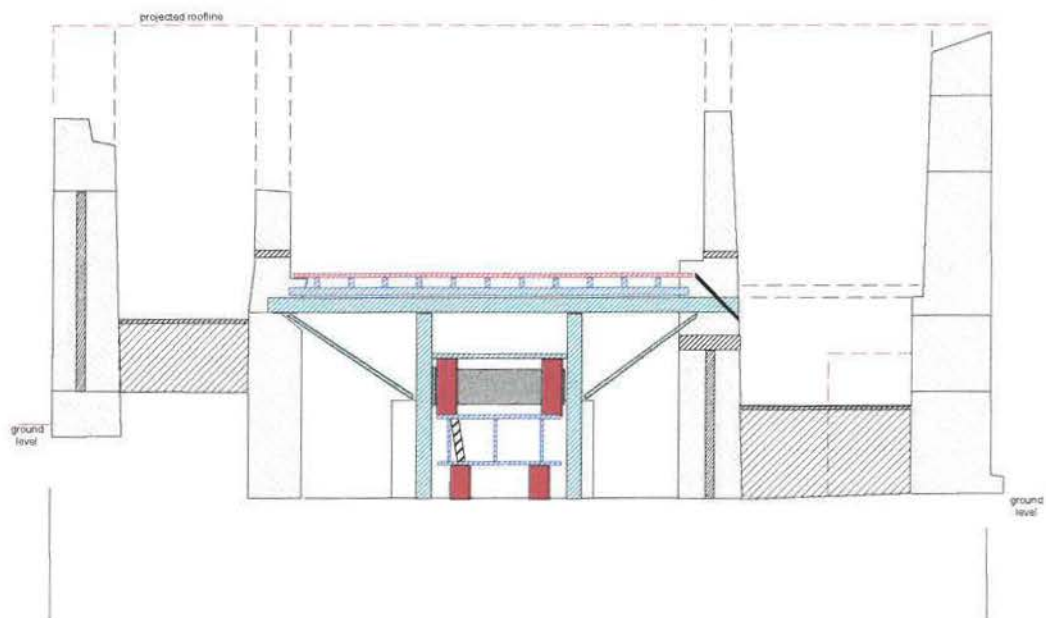


DRYING KILN - FELIN TY'N-Y-NANT - Maentwrog, Meirionnydd

Project no. G1487 scale 1:40

Surveyed by : AD/LAD Draw by : LAD Client : Snowdonia National Park Authority

LONG SECTION AND KILN ELEVATION



GROUND AND FIRST FLOOR PLAN

DRYING KILN - FELIN TY'N-Y-NANT

Maentwrog, Meirionnydd

Project no. G1487 scale 1:80

Surveyed by : AD/LAD Draw by : LAD

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South end of kiln



North end of kiln



Upper floor of kiln,



Interior of kiln, showing slate beams and sloping slate slabs

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