
Hafod Boeth Llandwrog



Archaeological Assessment

GAT Project No. 1853

Report No. 550

October 2004

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Prepared for Pritchard Jones Evans Lane Solicitors

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HISTORY

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The history of Hafod Boeth can be traced from the mid-17th century. Prior to then it is more obscure. However, there are hints within the available evidence that the upper part of the parish of Llandwrog, in which the property lies, formed part of the outlying lands of the freemen of the medieval township of Dinlle. The frequency of the name 'Hafod' (a property associated with summer pastures) would support this.¹ Certainly in 1547 the holding known as 'Kay Trevan Uchaph', adjacent to Hafod Boeth, was being fought over by Ieuan ap David ap Gruffydd of Dinlle and Hugh ap Gruffydd of Dinlle.²

The house was included in the Hearth Rate tax of 1663-4, and in the earliest Land Tax Assessments of 1750.³ However, some of the most informative records are from the Quarter Sessions minutes of the 17th century. This was principally because of the activities of the formidable Dorothy Griffith of Tryfan, the property adjoining Hafod Boeth. In 1632 Dorothy attacked Robert ap Ieuan of Hafod Boeth, though her husband was already bound over to control her following earlier exploits.⁴ Robert ap Ieuan was described as a freeholder of Dinlle. He had three children, William, Owen and Agnes; the latter married John David and lived at Gilwern, one of the holdings on the Hafod Boeth lands. The dispute between the two arose because of the rebuilding of a boundary wall by the Tryfan family which Robert of Hafod Boeth maintained included a part of Hafod land. Other disputes between the two families are also chronicled in the quarter session minutes.⁵

The Hafod Boeth family has not been chronicled.⁶ According to the Land Tax records, in 1789 Robert Roberts was the owner, and he rented Hafod Boeth to John Griffith and Gilwern to Ellin Griffith. Robert could well be a direct descendant of Robert ap Ieuan, but this has not been confirmed. Robert died around the year 1800, and Mrs Roberts is recorded as the owner until 1829 when, presumably the son, Robert Roberts is recorded as the owner. In that year he held part of Hafod Boeth in his own name, and let part to Owen Davies. Ellis Griffith was still the tenant of Gilwern.⁷ At the time of the tithe survey in 1840 Robert Roberts was farming all the land himself. Between 1840 and 1865 ownership passes to David Evans and his wife Ellen (perhaps Ellen was the daughter of Robert Roberts). In 1865 the property is sold by David Evans (described as late of Hafod Boeth but moved to Rhandir Issa) to David Jones of Bryn y Foel Hall (described as Quarry Agent).⁸ David Jones owned and ran the adjoining Llifon slate and timber mill, used for manufacturing writing slates. It is difficult to understand why he also bought Hafod Boeth, except as an investment, or perhaps to also use it for commercial purposes, as a leat was built from the Llifon mill leat to Hafod Boeth. However, a 1927 valuation of Hafod Boeth records a dairy with water wheel, which may have been the intended purpose.⁹ Following David Jones interest the property passed to Daniel Thomas and then to Hugh Williams.

¹ For a discussion of Hafod placenames in Llandwrog see E. Davies 'Hendre and Hafod in Caernarfonshire' *Transactions of the Caernarfonshire Historical Society*, 1979, 79-46

² Williams, W. O. *Calendar of Quarter Session Rolls*, 47

³ Gwynedd Archives Service, Land Tax Assessments and Hearth Tax for Llandwrog

⁴ The history of Tryfan has been detailed by W. Gilbert Williams in 'Y Tryfan', *Transactions of the Caernarfonshire Historical Society*, 1940, 58-70.

⁵ See 'Y Tryfan' for details

⁶ J Griffiths *Pedigrees of Caernarfonshire and Anglesey Families* (1914) only includes one branch of the family, and seemingly not the side that remained owners of Hafod Boeth.

⁷ Gwynedd Archives Service XQS 5/30 Llandwrog

⁸ Information from deeds in current owners possession. David Jones was manager of Penyrorsedd Quarry (*pers comm* Dr Gwynfor Pierce Jones).

⁹ Valuation in current owners possession.

SITE DESCRIPTION

Hafod Boeth consists of the extant house, occupied, and possibly of late 18th century date, that lies on the west side of the road, and a number of redundant farm buildings that lie on the east side of the road (see fig. 1). The existing house will not be considered further in this report. The farm buildings now lie in two groups, though a third group formerly existed. These lie in a line roughly north south. The northernmost group (marked A and B on fig 1) have been demolished, probably in the late 1970's when the road was widened.¹⁰ The leat from Llifon led to these two buildings, and the water wheel would have been on the end of (or within) the northernmost structure. Remains of low stone walls that currently mark the roadside are the remnants of these two buildings. The southern group of buildings (marked E on fig 1) consist of a small structure with chimney, too overgrown to see closely, but built from small stones, and incorporating considerable quantities of small slate blocks. The style of construction would suggest a date within the mid-19th century. The OS map of 1890 shows an adjoining structure which has since been demolished.

The central range of buildings (marked C and D on fig 1), which are the two proposed for conversion, consist of an upper (east) building and a lower (west) one. The upper building is stone built in rough courses using quarried stone, with a slate roof. The roof trusses are of king post type, and dateable to the mid or late 19th century, which is almost certainly the date of construction of the building. The lower building is stone-built but of rounded field boulders. There are opposing doorways in the lateral north and south wall, though the south door may be a later insertion. The primary entrance appears to have been through the north door. A small original square window east of the north door appears to be the only other original opening. Later door openings have been made in the two gables. The roof is supported on three relatively simple collar-beam trusses held together by wooden pegs. The collar beams appear chamfered, and the east truss is blackened. They enter the wall part way down, in the manner of an upper cruck. Typologically they are of 17th century date. The remainder of the roof, including the purlins, is relatively modern, either late 19th century or early 20th century. The longitudinal walls were raised slightly when the present roof was constructed. Dense vegetation and the addition of later brick structures obscures much of the evidence, and full interpretation of this building would have to await clearance of these obstructions. However, it is a reasonable assumption that this building is the original house at Hafod Boeth, occupied during the 17th century, and then perhaps converted to a farm building following the construction of the present house in the 18th century. The roof trusses, masonry walls and original door and window openings remain. There is good potential for the survival of underground archaeology that would allow greater interpretation.

SIGNIFICANCE

The earlier building (structure C) at Hafod Boeth is of historic and archaeological interest. There are very few structures of this date remaining, and those that do are usually from houses of a higher status. For example within the parish of Llandwrog the house at Ty Mawr has good 16th century surviving remains, and those at Bodfan and Tryfan are largely of 17th century date.¹¹ However, the house at Hafod Boeth was of lower status than these, and the survival of houses owned by lesser landed freeholders is very rare. Its importance is raised by the historical evidence contained within the Quarter Session rolls. The period of ownership by David Jones reveals a small but interesting episode within the industrialisation of Gwynedd.

There is good potential for the recovery of additional information concerning the site from further historical and archaeological research. This would lead to a better understanding of the site and its context. However, present evidence suggests this is a significant site that should be preserved. Re-use as a dwelling, providing original features are retained and archaeological evidence is recorded, would provide an appropriate means of achieving this.

¹⁰ Map in possession of present owner

¹¹ RCAHMW *Inventory of Ancient Monuments of Caernarvonshire* Vol 2, 184-5

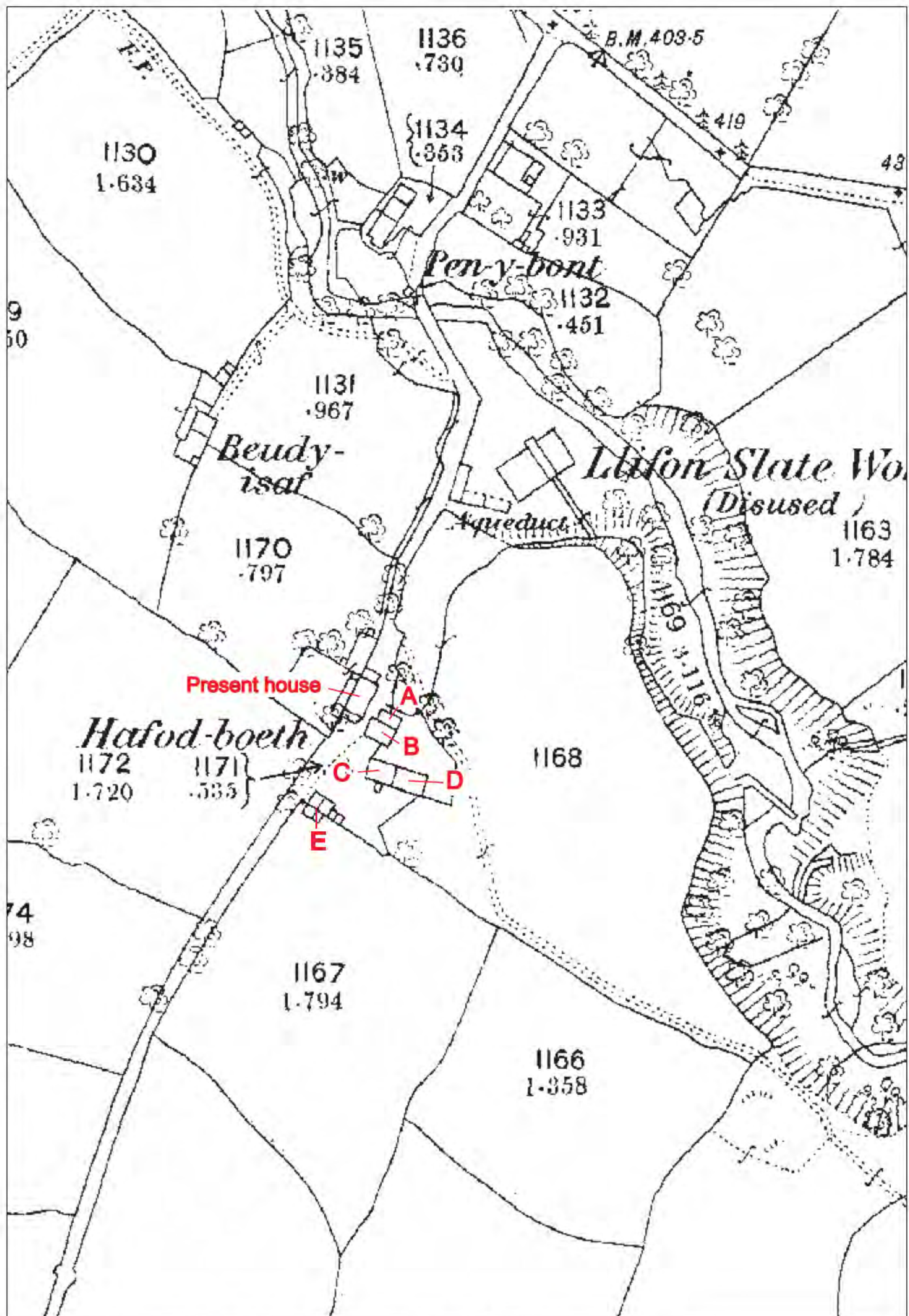


Figure 1. Ordnance Survey 25". Sheet Caernarfonshire XX.04, 1898. Enlarged to scale of 1:1500



Plate 1. South view of structures C and D



Plate 2. Leat from the Llifon mill to Hafod Boeth



Plate 3. Interior of structure D



Plate 4. Collar beam roof trusses in structure C



Plate 5. Roof truss at the east end of structure C



Plate 6. Window opening in the north wall of structure C



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