HER COPY

St Seiriol's Church and Prior's House, Penmon

GAT Project No. 1842
Report No 648
prepared by
David Longley
2006

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust
Craig Beuno, Ffordd y Garth, Bangor, Gwynedd LL57 2RT

St Seiriol's Church and Prior's House
Penmon
Archaeological Recording
2004-2005

Event PRN 40667

Prepared for the Rev. Neil Fairlamb, St Seiriol's Church
and
Adam and Frances Voelcker, Architects

by

David Longley

Conservation work and repairs, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund was undertaken at St Seiriol's Church and adjacent Prior's House, Penmon, Anglesey, between October 2004 and June 2005. This report presents an account of the archaeological recording carried out during the course of that work and includes a discussion of the historical background to the foundation and subsequent development of the church and house.

My thanks are due to Neil Fairlamb and Adam Voelcker for recognising the important opportunities for recovering archaeological and historical detail that conservation projects of this kind afford and for ensuring that an appropriate record was made

Thanks are also due to the librarians and archivists in the University of Wales, Bangor, Anglesey County Council, National Archive (PRO), National Monument Record (RCAHMW), National Library of Wales, British Library and Lambeth Palace Library for helpful assistance in access to and supply of documents.

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust
Craig Beuno, Ffordd y Garth, Bangor, Gwynedd LL57 2RT
2006

Contents

List of figures

Penmon Priory

The church at Penmon is one of the earliest surviving Christian establishments on Anglesey. It is also historically and architecturally important. There is clear evidence of four major building phases at the site and more subtle evidence of several other modifications and changes during its long history.

We need not doubt an early origin for a church at Penmon or for an eremitical component on the island. The founder is traditionally held to be Seiriol, great-grandson of Cunedda and cousin of the sixth century king of Gwynedd, Maelgwn. We should expect the involvement of the king, whether Maelgwn or another, later, king in the establishment of the church, whether this be through a grant of royal land or the acquiescence of the king in the transference of a private freehold to the service of the church 'for the good of their souls'. In either circumstance the special nature of the location, the holy well and the island, may have been the catalyst. The precise date of foundation remains uncertain. There are few churches in north Wales which can be documented with any certainty to the early Middle Ages. Penmon, however, is one of these, recorded as having been raided by Vikings in 971. The church, at this date, is likely to have been of wood. It is generally supposed that the earliest stone churches in Wales were constructed during the twelfth century and that before this, timber would have been employed. If stone was used, then it has not survived to be recognised, but the 10th century stone cross, popularly known as the Deer Park Cross (now in the nave of the church), would already be standing, outside the church, perhaps at the boundary of the area of sanctuary (noddfa).

The topography of the Penmon site has influenced the architecture of the complex. The promontory of Penmon is formed from a series of limestone escarpments which extend as a string of flat ridges to the point at the south-eastern corner of the island. Ynys Seiriol, detached from the mainland, is the last in the line of these ridges. The scarp faces are on the south-eastern sides and the summits are inclined gently towards the north-west.

The church of Penmon is located on a small terrace at the foot of one of these escarpments, from which the ground falls relatively gently towards the south and east. Over time, the church buildings expanded beyond this small terrace to incorporate a tower, transepts, an enlarged chancel, refectory and dormitory block, prior's house and warming room.

The origins of the church

The origins of Penmon are consistently described as obscure (Longueville Jones 1849, 46-8); Carr 1986, 18), with no detailed written documentation available until the twelfth century. However, it may be possible to offer some conjecture as to how such a church may have come into being in its early years.

Ancient tradition represents the foundation of Penmon as having been initiated by Einion Frenin (the king), great-grandson of Cunedda. Cunedda, a north British leader, in a ninth-century source, is reputed to have established himself in the west of Wales, accompanied by his eight sons, after driving out Irish settlers from those parts. Einion is said to have installed Seiriol, a close relative, either his brother or nephew, at his new foundation of Penmon. Later commentators have formed divided opinions on the probable location of this early church. Some have thought it likely that St. Seiriol's well, on the mainland, would have provided an appropriate focus for the religious establishment, others regard the eremitical solitude of Ynys Seiriol as a better candidate. The date of these presumed events is around AD500. However, the historicity of the individuals at the heart of this tradition and the chronology of these events have not been conclusively demonstrated in a period where tradition and historical fact are inextricably intermingled.

It is clear, at least from the later history of Penmon, that Penmon could be described as a clas church. Idwal ap Gruffudd ap Cynan, is recorded as abbot in the 1130s and in 1237 the abadaeth of Penmon is referred to. The nature of a clas church is that the church is held by a community (the clas) which has a vested and inheritable interest in the church and its landed endowments (the abadaeth). Not all members of the clas, by any means, were clerics, although there had to be at least one priest. The leader of the community was styled 'abbot' but the connotations of this designation are likely to be dramatically different from those associated with the abbots of the pan-European monastic orders of the 13th century.

A grant of land by a king or a local lord for the foundation of a church is a well-attested procedure. The land grant could be extensive and in any case would entail the means of support for the new church, including the labour services and food renders previously payable to the king, or lord, and now payable to the church. There are documented precedents, too, for the installation of a member of the donor's family as 'abbot' to lead the church, effectively providing a benefice for the individual. We are reminded, here, that Idwal son of Gruffudd ap Cynan, the king, was abbot of Penmon in the twelfth century.

In Anglo-Saxon England such donations could be, and were, endowed with hereditary rights (EHD.1.805 Morris, 1989, 126). Bede, in the eighth century made a complaint that 'no life of monastic rule was being practised [in certain monasteries] often headed by reeves, thegns or royal servants who had simply declared themselves to be abbots ... and in addition cause hereditary rights to be ascribed to them by royal edicts'. Much later, Giraldus Cambrensis, writing about his own personal experiences, in the 1180s, describes how 'powerful men in a parish' could be 'appointed by clergy as stewards or patrons and defenders of churches. Later they usurped all rights for themselves, appropriating lands and outlying property, leaving to the clergy only tithes and offerings, even assigning these to their sons and kinsmen who were clerics ... and called themselves abbots'.

An example taken from documentation collated and transcribed in the twelfth century but, nevetheless, retaining an invaluable core of early medieval material, describes a donation by King Peibio of Gwent to God, Dyfrig (the bishop of Llandaff) and Iunabwy a clergyman, who was also the king's cousin. The gift involved Maenor Garth Benni 'with wood, field and water' and fishing rights in the Wye. Maenor Garth Benni (the equivalent of a north Welsh maenol or dynastic lordship) is likely to have been a sizeable territorial unit with tenant communities in place. The intention would be to provide a suitable benefice for Iunabwy. The food rents which ordinarily would be paid to the king were now to be paid to the church.

An alternative process to the donation of land by a king could involve a decision taken by the senior members of a freeholding family, with the consent of their heirs, to give up their land to God, with the intention of building and maintaining a church on, and from, their landed estate. This effective alienation of land could only be achieved with the consent of the king, for which compensation would be paid for loss of hospitality services due to the king, and which would now contribute to the maintenance of the new church. In this circumstance, the freeholders might stay on the land, themselves constituting a religious community, later described as a 'clas'. The community would retain the usufruct for their own support.

In addition to the processes at work, there would be decisions to be taken in the choice of location. In the transition from Paganism to Christianity, important Pagan shrines, or their locations and festivals, might be incorporated in the infrastructure of the new religion. In some instances such shrines might determine or influence the location of church building. In the context of Penmon, there are two locations which deserve consideration in this respect, St. Seiriol's Well and Ynys Seiriol. Watery places: lakes, wells and rivers would appear to have been places of veneration to the Celts. Wells with special properties of healing, or the propensity to predict or influence the outcome of events, are particularly thought to have retained a memory of their former significance in a Pagan context. Such wells have often been incorporated into the ritual landscape of the early Christian church. Ffynnon Seiriol, like, for example, Ffynnon Eilian and Ffynnon Dwynwen, could be an instance of this process. Islands in the Western Sea are similarly thought to have been special places in the Celtic consciousness, the homes of deities, and to have retained that mystic quality as appropriate locations for early Christian churches.

The earliest surviving part of the church is the western group of nave, tower and transepts. It has been thought that the nave is the oldest component in the group, perhaps with an eastern chancel, which was replaced when the tower was built, and the transepts added immediately after. This would appear to be the sequence on Ynys Seiriol. However, the precise sequence of building is more complex than generally thought. There are indications that the tower may have preceded the present nave, appended, perhaps, to the west end of an earlier nave in the position where the chancel now stands. The alternatives are discussed in more detail below. There would not be a long period of time between the construction of the surviving elements which all belong to the early to mid twelfth century.

In, perhaps, the 1230s, the old clas community of Penmon-Ynys Seiriol was encouraged to reform as a community of Augustinian canons. The old system was seen to be decayed and anachronistic. Movements for reform were sweeping across western Europe and pressure came from the top. Other clas communities in Gwynedd, at Aberdaron, Beddgelert and Llaneilian were reformed or restructured at this time. Aberdaron, or rather, Bardsey, became a community of Augustinian canons, as did Beddgelert; Llaneilian became a parish church. The conventual buildings at Penmon, the cellar – refectory – dormitory – block on the south side of the present complex with, perhaps, a prior's house on the west side, immediately south of the south transept and a new, large and long chancel, added to the east wall of the tower were begun to be built at around this time. Together they define three sides of a rectangular cloister. One suspects that the project was funded by the king, Llywelyn ap Iorwerth, as was the case at Bardsey.

The present house, to the west of the cloister, may retain elements of an early building but much of its proportions and structure are likely to derive from new building work in the early sixteenth century when the thirteenth century chancel was rebuilt, or at least repaired and modified, and a new three storey 'warming house' was added to the east end of the refectory.

The suppression of the religious community of Penmon in 1537 saw the transfer of the conventual buildings to the crown, and then to secular private ownership, a phase in the site's history which is represented by agricultural buildings and the trappings of a well-to-do country residence manifested in work on the house, the dovecote and, later, the deer park walls.

Major repair work was undertaken in the 1850s, which included a substantial rebuilding of the chancel and the north transept. A large-scale revamp and repair was undertaken on the 'Prior's house' in the 1920s and again in 2004-2005. This last piece of work, undertaken by the architect, Adam Voelcker, for the parish and its rector the Reverend Neil Fairlamb, required archaeological recording while the work progressed. This recording, principally inside and outside the Prior's house and at the south transept and chancel arches and at the west gable of the nave, revealed new information and provided an opportunity for a wider assessment of the development of the complex as a whole. Slight misalignments of the successive components of the complex give clues to its building history, as do antiquarian sketches and early nineteenth century descriptions, made before the major works of the 1850s.

Work in progress on the west side of the church and house in 2005

The early church

No recognisable structural evidence survives in respect of an early, pre-twelfth-century church at Penmon. There is, however, a considerable amount of circumstantial evidence. This includes the association of a holy well adjacent to the present church, documentary references of early Medieval date and the presence of tenth-eleventh century stone crosses.

The well

There is a well 70m north-north-east of the church. It is fed by a spring which emanates from the limestone escarpment which rises steeply behind the well. The overflow from the well joins another stream issuing from a point some 100m higher up the ridge. The waters of both streams feed into the former priory fishpond east of the church.

The well is reputed to have particular properties. In the nineteenth century the Ordnance Survey mapped the site as a 'wishing well'. Watery places, springs, lakes and rivers were special places to pagan Celts and the assimilation of pagan shrines in the context of early Christianity would seem to have been an acceptable component of the transition. Wells with magical or curative properties which are intimately associated with a Christian church represent one possible indicator of an early origin for that church.

The well at Penmon lies outside the immediate precinct of the old conventual buildings and graveyard. Nevertheless, a strong association has developed between the Saint and the holy well. The Royal Commission investigators in the 1930s considered this location to be the founding settlement of a sixth-century religious community. The surviving walls and partially roofed structure, at the approach to and covering the well, were taken to represent the much-altered vestiges of the saint's chapel. The adjacent sub-circular limestone foundation was considered to be the residence, or cell, of Seiriol himself. Unfortunately this analysis is difficult to support. There is visibly late work in the structure, most notably in the use of brick and a dated plaque commemorating work done by the fourth Sir Richard Bulkeley in 1710. Other components of the structures, comprising large limestone blocks are not susceptible to close dating. The arrangement of the rooms are not dissimilar from that of St. Cybi's well, Llangybi, where components were added in the eighteenth century but where the main, sub-rectangular chamber could have existed, free-standing, much earlier, 'but not as early as the sixth century' (Avent,, 1989, 44).

St Seiriol's well

Documentary references
The earliest direct references to Ynys Seiriol and Penmon occur in the seventh and tenth centuries, respectively.

The first reference is an entry in the Welsh Annals under the year 632 which records the siege of Cadwallon, King of Gwynedd, on Ynys Glannauc, by Edwin, King of Northumbria. There is no reference to a church or monastic community on the island and it may be the defensive potential of the location rather than the inherent significance of the place, or the sanctuary a church could provide, that drove Cadwallon to take refuge there. On the other hand, no significance should be inferred from the use of Ynys Glannauc/Glannog, in this context, rather than Ynys Seiriol. Ynys Glannog continued to be used in respect of the monastic community well into the thirteenth century.

The context for this clash of kingdoms follows the death of Aethelfrith of Northumbria, in battle, against the powerful King Readwald of East Anglia. Edwin, a son of a rival Northumbrian dynasty had spent many years in exile as a fugitive before arriving at Readwald's court and receiving his support. A Welsh tradition suggests that part of that exile was spent on Anglesey at the court of Cadfan, father of Cadwallon. Cadwallon and Edwin would have been, in one sense, foster brothers. Readwald died in 525. Edwin now in control of his own Northumbrian kingdom succeeded Readwald as the most powerful of all the Anglo-Saxon rulers. Edwin pursued a claim to be recognised as a kind of overlord and to receive tribute from subordinate kings in recognition. Cadwallon, it would seem, was disinclined to comply. In 632, Cadwallon had his back to the wall, or, rather, the Irish Sea, but in the following year, Cadwallon, in alliance with the pagan Penda of Mercia, took the battle into Northumbria, defeating and killing Edwin at Hatfield Chase. The Welsh Bardic tradition remembered Edwin as 'one of the three oppressions of Ynys Môn, nurtured within'.

There is little evidence for monastic 'clas' communities on Anglesey in the seventh century but it is of interest that the dynasty of Cadfan and Cadwallon supply a tantalising glimpse. The incident on Ynys Seiriol provides no direct indication of a community there in 632. However, Cadwallon's father, Cadfan died around 625 and his memorial stone, 'Cadfan the king – wisest and most illustrious of all kings', survives at Llangadwaladr. Llangadwaladr was a 'clas' church and Cadfan's stone, a grave marker, suggests that the king was buried there, two miles south of the royal llys at Aberffraw. This was not a royal chapel, - the palace chapel is likely to be close to the llys in Aberffraw itself. It is more likely that, as at Penmon, 500 years later, a member of the royal dynasty headed the

community as abbot or, as many eminent men in the later years of their life did, the ageing king retired to a monastery. The dedication at Llangadwaladr is to Cadwaladr the king, son of Cadwallon, grandson of Cadfan; a family that patronised the monastic church as the dynasty of Gruffydd ap Cynan and Llywelyn ap Iorwerth were to do at Penmon in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

The second record concerning Penmon makes no reference to a church either. But here we can be more positive. The context is a succession of raids on Anglesey, originating from the Viking kingdom of Dublin. Most records of these attacks are less than specific: 'Anglesey was ravaged by the Black Host; Anglesey ravaged by the folk of Dublin', and so on. Where specific locations are mentioned; Caergybi (961), Aberffraw (968), Penmon (971) and outside Anglesey, Tywyn (963), the raids are on royal sites and major churches. This is equally true of Anglo-Saxon raiding from the east: Ynys Lannog (632), Bangor (634), Rhuddlan (797), Deganwy (823), Conwy (821), Clynnog (978). We may be confident, therefore, that the Viking raid on Penmon was directed at the church of Penmon.

Stone crosses

There are five or possibly six Medieval stone crosses at, or associated with, Penmon. The ornament and context of the decorated crosses has been discussed recently by Edwards (Edwards, 1999, 5-16). One is a plain Latin cross, now set into the north wall of the rebuilt chancel, just under the eaves and a short distance to the east of the westernmost window. The second is a fragment of a gritstone wheel-cross set into the external eastern wall of the south transept, above the nineteenth century window there. The Royal Commission (1937, 121) note that this cross came from the apex of the tower roof. Both these crosses are too fragmentary to contribute to the advancement of our enquiry into the early origins of the church. The third cross is the highly decorated 'St. Anthony' or 'Deer Park' cross which now stands in the nave. The fourth cross is a decorated, but broken and now lost, cross which once stood to the south of the church. The fifth cross is the decorated cross, now in the south transept. The sixth cross is a very similarly proportioned cross which once stood 1.4km to the south-west of the church. This cross was recorded by Edward Lhuyd in 1699. If it is not the same cross as the transept cross, then it is now lost. In addition there is a decorated font, now in the nave, which may originally have served as the pedestal of a cross. The third, fourth, fifth and sixth crosses and the font/cross base do contribute to our understanding of the early church and are discussed in more detail below.

The 'St. Anthony' or 'Deer Park' cross

This cross stands 2.77m tall, including the pedestal and cross head. Lluyd, who saw the cross in the open, some 420m west of the church, provides slightly different measurements to the authoritative published record (72 inches for the shaft compared to Nash-Williams' 64 inches: Nash-Williams, 1950). In 1699, the cross-head had become detached and lay, weather-beaten, on the ground nearby. Although some commentators have remarked on the slightly clumsy setting of cross-head to shaft, with the implication that a section of the shaft might be missing, this is not supported by a comparison of Lhuyd's sketch with the actual stone.

All four sides of the cross are decorated. The front is arranged in a series of vertical panels separated by horizontal tram-line and pellet dividers and simple raised horizontal bands. The uppermost panel is filled with a loose single-strand ribbon interlace in relief. Below this is a tramline and pellet divider followed by a narrow zone of interlace bordered on its lower edge by a single raised line. The principal item of decoration lies below this. It is figural scene representing the temptation of St. Anthony in the desert, a favourite eremitic motif. The saint stands face-on, flanked by animal-headed demons. Below, there is a wide band of tight, single-strand interlace bordered below by another tramline and pellet zone. At the bottom of the shaft there is a scene featuring one or more equestrians.

The left hand side of the cross-shaft, defined by a rectangular frame, is filled, for the most part, with broad curvilinear three-strand interlace which terminates in a rectilinear fret pattern. At the base of the frame there is a small figural scene.

Borre ring-chain on back of cross (above)

Detail of the St Anthony scene (left)

The right hand side of the shaft is occupied by two-strand curvilinear interlace, in its upper third, of which the two strands of one ribbon separate and diverge to compose rectilinear frets down each edge of the shaft side.

The back of the shaft is occupied by a double-strand rectilinear fret pattern at the top of the panel which quickly morphs into a Borre-style ring-chain down the remainder of the shaft. The cross-head comprises a closed ring-cross with expanded arms which project beyond the ring on the upper, left and right sides. There are central projecting bosses, front and back.

the cross originally stood high on the limestone ridge, above and behind the church, 420m to the west, towards the western limit of what was later to become Sir Richard Bulkeley's deer park.

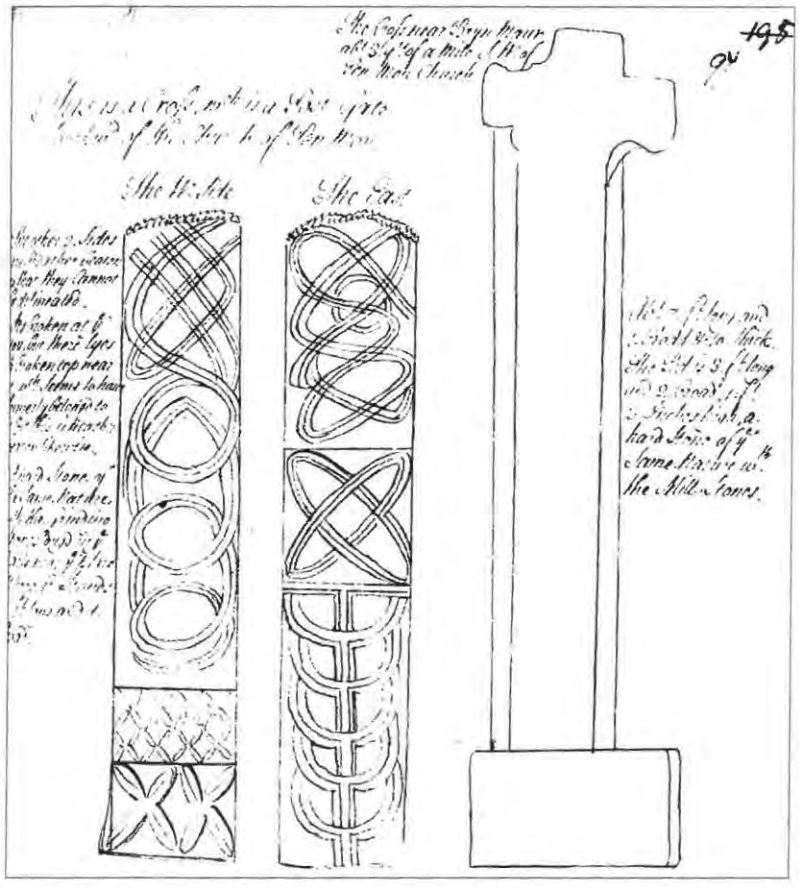
The 'Post-Gate' cross

A cross shaft once stood as a gate post to the south of the church. The shaft stood 6ft (1.83m) tall and 1ft (305mm) broad. It was recorded by Edward Lhuyd in 1699 but is now lost. The shaft was broken at the top but may have been at or near its original position as the cross-head lay weather-beaten on the ground nearby. The two broad sides of the shaft had recognisable decoration. The narrow sides were abraded.

The east side of the shaft would appear to have been arranged in three vertical panels. The upper portion displayed an interlace pattern, possibly employing two-stranded ribbon. The central register would seem to have been occupied by a saltire cross of two interlaced links of two-strand ribbon. The lower register had five links of ring-chain ornament, of two-strand ribbon, similar to the rear panel of the St. Anthony cross.

The west face of the shaft was occupied, for about two-thirds of its upper portion with an interlace motif which devolved into a pattern resembling a spiral. Below this, there was a narrow band of fret pattern saltires and below this again, a panel of two fret pattern saltire crosses, side by side, perhaps not dissimilar to the lower half of the south side of the Penmon font.

The stone of the 'post-gate' cross was compared by Lhuyd to that of the millstone (that is, gritstone) quarry at Penmon, some 590m north east of the church.



Extract from Edward Lhuyd's sheafs of archaeological drawings showing the 'post-gate' cross and the 'Bryn Mawr' cross

The South Transept cross

The shaft and head of this cross is formed of one slab of stone, unlike the St. Anthony cross which has a detached head. the stone is a coarse gritstone. The cross shaft is 1.63m tall, 305mm broad and 254mm thick. the head is 533mm tall. One side of the head (the right side as now viewed from the transept arch) has been trimmed flat, to the same plane as the shaft side, removing part of the head and one of the projecting arms of the cross. This is a consequence of the stone being used, at one time, as a lintel in one of the windows of the thirteenth-century refectory.

The front face of the cross (as now viewed from the transept arch) displays a plain cross with expanded arms within a circle. The quadrants between the cross and the circle are filled with interlaced triquetrae. There are short, broad extensions on the line of the arms of the cross which protrude beyond the circumference of the circular head.

The shaft has three panels. The uppermost, extending down half the length of the shaft, is a mirrored 'Greek key' fret pattern of plain rectilinear ribbon.

The second panel is a well-worked square interlaced knot disposed along criss-crossed diagonal axes.

The third panel is an enlarged version of part of the fret pattern in the upper register.

The rear of the shaft has a very similar arrangement of design to the front. The cross head is the same as the front face. There are three decorative panels, vertically disposed along the shaft. The uppermost, occupying half the shaft, and the lowest panel are filled with a fret pattern very similar to that on the lowest register of the front face. The central panel reproduces the knot-work design of the central panel on the front face.

The left and right faces of the shaft have linear rows of fret patterns. The left hand side has two variant arrangements. The upper portion has two-strand ribbon frets which terminate in an animal head midway down the shaft. The lower portion and the right hand face have simple stepped frets. This design, on the right hand face, terminates in an animal head at the top of the shaft.

Fret patterns similar to those of the upper register on the front face are also carried onto the curving underside of the left-side cross head and on to the end face of the projecting cross arm. The right hand projecting arm is missing.

The Bryn Mawr cross

This cross was recorded by Edward Lhuyd in 1699 'near Bryn Mawr, abt. 3qrs of a mile SW of Pen Mon church'. Edwards has drawn attention to the significance of the siting, close to the Penmon parish boundary (Edwards, 1999, 3-15). Bryn Mawr is a short distance west of the present village of Penmon. The location, if not the property, is mentioned in 1571 when David ap Hugh of Penmon, released Ty Gwyn, near Bryn Mawr, to Lewis ap Ieuan ap Ieuan Fychan and Griffith ap John ap William. In the 1770s Bryn Mawr extended over 37 acres. One of the fields of the property was Cae'r Groes – the field of the cross. Cae'r Groes is 1.4km south west of the church on the road between the nineteenth century National School and Haulfre.

Unlike the other crosses recorded by Lhuyd, the illustration of the Bryn Mawr cross shows no decoration. The cross is drawn tall and narrow with, possibly, the head in one piece with the shaft. Lhuyd's dimensions are 'Abt. 7ft long and 1 broad and 10 [inches] thick. The ped. is 3ft. long and 2 broad 1ft 3inches high, a hard stone of ye same nature wth. the Mill Stones'. These dimensions are very close to Nash Williams' figures for the South Transept cross: 7ft 1in by 1ft broad by 10 ins deep; that is 2.16m by 305mm by 254mm. The description of the geology is also compatible with that of the South Transept stone. These two stones are either closely comparable and from a common source or they are one and the same stone. For this latter hypothesis to be considered, the Bryn Mawr stone must have been moved some time after Lhuyd saw it in 1699 and must only have been set and used as a lintel in the refectory building at a relatively late date, perhaps during the eighteenth century when other structural works were in progress on the, by then, secular elements of the complex.

The font

The font now stands on a modern plinth at the west end of the nave. It was retrieved from a mason's yard in Beaumaris during the nineteenth century, presumably before Fenton saw a font in the nave when he visited Penmon around 1810. He describes the font as bearing some old sculpture, too much blunted by daubings of whitewash to be traced. Fenton was accompanied by Sir Richard Colt Hoare who sketched Penmon at this time, as did John Buckler who was commissioned by Colt Hoare on many occasions. Buckler produced an extremely valuable plan of Penmon, which may be compared with that following the renovation of the 1850s. Buckler's plan shows a font against the south wall of the nave, immediately to the west of the twelfth-century south door.

The font is approximately square, tapering slightly towards the top. The east face has two interlaced triquetrae, side by side in the centre of the face. These are bordered by a single register of simple stepped fret pattern except at the upper edge where the zone of fret is doubled. The south side has a symmetrical arrangement of four fret-pattern saltire crosses disposed two-up and two-down. The north face is covered with a carpet pattern of interlocking T-shaped frets. The west side has no decoration.

The font: east side (above); north side (below)

The significance of the crosses

Three of the Penmon crosses discussed above are highly decorated. The Bryn Mawr cross may or may not have carried decoration or may even represent an early notice of the cross discovered in use in a refectory window lintel and now displayed in the south transept. The font is considered by most commentators to be the re-used base of a free standing cross. However, an alternative possibility has recently been canvassed by Aimee Pritchard, that the font was made as a font, contemporary with the manufacture of the crosses. In either case the significance of this piece with regard to dating the early church remains the same. If this is an early font, however, there may be implications for the dating of other Anglesey stones fonts and their associated churches. The opinion of Thurlsby (2006, 210) that the font is a twelfth-century font with contemporary decoration is less likely in the context of Penmon. Where decoration is recognised, on the crosses and on the font/cross base, there are certain recurring motifs and other characteristic or diagnostic motifs. The most common patterns at Penmon are fret patterns, interlace, ring-chain, figural scenes and zoomorphs. Particular motifs, in their own right or formed from these patterns are: expanded arm crosses, triquetras and saltires.

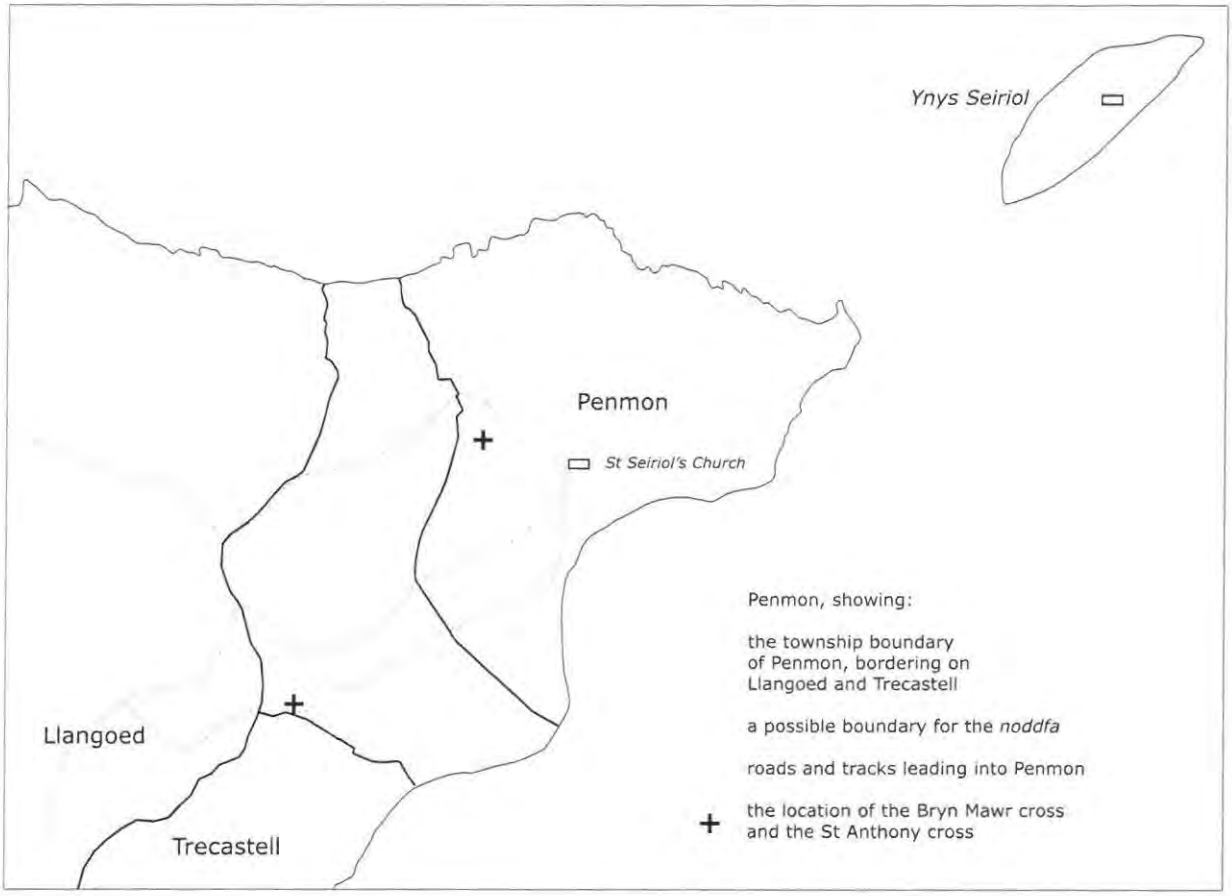
All the items have both interlace and fret patterns together although the balance varies considerably. Two of the three cross-shafts have ring chain. Fret patterns are predominant on the South Transept cross and the font, with interlace only present in the Triquetras in the angles of the cross and central to the east panel of the font. The knots in the central panels of the Transept cross on each side are also rectilinear interlace rather than fret patterns. In contrast, the St. Anthony cross has open single strand, tight single strand, two and three strand interlace. Similarly, albeit on the evidence of Lhuyd's sketchy drawing, the 'Post-gate' cross also carried a high proportion of interlace. It is noteworthy that both these crosses have panels of ring chain, features which link the 'Post-gate' and the St. Anthony cross. However, the figural scene on the central panel and lower registers of the St. Anthony cross, and the use of decorative dividers, are important in differentiating this cross from the others.

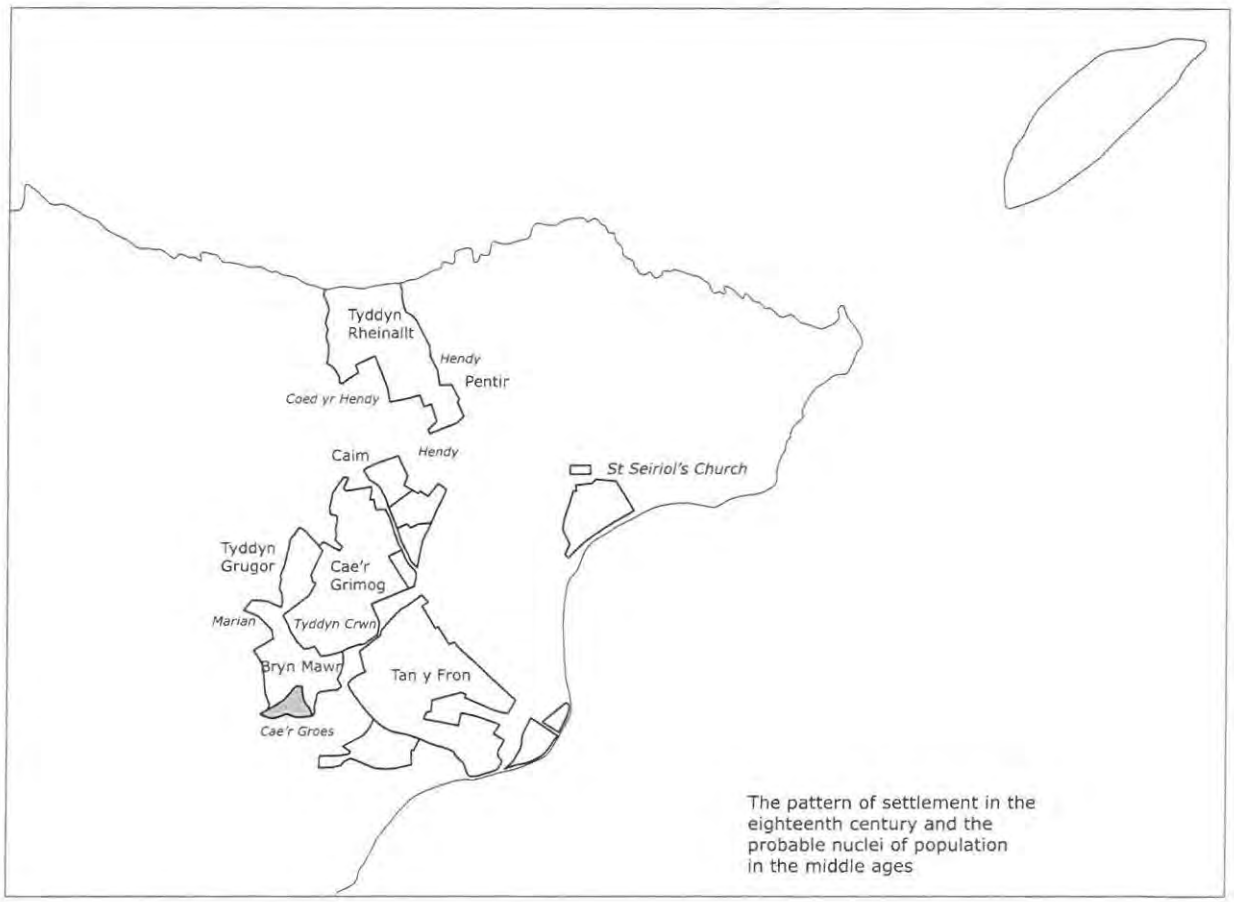
All these motifs and patterns can be matched in contexts around the Irish sea-board in the tenth and eleventh centuries. In particular the ring-chain motif is distinctively Scandinavian with several Manx examples of tenth-century date providing the most obvious source of inspiration. The figural scenes in bordered panels on the St. Anthony cross are perhaps closer to Irish exemplars than to the Welsh series. The lowest panel on the front face has been described as a hunting scene, but could equally represent the 'Flight into Eqypt'. The juxtaposition of panels illustrating the temptation of Anthony in the desert and the 'Flight into Egypt' occurs, for example, on the Moone cross, Co. Kildare (Henry 1965, 148-50, pls. 70, 72). The remaining motifs of interlace and fret pattern can all be paralleled on tenth and eleventh century Welsh crosses. The presence or associations, therefore, of a series of decorated crosses of probable late tenth century date is strong evidence for an important religious community at Penmon at this time. These crosses, and an associated church are likely to have been standing at the time of the documented Viking raid in the 970s.

The landscape context of the crosses

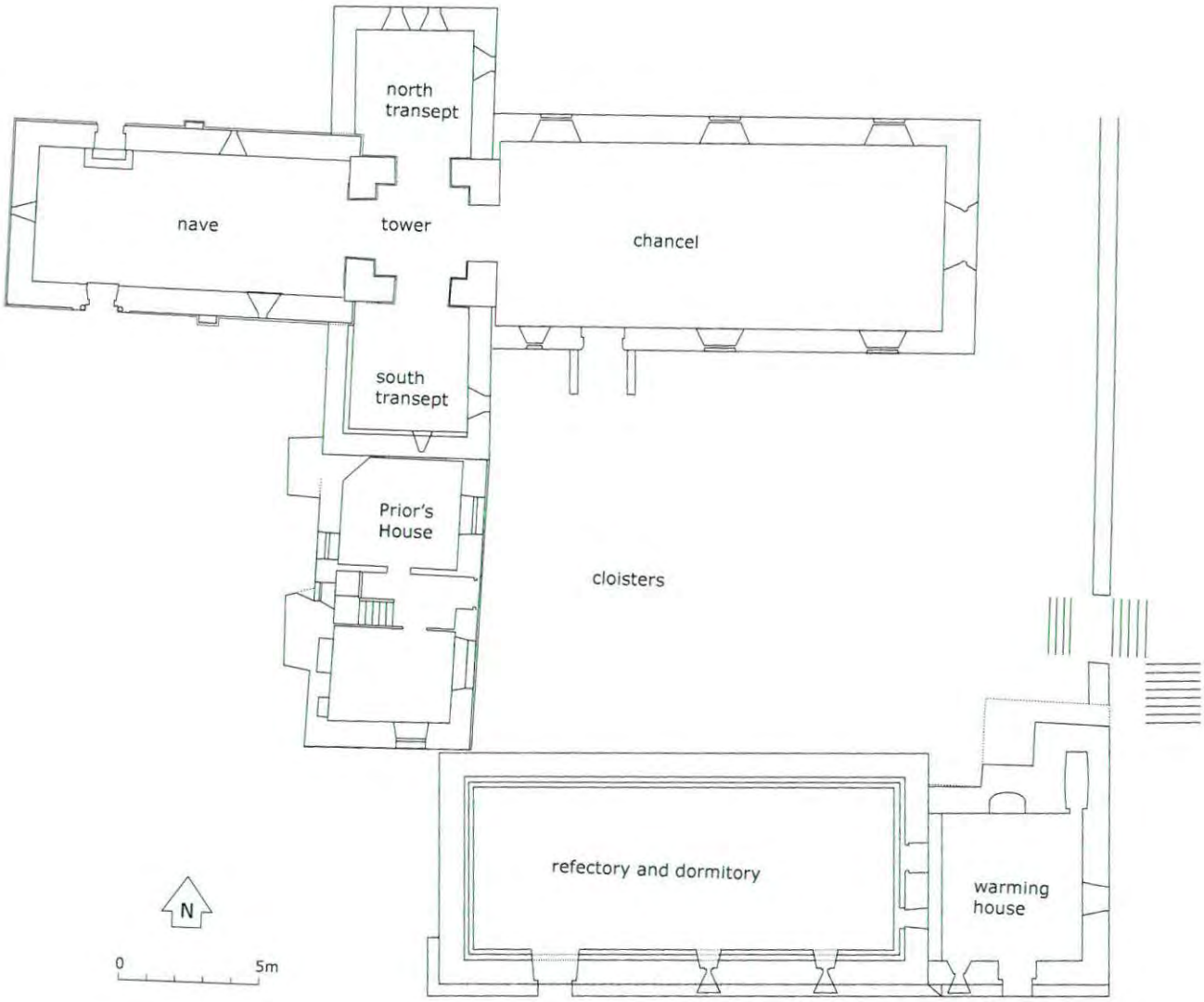
Of the four, of possibly five, crosses discussed above only two have identifiable locations in which we may have confidence. Nevertheless, these two locations are important. The Bryn Mawr stone may have stood in the field known as Cae'r Groes on land of what was much later to become the tenement of Bryn Mawr, The location is a slightly elevated spur of land projecting southward from the limestone ridge at the parish boundary between Penmon and Llangoed. This boundary, from Bryn Mawr, northwards, probably represents the ancient division between the townships of Penmon and Llangoed. In a later period, however, to the south, the Medieval township of Trecastell was assimilated within the ecclesiastical parish of Penmon. In 1237 Llywelyn ap Iorwerth confirmed the *abadaeth* of Penmon with all its boundaries as far as the township of Trecastell. Penmon's territory, therefore, extended as far as the township of Trecastell but did not include it. The field of Cae'r Groes lay within Penmon at the boundary of Llangoed and Trecastell and it is highly likely that the cross stood at, or close to, that conjunction at a point where one of the principal routes of access from the south-west entered Penmon land. If the Bryn Mawr cross, depicted with no decoration visible on Lluyd's sketch, is really contemporary with the decorated crosses, and was in its original location, then a case can be made for the identification of the core of Penmon's landed interest as far west as the Llangoed/Trecastell border.

The St. Anthony cross stood in an elevated position on the limestone ridge at the western limit of Lord Bulkeley's deer park, near Tyddyn Rheinallt. There is a property, close by, to the west of the park wall, named Pen y Groes. The deer park wall was built in the eighteenth century. The boundary is, in a swagging way, concentric with the township boundary discussed above and about 400m apart from it. If the wall follows a pre-existing delineation then it is conceivable that the geography of Penmon reflects a pattern seen at other early monastic sites. The inner circuit, marked by a cross at the point of access, might define the area of sanctuary or noddfa.


Ynys Seiriol
Penmon
St Seiriol's Church
Llangoed
Trecastell
Penmon, showing:
the township boundary of Penmon, bordering on Llangoed and Trecastell
a possible boundary for the noddfa
roads and tracks leading into Penmon
the location of the Bryn Mawr cross and the St Anthony cross


Tyddyn Rheinallt
Hendy
Pentir
Coed yr Hendy
Caim
Hendy
St Seiriol's Church
Tyddyn Grugor
Cae'r Grimog
Marian
Tyddyn Crwn
Bryn Mawr
Tan y Fron
Cae'r Groes
The pattern of settlement in the eighteenth century and the probable nuclei of population in the middle ages

Penmon Priory



The twelfth-century church

The twelfth-century church is the first stone church on the site for which there is clear structural evidence. There may have been an earlier stone church. If this were the case it might explain some of the structural anomalies we can see in the present building. On the available evidence, however, we may postulate that the twelfth-century church was built in stages but not necessarily over a prolonged period of time. The components are, along a west-east alignment (1.2 deg. north of east):

- a rectangular nave at the west end
- a square tower abutting the nave at the east end of the nave
- north and south transepts springing from the tower and overlapping the east end of the nave
- a chancel, replaced in the thirteenth century by a larger chancel.

Each of these components has a slightly different axial alignment.

The nave

The nave is 12.20, long externally excluding the plinth course. The walls are of random or roughly coursed rubble in limestone, gritstone and other local stone. The nave is 6.60m wide at the west end and 6.70m wide at the east end. The internal dimensions are 10.98m from the west wall to the tower and 4.85-4.90m from north to south. There is a plinth course 50mm wide which rises c.900mm above the original level of the floor and which follows the natural contour of ground along both west-east and north-south axes. There are original pilaster buttresses on both north and south external walls. These are not diametrically opposed, being offset by about 750mm. It may be significant that the northern buttress is set at the exact mid-point of the internal dimensions of the nave. The caps of the buttresses are modern.

The floor is flagged with York-stone slabs. These were set in place during the 1850s restoration. The floor of the nave was levelled at the same time and a step of around 170mm was inserted between the nave and the floor of the tower. The original floor, as illustrated by Buckler in 1810 and described by

Penmon nave and arch to tower.
St Anthony cross in foreground

Longueville-Jones in 1849, was of earth and must have sloped noticeably. This slope is reflected in the external plinth course, as described above.

The apex of the present roof is 9.61m above the new floor at the west end. The top of the long walls, internally, are 5.2m above the stone flags. When Longueville-Jones saw the church in 1849 he noticed that the nave roof had been raised by several courses of stone. This was before the renovation work done in the 1850s. Longueville-Jones' observations were confirmed in 2005 when old pointing was raked out from the external west gable. A very distinct and earlier roof line was observed and recorded at a lower pitch than the present roof. A comparison of mortar samples from the earlier wall provided a good match with mortar in the soffit of the south transept arch and chancel arch, suggesting that this lower line represented the original twelfth-century roof. The present steeply pitched roof is supported by nineteenth-century pitch pine hammer-beam trusses. It is not known what form the original trusses took.

Doors

There is a very fine twelfth-century door in the south wall of the nave at 1.9m from the internal west wall. The jambs are plain and squared, 870mm apart and recessed 140mm from the face of the wall. Rectangular pilasters, 1.6m apart, frame the door. Cylindrical columns surmounted by scalloped capitals stand in the angle of the pilaster and the jambs. The jambs support a semi-circular tympanum on which is carved a backward-looking clawed beast which grasps its own tail. The animal is framed by tight single-strand interlace. The tympanum is framed by a semicircular arch with roll moulding and billet decoration, carried forward of the tympanum on abaci supported by the column capitals and the pilasters. The capitals are at different levels and the abacus on the eastern side has been added-to in order to provide a level setting for the base of the arch. This suggests that the door may have been reset at some time. There are two steps down (264mm) from the threshold of the door to the present floor of the nave. The steps appear to be modern.

There is a second door in the north wall, directly opposite the south door. This is a thirteenth-century insertion or replacement. The door has chamfered jambs on the outside wall and a so-called 'Caernarfon' or shouldered arch with flat lintel. There are four steps down from the threshold, level with the outside ground surface, 660mm above the level of the nave floor.

The decorated font has been described above. It stands between the two doors at the west end of the nave. A small rectangular pedestal, surmounted by a stoup, decorated in similar style to the scalloped arch capitals, stands nearby.

Windows

The west window

There is one small round-headed window high in the west gable at 3.94m above the nave floor. The external dimensions are 287mm wide by 803mm tall. Internally the window splays to 755mm by 1.38m tall. This was blocked by the nineteenth century although visible from the outside. It was opened up again after the renovations of the 1850s.

There are two other windows, in the north and south walls of the nave respectively.

The south and north windows

These windows are of a similar size and proportion to the west window as they appear on the external faces of the north and south walls. Internally, however, their splays are wider and deeper. The two windows are not diametrically opposed across the nave. A hypothetical division of the nave into two-thirds at the west end and one-third at the east end would mark the point at which the eastern splay of the north window ends and the western splay of the south window begins. Thurlby has commented on the dislocation of the two windows and suggested that a screen may have stood 'to separate the parochial nave from the canons church' (Thurlby 2006, 204).

The southern window has a large splay, 1.2m across. The lower splay is stepped. The window is enhanced

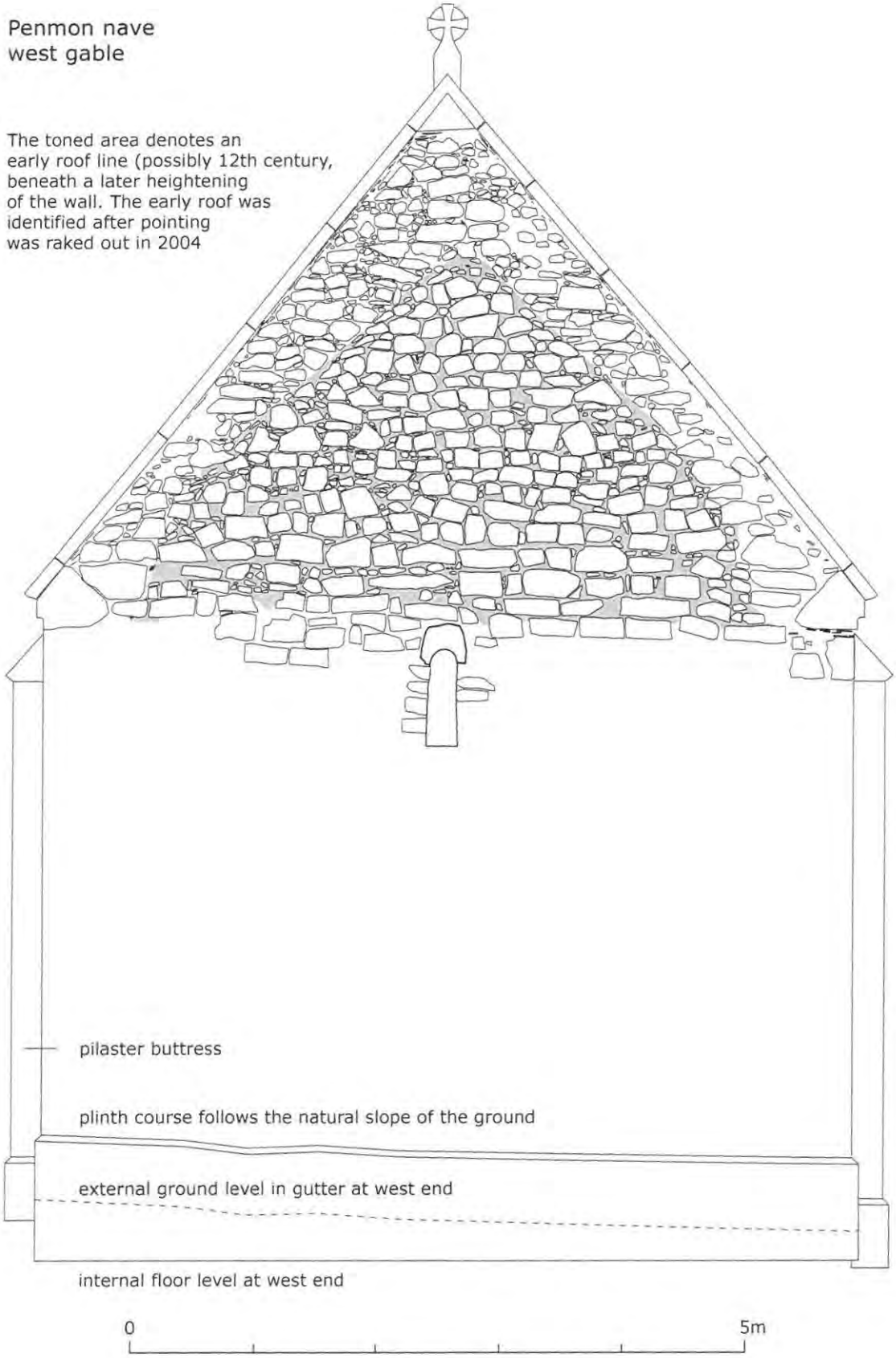
Detail of nave south door tympanum

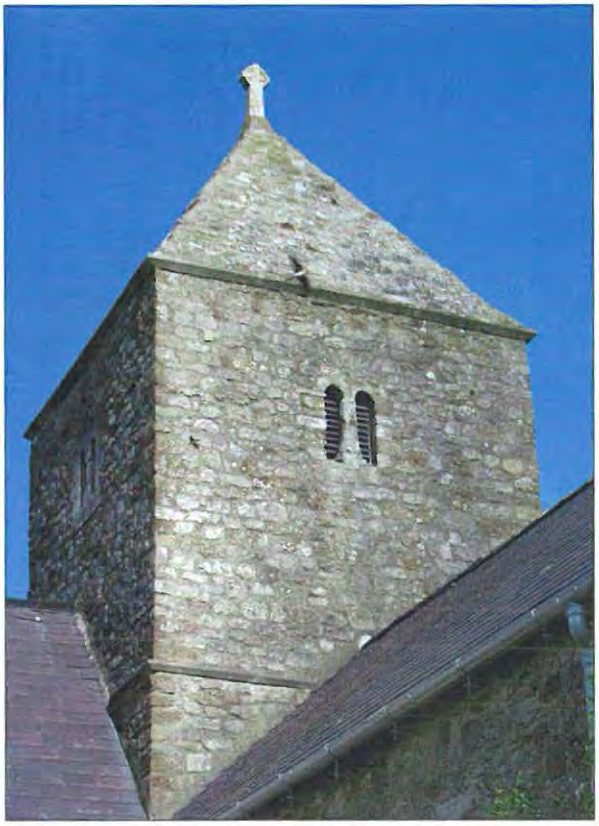
Nave window, south wall

Nave, west gable, showing lower roof line

Penmon nave
west gable

The toned area denotes an early roof line (possibly 12th century, beneath a later heightening of the wall. The early roof was identified after pointing was raked out in 2004





Tower showing original 12th century window

Plain back of arch from tower to nave, showing rebate for screen in impost

by a dressed stone frame with a roll-moulding on the inner edge. This feature had been obscured by plaster rendering until the restoration of the nineteenth century.

The tower

The tower is very nearly square at the base, measuring 5.27m by 5.27m above a plinth course. The walls are predominantly of roughly coursed limestone. There has been some repair to the tower. There is a step down of 160mm from the level of the nave to the floor of the tower at the back face of the tower arch. The floor is now paved with Yorkstone flags and has been levelled above the original sloping surface by about 300mm to 500mm. The resurfacing was done in the 1850s.

The walls rise to a height of 12.77m, narrowing slightly above a projecting moulded string course at about 7.5m. The width of the tower at the top of the walls is about 5.15m. The walls are capped by a similar projecting moulding to the string course, above which a conical stone tower rises to an apex at a further 3.85m giving a total height of 16.62m. The roof is surmounted by a modern stone cross. The Royal Commission note, however, that a wheel-cross once stood in that position, the cross now having been removed and re-set in the external east wall of the south transept. The string courses visible on the external faces of the tower terminate where they meet the pitch of the nave, chancel and transept roofs and are modern replacements. An original surviving string course is visible on the west wall of the tower where this wall forms the east wall of the nave.

Tower windows

There were originally four windows in the tower, high up the walls between the string course and the roof. Each window was disposed at the same height, each more or less central to each face. The four windows were of the same design, each of two lights, with a short baluster mullion on a splayed base supporting a cushion capital. The jambs are formed from the stonework of the wall. The heads are single stones with curved arches, paired, one over each light. The north and east windows are original; the west and south windows are nineteenth-century replacements.

Tower arches

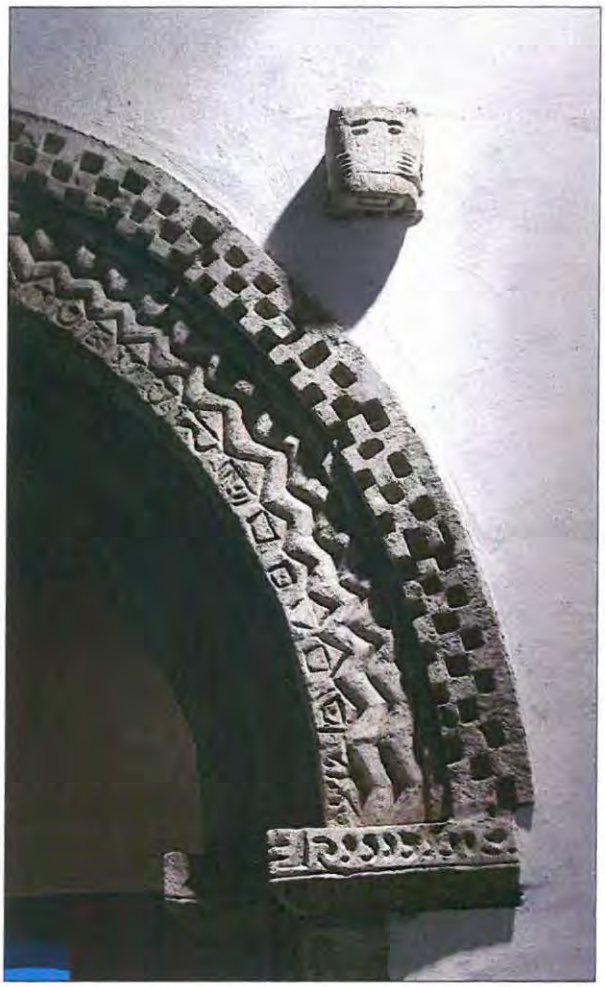
There are four large openings, one in each side of the tower. One communicates between the nave and the tower on the west side. Another gives access to the chancel on the east side. A third and a fourth give access to the north and south transepts respectively. The western tower arch and the chancel arch are described here; the transept

arches will be described below in the context of the transepts.

The western tower arch
This arch is a very grand entrance to the tower space. The opening is 2.2m wide and 3.7m to the soffit of the lower, rear order, from the present floor level. The arch would have been about half a metre taller before the levelling and re-surfacing in the nave and tower.

The arch rises above a bevelled plinth, now 200mm above the nave floor, originally about 660mm high. The opening is of two orders. The inner, rear order, comprises a semicircular zone of two bands of roll moulding springing from chamfered imposts supported by columns with decorated capitals. The left-hand (northern) column has a rectangular cross section with rounded corners decorated with vertical grooves on the two visible faces. The column is rebated into the rear jamb of the arch. The capital is decorated with an abstract carving which might be taken as a grotesque face or, possibly, a ravenous bird. The impost above carries a frieze of low relief arcading. The right hand (southern) column is octagonal. The capital carries a carved image of a figure with limbs akimbo. The expansions either side of the shoulder might, perhaps, indicate the wings of an angel. A ring moulding between the capital and column is decorated in rope-work fashion. The impost carries the same arcading motif as the northern side.

Below and right:
details of western face of west tower arch



The outer order comprises an arch which carries three registers of decoration. The arch springs from abaci or imposts supported by columns with decorated capitals in similar fashion to the inner order. The decoration on the arch has three distinct elements. On the angle with the soffit there is a zone of very small and stylised designs which carry over from the front face to the underside of the stone on which they are carved. Each image is particular to each individual stone which forms the lower part of the arch. They appear to represent miniature versions of the animal heads that appear in a roughly similar position on the twelfth-century arch at Aberffraw, for example. The second register, occupying the same carved stones as the first, displays a chevron pattern in two continuous bands. The chevrons are cut on the individual stones so that the apex of the chevrons is at the centre of each stone and the base to each side. Above this and standing proud from the chevron band, on separately carved and larger stones, is a zone of chequer pattern billet ornament.

The left-hand column of the outer order is a plain cylinder. The capital carries another grotesque face above a rope-work ring-moulding and the abacus carries an abstract motif which might possibly represent the head and body of a serpent.

The width of the decorative zone on the arch, across the two orders is 630mm and the height of the arch at its outer circumference is 4.09m above the present, reconstituted, floor surface. The top of the arch would, originally, have risen to something closer to 4-5m.

The back of the arch, on the inside face of the tower, is plain. The depth of the arch, through the thickness of the wall, including the plinth course, is 1.06m.

The abaci of the inner order, or imposts, as they are carried through the thickness of the wall, have been cut through. The cuts, which occur immediately behind the left-hand (north) column of the inner order and overlap the right-hand column, are rectangular niches which probably held a timber screen in place in this position (Holme, 1925, 9). This would appear not to have been an original feature, however, as the niches cut across the decoration on the imposts.

Above the tower arch, on the wall facing the nave, there are two groups of small fragments of sculptural detail, reset. These were in place in the early nineteenth century and are not a product of the 1850s restoration. To the left side of the arch there are two small 'keystone' shaped elements which look like abstract cowled figures. The shape of the stones suggests that they may have come from an arch. To the right of the arch is a single fragment of sculpture depicting an animal head with claws or hands grasping the snout. This is very close, but not identical, to similar heads on the arch in Aberffraw church, where such beasts are a major component of the outer of two orders of the arch. The origin of such motifs is to be found in beak-head beasts which clasp some poor soul to their mouths or jaws with their hands as they devour them.

The chancel arch

By contrast with the western arch, the eastern chancel arch is quite plain. It is considered to be a small arch but, in fact, is very close to the scale and proportions of the transept arches. It appears to be small because of the levelling up of the ground surface in the tower and the modern insertion of steps within the arch itself. The transition from nave to tower to chancel was originally a continuous sloping surface.

During the repair work of 2005, areas of unsound plaster were removed from the south side wall and soffit of the arch and these areas were recorded. Mortar samples were taken from the soffit of the arch and compared with samples from exposures in other parts of the church including, in particular, the south transept arch and the external west gable.

The stonework of the east wall of the tower is 1.05m wide at this point. Mortar rendering increases this to 1.1m. The opening is 1.94m wide. A semicircular head springs from chamfered imposts 2.36m above the floor surface of the chancel. These imposts are carried a short distance north and south along the east face of the tower wall (that is, the western interior wall of the chancel). The total height of the arch from the chancel floor to the soffit is 3.39m. There are now three steps between the tower floor and the chancel, dropping a total distance of 480mm.

The transepts

Two transepts, north and south, flank the tower and are accessed by wide arches from the tower.

The north transept

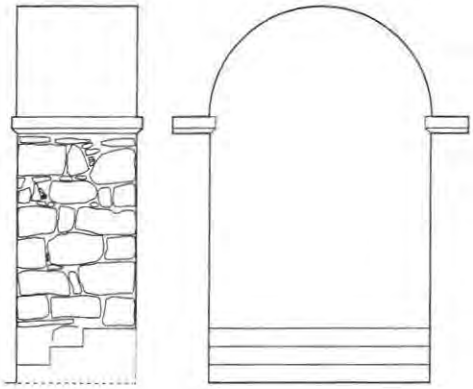
Fenton saw the transepts in 1810 and described one as appearing to have been a chantry chapel 'highly finished with mock recesses of stone stalls ... highly ornamented like the arches... An altar on the East side'. He calls this the north transept, but it must be an error of his notes as, in the next sentence he describes the 'arch leading to the north transept' as 'down, stopped up'. By 1849 the north transept had disappeared (Longueville-Jones 1849, 198). In 1853, the foundations of the north transept were recovered by excavation and rebuilt on these foundations. The floor of the north transept is raised above the level of the present tower floor by a step, 160mm high.

The windows

The interior walls of the north transept are now plain. A neo-Romanesque, single light window has been placed midway along the external east wall of the transept at a height of 0.63m above the external plinth course and 1m above the external ground surface. The design of the window is based on one of the arches in the south transept blind arcade. Two plain single light windows have been placed adjacent to each other, midway along the external north wall at a height of 2.7m above the external plinth course.

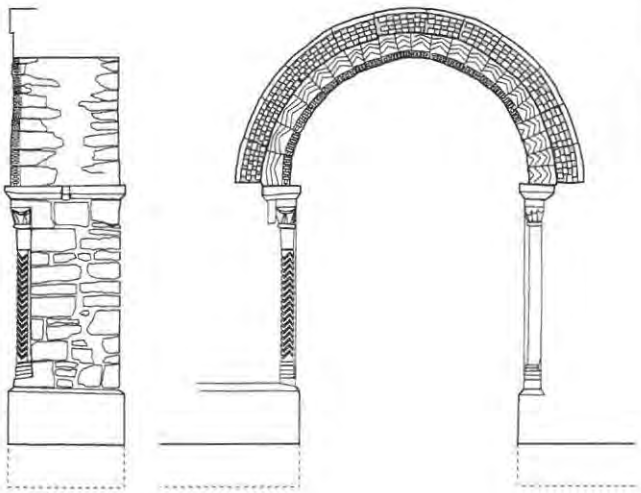
The north transept arch

The north transept arch is modern, plain and comparable in scale to the original south transept arch, which will be described below. The style reflects that of the other tower openings with a



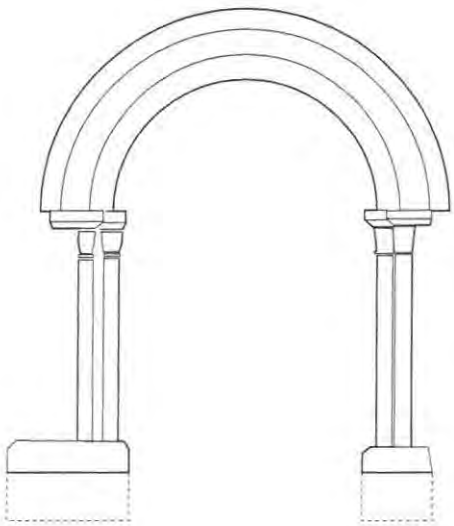
The chancel arch
East elevation with modern steps inserted.

South profile showing exposed stonework after stripping of plaster



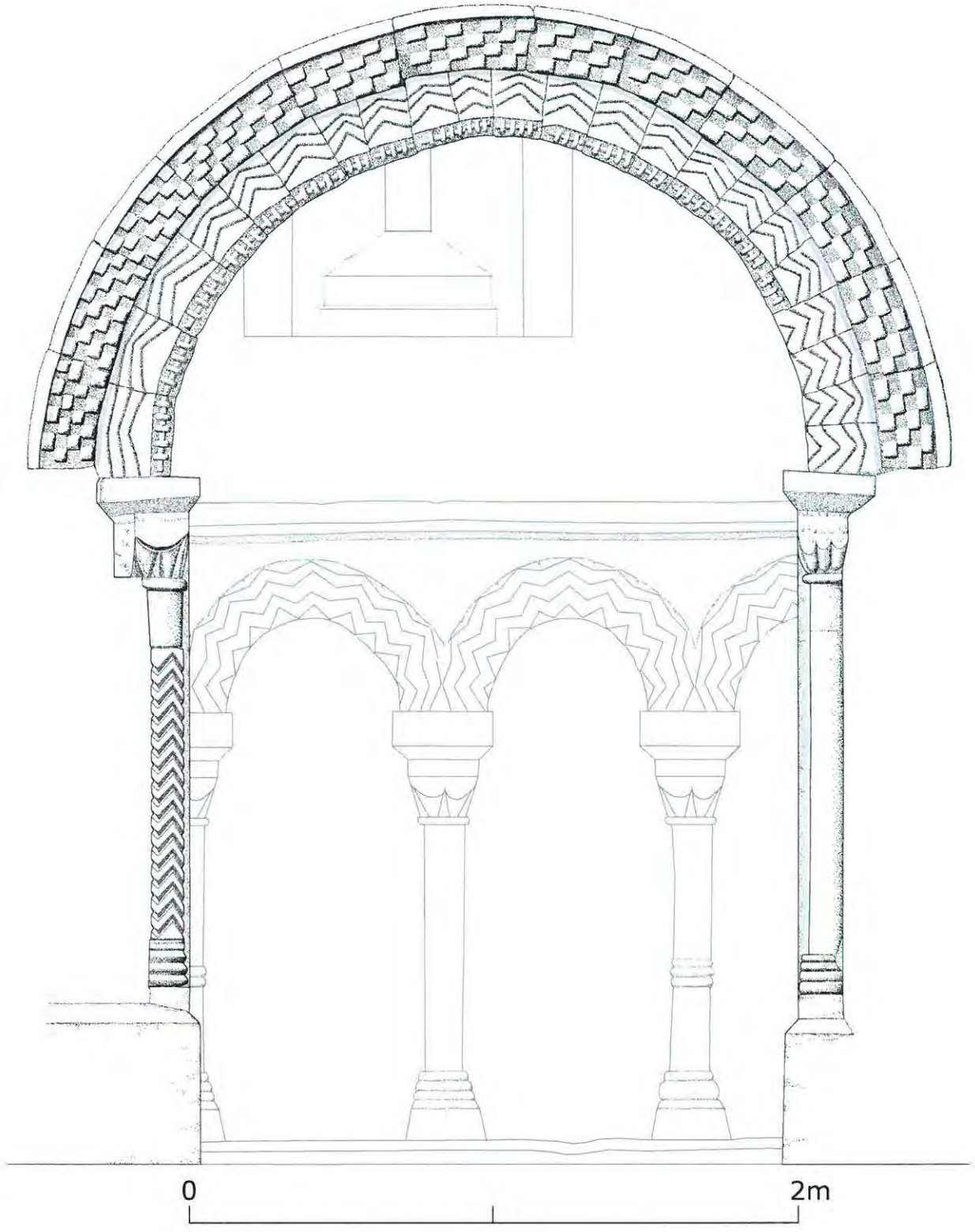
The south transept arch
North elevation and east profile showing exposed stonework after stripping of plaster and 'cotton-reel' edge moulding carried over onto soffit

The hard line indicates the present floor surface, the dashed line indicates the original height of the plinth



The tower arch giving access to the tower from the nave
Outline elevation from west (nave) for comparison of scale with the other two arches

The hard line indicates the present floor surface, the dashed line indicates the original height of the plinth



Arch to south transept

round headed arch springing from chamfered imposts. The jambs rise above a chamfered plinth course 500mm high above the tower floor, 340mm above the raised interior. The plinth is carried through the arch and along the south wall of the transept, which is, in fact, the north wall of the tower.

In the south west corner of the transept there is a projecting angle of wall which also carried a plinth course, although at a noticeably higher level. This angle of walling is the butt end of the north wall of the nave at its eastern end. The relationship of the transept walls to the nave, tower and chancel will be discussed below.

The south transept

The south transept is entered from the tower through a large decorated arch. A blind arcade runs the length of the south wall and most of the length of the west wall. Fenton, probably, and Longueville-Jones, certainly, saw a stone altar on the eastern side. The floor of the transept is paved in continuation of the nineteenth-century floor of the tower, sloping slightly (80mm) from the tower to the south wall of the transept. The walls are 5.5m high from the present floor surface. The roof is supported by nineteenth-century hammer beam trusses and the apex of the present roof is 9.4m above the internal floor with a pitch of 51 degrees. The roof was raised, however, in the nineteenth century and the original height would have been closer to 8.25m, with a pitch of 41 degrees.

Windows

A window in the east wall once lit the altar but by 1849 this had been blocked up. Buckler, in 1810, shows the window as relatively wide, around 1.1m at the jambs and 1.65m at the internal splay. It is not clear how accurate this depiction is but his plan does seem to suggest a window closer to the scale of those in the chancel than those in the twelfth-century nave. This blocked window has now been replaced with a smaller neo-Romanesque window similar, but not identical, to that in the east wall of the north transept. The glass in both windows is reused from elements taken from the old chancel east window. A small window was noted by Longueville-Jones beneath one of the arcades on the west side but this is no longer visible.

A round-headed window once lit the transept from the south side. This window had a narrow opening, 150mm wide, splaying to 710mm at the internal face of the south wall, 2.75m from the floor. The splay is stepped and the opening is framed by a border of dressed stone. In these respects there are similarities with the slightly larger window in the south wall of the nave. The south window of the transept was blocked when the Prior's House was built.

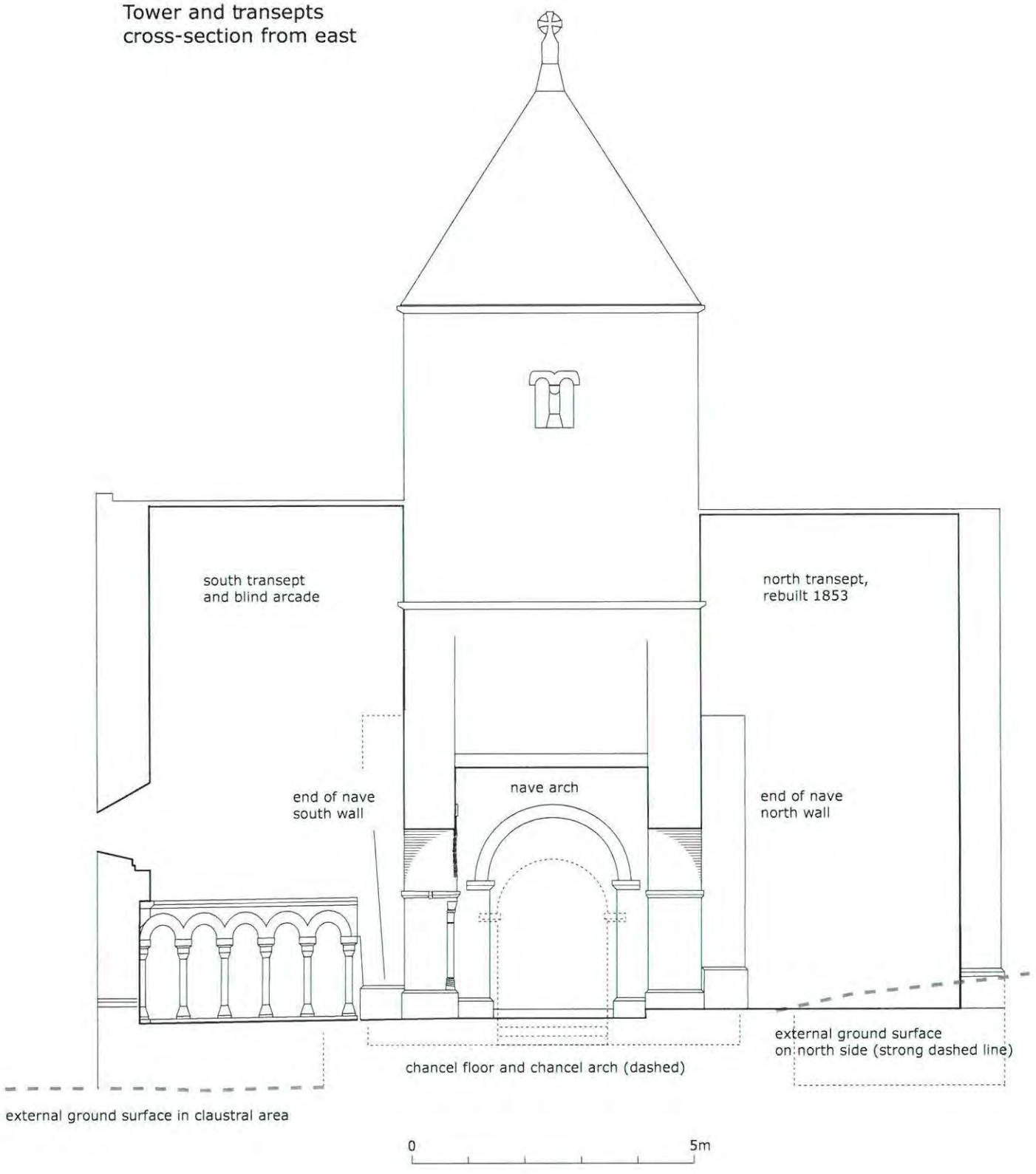
The south transept arch

The opening is 2m wide above a slightly battered plinth course which rises around 0.5m above the present floor. A semicircular arch springs from imposts on either side which run the full depth of the opening. At the north (tower) side, two columns surmounted by capitals flank the opening, set in rebates between the plinth courses and the imposts. The eastern column, 107mm wide is octagonal with deeply cut chevron moulding, for a length of 985mm. This is surmounted by an additional plain cylindrical piece of the same diameter which, in turn, supports a scalloped capital with ring-moulding at its base. The capital is shaped from one rectangular piece of stone which extends into the jamb of the opening. The base of the column has four rings of moulding on a short square plinth.

The western column is a plain cylinder with four rings of moulding and a squared off plinth above the continuous plinth course. The column supports a scalloped capital with ring-moulded base, similar to, but not matched by, the eastern partner.

The arch itself is highly decorated. The voussoirs are arranged in two zones across which there are three registers of decoration. There are twenty-two stones in the lower zone and twelve stones in the upper zone. The lower stones carry a chevron design with a 'cotton-reel' border at the lower edge. The upper stones carry a chequer-board billet design. The stones in each zone are not uniformly carved and in some there is considerable variation. For example, in the lower zone, the voussoirs on the left hand side of the arch are predominantly larger, occupying a larger segment of the arch than those on the right hand side. There is also some variation in the treatment of decoration from left to right.

The lowest register of decoration is formed of a more-or-less continuous border of cotton-reel motifs. The soffit of the arch was stripped of unsound plaster during the renovations of 2004-2005 when it was possible to record the continuity of the decoration on both the front face and the underside of the arch. One striking anomaly in the occurrence of this design, however, was the absence of this decoration of the last four stones on the right hand side. This suggests either a mistake or a change of plan in the design. It will be argued below that the insertion of the arch from the nave to the tower preceded the construction of the transepts. This tower arch carries a very similar arrangement of chevron and chequer-board billet to the transept arch. The chevron voussoirs on the tower arch also have a narrow decorative border on their lower side which carries over onto the soffit. As the tower arch was already standing when the transept arch was



This diagram shows the relationship between the tower, transept and chancel arches and the variations in floor levels and plinth courses

Penmon complex from the south:
outline elevation showing trend
in ground surface
and nineteenth century levelling
of interior floors

put up, this organisation of design was an available model for the transept arch. The arch itself would be raised by laying the voussoirs on a timber frame springing from the imposts. The first stones of the transept arch to be laid would be those at each side, directly above the imposts. It must be the case that the first four stones to be set in place were those on the right hand (western) side and which each carried four rows of chevron, with no border at the lower edge. These are the only stones with this variation of the design. From here on, the work continued with the border in place.

The stones laid at the left-hand (eastern) side each carry three rows of chevron with a cotton-reel border at the lower edge. The first, second and third stones on the eastern side are noticeably the largest in the chevron register. Above this, twelve large stones are laid, each carrying chequer-board billet decoration. This upper register projects some 30mm from the face of the arch. There is a plain 42mm border round the outer edge of the decorative zone.

The transept arcade

A blind arcade, in two sections, runs along the inside of the west and south walls of the south transept. The west section and the south section meet awkwardly at the south-west corner. The arcade is recessed 200mm into the face of the wall. The west arcade recess is facilitated by the projection into the transept of the south-eastern external corner of the nave wall. The arcade is butted up against it.
Both sections have runs of five arches supported by six columns. Each column stands on a ring-moulded base above a short square plinth. these plinths stand on a continuous plinth course around 80mm tall. The columns are surmounted by scalloped capitals with ring-moulding at their bases. The arches of the arcade spring from chamfered abaci above the capitals. The arches carry three-row chevrons which meet, but do not intersect, at the abaci. Above the arches runs a chamfered string course with a horizontal groove near the bottom edge of its projecting face. The total height of the arcade to the top of the string course is 2.24m.

The shape and decoration of the supporting columns is not uniform. The number of ring-mouldings at the base of the column varies between three and four. Four columns against the south wall have ring-moulding mid-way down the shafts. Most of the columns are plain cylinders but two columns against the west wall are octagonal, decorated with chevrons; one has 'barley-sugar stick' spiral decoration. The decorative treatment of the arcade is clearly related to the ornamentation of the transept arch. In particular the chevron moulding on octagonal columns, the ring-moulding-and-plinth bases, the scalloped capitals and the chevron rows have correspondences in both areas.

In 1853-5 the arcades were cleaned and 'restored' (The Builder, November 1855). There is, however, from Longueville-Jones' description of the transept in 1849, no reason to suppose that the arcades are not in their original position.

The twelfth-century chancel

Nothing now survives of the twelfth-century chancel. The chancel arch, described above, however, gave assess to it at the level of the base of the modern steps down from the tower. A possible interpretation of the context of the chancel in the construction sequence follows.

The present chancel from the cloisters (south) and from the north

The building sequence of the twelfth-century church

The sequence of construction at Penmon was set out by the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in 1937 (119-123). This interpretation suggested that the nave was built around 1140 and that the tower and transepts were added in a second phase of construction in the later twelfth century, say 1160-1170. There is no mention of a twelfth-century chancel. A large chancel was added to the eastern end of the tower around 1220-1240. the refectory block was built at the same time. A 'warming house' was added in the early sixteenth century. The Royal Commission suggested that part of the Prior's house could be contemporary with the thirteenth-century conventual buildings but that later modifications had obscured all trace of this phase. A sixteenth or seventh-century date was suggested for the surviving appearance of the building (in the 1920s).

Recently Malcolm Thurlby has proposed that the tower predates the nave and transepts on the basis that, in twelfth century cruciform churches 'the walls of the individual arms of the church continue those of the crossing.... In contrast, it was a hallmark of pre- [Norman] conquest cruciform churches to have a crossing tower with salient angles. The only parallel known [to Thurlby] for the arrangement at Penmon, with a nave wider than the crossing tower, is at Wooton Wawen, Warwickshire.' Thurlby also remarks on the survival of the tower string courses, against which the roofs of the nave and transepts have been superimposed (Thurlby 2006, 204).

There are a number of other anomalies which require a re-assessment of the sequence.

- The north and south walls of the nave diverge slightly at the point of conjunction with the tower.

- There is no indication of a returning east wall associated with the nave; the east wall is the tower wall as indicated by the string course, referred to above, at a high level on the wall but below the present roof line and also below the projected line of the twelfth-century roof.

- The nave, tower, transepts and chancel have progressively skewed axial alignments. The present chancel is two degrees off from the nave. The west wall of the south transept is square with the nave but the east wall is square with the present chancel. The opening from the nave to the tower has a discontinuous plinth course and one which is lower, in absolute terms than the transept plinths. The south transept plinths, on the inside and outside faces, take their reference from the nave plinth on the south side.

- The opening from the tower to the chancel is plain. It might be assumed that the chancel arch, if this was the original function of the opening, would have been grander. Thurlby discusses this point, arguing for an enhanced liturgical significance for the tower space (2006, 205-6). There may, however, be an alternative explanation.

Thurlby considered that the small footprint of the tower, in relation to the nave and transepts, was an anomaly. He compared the plan of Penmon to Norman English cruciform churches where the walls of the nave would form a continuous line with the crossing tower and, in similar fashion, so would the transepts. Thurlby looked to the parallel of Wooton Wawen where a twelfth-century Norman church abutted a narrower Late Saxon tower. The Anglo-Saxon openings in the tower demonstrate that the original church had transepts to which a Norman nave was added. We do not know the proportions of the Anglo-Saxon nave and chancel. However, it is possible to demonstrate that the Penmon sequence was different and may not have been designed to be cruciform when the tower was first built. We can show that the transepts were the latest components of the twelfth-century church to be added.

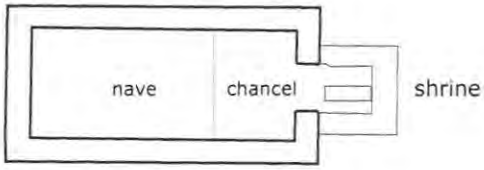
Among early stone towers in Late Anglo-Saxon England, western towers were significantly more numerous than central or axial towers, whether of not transepts were added. In addition to Penmon there are two other early stone towers on Anglesey. At Llaneilian the tower is a western tower, of late twelfth-century date. The nave was rebuilt in the late fifteenth century but the tower remains. The second tower is on Ynys Seiriol. Whether or not it was built as a central axial tower, the church was not built to a cruciform design, as one of the arches to an added transept cuts an earlier window in the tower.

Two hypotheses for development of the Penmon sequence may be put forward. Both have parallels in the development of early churches elsewhere.

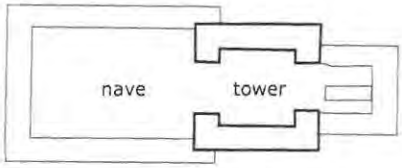
The first requires a consideration of the Ynys Seiriol sequence. The church complex on Ynys Seiriol is more decayed than Penmon but is less encumbered by later development and limited excavations have taken place within the thirteenth-century chancel (Hughes, 1901, 85-108). The Ynys Seiriol sequence shares many features in common with Penmon. There is a nave, central tower and chancel. A transept or transepts were added to the tower but were not part of the original design. The nave and the chancel are both wider than the tower. The width of the nave and the tower and the proportions

A hypothetical sequence for the development of the church on Ynys Seiriol

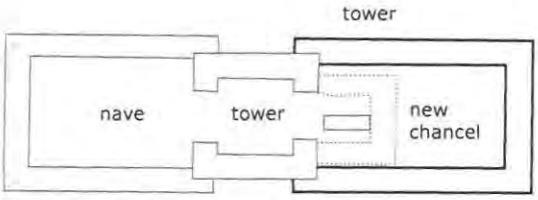
Although there are great similarities in their layout, this sequence differs from the one proposed for Penmon



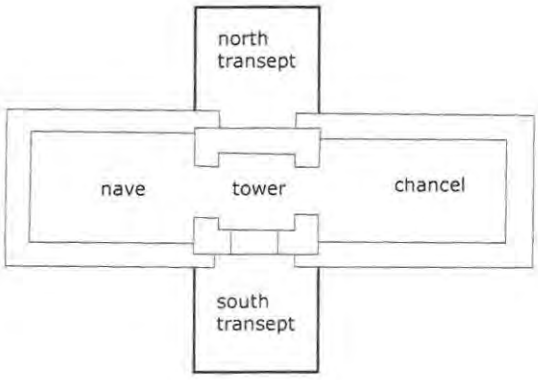
Phase 1
A small unicameral church is attached to a grave shrine. The church is attached to the west wall of the shrine



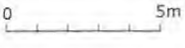
Phase 2
A tower replaces the chancel. A plain arch gives access to the tower from the nave and possibly from the tower to the shrine.



Phase 3
A new chancel is built over the shrine and appended to the east of the tower. A plain arch gives access to the chancel.

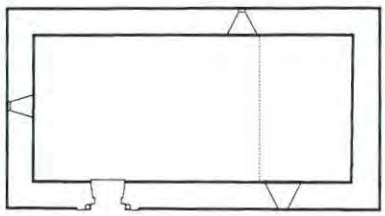


Phase 4
Transepts are added to the tower. The walls of the transepts abut the east and south ends of the nave andchancel respectively, rather than joining the tower walls directly.

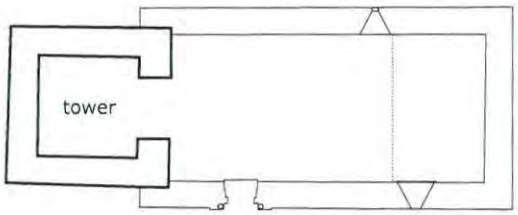


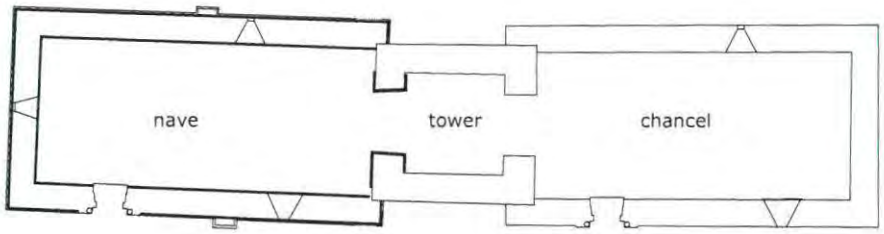
A hypothetical sequence for the development of Penmon church

Phase 1
A small unicameral church

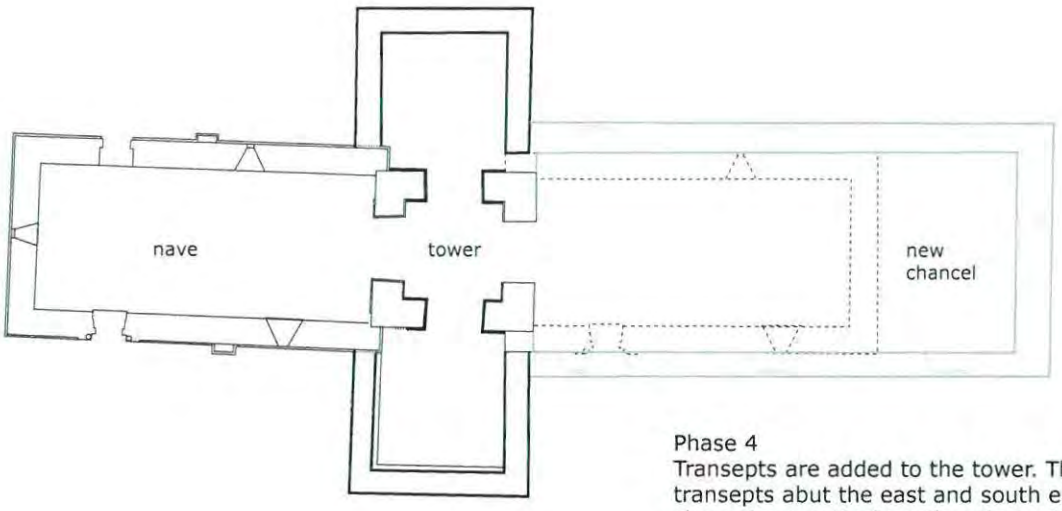


Phase 2
A tower added to the west end of the existing small church. A plain arch gives access to the nave.



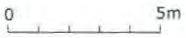


Phase 3
A new nave is added to the west of the tower. A new decorated arch provides access to the tower. The old nave serves as the chancel and the existing plain arch becomes the chancel arch.



Phase 4
Transepts are added to the tower. The walls of the transepts abut the east and south ends of the nave and chancel respectively, rather than joining the tower walls directly.

In the thirteenth century, a new large chancel replaces the earlier one. Coincidentally, the dimensions of the new chancel would exactly envelop a pre-existing early church of the dimensions used in this hypothetical sequence, based on the dimensions of the present nave.



of the chancel arch are precisely seventy-five percent smaller than the arrangements at Penmon or, if Ynys Seiriol is seen to be primary, then Penmon represents a scaling-up of an additional third.

Ynys Seiriol retains the foundations of its thirteenth-century chancel intact. More significantly Hughes' excavations in 1901, revealed the foundations of an earlier structure, within the footprint of the later chancel and was able to establish the wall line, profile and roof pitch in the masonry of the tower against which it butted. This structure is small, about 1.6m square, internally. The roof was very steeply pitched and the ceiling of this cell was barrel-vaulted. Hughes drew a parallel with steeply pitched and barrel-vaulted Irish churches but this structure is too small to have served as a chancel. A burial was found, on excavation, recessed into the rock floor of the cell. The individual, a middle –aged man of around 5ft 10in in life, had been compressed, in death, into this restricted but undoubtedly revered space. An alternative parallel might be with the shrine or reliquary in St. Melangell's Church in Cwm Pennant. There the shrine takes the form of a tall, steeply pitched structure, elaborately decorated in Romanesque style, almost 4m tall at the apex of its roof. At Pennant Melangell the shrine is thought to have been housed in a small funerary apse projecting from the east end of the nave. At Ynys Seiriol the structure itself may have been the shrine.

When scaled-up proportionately, the width of nave and tower on the island are commensurate with the layout at Penmon, except that the nave appears to be foreshortened by a third of its length in comparison with the Penmon nave. The layout would make more sense if an original nave extended as far as the 'shrine'. The chancel space would be regained within the length of the unicameral structure and the 'shrine' would project from the east wall of the chancel. This is, in fact, the layout at Pennant Melangell. The modification then, would involve a replacement of the chancel area with the prominent tower that stands today. Initially the shrine would be retained against the east wall of the new tower. By the thirteenth century, however, a new and larger chancel was added over and beyond the location of the shrine.

This hypothesis requires that we assume that a small chancel stood to the east of the existing nave at Penmon, occupying the area where the tower would be built. The space, at about 3.3m square internally would be quite restricted but not impossibly so. In time the arrangements would be modified. A tower would be built on the site of the chancel. This would allow the elaborately decorated arch, at the east end of the nave, to have been provided as a chancel arch. The recesses in the arch imposts would secure a timber screen between the nave and the chancel. Later, or at the same time, a new chancel would be built, with a new opening into the chancel at the east side of the tower . Transepts would be added to the north and south. Such a scenario has parallels at a small number of Late Saxon churches. At Albury, Surrey, Boreham, Essex and St. Peter's, Bedford, small squarish chancels of between 4.5m and 5m were rebuilt as Norman towers with arches knocked through the former chancel walls and new chancels built to the east. At Albury the walls were strengthened, but at Boreham and St. Peter's the 900mm walls were strong enough to take the load.

If the proposed sequence at Ynys Seiriol is accepted then the layout at Penmon may have mirrored the developments on the island. For a time, the tower space may have served, liturgically, as the chancel, with at Ynys Seiriol, a mortuary shrine behind the chancel/tower at the east end. This hypothesis might provide a context for the very elaborately decorated arch between the nave and tower at Penmon.

The arguments against the above hypothesis at Penmon are that firstly, the tower walls are thicker than those of the nave, albeit not much thicker, and there is no evidence for strengthening; the western arch runs through the thickness of the wall. Secondly, the tower string course is placed at a height where it must have run inside the roofed area of the nave on the west side. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, the ground plan as it now is, shows that the west wall of the tower is offset from the position we would expect the east wall of the nave to have stood. The tower wall does not replace a putative nave wall and there is no return of an east wall at the end of the nave, against which a chancel or tower could be set.

The second hypothesis, which is more radical, is, nevertheless, to be preferred. This requires that a small church stood on the site of the present chancel. All early evidence in this location has been destroyed or obscured by the construction of the large thirteenth-century chancel and its rebuild in the 1850s. However, if we postulate a unicameral church of the same scale and arrangements as the surviving twelfth-century nave, but in the position of the later chancel, we find that such a structure would fit exactly within the north and south walls of the thirteenth-century and later chancel and that the south door of the later chancel would conveniently correspond to the general position of the south door of the hypothetical nave. The arrangements of the present nave, with a perceived division of liturgical space two-thirds along the length of the nave and marked by the off-set of the north window and the

grander south window might have applied to our hypothetical early church. That is to say, the chancel would be contained within the eastern third of the structure. At some point, a tower would be added to the west end, with a single opening through to the nave. This is the arrangement at Llaneilian and the opening is of comparable scale. At Llaneilian the arch is pointed above plain chamfered imposts. At Penmon the arch in the east wall of the tower is plain, rounded, springing from chamfered imposts. There would be no other openings in the wall at ground level, at this stage.

Later, a new nave might be added to the west side of the tower and a new, decorated, arch inserted to provide access from the nave to the tower. The former nave would then become the chancel and the former tower to nave arch would serve as the chancel arch. The final stage in this process would involve the addition of transepts, north and south of the tower.

The addition of a tower to the west wall of an existing nave would have involved the replacement of the west wall with the inserted east wall of the tower. The north and south walls of the nave would invariably overlap the tower, on the north and south sides by the width of the replaced wall. At the west end of the tower, the relationship between the surviving nave and the tower is identifiable. The overlap is only partial. When transepts were added, the transept walls were butted on to the outside faces of the north and south nave walls at their eastern ends and not to the tower. The transepts may also have butted on to the overlap of the chancel walls at their west ends in similar fashion.

In summary an argument can be made that the construction of the Penmon tower precedes the present nave. It is proposed that a western tower would be as likely if not more likely than a central tower. This argument requires there to have been a primary nave to the east of the tower which is now lost. The later addition of the present nave to the west of the tower can be explained by the transference of function of the primary nave into a chancel. This sequence has parallels in late Saxon England at, for example, St. Peter's Bedford.

The addition of transepts need not have been a component of the original design but when transepts were added, they abutted the end walls of the nave and perhaps the end walls of the hypothetical chancel, rather than the tower itself. Later, in the thirteenth century a large chancel was added to the east face of the tower. This enveloped the pre-existing chancel and its south door may have reflected the position of its hypothetical predecessor.

The Ynys Seiriol sequence has been considered, in the possibility that the similar development of that church might provide clues to unravelling the Penmon buildings. At Ynys Seiriol it seems more likely that the presence of a mortuary shrine at the east end of the church contributed to the enhancement of the chancel space and the construction of a tower in that position. It is probable that there was considerable cross-fertilisation between the two sites although it is unclear in which direction.

Detail of west arch

The thirteenth century and later conventual buildings

With the exception of the Prior's house, the conventual buildings were not affected by the renovation of 2005 and only a summary account is provided here.

Alterations to the twelfth-century church

The nave

The main alteration to the nave in the thirteenth century was the addition or replacement of a door in the north wall, opposite the twelfth-century south door. This door has a shouldered profile with horizontal lintel and has been described above.

The later chancel

The chancel was rebuilt in the 1850s restoration. The architects were Weightman, Hadfield and Goldie of the Corn Exchange, Sheffield. There is some confusion regarding the extent of the reconstruction but there is universal agreement that the new chancel was built on the foundations of its predecessor. An article in 'The Builder', a magazine published in London, for November 1855, the year in which the church re-opened, suggests that the walls were only partially rebuilt. The Royal Commission contradictorily states that nothing is now to be seen of the original chancel but later stress that the walls were only partly rebuilt in the nineteenth century. Holme, following his excavations of 1923, identified three stages of construction at the east end. The earliest was a plinth course, thought to be of thirteenth-century date, underlying the present east end. Above this was a later plinth, perhaps of fifteenth-century date, upon which the present chancel was built. A small run of a plinth course is still visible at the external angle of the chancel and south transept and must belong to one of the earlier phases of construction. At the same angle but in the presumably rebuilt portion of the south transept, eastern wall, there is an inset carved stone bearing a three-banded chevron decoration.

The windows, stones in outside wall at west end and plinth

In 1849, before the renovation had begun, pigsties stood under the chancel window. There were two windows on the north side and four windows on the south side. The east window, identified by Longueville-Jones as a fifteenth-century style, was of two lights beneath a pointed arch, displaying foliated tracery. Longueville-Jones provides measurements for the early nineteenth-century chancel at 51ft 6ins by 21ft 6ins internally (15.70m x 6.55m). These are as near as makes no difference to the dimensions of the present chancel. The description in 'The Builder' records that the chancel was, as found in 1850, of the decorated style, that is, fifteenth-century, Later Gothic, and was restored accordingly. The late fifteenth or early sixteenth century was a period when other Anglesey churches were significantly rebuilt or modified. The 1850s restoration was not exact and was not intended to be, but rather in sympathy with what had gone before. The windows were 'copied from an old window' (The Builder, November 1855, 524). A window of three lights with flowing tracery beneath a pointed arch with hood mould replaced the 'decorated' two-light window.

Longueville-Jones recorded two windows on the north side of the chancel and four on the south. This same arrangement was planned by Buckler in 1810 and represents, at least, the late-fifteenth century arrangement. The restoration of 1853-5 replaced the windows with a more symmetrical disposition of three on the north side and three on the south.

The porch and door

the door was retained in its previous position in 1853-5. A porch supported by ancient columns, had stood against the outside wall since the early nineteenth century but perhaps not much before that (Longueville-Jones 1849, Buckler 1810). The old porch was replaced in the 1850s. There had been steps previously and now these too, were replaced with new ones.

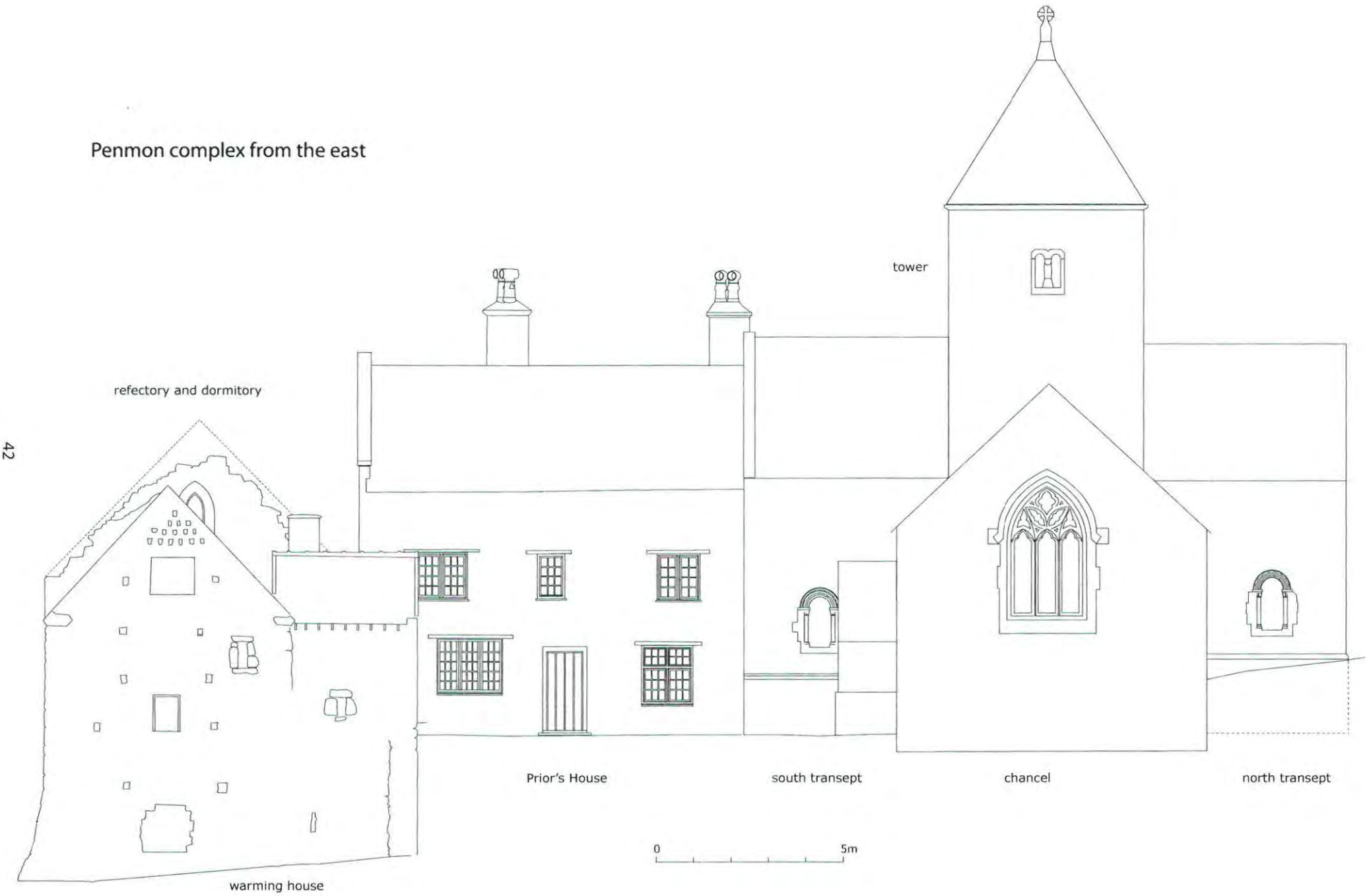
The refectory block

The refectory building has been described as one of the best preserved and best surviving structures of the thirteenth century on Anglesey. The original thirteenth-century building is a three-storey unit comprising a cellar, first floor refectory and second floor dormitory. To this a three-storey 'warming house' was added on the east side, around 1500.

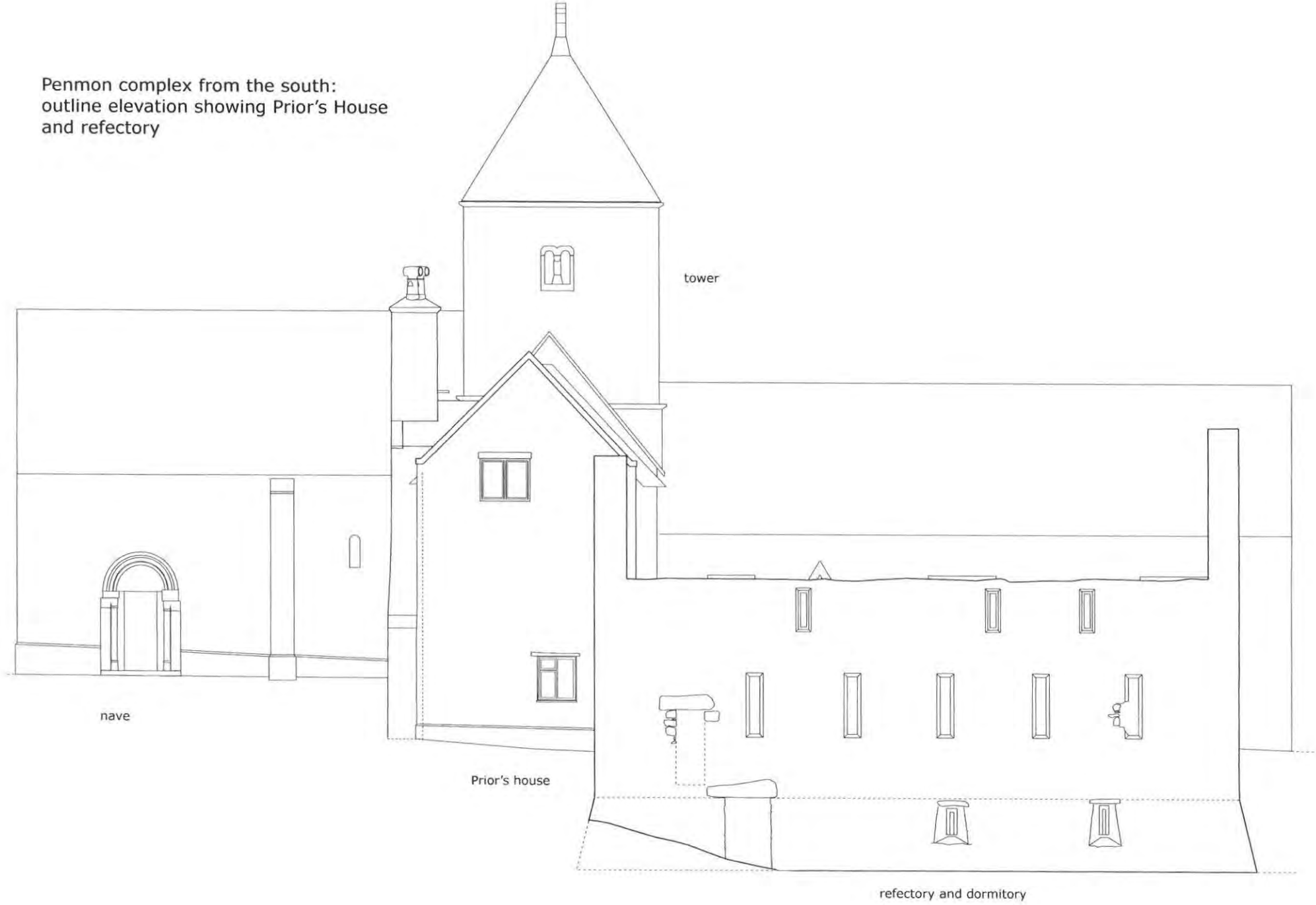
The refectory block is 17.29m long externally and 8.68m wide. The walls, of coursed limestone, are 1.20m wide at the base, widening to 1.65m on the south, west and east sides where the walls are battered to a height of 1.5m to increase stability. The internal faces of the walls are rebated at each floor level. The building is set into a slope so that the basement floor opens onto the external ground surface on the south side. The ground surface of the cloister, against the north wall, however, is at the approximate level of the first floor.

The south wall rises 7.7m to the top of the surviving height of the wall which closely approximates the height of the original eaves. The surviving west gable rises a further 3.3m to a total height of 11m. The ridge of the roof probably reached 12m above

Penmon complex from the east



Penmon complex from the south:
outline elevation showing Prior's House
and refectory



the internal ground surface in its complete state.

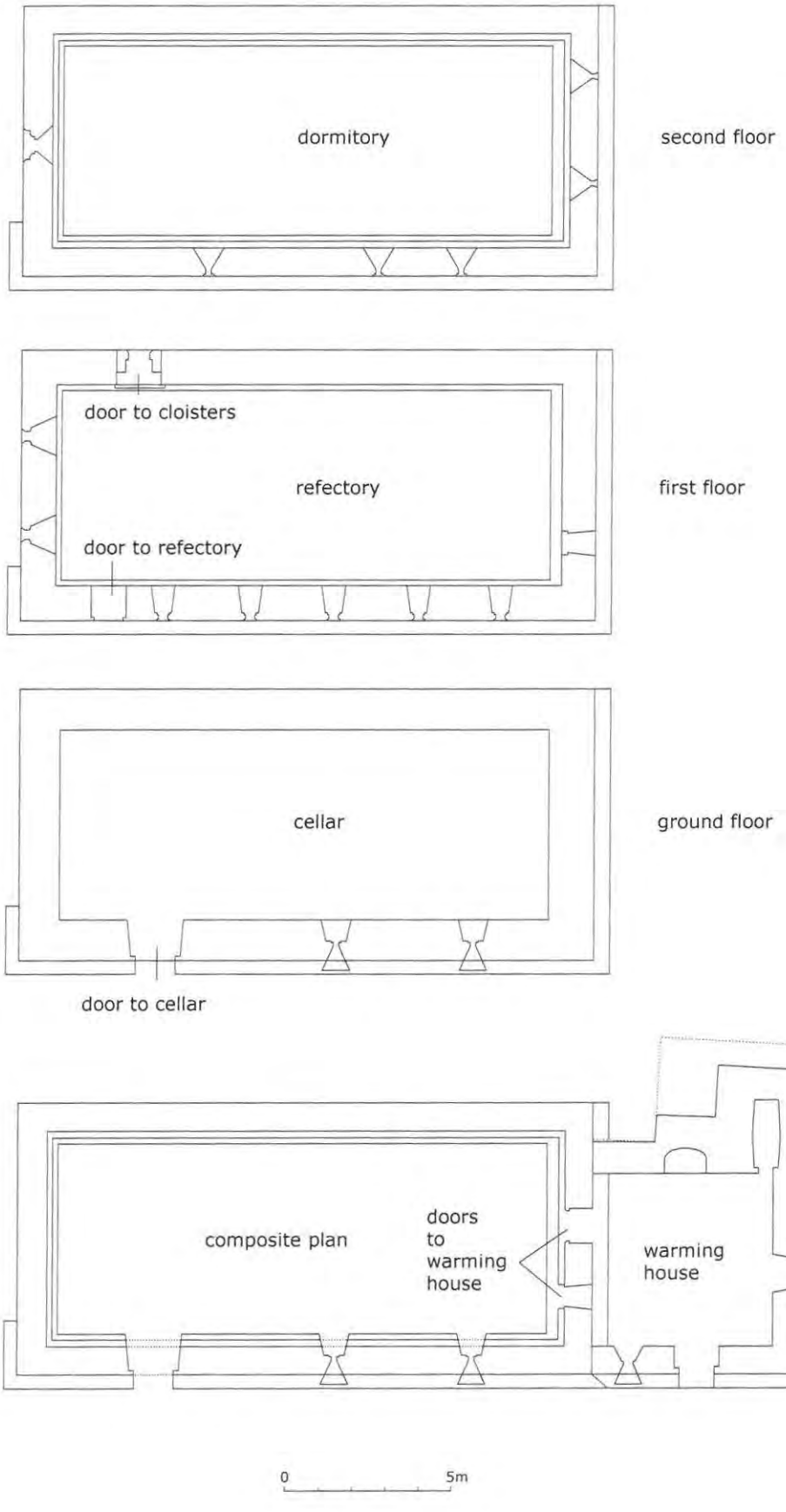
The ground floor is a cellar. This space is reached through a door with vertical jambs and a massive stone lintel. A stone grave slab with a relief carved ring-cross above a long stem once served as one of the lintels of this door. It now stands upright against the internal west wall. The door is towards the west end of the south wall. There are two double splayed windows in the south wall which light the cellar. The openings themselves are rectangular and narrow. There are thirteen large beam slots in each of the two long walls at about 2m from the internal ground surface. The floor is uneven, so the measurements are not precise. The beams would be about 300mm by 380mm. Immediately above the beam slots, at about 2.4m, the wall is rebated. It is unlikely that the floor was carried directly on the beams. The rebates would have carried joists on which floor boards or slabs could by laid.

The first floor would have been at about 2.6m from the interior ground surface. This space would have served as a refectory. The dining hall was approached from the outside by an external stair which no longer survives. The door is now blocked but can be traced immediately to the west of the cellar door, with a threshold one step lower than the internal first floor. A corresponding door in the north wall gave access and exit to the cloister. This door, too, required a step up, this time from the refectory floor to the level of the cloister outside. The southern door was plain. The door in the north wall seems also to have been plain originally, but was modified at some later date with the insertion of a smaller pointed-arch door with dressed stone jambs and head. The refectory was lit by five rectangular single light windows in the south wall and two single light and widely splayed windows in the west wall.

The top floor has a similar arrangement of beam slots and rebated walls. The beams are less thick and more widely spaced. The floor rose 3.4m above the refectory floor, 1.77m below the eaves. This space served as a dormitory, lit by three rectangular, narrow, single-light windows on the south side, widely splayed internally, one tall lancet window with moulded frame and hood in the west wall and two smaller lancets in the east wall.

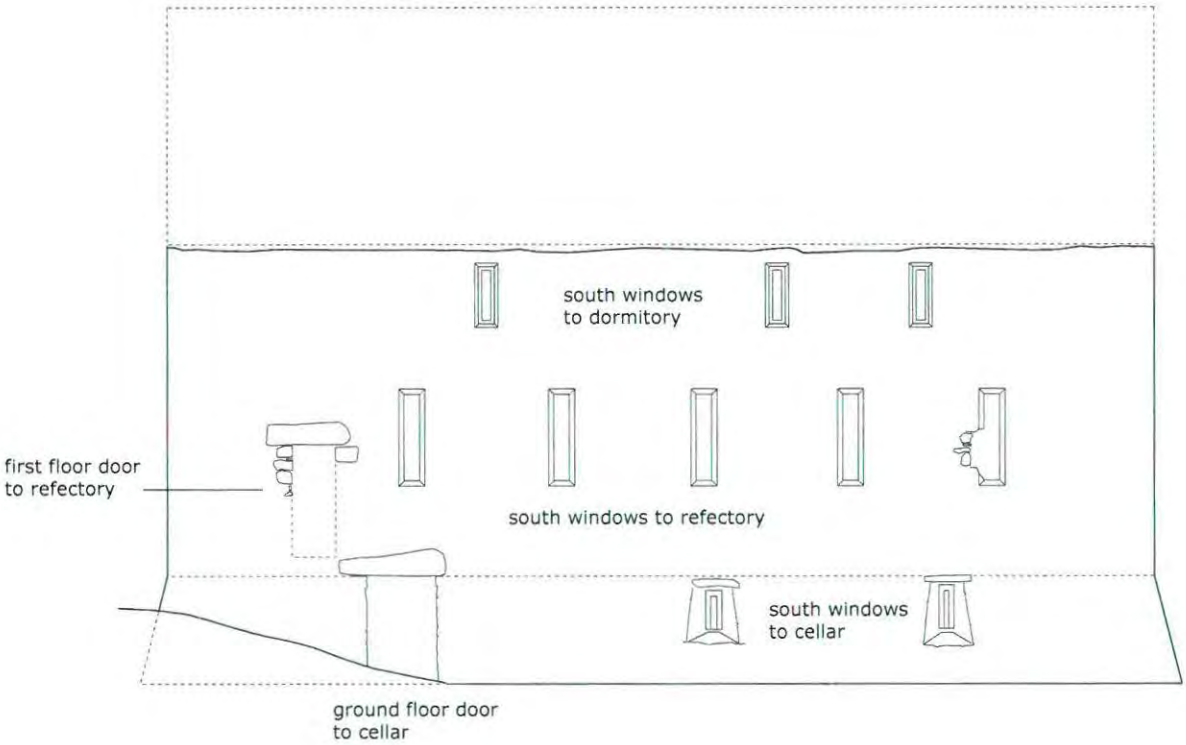
The refectory block and warming house

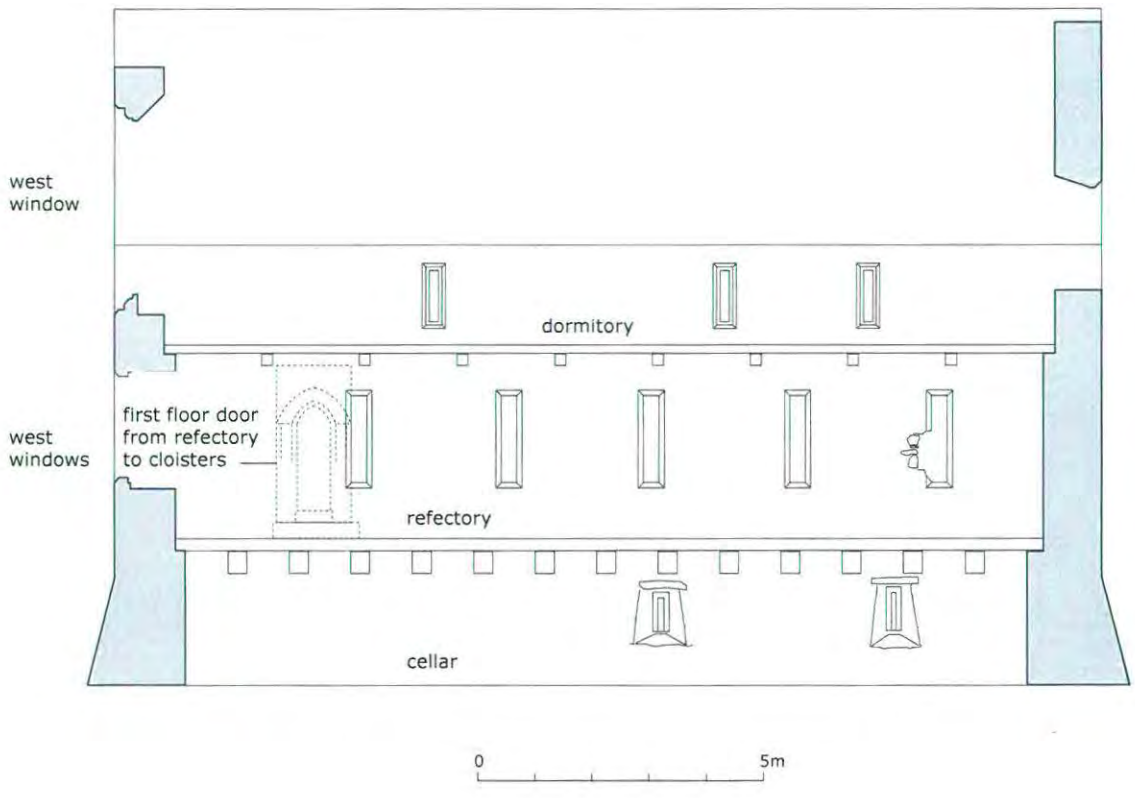
Penmon refectory and dormitory block



Penmon refectory and dormitory

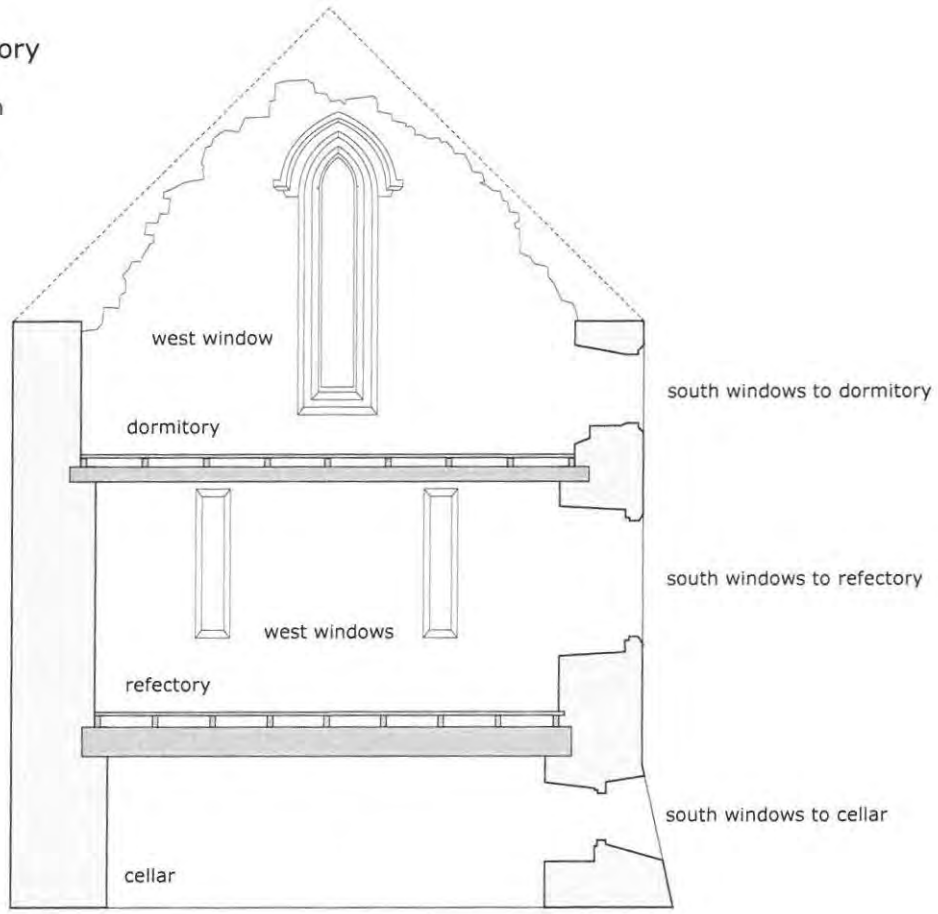
south elevation and cross section

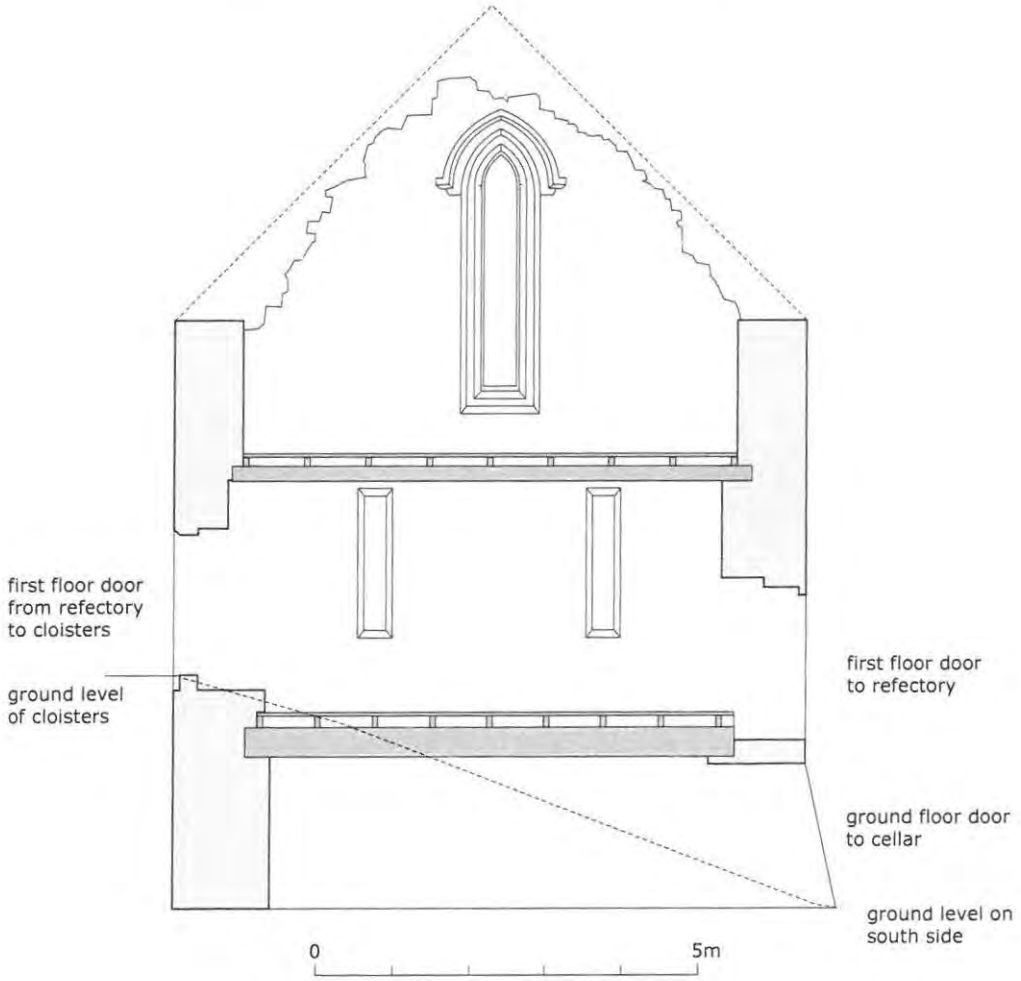




Penmon
refectory
and dormitory

west elevation
and
cross section





The warming house

The warming house was probably built at the end of the fifteenth century or at the beginning of the sixteenth century. It was attached to the east end of the refectory block and two doors, at first and second floor levels were opened to give access to and from the two buildings. The warming house is narrower, less tall and considerably shorted in length than the thirteenth-century building. Nevertheless, it still stands to the full height of its eaves at 6.8m and still carried a roof, albeit in serious disrepair, into the 1920s. The east gable has been repaired, to some extent, and now presents a complete facade, rising to 10.45m above the interior ground surface. The structure is 6.4m long externally and 7.5m from north to south. There is an original chimney stack in the north wall, serving fireplaces on the ground and first floor. The stack projects 810mm from the external north wall. The south wall continues the batter form the south wall of the refectory.

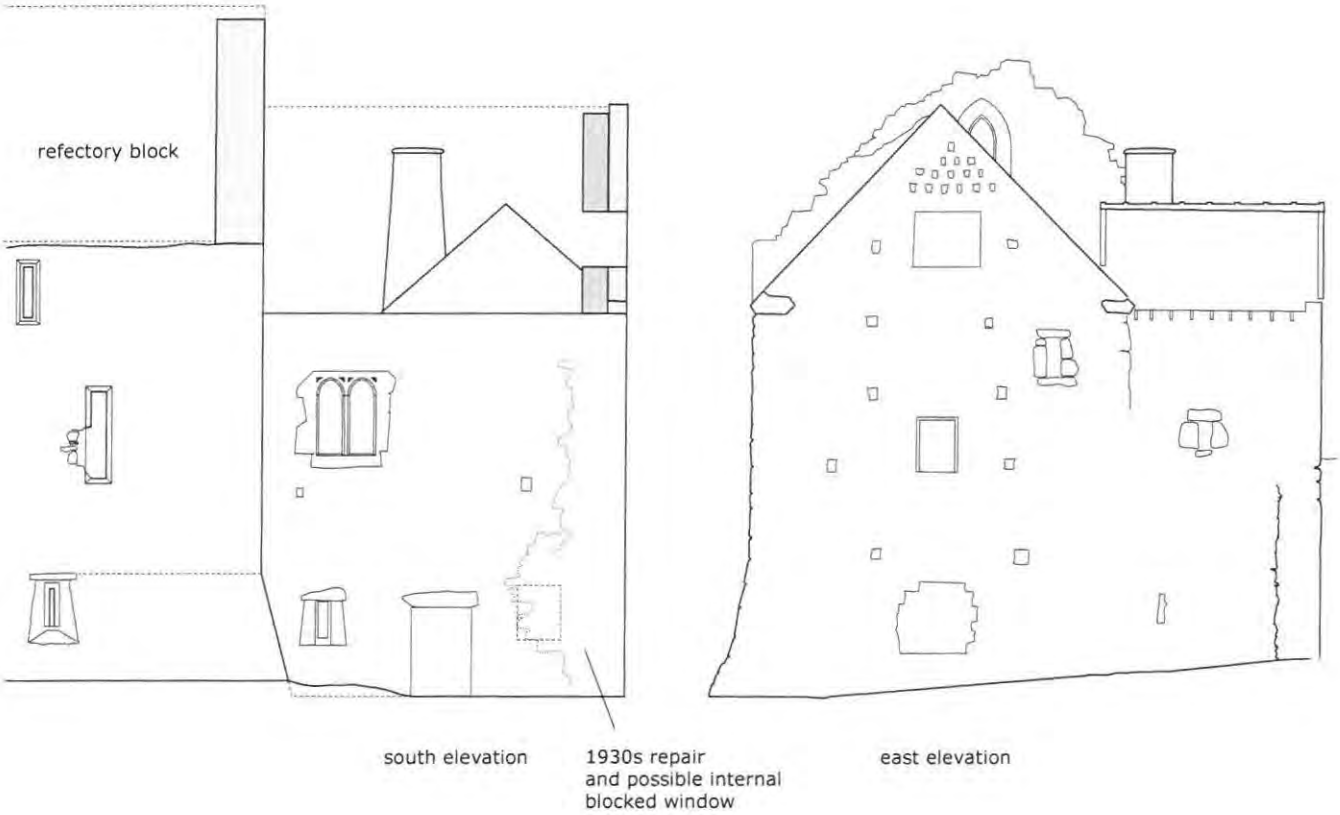
There is a doorway with a horizontal slab lintel, approximately central to the external south wall and a double-splayed rectangular, single light window between the door and the refectory block. There are indications on the internal face of the south wall of a corresponding blocked window to the east of the door.

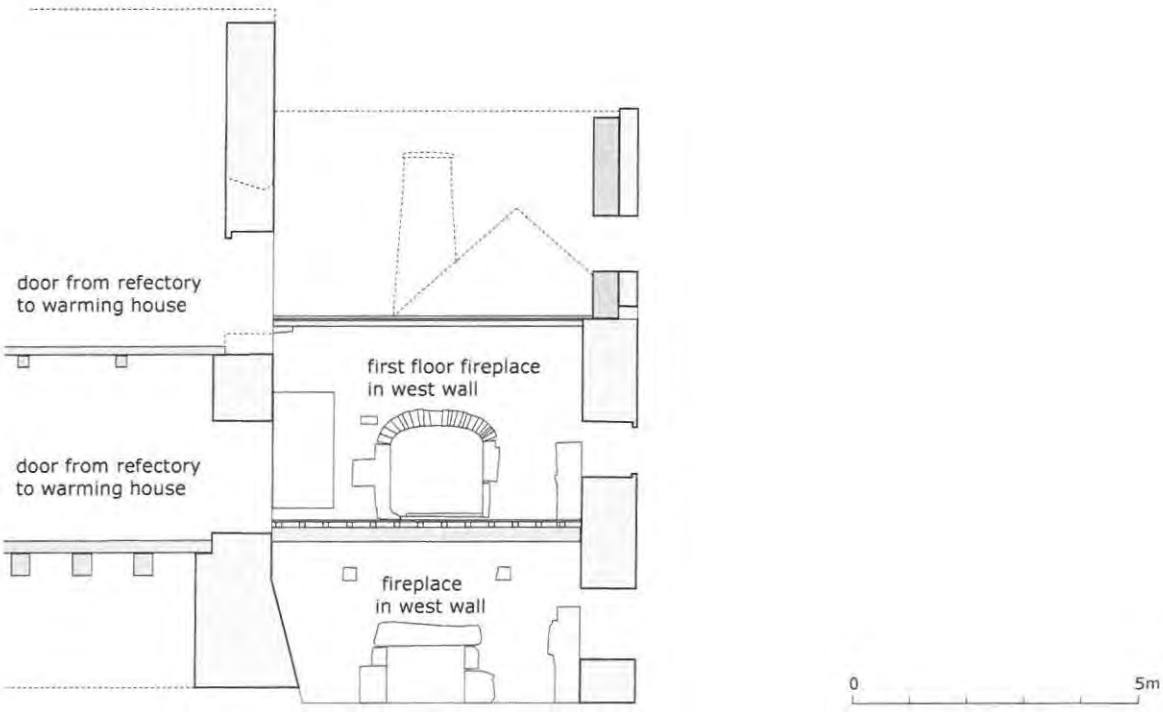
The ground floor space is 5.25m north-south and 4.95m west-east, measured from the base of the external batter of the refectory east wall which intrudes into the ground floor of the warming house. There is a large fireplace with vertical stone jambs and massive horizontal lintel in the north wall. There was once a window in the east wall which, by the nineteenth century, had been converted into a doorway and, around 1930 reinstated as a 'ruined' window. In the north-east corner of the ground floor there is a narrow rectangular opening, 1.7m tall, giving access to a covered passageway 2.2m long. The passage is lit by a small, narrow, rectangular window. A similar door in a corresponding position on the first floor is now blocked. Both doors could give access to a latrine chute or, less likely, to an external stair.

Warming house and adjacent structure from the east

Penmon Warming House

south and east elevation and cross section





south elevation and cross section

The first floor was carried on joists running north-south, supported on a large timber beam bedded in the west and east walls. This floor was 3.22m above the ground floor. There is another large fireplace in the north wall, now blocked with limestone and brick. This fireplace has jambs of dressed stone blocks, as did the fireplace below. The first floor fireplace, however, has a depressed-arched head with a stone keystone and bricks forming the arch, which may originally have been plastered. A small image, of the head and shoulders of a person, has been carved on the angle of the left jamb, half-way down. The east wall at first-floor level has a rectangular window with chamfered frame and internal splay. The south wall has an ornate window of two pointed-arch lights with chamfered jambs, mullion and heads. The window is splayed, internally, and has seats to either side. The lintel on the interior side is supported by lateral corbels creating a shouldered profile. The Royal Commission describe this as level with the wall-plate but it is, in fact, 800mm lower. A blocked window in the east wall near the north-east corner, on the other hand, has a very similar shouldered lintel which does site immediately below the wall-plate. This window is visible in the external wall as a plain single-light opening, similar in appearance to the early windows of the Prior's house. There is a blocked door to the left of the fireplace, which once gave access to the north side of the warming house at the level of the cloisters. A door has been inserted through the east wall of the refectory giving access, via two steps, from the refectory floor to the first floor of the warming house.

The second floor is at 6.8m from the ground floor surface, at the same level as the eaves of the warming house. This is an attic space which is lit by a rectangular window in the east wall and accessed by a doorway cut through the east wall of the refectory. There are two steps up from the thirteenth-century dormitory to the warming room attic and head room would be restricted passing through the door.

At a later, but unknown, date a single-room structure was added to the north wall of the warming house, encasing the earlier chimney-stack in the process. The structure is approached form the level of the cloister. There are modern windows in the north wall but there are blocked, narrow, early windows in the east and north wall too. This building and the entire warming house complex deserves further investigation.

Holme argued that when the cloister was laid out in the thirteenth century, a battered retaining wall was built from the south-east corner of the refectory (Holme 1925). The warming-house would be to the east of this line. Holme further argued that a chapter house might well have stood between the retaining wall and the present boundary wall on the east (Holme 1924, 20-22).

In 1702, an external stone stairway was built and still stands as the entrance to the former claustral space. At the same time, it would appear, the ground between the thirteenth-century retaining wall and the present eastern boundary was levelled up. This might be the occasion of the construction of the building next to the warming house and also, perhaps, the opening of a door at first floor level in the north wall of the warming house.

During the nineteenth century, the warming house and adjacent structure would seem to have been still occupied. The south door of the warming house was blocked and the window at ground floor level in the east wall had been opened as a door. The stack carried a brick work extension above the ridge line of the warming house roof.

Sculptured head on first-floor fireplace jamb

The Prior's House

The Prior's House is a substantial structure appended to the south gable of the south transept of the church and extending to the north-west corner of the refectory block. The house has been much modified over the centuries and it is no longer possible to identify any certain evidence for its presence contemporary with the thirteenth-century conventual buildings. However, the thirteenth century and later chancel, twelfth century south transept, Prior's House and refectory block define a coherent rectangular space which undoubtedly served as a cloister. Holme identified evidence for a retaining wall between the east end of the chancel and the east end of the refectory block which completes the enclosure. Holme suggested that the area representing the claustral space had been levelled up, a further argument in favour of a structured cloister (Holme 1925, 19-22).

Normally, if not invariably, a monastic cloister would lie adjacent to the south wall of the nave. The refectory is usually found along the south edge of the cloister and a chapter house would stand immediately adjacent to, and south of, the south transept. A dormitory is often found next to the chapter house and completing the south-east angle with the refectory. Abbot's residences are found in various locations within the complex, although Llanthony Priory, an Augustinian house in South Wales, has the Prior's House adjacent to the church in the west range. At Penmon the conventual buildings have been disposed against and to the south of the chancel, rather than the nave. In this position, there is a presumption of a western range springing from the south transept and it would not be inappropriate for this to be occupied, at least in part, by the Prior's residence.

The present house (as at 2004)
The house is aligned north-south and abuts the south wall of the south transept directly. That is to say that the north wall of the house is the south wall of the transept. During restoration work in the 1920s the plinth course of the transept was visible at the north end of the north ground floor room and the outline of the blocked window in the south wall of the transept was visible in the plaster of the north, first floor room.

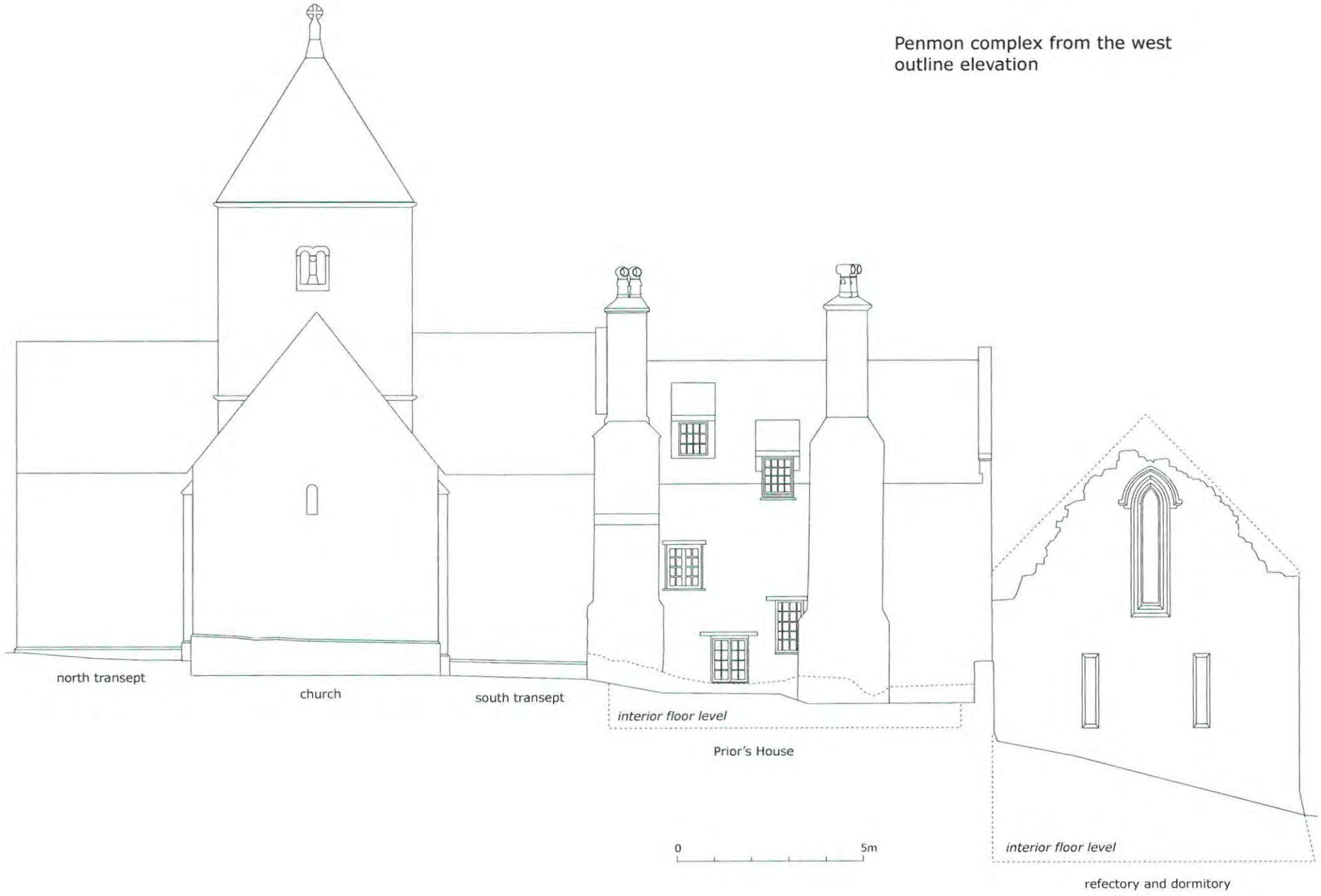
The external dimensions of the house are 10.40m north-south and 5.85m west-east. The height is 9.8m from the internal ground floor to the ridge of the roof. The external ground surface varies considerably on the west side, less so on the east side. The ground slopes naturally from north-west to south-east, falling 1.67m from the level of the graveyard at the north west corner of the house to the south-east corner at the junction with the refectory building.

The arrangement of the rooms, as recorded during the renovation of 2004-5, is as follows. There is one door, at ground level, in the east wall of the house. The door is central to the internal length of the building but slightly off centre as measured externally. The door gives access to a hallway and stairwell aginst the west wall. The hall is 1.89m wide flanked by internal stud walls. A door, central to the north partition wall, gives access to a sitting room. There was a casement window of two lights each of eight panes, opening in the middle, in the south corner of the west wall and a larger window in the east wall of four lights with panes of six and six above and nine and nine below. There is an angled fireplace in the north-west corner. The room was panelled in oak in the early eighteenth century. There is a moulded cornice and dado rail. Sometime in the modern period certain of the panels were replaced with hardboard and ventilation holes were drilled into the wood. The ceiling had (by 2004-05) been removed to expose the joists so that the cornices no longer reached the ceiling.

The room to the left (south) of the hall is entered through a thin partition wall. In 2004-05 it served as a kitchen. There was a large three-light window in the eastern wall, comprising two casements, of fifteen panes each, either side of a fixed light of fifteen panes. There was a smaller rectangular opening, 1m wide in the west wall, of three lights, one large pane to the left, one three quarter pane, side-hinged to the right and one small pane, top-hinged, above.

There was a large fireplace on the north side of the west wall which housed an oil fired boiler. The fireplace had a false four-centred head, lightly chamfered and with chamfered jambs. The opening stood 1.3m high and 1.22m across. The back is bricked-up. At the far left of the west wall was a tall wooden cupboard, 600mm above the ground at base of its frame, 1.68m tall and 855mm wide. Internally the cupboard appeared to have a slight splay. The top of the cupboard reached to within 200mm of the kitchen ceiling. When plaster was stripped form the room above a cavity was revealed in the wall on the line of continuation of the cupboard below. The significance of this relationship is discussed in the context of features visible on the external wall. The ceiling of the kitchen is 2.6m above the floor.

Penmon complex from the west
outline elevation



The Prior's House before and after restoration

The Prior's House and east facade

The second floor is reached by a flight of six stairs, a half-landing, one stair up and a second flight, returning on the first, of seven stairs. There is a window at the half-landing which extends above and below the level of the first floor. The window is a tall, fixed single light of twenty panes, 1.31m by 680mm. The window has a wide internal splay at the left (south) side and at the bottom, but not at the top or right side. The splay is largely a consequence of lighting the stairwell through the wall at the point where the shouldered base of the southern stack is set against it.

At the first floor landing there are doors to the north and to the south, close to the east wall. The landing is lit by a single light casement window of twelve panes. There is a shelf and a window seat beneath the window. The northern room 4m north-south by 4.3m, is lit by larger windows in both the west and east walls. Both are two light casements, side hinged, with eight panes in each light. There is a shelf and a window seat beneath each window. The eastern window is slightly wider at 1.1m. The western window is 940mm wide. There is an angled cast-iron fireplace in the north-west corner of the room. There is a narrow band of coving at the junction of wall and ceiling and a moulded dado rail just above the level of the window shelf. This room was panelled in deal at about the same time that the sitting room was panelled. When the deal panelling was removed in the 1920s a set of initials and a date, 1711, were observed in the plaster beneath.

There is a small rectangular recess in the north wall, at the level of the dado rail. It is 180mm wide, 300mm tall and recessed 230mm into the wall. The purpose of this feature is unclear. The possibility that this may have been an attempt to create a squint, viewing into the transept, has been suggested, but not too strongly (Holme 1927, 29-30). The recess is too low in the wall to connect with the blocked transept window, if this was the objective.

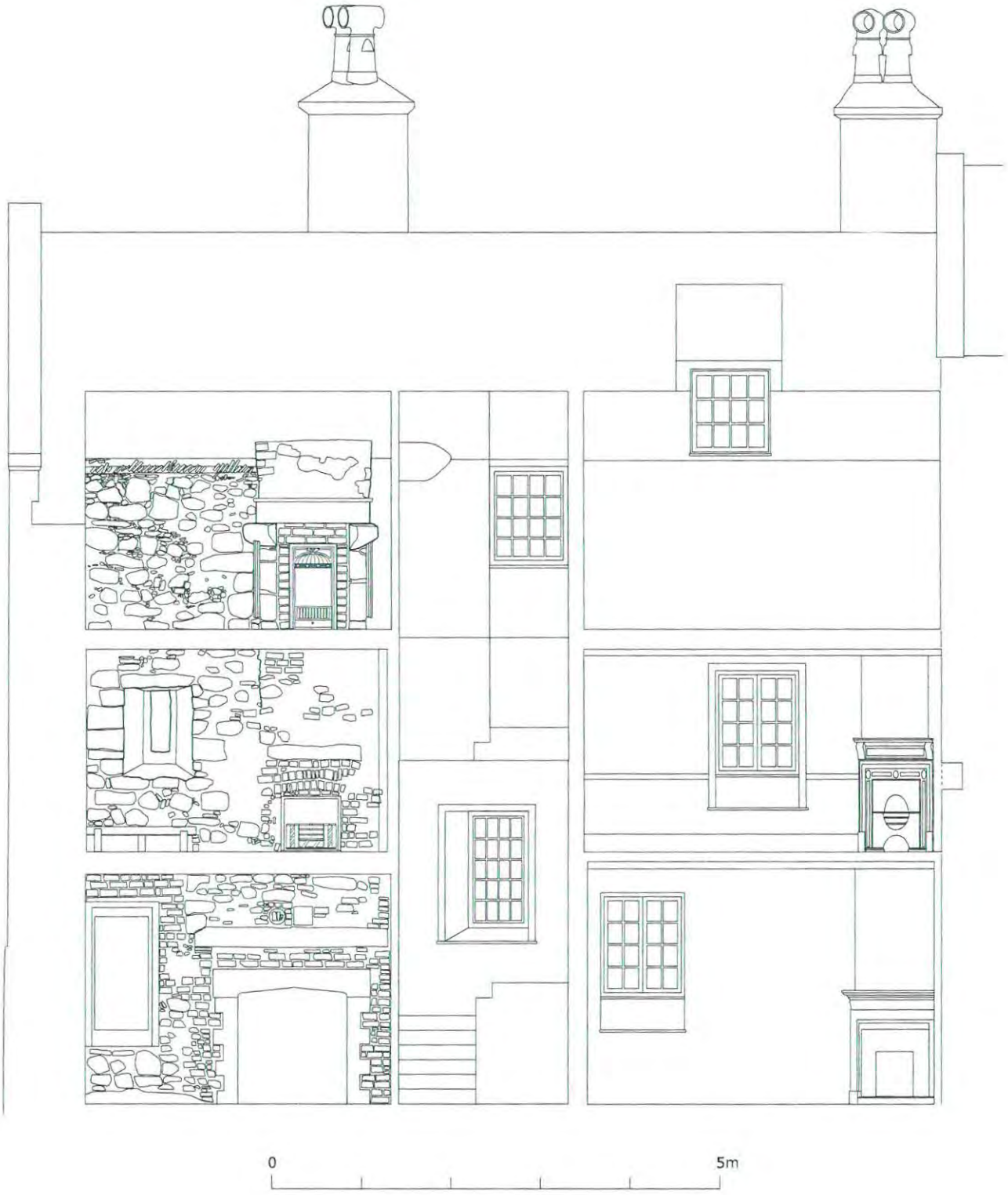
The southern first floor room measures 3.25m north-south by 4.29m. There is a modern casement window of two lights, twelve panes in each, hinged at the sides and opening at the middle. The window is 1.36m wide, 1.17m high and central to the eastern wall. The window is splayed slightly, internally. In the west wall there is a small square cast-iron fireplace, 650mm high 660mm wide. There are courses of brick on each side of the fireplace which suggests that this small insert has replaced a larger fireplace. There is a vertical plaster line and a change in the composition of the masonry in this wall at about 1.4m from the north-west corner of the room which corresponds to the projection of a lintel and breastwork of a fireplace similar to that in the room above. Holme saw such a fireplace, in situ, in 1925, albeit damaged (Holme 1925, 27). The change in composition of the masonry to the north of this line is essentially that of patching and filling with brickwork.

Towards the southern corner of the western wall there is a cupboard recessed into the wall. The cupboard had a wooden frame and hinged door. The recess is splayed. After stripping the plaster in this area and removal of the wooden frame it became clear that the cupboard had been created from a small window blocked on the outer face. The window is 670mm wide at the internal wall and 990mm tall. The splay narrows to 380mm at the jamb, 500mm from the internal wall. The internal jambs are dressed. This window was revealed on the outer face when the pebbledash render was stripped form the western wall. At the base of the wall, below the blocked window there is another recess. It extends 1.23m from the south wall and is 280mm high, above the floor boards a small sawn timber beam or joist supports the masonry above and is propped up by three short timber struts. The timber is relatively modern (less than a century?). The cavity is the result of damage to the wall in making a hole through an early blocked window to take out a coffin in 1877. It lies directly above the cupboard in the room below.

There are seven steps up to a half-landing, one step up again and a further eight steps to the top floor. There is a window at the half-landing which lights the upper flight of stairs. It is a swivelling dormer window of twelve panes. Again there are two rooms. The northern room measures 3.99m, north-south, and 4.37m west-east. There is no fireplace and the only window is a swivelling dormer of twelve panes in the pitch of the coved roof on the west side. In 2004-05 this space was divided by light partitions into a bathroom (on the west side) and small bedroom (on the east side).

The southern room measures 3.30m north-south and 4.33m west-east. The ceiling is coved and plastered and the roof timbers are not now visible. However, Holme saw collar-beam and tie-beam trusses in the roof space and grooved-stud partitions, plastered, dividing rooms and a longitudinal passage against the east wall (Holme 1925, 27). All these timbers have now been replaced except part of the stud partition which was reset on the south side of the hall on the ground floor. The wall height was raised by about 150mm in the 1920s and the roof line was also raised at the same time. The division between the old and the new work was clearly visible in the west and south interior walls of the southern top floor room after the plaster had

Prior's House
west wall, interior elevation

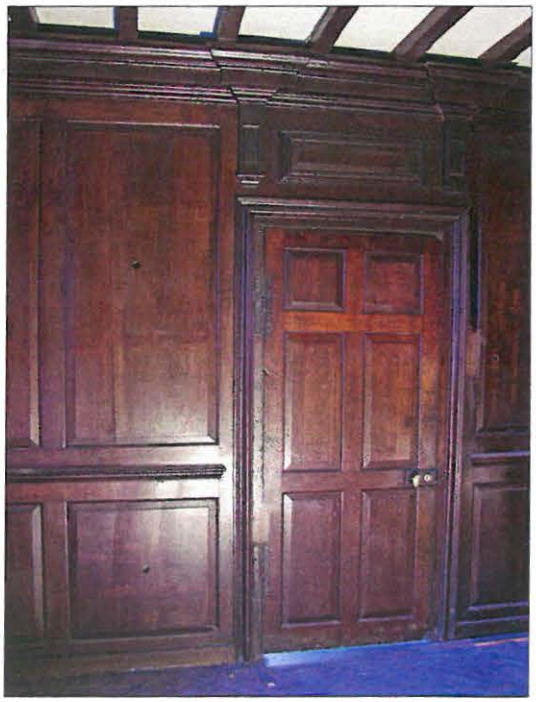


Ground floor south fireplace during stripping

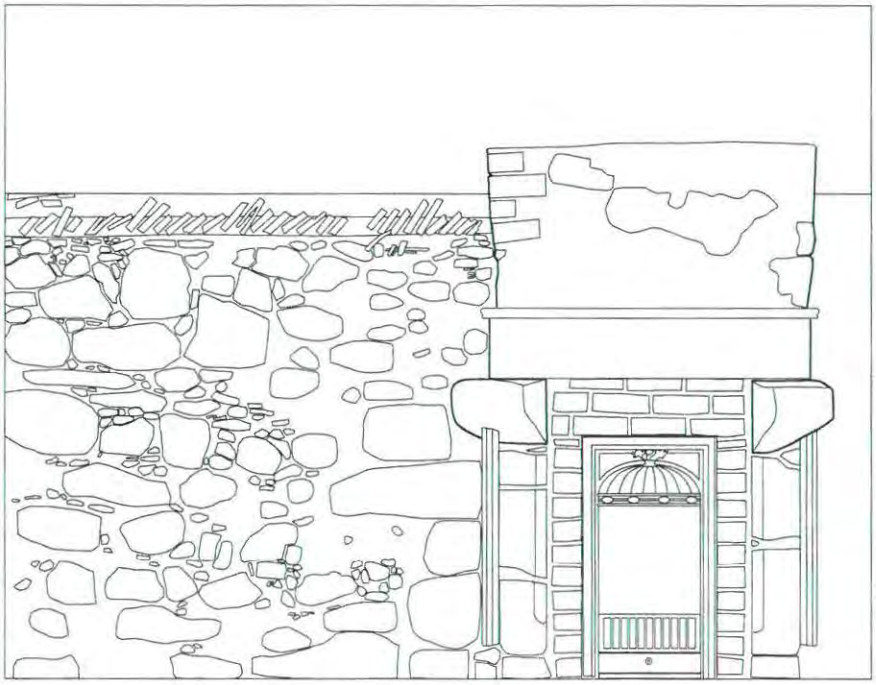
First floor south fireplace, plaster stripped

Second floor south fireplace, plaster stripped

First floor south, early window revealed behind cupboard



Ground floor sitting room, early C18th panelling



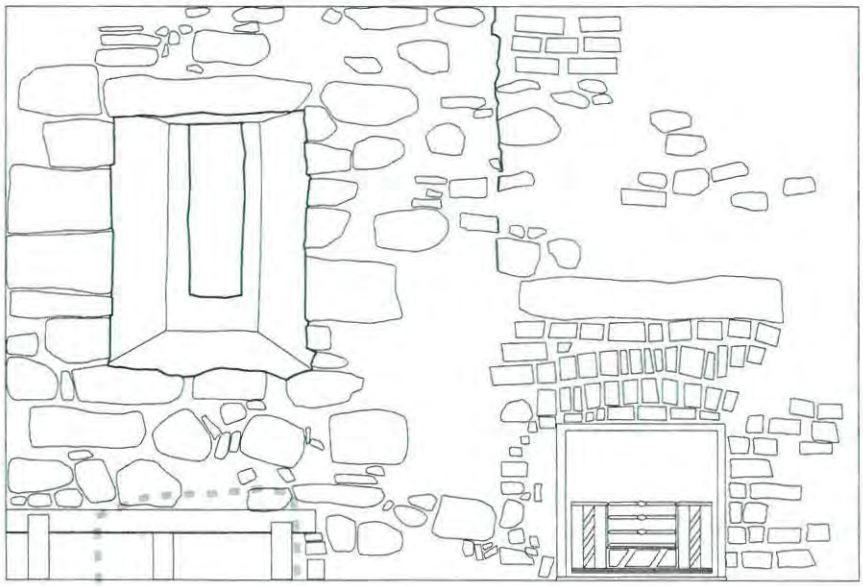
Detail of
exposed interior faces
on west wall of house

Top floor
The laths above the original masory indicate where the wall was heightened in 1923

The fireplace with projecting corbels supporting a massive lintel.
The jambs are stop-chamfered.

A relatively modern cast-iron grate has been inserted into the bricked-up earlier space

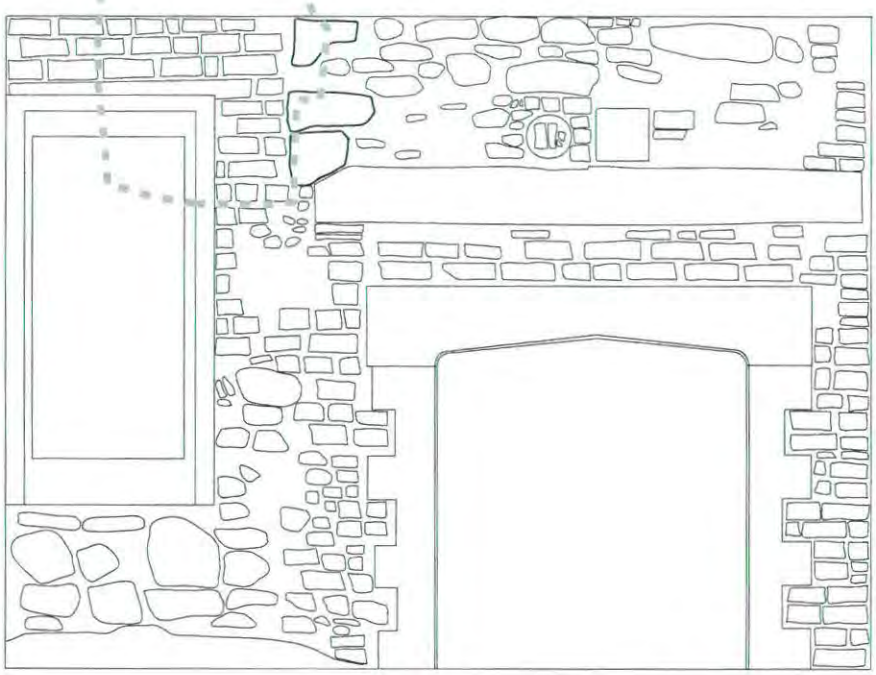
Modern decorative wooden moulding has been placed to frame the possible seventeenth century fireplace



First floor
A similar fireplace to the one on the top floor has been removed and a modern grate inserted in the bricked up space

An early splayed window was revealed after the plaster was stripped and a cupboard removed, in 2004

A cavity below the splayed window is a result of a hole being knocked through a blocked sixteenth century window in the wall to remove a coffin.
The position of the damaged window was recorded on both the inside and outside walls after removal of plaster and render (grey dashed line on drawing)



0 1m

Ground floor
An original fireplace has been removed and replaced

Surviving dressed gritstones from a sixteenth century window are highlighted in thick black line

The position of the damaged window was recorded on both the inside and outside walls after removal of plaster and render (grey dashed line on drawing)

been stripped, and in the external gable after the removal of pebbledash.

In 2004-05 there was a modern rectangular window of two casement lights, side hinged, in the south wall, with a concrete lintel above.

There is a fireplace in the west wall, close to the north-west corner. The fireplace had an opening 810mm wide, 1.19m high, with dressed, stop-chamfered gritstone jambs and a rectangular gritstone lintel supported by projecting corbels. The jambs are flush with the face of the wall but the lintel projects, on the corbels, and carries above it a projecting breastwork, 1.26m wide. The breastwork has been repaired with brick. The original opening of this fireplace has been reduced with brickwork and a cast-iron grate inserted. The original fireplace and lintel has been incongruously framed with a modern wooded decorative moulding.

The external appearance of the house

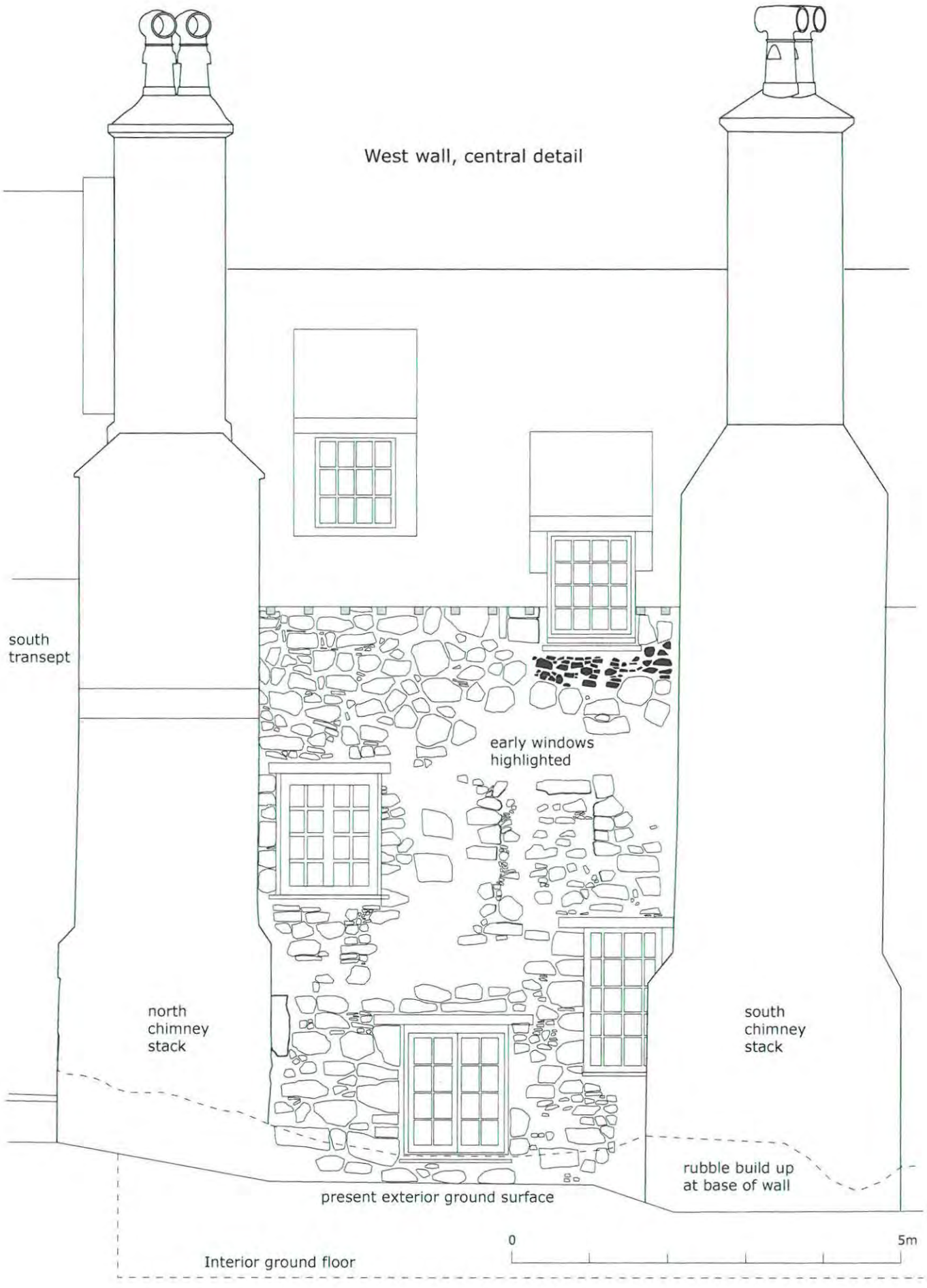
The west face

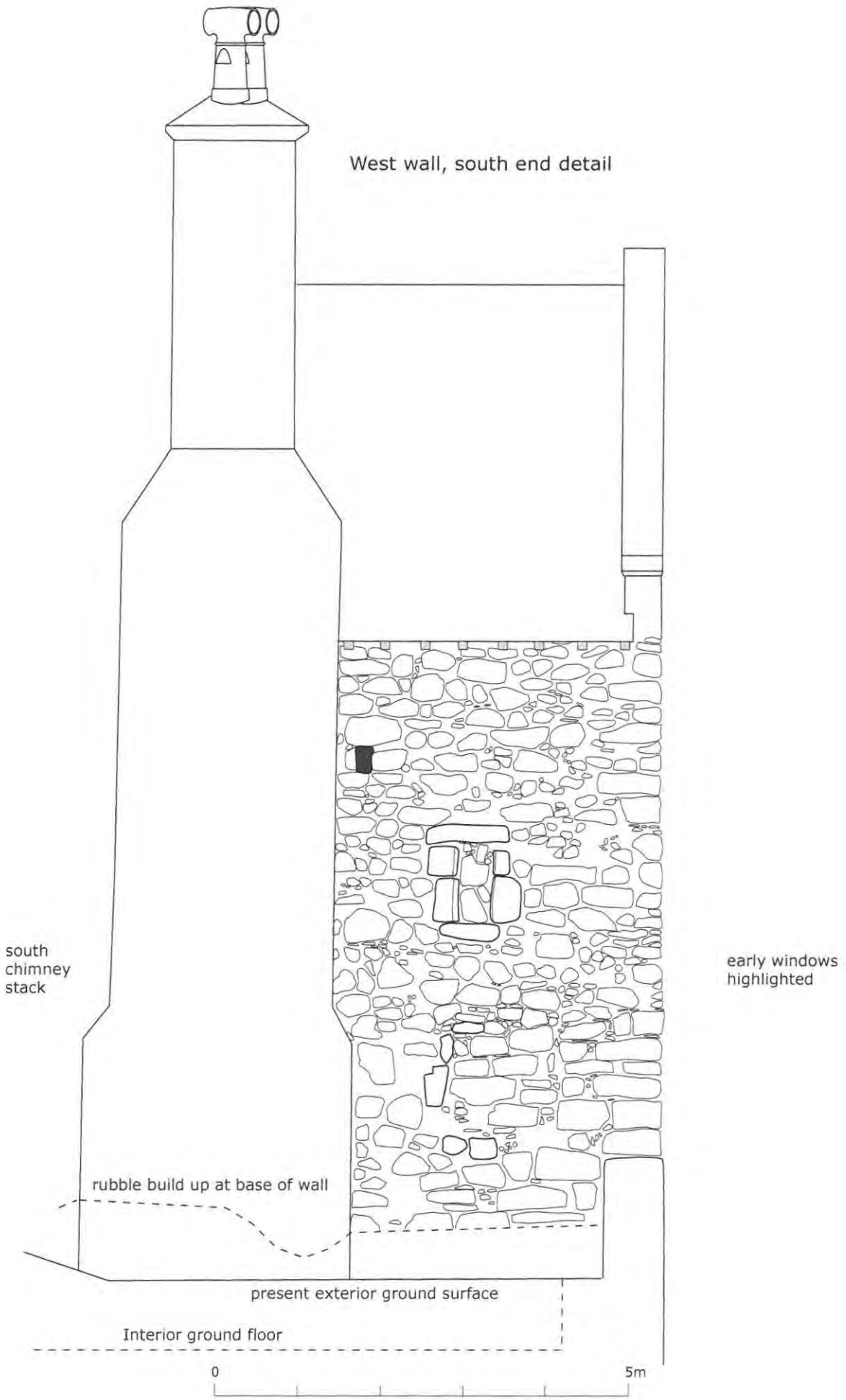
There are two tall chimney stacks built against the west face of the house. One stands at the north-west corner and overlaps the junction of the south transept and the house. The second stack stands 3.4m to the south, along the same wall. Both stacks now stand from the base of the wall to a height of 1.5m above the present ridge of the roof. The stacks have massive, shouldered bases (the southern stack is 2.6m wide at the base), at about 3m above the internal floor level (the shoulder on the northern stack is slightly higher). As the stacks rise above the eaves, they continue to be joined to the main building by small gabled, pitched roofs to a height of 8.25m above the internal floor. The stacks then rise, in rectangular cross-section (1.1m by 1.36m), free standing to a total height of 11.27m. The entire face of the west wall and the height of the stacks to the small gabled roofs which join the chimneys were, in 2004-05, swathed in pebbledash render. A window was visible at ground floor level, between the stacks, lighting the northern of two ground floor rooms. (The windows have been described above, individually, in the context of the interior arrangements). Further windows were visible, at half-landing level, between ground and first floor, adjacent to the southern stack; at first floor level, adjacent to the northern stack; at the level of the eaves where a dormer lights the stair well between first and top floor and, lastly, at top floor level where a dormer in the roof pitch lights the northern room on the upper floor.

After removal of the pebbledash further details were revealed which aid our understanding of the changing way in which the house was used, at least during its later history.

Dressed stone blocks, with a vertical straight-edge, adjacent to the north edge of the eaves dormer and small stone infill below the sill, suggest an earlier window in this position. Parts of the stone jambs and lintel of a blocked rectangular window were visible below the eaves dormer. The stone jamb of a window was identified immediately adjacent to the south side of the north stack at ground floor level. A dressed gritstone window, rectangular (750mm by 30mm) and narrow with chamfered jambs, and now blocked, was visible in the wall at first floor level to the south of the south stack. A second, incomplete and damaged window, similar to the one just described but taller at 980mm, was visible at ground floor level, below the one above. Large areas of hard mortar which remained on the surface of the central area between the stacks precluded the identification of any further features. The two stacks were shown to be entirely of stone in their present condition but were not always so.

Early window at first floor level, south of the south stack


West wall, central detail
south transept
early windows highlighted
north chimney stack
south chimney stack
rubble build up at base of wall
present exterior ground surface
Interior ground floor
0
5m

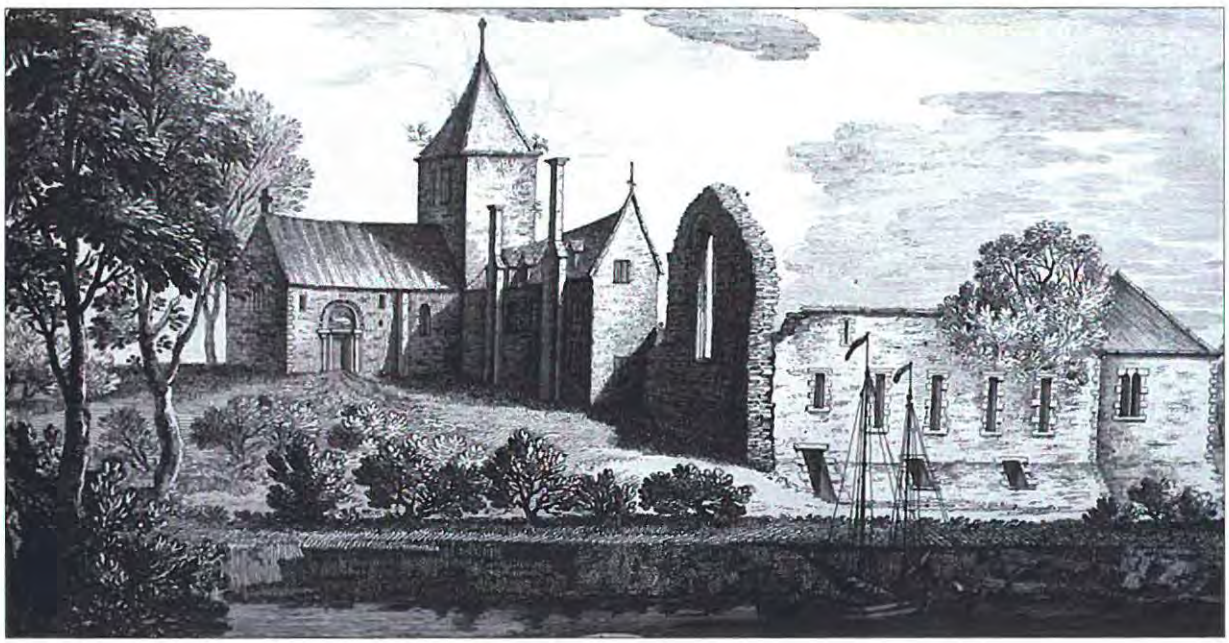

West wall, south end detail
south
chimney
stack
early windows
highlighted
rubble build up at base of wall
present exterior ground surface
Interior ground floor
0
5m

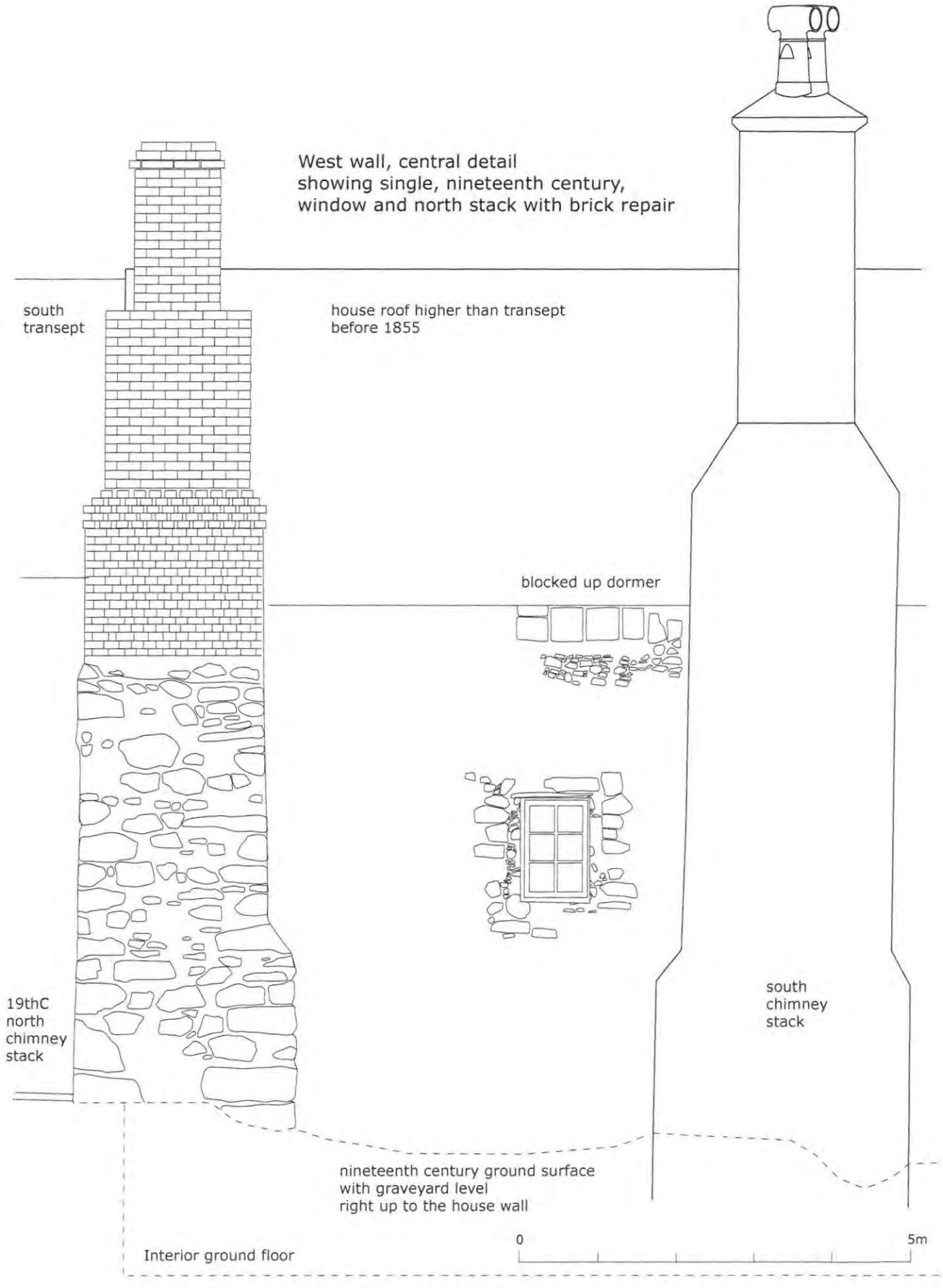
A comparison of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century illustrations and late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century photographs has helped to piece together elements of the developing sequence. In the 1740s the Buck brothers produced an attractive depiction of the church, Prior's house, refectory and warming house. The illustration is not entirely accurate but can be corroborated on very many points to the extent that we can have confidence in the major features of the drawing. Two stacks are shown and are probably intended to be of the same height although the northernmost looks slightly smaller. The distinction is significant as, by the nineteenth century, the northernmost is clearly shown to be less tall. Both stacks are very similar, if not identical; they rise uniformly vertically to the small gabled roofs which join the stacks to the main pitch. The drawing shows these features are detached dormers which cannot be the case and must be an error. Also, the southern stack does not have the massive shouldered base we should expect from its present manifestation. However, the gabled dormer between the two stacks probably represents a genuine window in this position in the 1740s. Again windows are shown at first floor level between the stacks (two windows) and a third to the south of the southern stack. At ground floor level there is a window immediately north of the south stack and another immediately south of it. There are two windows in the south gable, one at ground floor level and the other on the top floor. There is no indication of a door in the west wall. The eaves of the south transept and the house appear to be on the same level, as do the ridge lines.

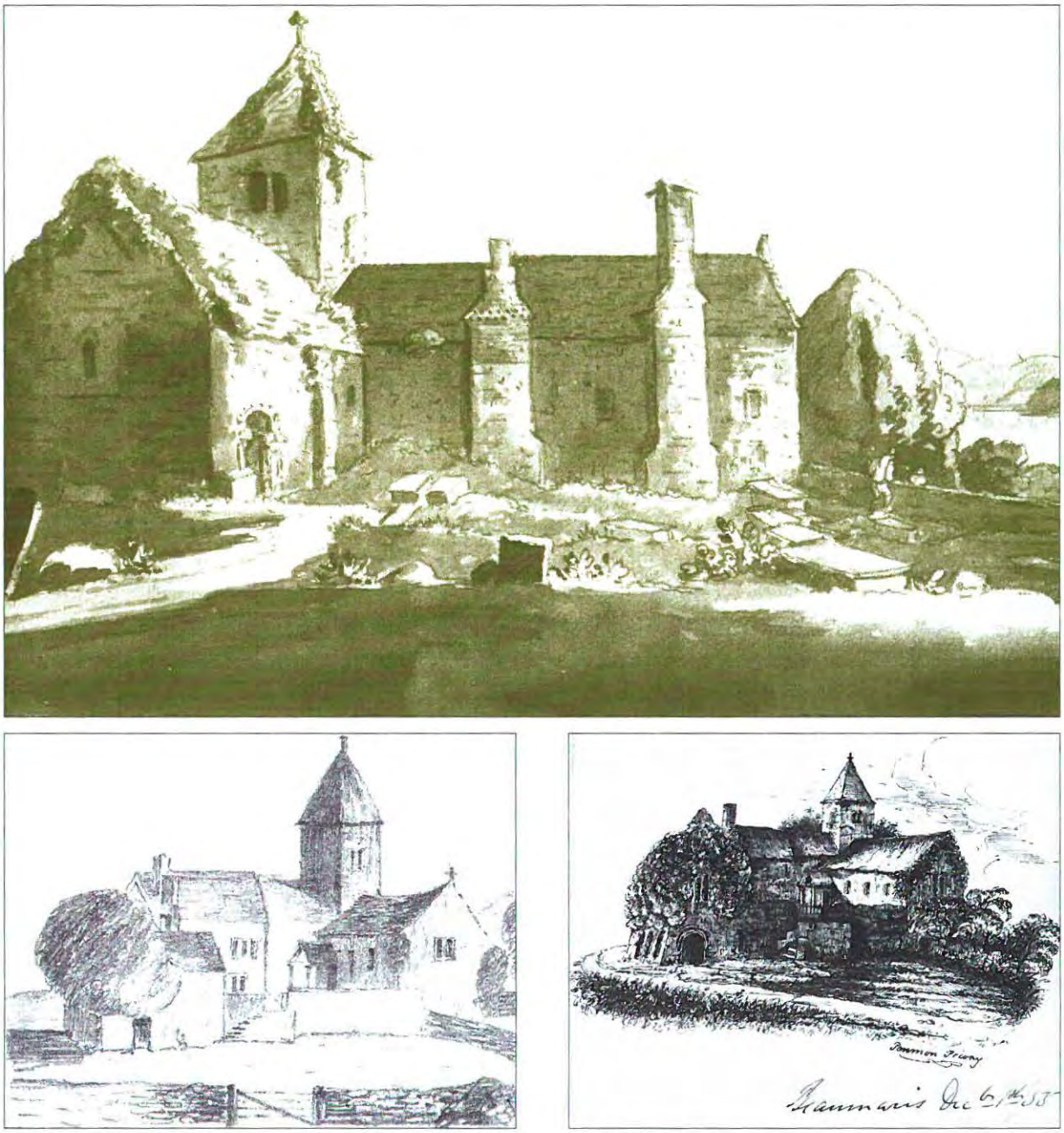
In 1810 John Buckler and his patron, Richard Colt Hoare, painted and sketched Penmon Priory from the west side. Both are accurate renderings. The southern chimney stack has its shouldered base, as we see today, and there is nothing in the stonework exposed in 2004 to suggest any later additions to the base. The northern stack has a shoulder on the south side but runs vertically on the north. This apparent anomaly is confirmed by a photograph of the early twentieth century. Where the Buck brothers appeared to show stonework in the northern chimney stack, both Colt Hoare and Buckler show brick in the upper courses from about 0.5m below the eaves. The gable of the pitched roof, which protects the stack and joins it to the main roof, is shown worked in a decorative arrangement of brick. This is shown more clearly in photographs of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In each of these illustrations the northern stack is the lower of the two.

Colt Hoare's drawing shows narrow rectangular windows on ground and first floor in the position identified after the removal of pebbledash in 2004. The Bucks' dormer has gone by 1810 but a shadow of its former existence is sketched by Colt Hoare, corresponding to the vertical dressed stone and disturbance under the eaves recorded in 2004. Where the Bucks shows two windows on the first floor between the stacks, and one on the ground floor, Colt Hoare shows two blocked windows and one in use. The surviving window is the one on the first floor close to the south stack on its north side. This is the only window still open on the west side by the turn of the nineteenth/twentieth century.

Samuel and Nathaniel Buck's view of Penmon




West wall, central detail
showing single, nineteenth century,
window and north stack with brick repair
south
transept
house roof higher than transept
before 1855
blocked up dormer
19thC
north
chimney
stack
south
chimney
stack
nineteenth century ground surface
with graveyard level
right up to the house wall
Interior ground floor
0
5m



Views of Penmon by Richard Colt Hoare,1810, (top), John Evans, 1831 (left) and a letterhead from Beaumaris, December, 1855 (right)

Another significant detail of the early nineteenth-century drawings, and this includes a small sketch view from the east, by John Evans in 1831, concerns the relative heights of the house and south transept. All these drawings show the south transept roof as lower than the roof of the Prior's house. It is clear from the present height of the transept roof and, notwithstanding, the heightening of the house roof in the 1920s, that the transept must have been raised by about 1.15m in the 1850s.

In 1923 the Prior's House was remodelled, the northern chimney stack was taken down and completely rebuilt in stone, matching its southern partner with the exception that, at about the level of the second floor, a hipped step was made reducing the thickness of the stack from the wall from 1.17m to 1.0m. The thickness of the southern stack from outer face to wall tapers very slightly from 910mm above the shoulder to 820mm at eaves height.

In 1920 there was only one open window in the west face of the wall, as described above. After the restoration of 1923 there were three new windows in the body of the west wall between the stacks and two dormers. These changes reflect a re-vamping of the internal spaces of the house, which will be discussed below.

The east face

The eastern face of the Prior's House faces the cloister. There is a door at ground floor level, roughly central to the eastern wall and central to the internal space. There is a plinth course at about 1.2m from the exterior ground surface, more or less on the line of the ground floor windowsills. The plinth fades out at 780mm from the junction with the refectory north wall. There are two windows, one either side of the door which light the ground floor rooms, and three windows on the first floor. The central window lights a landing, the other two light the north and south first floor rooms. There are no windows in the east facade which light the top floor. The windows are described individually in the context of the internal arrangement of the rooms. The east wall is heavily pointed but the masonry is still visible and has not been coated with render, in the way that the west and south sides have been, for at least a century and probably not at all. However, there have been changes and modifications made to this side of the house which require comment.

Around 1900, that is before the renovations of 1923, the door and window openings were in the same position and the same proportion as those of 1923. In other words the works of 1923 re-used the existing openings, with two exceptions. Firstly the windows of c.1900 would seem to have been, on the first floor and in the sitting room two-light, that is paired, vertical sashes with glazing bars. In the room to the left (south) of the door there were three lights, that is three sets of sashes in a line, in a bigger window. Secondly there was no window where, later, the front landing window was to be placed. This is, of course, because the stairs were only moved to that position in 1923.

There is a significant structural anomaly in the space between the two upstairs windows. This is visible on the outside face but Holme also traced it through the thickness of the wall (Holme 1925, 29). Recesses, 6ft to 8ft (1.8m to 2.4m) wide, were observed, central to the inside face of the eastern wall on the first floor and top floor levels. A straight joint was traced through the thickness of the wall on the south side of the first floor recess. These anomalies are still visible on the external face of the house despite the insertion of the first floor landing window in this position. These are, perhaps, more clearly visible in photographs taken at the end of the nineteenth century. The space between these anomalies is infilled with what appears to be a more regular and tighter piece of walling than elsewhere on the face. Holme suggested that this feature is indicative of a projecting oriel on the first and second floors, supported by columns of pillars on the ground outside. Holmes' excavation in the claustral area claimed to have uncovered the base of such columns (Holme 1925, Plate 4). This is a plausible suggestion. Alternatively such an aperture in the wall might indicate the former presence of a stair and doorway to a first floor hall.

Immediately adjacent to the northern edge of the north room downstairs window there remains, in the wall, the right hand jamb and lintel of an early, dressed stone window, comparable to those in the south end of the western wall.

The Prior's House meets the west end of the thirteenth-century refectory block at the south-western corner of the cloisters. The conjunction is a slightly awkward one and suggests that the two buildings were not designed as a piece. This may be an argument for suggesting that the Prior's House, as we see it, is not, in its present manifestation, representative of a building contemporary with the thirteenth-century conventual group.

The south face

The south wall of the Prior's House is a tall gable 10.5m high, from the apex of a raised coping to the base of the wall, and 5.6m wide. There is a plinth course between 400mm and 640mm above the sloping ground surface. The wall is predominantly limestone with some gritstone, roughly coursed. There are two windows in the south wall, one on the top floor, the other on the ground floor. These windows are described in the context of the interior arrangements. The openings are rectangular measuring 1.14m by 1.3m and 1.15m by 1.05m respectively on the external face. The present windows (pre-2004) are modern but the openings may be more ancient. The Buck brothers, Colt Hoare and Buckler all show these windows in the south gable, quite accurately, in 1742 and 1810. Photographs taken before the renovations of 1923 show the lower window in situ, the upper part of the gable is swathed in ivy.

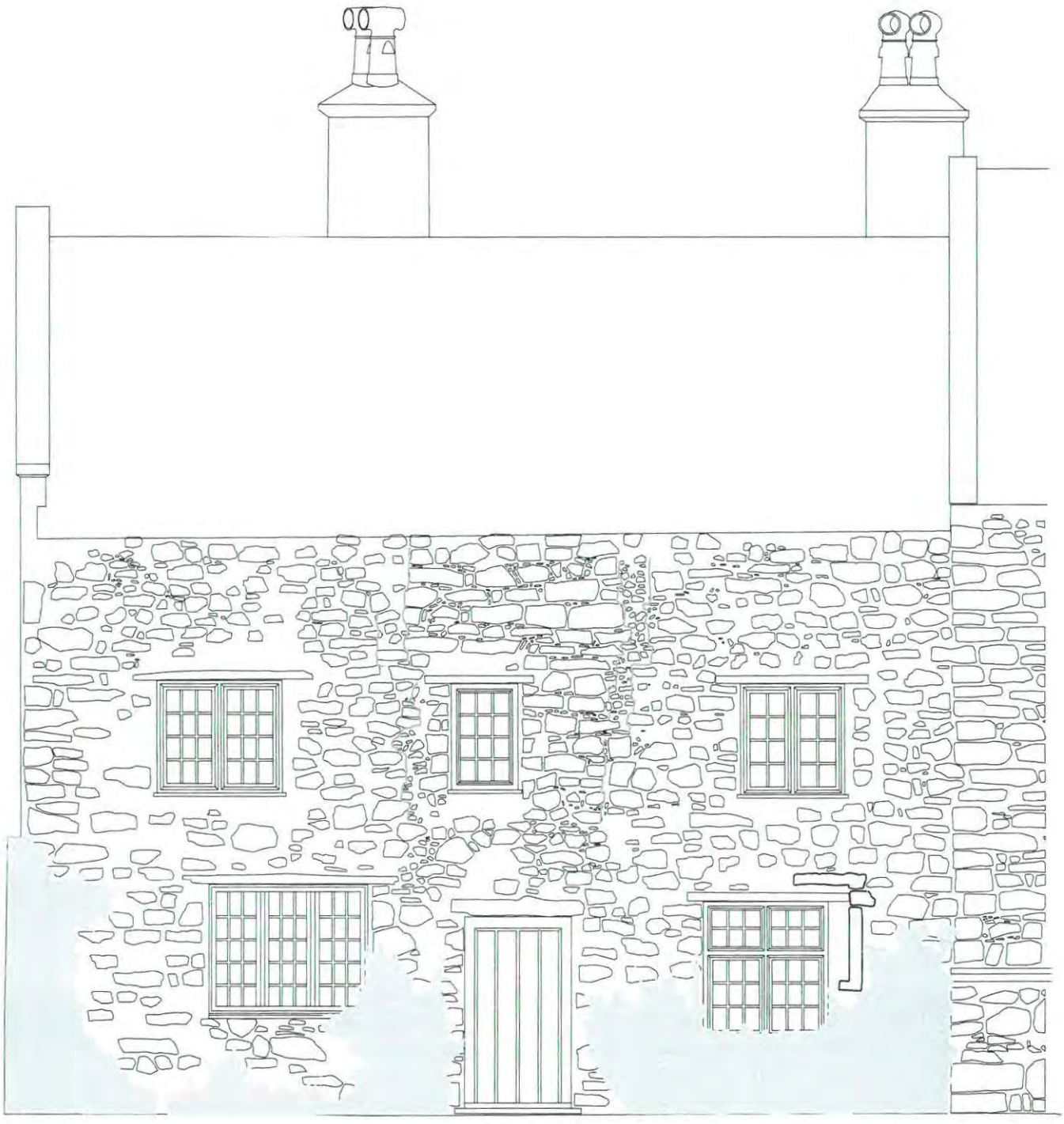
The cellar

A cellar underlies the ground floor sitting room. Access to this space was not possible. The cellar is approached by eight stone steps down from the claustral area, flanked by a wall built from squared gritstone slabs topped by gritsone copings. The door is framed by a monolithic gritstone slab, shaped to a depressed arch, resting on gritstone jambs.

Sequence and modifications to the Prior's house

The south chimney stack appears to be bonded and integral with the west wall of the house (Holme 1925, 24). The north stack, however, is not bonded to the wall, but added to it. During the restoration of 1923, blocked windows were identified behind the stack, clearly indicating that the north stack was

Prior's House, East wall



0 5m

Grey toning shows areas obscured by vegetation

Junction with south transept visible in the masonry

Early window highlighted at right of ground floor window on the right (north) side

Masonry blocking and vertical disjunctions in the first and second floors may indicate the location of a former oriel

not a primary feature. Some remodelling was done in the early eighteenth century when oak panelling was installed in the north downstairs room and deal panelling in the room above. A graffito with the initials HTW and the date 1711 provide a benchmark after which the panels must have been inserted. The style of the panelling is early eighteenth century (RCAHMW 1938, clv). Holme argues that the oak panels can never have been altered or disturbed between their installation and the renovations of 1923 (Holme 1925, 25). Nevertheless, part of the deal framing had been disposed of and windows, upstairs and downstairs, had been modified and converted into cupboards in the interim. Notwithstanding these changes, if Holme is correct, the form of the downstairs sitting room and the position of its south partition wall must date from, at least, the early eighteenth century. The panelling also clads the corner angle above the downstairs sitting-room fireplace; therefore the chimney stack must also have been in place by that date. The Buck brothers illustrate two complete stacks in place against the west wall, in 1742.

It would appear that the earliest identifiable components of the Prior's house are the single large chimney stack, integral with the west wall and the window openings to the north which were blocked by the second stack sometime, perhaps, in the seventeenth century. To this we might add the circumstantial association of narrow rectangular windows, unglazed, with chamfered gritstone jambs which were visible in the west wall at ground and first floor level to the south of the stack. In addition there is part of the frame of a similar window, visible in the east wall immediately to the north of, and truncated by, the sitting room window. For what it's worth, these windows bear comparison with blocked windows in the exterior face of the warming house east wall but not, unfortunately, the thirteenth-century refectory as Holme suggested. The warming house is likely to be of a date closer to 1500.

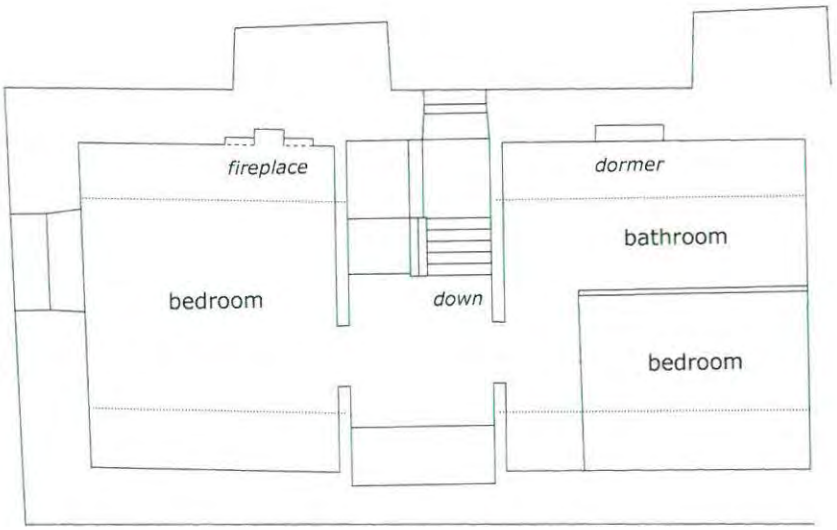
The most striking and characteristic feature of the early house is the stack. The earliest examples of houses with projecting lateral stacks are associated with hall houses. The best and earliest surviving instances in north west Wales are Cochwillan, near Bangor, Plas Berw and Hafoty on the boundary of Llansadwrn and Llanddona in the ancient township of Crymlyn Heilyn. The halls at Cochwillan and Plas Berw were built in the late fifteenth century, perhaps in the 1480s. Hafoty is an earlier construction, dating, perhaps to the middle of the fifteenth century. The impressive chimney and stack was added somewhat later, however, after 1511 when Richard Bulkeley, archdeacon, acquired the premises. It may, or may not, be of significance that the priory held lands in another part of the township of Crymlyn at this time.

The fifteenth-century halls at Cochwillan, Plas Berw and Hafoty were all built originally as single storey structures, in respect of the main room, open to the roof. An upper floor was inserted in the hall at Plas Berw, in the second half of the sixteenth century and a fireplace was inserted into the existing flue at first floor level. At Hafoty a tall lateral chimney stack, extending 8.5m across two storeys of the west, solar, wing of the hall, was built in the early sixteenth century. At 7.2m the stack is connected to the pitch of the solar by a small gabled roof, as at Penmon. At a slightly later date a massive lateral stack was attached to the south wall of the hall to serve a monumental fireplace.

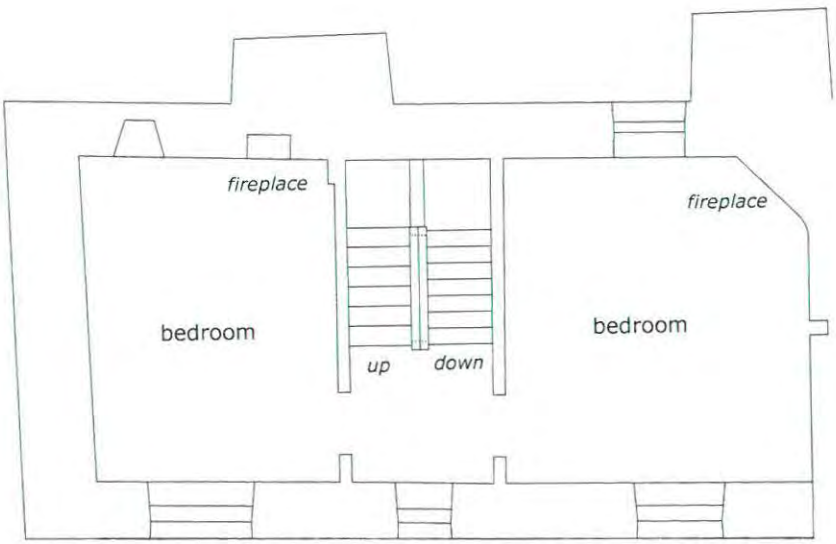
By the 1570s Hafoty was being leased as a cattle farm and a dairy house. This may always have been the economic context for the land around and would have been an important resource. It does not imply a mean house. Nevertheless, Hafoty had begun a process of decline. It is unlikely that the major structural alterations that the chimney stacks imply, and the very direct association with the Bulkeley family that the hall fireplace motto signals, would have been put in place later than 1570. There is a time frame, therefore, of around half a century or so within which the stacks were built, between 1511 and 1570.

The Bulkeley family of Beaumaris had a long standing interest in Penmon. In 1535 the first Sir Richard Bulkeley petitioned Thomas Cromwell on behalf of the prior, John Godfrey. He begged Cromwell's favour to *'a poor religious man, John Godfrey, prior of Prestolme or Penmon, in diocese of Bangor, shut up in his house by Dr. Elys Price and Will. Glyn, the King's commissioners and yours. He was enjoined to show the foundation of his house to you or the said commissioners by Christmas next, with all the writings, which were in my possession, which I now send. For your goodness to the said prior you shall receive by the bearer from him 20 nobles, and at the feast of St. Peter and St. Paul 20 marks more, for which I will be surety, that the prior may have his liberty, and not be troubled by the commissioners. His house is of small living, and cannot dispend in temporalities above £14, and in spiritualties more than £26, by which he supports two canons, a priest, and 12 or 16 persons besides'.* Sir Richard says he has no interest in speaking for him, except that he and his ancestors have been stewards to the house time out of mind and have a yearly fee of 40s. Just over a year later, in February 1537, Sir Richard wrote to Cromwell again, begging the farm of the priory of Penmon, if it was to be suppressed, re-stating that he and his elders had always been stewards of the place.

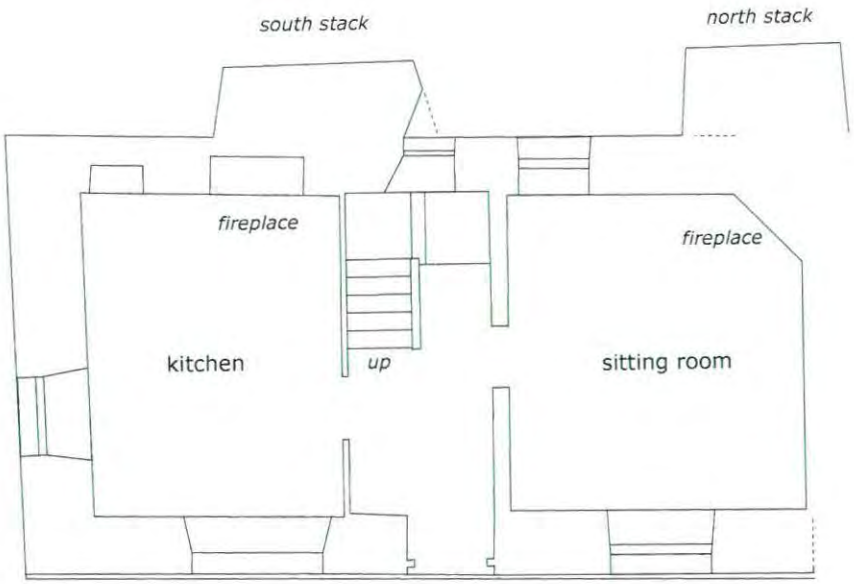
Prior's House plan



second floor



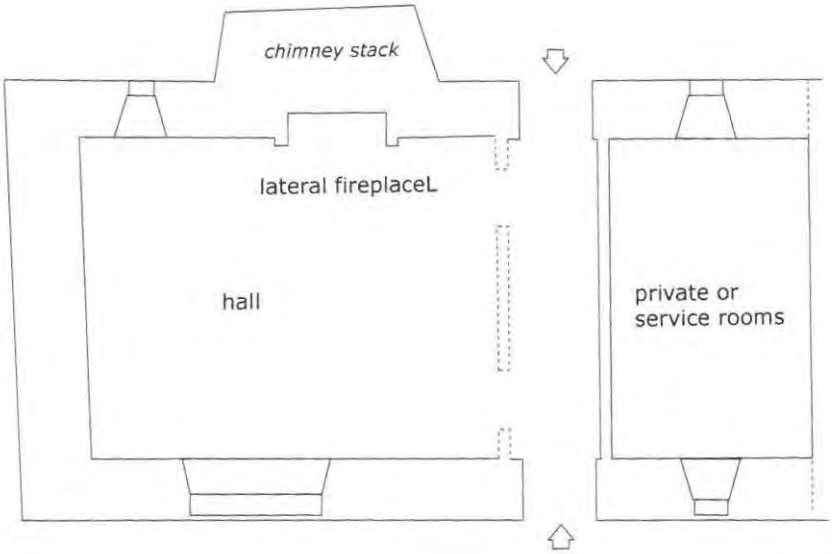
first floor



ground floor

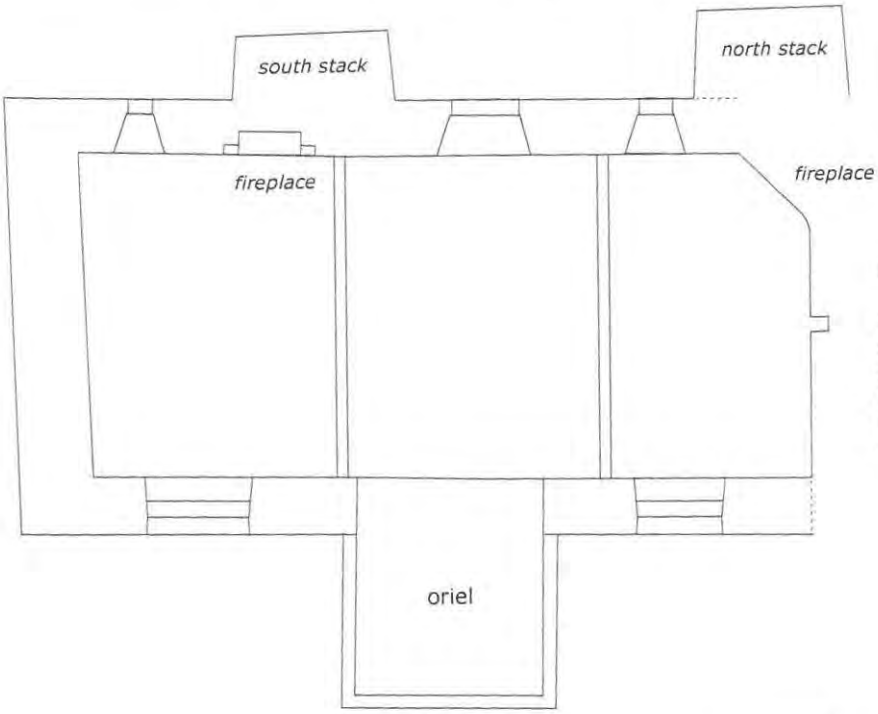
0 5m

Prior's House
hypothetical sequence



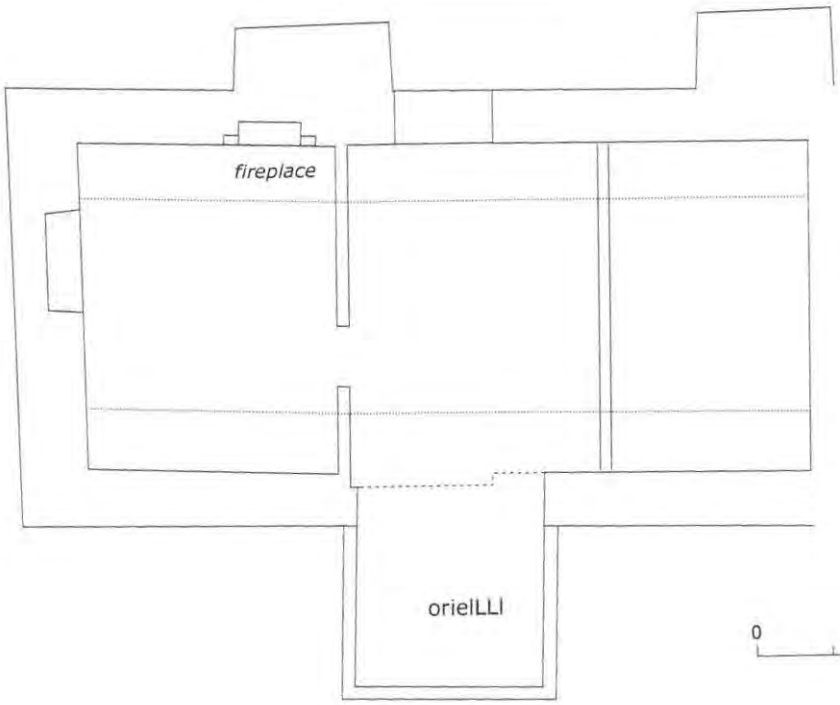
Putative early 16th century hall

ground floor



Late 16th century

Division into three rooms, windows centrally placed
Second chimney stack with
Corner-angled fireplace in northern rooms
Upstairs fireplaces to side of original stack
Oriel room over central door



Late 16th century

second floor

At the suppression, Sir Richard did not get the the lease. The Prior's house, with the island and the rectories of Penmon, Llanddona, and Bodewryd and the chapel of Penrhos Llugwy, went to Richard Starkey of the royal household. The rectories, together with St Catherine's, Llanfaes and Llangwyllog had been part of the spiritualities of the priory. Penmon was later granted to John Dudley, Earl of Warwick and in 1564, on reversion, Elizabeth I granted the site to John Moore. In the following year Sir Richard Bulkeley 2nd acquired the house, conventual buildings and the island of Ynys Seiriol from John Moore.

We know that there were major building works at the Priory in the thirty years, or so, before the suppression. These are represented by work on the chancel and, possibly, in raising the height of the nave and also in the construction of the warming house at the east end of the refectory. This was a period of considerable rebuilding at certain ancient clas churches, for example, at Caergybi and Llaneilian on Anglesey and at Clynnog on the mainland. It is possible that major work was done at the Prior's house at this time, perhaps with the exemplar of the new chimney or chimneys at Hafotty in mind. An alternative context might be the acquisition of the site by Sir Richard Bulkeley in, or after, 1565. The Bulkeley connection will be discussed further, below.

The tall, southern chimney stack has a gable-roofed connection to the main roof, which indicates that this particular manifestation of the house was always a two or two-and-a-half storey structure. The indications of a still earlier building, which we might expect, are confined to neater, tighter coursing, using larger blocks in the lower part of the west wall, south end, and the south wall. This distinction is not apparent on the eastern face. Nevertheless, a house built, with projecting stack, in the early part of the sixteenth century, is likely to have been arranged with a hall as its main room. A speculative indication of how this space may have been organised, based on the available evidence is illustrated.

One would expect two opposed entrances in a major house of this period with a screened passage separating the hall, to the south, from serving rooms or private rooms to the north. The distribution of space would be in the ratio of about 2:1 respectively.

The present door is central to the total interior. Our hypothetical model assumes an original door in the position of the current sitting room window in the west wall, and an opposed door immediately to the north of the present door, opening onto the cloisters.

To the north of the putative screens passage, at ground floor level, there are similar windows, with gritstone jambs, directly opposite each other in the west and east walls. They are comparable to the windows in the west wall, south of the chimney stack and also to the windows in the service rooms at Plas Berw and the sixteenth-century western solar block at Hafoty. These windows at Penmon are, on the east side, truncated by the later sitting-room window, and on the west side, mostly obscured by the later north stack. One jamb, however, survives on the west side and the north jamb and lintel survives on the east side. A further indication of their early status is that the windows on the west and east sides would be truncated by the early eighteenth-century disposition of the first floor if it had been in place earlier. An original higher ceiling, at about 3.25m would be indicated, commensurate with the height of the shoulder on the southern stack.

The tall, narrow rectangular window in the west wall south of the stack has been mentioned. It would contribute to lighting the dias end. The large splayed opening in the east wall, now the main kitchen window, could be original and would have lit the body of the hall. Hafoty has a three-light window in a similar position in the hall, as does Plas Berw, with small splayed windows flanking the fireplace and a wide-splayed, square-headed window with three trefoiled lights directly across from the fireplace.

Sir Richard Bulkeley, 2nd knight, acquired the house and conventual buildings in 1565. Some work may have been initiated at that time. Sir Richard, however, died in 1572 and was succeeded by the 3rd Sir Richard who built Baron Hill in 1618. The detail of this first house at Baron Hill is not known as it was completely rebuilt in the early nineteenth century. However, it was probably Sir Richard Bulkeley, 3rd, that added a Renaissance style house in the late sixteenth century, adjacent and at right angles to, Henblas, the Bulkeley family home in Beaumaris. Changes were also being made to the old hall at Plas Berw in the last quarter of the sixteenth century. Owen Holland added a massive stone stair tower to the junction of the hall and solar block in the 1570s to 1580s. A floor was inserted into the previously open hall and a first floor fireplace was made in the existing stack, above the original. The tower provided accommodation as well as access and a fireplace was inserted at first floor level in the tower. Owen Holland married Elizabeth Bulkeley, daughter of the 2nd Sir Richard Bulkeley, in 1578. Owen's son, Thomas, added a new Renaissance style mansion, at right angles to the old hall, in 1615. This style of architecture as in the new building at Henblas, was a radical departure from the old, in appearance, layout and the use of space. Nevertheless, Thomas Holland, at this time, added a new lateral chimney stack to the

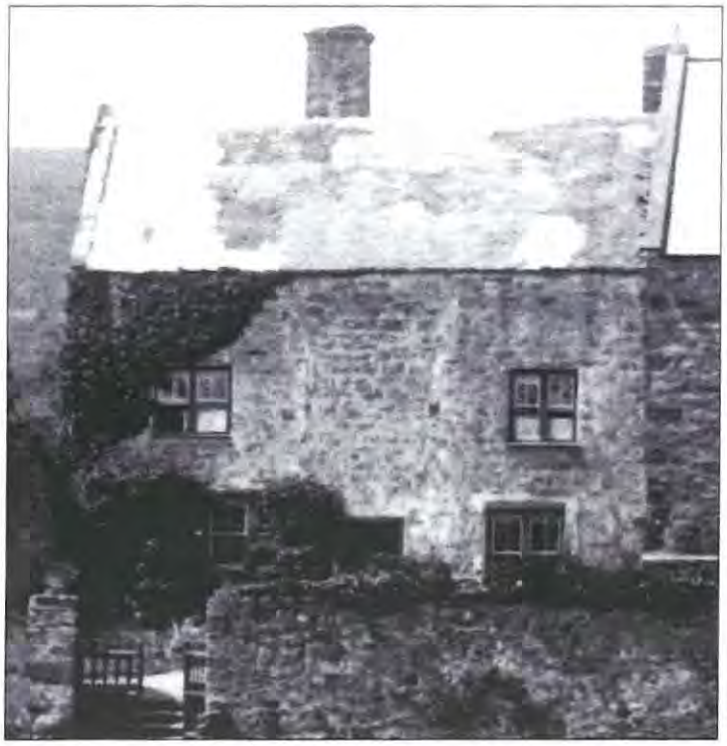
old solar and introduced angled corner fireplaces to the ground and second floors of Owen Holland's tower.

We have seen, from Holme's observations in the 1920s that the north chimney stack at Penmon is later than the southern one. The earliest manifestation of the surviving Prior's house is, perhaps, more appropriate to the early sixteenth century then the period after 1565, when the house came into Bulkeley ownership. Major building works were clearly underway at Penmon around 1600. The dovecote was built before 1606 (BH 871) and modifications to the house, including the addition of a second chimney stack and corner-angled fireplaces in the north rooms may have been put in place about this time.

The placement of the north stack will have required a reorganisation of the window openings and perhaps of the partitions of the rooms too. On the west wall, windows, which lit the north rooms, were blocked by the stack. A new opening was made at first floor level to the south of the stack. This is shown on the Buck's illustration of 1742. A shadow of this upper window (?blocked) is also shown on Colt Hoare's drawing of 1810 but no corresponding window lies beneath it on the ground floor.

The two narrow gritstone windows in the west wall south of the original southern chimney stack may still have been open into the early nineteenth century but this is, perhaps, unlikely. They are illustrated by the Buck brothers and by Colt Hoare, but they were certainly blocked by the end of the century. These two windows do not correspond to the floor and ceiling levels that are in place in the present day. The lower window rises some 300mm above first floor level. On the other hand, if the two gritstone-jambed fireplaces, which stand, or stood, on the southern first and second floors are in situ, then the floor levels will have been in place since, perhaps, the early seventeenth century. The fireplaces themselves are offset to the left-hand (south) edge of the stack. The fireplace on the top floor survives, the one on the first floor does not but its former position is clear from in-fill and discontinuities in the wall face after removal of plaster. Their location suggests that their position is constrained by a contemporary partition in the position of the present first and second floor walls. A large opening in the west wall, to the north of the south stack at first floor level and a dormer above it, lit the central area of the upper floors. These windows referred to, no longer survive. The first floor window was still in use, within a reduced opening, in the nineteenth century. The dormer had gone out of use by 1810 and was blocked, but is visible on the Buck brothers' illustration of 1842. The north jamb and the blocked in-fill were visible when pebbledash was removed from the west wall in 2004. A new dormer, inserted in 1923, replaced it.

Holme postulated an oriel room projecting from the first and second floors above the re-set doorway, now relocated central to the east side of the house (Holme 1925). Holme found evidence for the bases of supporting pillars in front of the house and straight joints in the masonry in the east wall. This feature had been blocked by the nineteenth century.



Prior's house around 1900

The infilling is still visible in the face of the wall. The oriel, if the interpretation were correct, would be consistent with possible renovations around 1600. By the early nineteenth century the north stack may have begun to deteriorate. If it had been completed to its full height in stone, as the Bucks' illustration suggests, then some remedial brick work on the gabled roof of the stack and the reduced shaft above it had been done, partly in decorative brickwork (Colt Hoare 1810). This remained the situation until 1923 when the stack, in dangerous condition, was pulled down to within 1.5m of the ground (Holme 1925, 32).

By 1923 only one window remained open in the west wall. In 1877 the lower of the two ancient gritstone-jambed windows in the west wall, south of the south stack, was broken out to remove the coffin of a tenant who had died in the house. The window was not reassembled with any great accuracy (Holme 1925, 25). However a low cavity, originally obscured by plaster, was visible during the work of 2004, corresponding to the upward projection of the window across the level of the first floor. In the present kitchen, in the south west corner of the room, there is a tall cupboard, slightly splayed, which does not correspond exactly to the position of the window but probably incorporates part of it.

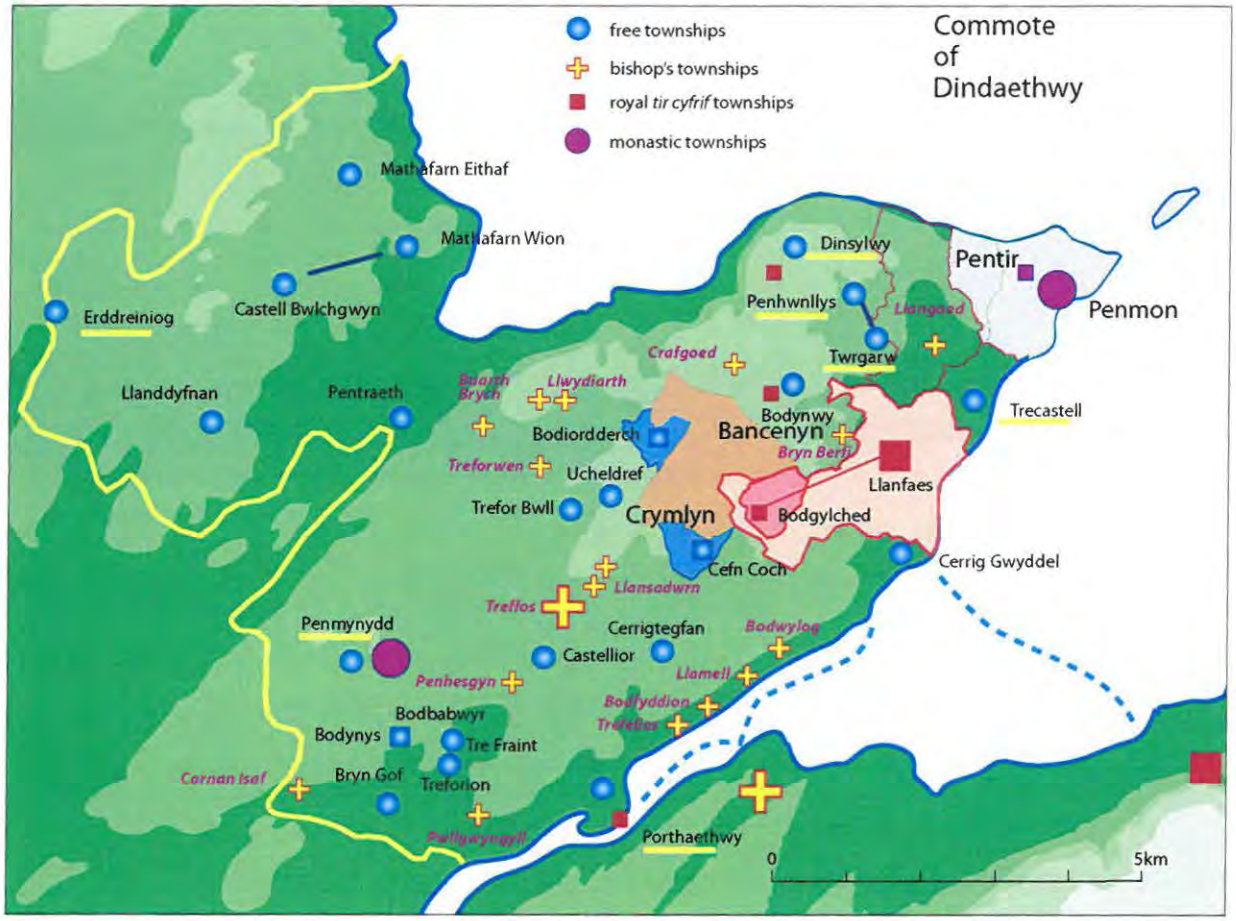
The social geography of Penmon

The society of the Middle Ages was hierarchical and complex but not without an underlying structure. During the earlier Middle Ages the power in the land was with the lords of great estates – extensive territorial lordships within which lay the farms and hamlets of communities linked, for the most part, by ties of kinship. The king, of course, was the pre-eminent lord but certain uchelwyr might come close to rivalling the king in the extent of their landed interests. On Anglesey the large maenolau include Bodafon and Lysdulas, together occupying most of the north-east corner of the island; Conysiog, between the estuary of the Alaw and Llanfaelog; Porthamel, extending from the Menai Straits to the Cefni and, in south-eastern Anglesey, Castellbwlchgwyn and the Mathafarns, north-west of Red Wharf Bay. These lordships (maenolau) were essentially self-contained regional units of administration. A substantial freehold, a small maenol or part of a larger lordship, a sub-set of the 'clan' might form the basis of a donation of land for the creation or support of a church as was possibly the case at Penmon. The freeholding tenants would then constitute the 'clas' community.

By the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, documentary records provide a clearer indication of an increasingly organised royal administration in Gwynedd. Anglesey had always been at the heart of the kingdom and it is here that the pattern is clearest. Following Gruffudd ap Cynan's success in turning back the tide of Norman land-grabbing in North West Wales at the end of the eleventh century, it is probable that Gruffudd's son, Owain, consolidated his father's achievement in introducing far-reaching administrative reforms. The kingdom and the Island of Anglesey, was partitioned into administrative regions, called commotes. Within these commotes the boundaries of individual communities were fixed, for taxation purposes. Previously settlement expanded in times of population growth, through partible inheritance (the division of land between 'heirs' on the death of a father), across the maenol lands. Following the reforms, this process continued but within the boundaries of the tref or township and royal rents and dues would be fixed on the township, however many or however few tenants lived there. There might be around thirty townships in each commote, each, on average, about half the size of a later ecclesiastical parish. There would be several homesteads within each township, either dispersed as smallholdings or nucleated in hamlets. Penmon, in administrative terms, was classed as a township.

As a result of the division and re-division of rights to the same land, through inheritance, those family holdings which shared a common ancestor, at a certain stage removed, came to be called gwelyau (sing. gwely = bed). This term reflects the matrimonial bed from which the progeny sprung. Another term in use, more commonly on the mainland but rare of Anglesey, is the gafael (= holding). There are, however, a number of gafaelion [Lat. gavella] recorded at Penmon, as well as gwelyau.

Many held their land as freeholders but there was also a large proportion of bond tenants in the Anglesey landscape. There were two principal types of bond tenure. The first and least restrictive, was tir gwelyog tenure – where a tenant held his land in a very similar way to a freeholder in that the tenure was inheritable and the family had a stake in the soil, but was, nevertheless, bound to the interests of a great lord, the king or the bishop, for example, and there was no freedom of movement. The second, more restrictive bond tenure is characteristic of the demesne land of a lordship. This tenure is described



as 'tir cyfrif – 'register land'. Several important freeholders had their own bondsmen but the extent of this is difficult to quantify as the documentation available invariably records those aspects which touch on the king's interests and largely ignores those that do not.

One particularly important category of township in the Medieval landscape of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was the maerdrefl. There was a maerdref in each commote which served as a focus for royal administration and the collection of dues and renders throughout the commote. At its heart was the llys where the royal hall, chambers and chapel stood. The complex operated on manorial lines with demesne land farmed by tied estate workers. Beyond the estate centre there would be land in the king's hand which served as a cattle ranch and dairy farm with provision for summer pasturing away from the arable open fields. The maerdrefi in each of the commotes would be run by the king's agents. The royal entourage could only be in one place at a time but when the king was in residence at any of his royal centres, local business would be attended to, audiences would be held and perhaps charters signed. Charters granting and confirming rights to Ynys Lannog and the abadaeth of Penmon were signed at Caernarfon (maerdref of the commote of Is Gwyrfai) in 1221; Rhosyr (maerdref of the commote of Menai) in 1237; Cemaes (maerdref of the commote of Talybolion) in 1238 and at Llanfaes (maerdref of the commote of Dindaethwy) and Bancenyn in 1247.

The hierarchy of settlement, therefore, begins with the commote, the boundary of regional administration. There were six commotes on Anglesey. The one which concerns our present interest is the commote of Dindaethwy in the south-eastern part of the island. The south-western boundary of the commote touches the Menai Straits at Llanfairpwllgwyngyll, extending north to Llanddyfnan and Cors Erddreiniog before turning north-east to reach the sea at Traeth Bychan, north of Benllech.

There are forty-one townships in the commote. A first impression is one of considerable diversity but, on closer examination, there is considerable territorial coherence in the organisation of settlements.

The king's interests are centred on Llanfaes. Here lay the royal maerdrefl and its demesne lands. Tied tenants of the king operated the important ferry connection across the Lavan Sands to the mainland between Aber and Llanfairfechan. The port of Llanfaes was a safe anchorage for trading

ships. There were also enclaves of the king's tir cyfrif tenants along the high plateau behind Llanfaes from Bodgylched through Bodynwy to Dinsilwy; and again, in the south western corner of the commote at Porthaethwy. Where tir cyfrif tenants are found away from the maerdref, one supposes a specialised function. The king's men at Porthaethwy serviced the ferry there. The tir cyfrif communities of Bodgylched, Bodynwy and Din Silwy may have maintained the king's livestock pastures.

The predominant presence in the commote of Dindaethwy, however, was the Bishop of Bangor. The Bishop maintained a manor (or maerdref) at Treffos and took rents and dues from thirteen other townships. The Bishop's influence ran along the Straits between Gallows Point and Porthaethwy, opposite the Cathedral church at Bangor and the Bishop's Porthesgob and Garth ferries controlled those waters.

The northern part of the commote, from the Afon Nodwydd flowing into Red Wharf Bay, was the exclusive preserve of large freehold townships at Pentraeth, Llanddyfnan, Erddreiniog, Castell Bwlchgwyn and Mathafarn Eithaf and Mathafarn Wion. Important freeholds are to be found in the south of the commote too, at Penmynydd, Porthaethwy, Castellior and Tre Fraint. Flanking Penmon to the west are the free townships of Dinsilwy, Penhwnllys and Twrgarw. To the south lies Trecastell, a township which acquired particularly free status through its heirs' association with Edynfed Fychan, a high ranking official in the service of Llywelyn ap Iorwerth. Penhwnllys and Twrgarw also benefited from exceptionally free tenure – the only requirement from the Crown was suit of Court. Penhwyllys and Twrgarw were, by the fourteenth century, two separate townships across two different parishes, Llaniestyn and Llangoed. However, there are good indications that the two townships formed part of one maenol. The Gwely Tudur ap Madog extends across both townships and one of the heirs of the gwely in the fourteenth century, Dafydd ap Rhys, held an interest in both townships.

The monastic or conventual presence in the township is represented by three very different components. At Llanfaes, Llywelyn ap Iorwerth built a friary, at his own expense, for the Franciscans, for the soul of his wife who died that year, in 1237. Llanfaes had developed a mercantile aspect and was growing as a town, an appropriate context for a friary. Later, around 1251, Dominican friars were established in Bangor. In 1284 Edward I granted half of the township of Penmynydd to the Cistercian abbey of Aberconwy although the abbey's interest in this property was as a landlord and receiver of rents and dues rather than having an actual presence in the township.

The history and development of Penmon is different again. The possible origin of the Penmon 'clas' as a grant of all or part of an estate in the early Middle Ages has been discussed. The nature of a clas community, in addition to an ordained priest or priests and a leader of the community, styled as 'abbot', would also accommodate several members who, related by kinship, would have an inheritable interest in the land and its proceeds. There are three terms which describe the land of the clas. The abadaeth describes the rights and landed endowment of the clas church. Abadaeth is used in the charter of 1237, given by Llywelyn ap Iorwerth at Rhosyr, confirming the abadaeth of Penmon in terms of limits and bounds as well as rights. The term abatir 'abbot-land' focuses more specifically on the land itself (Pryce 1993, 186, 214). The term clasdir, describes the land of the claswyr – 'clas-land', the territorial holdings of the community.

An important concept at churches of some status was sanctuary. In Welsh the term is nawdd, 'protection'. Noddfa refers to the area of sanctuary. The Iorwerth Redaction of the Welsh Law Books identifies an enclosure, outside the graveyard, within which a person seeking sanctuary can move freely (Jenkins 1986, 82). The legal term for the enclosure is corflan and it clearly corresponds to the concept of noddfa – a place of sanctuary or protection. The Law Books, further, identify the scale of such an enclosure – 'a legal acre in length, with its end at the churchyard, and surrounding the churchyard' (Jenkins 1986, 82). By the thirteenth century it would seem that long narrow acres, in the proportions of 1:10 were envisaged, with a total area of 1440 sq. yds. The length of a legal acre, therefore, and the width of a theoretical zone of sanctuary, would be 120 yds, although, in practice, by the fourteenth century, groups of quillets, back to back, made up long acres 240 yds in length (Longley, 2001). The Law Books are highly schematised, however, and the same passage glosses the extent of the corflan in these terms:'*whosoever takes sanctuary, it is right for him to go about in the churchyard and the corflan ... while his livestock go with the livestock of the clas and the abbots as far as the farthest point to which they go, while able to return to their cattle-pen*' (Jenkins 1986, ibid). A first-hand account, provided by Gerald of Wales at the close of the twelfth century confirms the general impression:'*Around the churches the cattle graze so peacefully, not only in the churchyards, but outside too, within the fences and ditches marked out and set by bishops to fix the sanctuary limits. The more important churches, hallowed by their greater antiquity, offer sanctuary for as far as the cattle go to*

feed in the morning and can return at evening' (Itin. Kamb. Bk. 1, 18, trans. Lewis Thorpe 1978).

It is possible that the line taken by the eighteenth-century deer park wall reflects a much earlier boundary, that of the monastic noddfa or corflan. The St. Anthony cross stood, until it was moved in the last century, close to that boundary, in a conspicuous and elevated position and close to an ancient upper route from the community of Pentir to the church. The distance from the church to the Deer Park boundary varies from 500m (at Pentir) to 800m (at its northern and southern limits).

In 1374 the 'Priory of Priestholme' was surveyed as to the value of its temporalities. Two hamlets are identified, Pentere (Pentir) and Llane.

In Pentir there were three gafaelion: Gafael Ithel ap Seysel, Gafal Isek (Isaac) and Gafael Gruffydd Foel. These three gafaelion extended over four carucates of arable land, in addition to any meadow or pasture land they may have had access to. A carucate, a measure of plough land, may have been assessed at between 30 to 40 acres on Anglesey, in which case the plough lands of the gafaelion of Pentir extend over about 200 acres.

There were two gafaelion in a place called *Llanne*. It is not certain where this hamlet or location stood. Carr translates the word as Llannau, 'churches' or 'enclosures' (Carr 2005, 13-19). Given the corruption of place and personal names in surveys of this kind, other renderings might be possible, such as Lannog (Ynys Seiriol), Lleiniau (there is a Leiniau Gwynion – white quillets – to the south-west of Pentir) or even Lleiniog, within the ecclesiastical parish of Penmon but beyond the probable boundary of the township. The 1374 survey is better than many, however, and Llannau is, perhaps, to be preferred. The Llannau gafaelion are the Gafael Wion ap Elidir and the Gafael Hwfa ap Philip.

There are also six other gafaelion, one being a half-gwely, and three gwelyau, with no locational designation other than that they lie within the township. These holdings are: the Gafael Arthen; the Gafael Gronw ap Purwyn; the Gafael Madog Hen; the Gafael Wion Goch and the Gafael David ap Madog ap David; the Gwely Ieuan Lace; the Gwely Meilir ap David and the half Gwely Kendelyk (?Cynddelw).

One of the tenants of the Gafael David Goch also held a carucate of land 'in this same place' and in addition to other rents and services, was required to clean the ditches of Bancenyn Mill.

Bond tenants, Ieuan Chwith, the sons of David Gwta and the sons of Gwassanffraid are also recorded. These may be estate workers on the Prior's demesne although the demesne lands are not specifically referred to in the survey. An assessment of the Priory assets was made by the Prior's bailiff in 1535-6 which, following a list of the tenants of Penmon township, identified the rent of bond and free tenants in Bancenyn. It is more probable that the bondsmen of 1374 are tenants in Bancenyn.

There may, very probably, have been an enclave of estate workers close to the conventual buildings. The Prior had several assets at his direct disposal, the pasturing of animals, honey from bees, rabbit skins from the headland and fish from a weir as well as the Priory fishponds.

Fish traps between high and low water

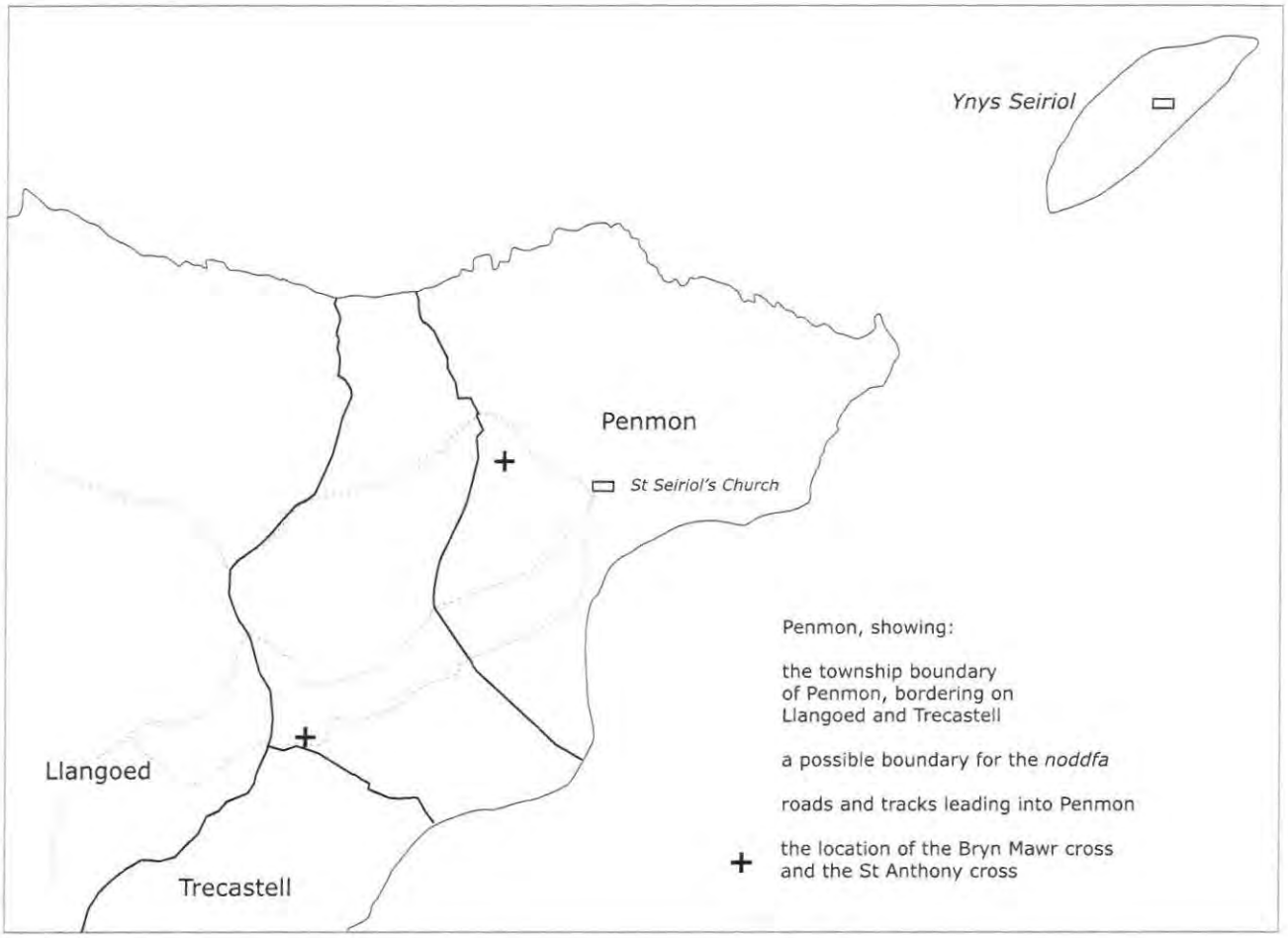
However, there is very little evidence for more intensive settlement within the area around the conventual buildings. The indications are that the principal areas of settlement, the smallholdings of several tenants, lay to the west of the Priory, between the line of the later Deer Park wall (and possible limit of sanctuary) and the township boundary, which corresponds, more or less to the later boundary of the ecclesiastical parish.

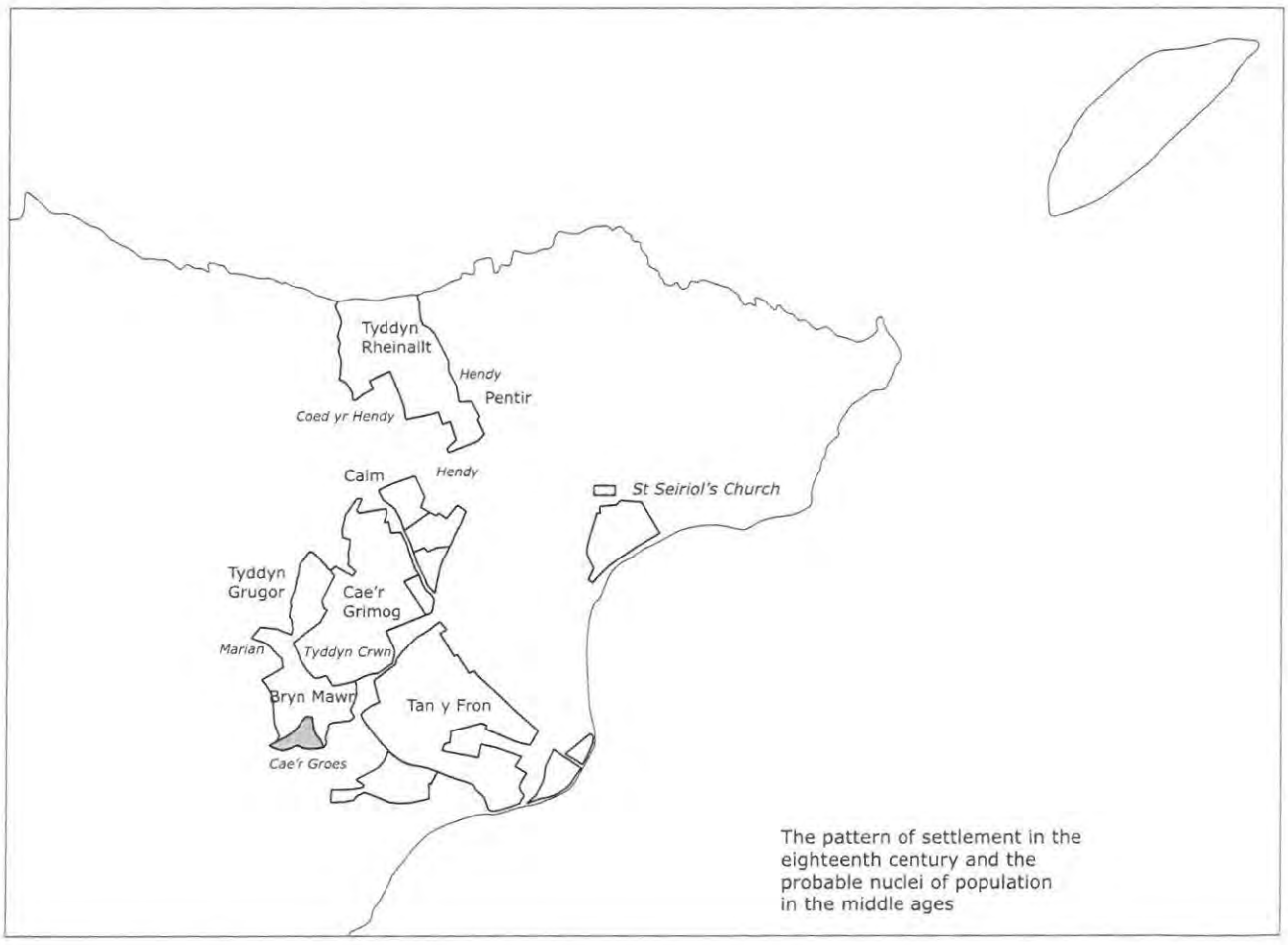
The hamlet of Pentir is clearly identifiable. It is high on the limestone ridge, where the ground slopes towards the north slope of the promontory, flanked on the east by the Deer Park wall and on the west by the deeply scoured valley of the stream which flows through Coed yr Hendy. Properties in Pentir are recorded in 1415 when Gwenllian, daughter of Angharad, daughter of Madog and her son, Hywel, sought the consent of Thomas Trentham the Prior, with regard to a transaction. Several other property transactions were made in Pentir during the sixteenth century. In 1583 Pentir Isaf is described as being between the lands of Hugh ap John ap William and the stone wall of the Penmon hare warren. On that occasion Sir Richard Bulkeley was the beneficiary of the transaction.

The narrow valley which borders Pentir on its west side and which corresponds to the parish and probable township boundary is, almost certainly, Nant Gwion or Ceunant Gwion (Ceunant = constricted valley). In 1710 the 'Llain' or quillet above Nant Gwion is described as bordering on Pentir Park. In 1573 Henry Lewis ap Rhydderch of Tyddyn y Marian Purwyn acquired the parcel called Nant Gwion. The location of Marian Purwyn is uncertain but may be represented by the field name 'Marian' in Bryn Mawr, directly east of Marian Newydd in Llangoed. The two properties of Cae'r Grimog (in Bulkeley hands in the eighteenth century) and Tyddyn Grugor, by then in Llangoed, may have constituted the core of Marian Purwyn and relate back to the Gafael Gronw ap Purwyn of the 1374 survey.

In 1512 the Prior, John Godfrey, granted eight virgates of land to Thomas ap Christopher Glegg for a cash consideration. In 1514 Hugh ap Hywel ap Ednyfed paid 5s. 4d relief to John Godfrey, Prior, in respect of the tenancy of Morwydd, daughter of Ieuan ap Dicws ap Madog in Gwely Madog Hen. Sixteen years later, Hugh ap Hywel and his brother Thomas, paid the same sum of relief for Gwerful ferch Ieuan ap Dicus ap Madog. In 1530 the same

The wooded valley of Nant Gwion and the township boundary, right centre; the deer park wall to the left


Ynys Seiriol
Penmon
St Seiriol's Church
Llangoed
Trecastell
Penmon, showing:
the township boundary of Penmon, bordering on Llangoed and Trecastell
a possible boundary for the noddfa
roads and tracks leading into Penmon
the location of the Bryn Mawr cross and the St Anthony cross


Tyddyn Rheinallt
Hendy
Pentir
Coed yr Hendy
Caim
Hendy
St Seiriol's Church
Tyddyn Grugor
Cae'r Grimog
Marian
Tyddyn Crwn
Bryn Mawr
Tan y Fron
Cae'r Groes
The pattern of settlement in the eighteenth century and the probable nuclei of population in the middle ages

Hugh ap Hywel ap Ednyfed, acting as executor, Thomas ap Christopher Glegg released his claim on an interest in his eight virgates to Llywelyn ap David ap Rees. In 1536 Hugh ap Hywel transferred his share in Gwely Madog Hen to his son David ap Hugh and the heirs of Roland ap David ap Hugh. The share in the property comprised a house with 51 virgates of arable land and appurtenances. This deed identified the location of Gwely Madog Hen as situated in the township of Penmon and Caim. Caim, of course, is a short distance to the south-west of Tyddyn Rheinallt and on the fringe of Pentir.

In 1538 David ap Hugh ap Hywel ap Ednyfed acquired more land in Gwely Madog Hen with a release by Ieuan ap Llywelyn ap Hywel ap David ap Madog, in respect of two houses and three bovates (twelve Welsh acres) including fourteen virgates of arable. Again we are told that Gwely Madog Hen lies within Penmon and Caim.

In 1553 William ap David Guthyn (?Gethin) transferred eight virgates of land between the land of his brother Hugh and the land of David ap Hugh ap Hywel (the beneficiary of the grants and deeds of 1536 and 1538) and David ap Hugh ap David and we are informed that this land touched the sea. The eight virgates transferred by William ap David Gethin, therefore, lay adjacent to Gwely Madog Hen. In 1563 a transfer by Hugh ap David Gethin of a quarter of gwely Madog Hen confirms that his brother William's eight virgates were those previously held by Thomas ap Christopher Clegg and also formed part of Gwely Madog Hen.

We have already noticed that Henry Lewis ap Rhydderch held Tyddyn Marian Purwyn in 1573 and acquired a parcel called Nant Gwion, the narrow valley leading from Caim to the north coast and running through what is now known as Coed yr Hendy. In the following year Hugh ap David Gethin, who transferred his interest in Madog Hen to Roland ap David Vaughan in 1563, received back half of Gwely Madog Hen from Roland's son William. In the same year (1574) this part of the property was transferred on to Henry Lewis ap Rhydderch who had very recently acquired Nant Gwion. From the evidence of the above transfers it is possible to suggest that the gafael of Madog Hen, recorded in the 1374 valuation, is to be located (as Gwely Madog Hen) from Caim northwards, alongside Nant Gwion and towards the northern coastline. The designation 'Gwely Madog Hen' is lost in later transfers and referred to subsequently as Cae Hen. By the 1840s the property 'Hendy' in this area, including Coed yr Hendy, may represent a remaining link with the ancient gafael.

The earliest records of transfers for Penmon which have survived involve the consent of the Prior or, in the case of payments of relief, for taking up a tenancy, the payments are made to the Prior. For example, in 1515 and 1531, Hugh ap Hywel ap Ednyfed, with an interest in Gwely Madog Hen, paid relief to Prior John Godfrey in respect of the daughters of Ieuan ap Dicus ap Madog. The priory was suppressed in 1537 and in 1565 Sir Richard Bulkeley acquired the Prior's house and conventual buildings and Ynys Seiriol. Already by 1567, Hugh ap David ap Hugh ap Hywel was paying relief to Sir Richard's deputy steward, Thomas Evans, for his Penmon lands. The Bulkeley family were actively involved in land transactions during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and by the eighteenth century held most of the properties in Penmon township. Notwithstanding the imposition of an extensive deer park in the eighteenth century across a considerable area of the Penmon headland, and its predecessor, the hare warren, it is very likely that the pattern of settlement mapped in the 1770s and, less clearly traceable through deeds and transfers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, genuinely represents the areas of Medieval settlement. The core areas, bearing their modern names, are Pentir, Caim, Penmon village and Bryn Mawr and the limits of settlement are bounded by the Deer Park or putative noddfa on the east and the parish or township boundary on the west. The main routes and points of access to the church are less likely to have been the present coastal road and are more likely to be represented by the narrower winding lanes running east from Llangoed and from Llanddona. The lower of two Llangoed routes skirts the base of the limestone escarpment and may have been sign-posted by the free standing cross, recorded by Edward Lhuyd, on a spur above the lane at Cae'r Groes, Bryn Mawr. This cross stood close to the junction of the Medieval townships of Penmon, Llangoed and Trecastell. The upper road from Llanddona passes through Caim, at the head of Nant Gwion/Coed yr Hendy, entering the Deer Park at Tyddyn Rheinallt. Here the track across the Deer Park passes close to the site of the free-standing St. Anthony cross.

The Demesne

It is argued that the settlements of the tenants of the township, for the most part, occupied tenements in the area of Pentir, Caim and Bryn Mawr. The demesne was also exploited. The area within the later Deer Park walls extended over 400 of the 700 acres of the township. Components of the demesne, recorded in 1534 by Henry VIII's surveyors, include Maes y Neuadd (Maes Ynyeth), a fish trap (gurgitum), the pasture or pannage of one wood, a parcel of land called Maes y Borth, a parcel called Y Ddol (Ytholl),

a meadow, and other lands and assets outside the township. Y Ddol is likely to be to the east of the church. Two pieces of land called Dol Deer Park are recorded in the 1840s tithe schedule for Penmon. The accompanying map, however, is devoid of detail within the Park. Pentir Park, Dinmor Park, Trwyn Du Park and 'Deer' Park are also accounted for on the schedule, leaving the fields south east of the church as the likely contender. Maes y Borth (Harbour field) is probably directly south of the church, above the bay of Porth Penmon. The fish trap (Lat. gurgitum; W. gorad) lies just south west of Penmon Point, immediately adjacent to the modern lifeboat station slipway. There are two traps side by side with just a possibility of a third trap a short distance to the south, near the old landing stage of the Flagstaff quarry. The prior also had ploughland, cattle, sheep and the pelts of rabbits and honey from bees.

The priory had land outside the township. In 1221 the township of Bancenyn was granted to 'the canons of Ynys Lannog' by Llywelyn ap Iorwerth. In 1247 two charters, of Llywelyn ap Gruffydd and Owain ap Gruffydd, respectively, confirm the grant made by LLywelyn ap Iorwerth in 1221 and a second in 1237 when the 'abadaeth of Penmon' was confirmed to the canons. The 1247 confirmations make it clear that both Bancenyn and the township of Crymlyn had been granted to the priory.

Crymlyn is a township of around 700 acres, comparable in size to Penmon. In 1352, two hamlets are accounted for in the township, Bodarthar (Bodiordderch) and Cefn Coch (where the Prince's mill lay). In the royal survey of 1352 only those interests particular to the Crown would be accounted for and would not include monastic land. The hamlets of Bodarthar (in Crymlyn Heilyn) and Cefn Coch together account for about 150 acres of the total. The remainder of the township (Crymlyn Wastrodion), totalling, perhaps, 550 acres was in the hands of the priory. Crymlyn lies 2km east of the maerdref of Llanfaes and 4.5km south-west of Penmon on the high wet ground above Coed Cadw on the boundary of the parishes of Llanddona and Llanfaes. The tir cyfrif hamlets of Bodgylched and Bodynwy lie nearby. Crymlyn Wastrodion (Crymlyn of the Grooms) suggests a royal association and must, at one time have been in the hands of the prince for it to have been the subject of a grant.

Bancenyn is not easily identifiable but there are clues to its location. Crymlyn and Bancenyn are frequently listed together in transfers and litigation. In 1552 Hafod Hyrgwn is described as being in the township of Bancenyn ('a possession of the late priory of Penmon'). The context is alleged encroachment by Richard and John Bunbury and the driving out of twenty head of cattle, In their defence the Bunburys' claimed to hold a conventual lease, issued by John Godfrey, late abbot, in 1533, in respect of two tenements on the east side of the village of Crymlyn. One of these tenements was called Crymlyn, itself, the other Havod Hyrgwn. Hir-cwm could describe the long steep defile of the Cadnant at Cwm Cremlyn, which would accord with the locational description and place a part of Bancenyn adjacent to Crymlyn, between Bodgylched and Bodynwy. There was a mill in Bancenyn in Priory hands, variously spelled and rendered by Carr (2005, 1319) as Gorthyroch. Carr associates the name with the lordderch element of Bodiordderch (otherwise Bodarthar, now Hafoty) of the hamlet of that name in Crymlyn Heilyn. In 1352, however, the free tenants of Bodarthar milled at Cefn Coch. If the Castell Issay of a 1535 survey of the rents and tenants of the Priory corresponds in any way to the property Bryn Castell, immediately to the north of Bodiortherch/Hafoty, then it is possible that Bancenyn flanked the north-eastern boundary of Crymlyn through the parishes of Llanddona, Llaniestin and Llanfaes.

The Priory also had a small amount of land in Llanfaes, including a tenement called Buarth Seiriol. A buarth is a cattle yard or fold. There is no doubt that the pasturing of cattle and dairying were important activities in Crymlyn and this may be the case across all the wet uplands in this area. As a specialist component of the agricultural regime this would be an important adjunct to the royal maerdref at Llanfaes and could explain the prince's direct interest in the townships of Bodgylched and Bodynwy. For example: in 1577 Sir Richard Bulkeley leased a property in Crafgoed to Richard Lewis, supplying him with 34 cattle at the same time. In 1578 Sir Richard leased out Hafoty in Llanddona/ Llansadwrn, described as a dairy house. Twenty four cattle and a bull were supplied and the terms of the lease required the tenant, Owen ap Llywelyn, to supply Baron Hill with good, fresh and sweet butter, at 3s. 4d a gallon, to the measure of seven wine quarts and a pint to each gallon.

Bibliography of books, articles and documents consulted

Publications

Avent, R. 1989, *Criccieth Castle, Penarth Fawr Medieval Hall house and St. Cybi's Well*, Cadw

Bartrum, P.C. (ed.) 1966. *Early Welsh Genealogical Tracts*, Cardiff.

Bartrum, P.C. 1993. *A Welsh Classical Dictionary*, NLW Aberystwyth

Butler, L. A. S., 1979 'The monastic city in Wales: Myth or Reality?', *Bull Board Celtic Studies*, 28, 458-67.

Carr, A D, 1972. 'The extent of Anglesey 1352', *Transactions of the Anglesey Antiquarian Society*, 1971-2, 150-72.

Carr, A D, 2005. The Penmon Valor, *Anglesey Antiquarian Society*: Llangefni.

Carr, A D, 1986. The Priory of Penmon, *Journal of Welsh Ecclesiastical History*, 18-30

Davies, W. 1978. *An Early Welsh microcosm: studies in the Llandaff Charters*, London: Royal Historical Society.

Davies, W. 1979. *The Llandaff Charters*, Aberystwyth.

Bott, A and Dunn, M. 2005, *The Priory and Parish Church of St Mary, Beddgelert*

Edwards, N, 1999, Viking-influenced sculpture in north Wales, *Church Archaeology* 3, 5-16.

Evans, D. Simon 1990, *A Medieval Prince of Wales: The Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan*, Llannerch

Fisher, J., 1917 Tours in Wales (1804-1813) by Richard Fenton, Cambrian Archaeological Association, Supplemental volume for 1917: London.

HE: *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum, in Bede: Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (ed. and trans.) .B. Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors, Oxford, 1969.

Holme, G, 1925, Penmon Priory, *Transactions of the Anglesey Antiquarian Society*

Hughes H 1901 Ynys Seiriol Archaeologia Cambrensis , sixth series vol I pt II, 85-108.

Itin. Kambr: Dimock, J.F. (ed.) 1868. *Giraldi Cambrensis Itinerarium Kambriae et Descriptio Kambriae*, in (eds J.S. Brewer, J.F. Dimock and G.F. Warner) Giraldi Cambrensis Opera, 8 vols., Rolls Series, 1861

Jenkins D. 1986, *The Law of Hywel Dda*, Llandysul

Jones, F., 1954 *The Holy Wells of Wales*, University of Wales Press: Cardiff.

Jones H L 1849 *Mona Medieva XII-XIV Penmon Priory*, Archaeologia Cambrensis, 44-60, 128-34, 198-204

Jones Pierce, T. 1972. *Medieval Welsh Society, Selected Essays*, J Beverley Smith (ed.), Cardiff: University of Wales Press

Jones Pierce, T. 1963 'Bardsey – a study in monastic origins' in J. Beverley Smith (ed) *Medieval Welsh Society*, 1972, University of Wales Press: Cardiff, 391-407.

Lewis E. A. and Conway Davies, J. (eds), 1954 , Records of the Court of Augmentations relating to Wales and Monmouthshire, Cardiff, University of Wales Press,

Lewis, S., 1833 *A Topographical Dictionary of Wales*, 2 vols, S Lewis and Co: London.

Letters and Papers Hen. VIII. IX (1535); XII, 1537

Lloyd, J E 1911. A History of Wales, London

Llwyd, A., 1833 *A History of the Island of Mona or Anglesey*, Ruthin.

Morris, R., 1989 *Churches in the Landscape*, Dent: London.

Nash-Williams, V. E., 1950 *The Early Christian Monuments of Wales*, University of Wales Press: Cardiff.

Pennant, T. (1773--6). Tours in Wales. ed. J. Rhys (3 vols, 1883).

Pryce, H., 1993 *Native Law and the Church in Medieval Wales*, Clarendon Press: Oxford.

Pryce, H, 2005, *The Acts of the Welsh Rulers* 1120-1283, University of Wales Press: Cardiff.

Rec. Caern: Registrum Vulgariter Nuncupatum *'The Record of Caernarvon'*, Ellis H. (ed) 1838, London

Record Commission 1802. Taxatio ecclesiastica Angliae et Walliae auctoritate P. Nicolai circa A.D. 1291, London.

Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales (1937) *An Inventory of Ancient Monuments in Anglesey*. London: HMSO.

Seebohm, Frederic, 1895. *The Tribal System in Wales*, London

Taylor, H.M. and Taylor, J. 1965-1978. *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, Cambridge

Thorpe, L. (trans.) 1978. Gerald of Wales: *The Journey through Wales and the Description of Wales*, Harmondsworth.

Thurlby, M. 2006. *Romanesque Architecture and Sculpture in Wales*. Logaston Press, Woonton Almeley

Valor Ecclesiasticus Temp. Henry viii, Auctoritate Regia Institutis, vol vi, 1821, House of Commons, London

Valuation of Norwich: Lunt, W.E. (ed) 1926. *The Valuation of Norwich*, Oxford.

Documents consulted

University Wales Bangor Archives:

Baron Hill MSs 4959-60, Estate Surveys made in 1776 by J Foulkes
Bangor MS F.34081 OS 2 inch scale manuscript map c.1820

Several transactions in Beaumaris, Penmon, Llangoed, Llanfaes and Llanddona between1415 and 1743
References and dates to properties in Penmon named in the documents

BH822 1415 Pentir, Bryn Bugeilydd
BH823 1475 Penmon
BH824 1530 to 1531 8 virgages of land in t'ship Penmon
BH825 1536 Gwely Madoc Hen in Penmon, a house and 51 virgates of arable land
BH826 1546 Penmon
BH827 1553 to 1554 lying between the lands of Hugh ap Dd Guthyn, David ap Hugh ap Hoell, David ap Hugh ap David and touching the sea
BH828 1558 Pentir Ucha and Pentir Isa
BH829 1561 tenement of Pentir
BH830 1563 to 1564 fourth part of Gwely Hen
BH831 1564 site of the Priory of St. Seiriol alias Penmaen
BH832 1565 to 1566 House and site of late Priory of St. Seiriol al. Penmaen / an island and other lands belonging to the Priory
BH833 1570 to 1571 House and site of late Priory of St. Seiriol
BH833 1570 to 1571 Tyddyn of Marian Purwyn in Penmon
BH834 845 1571 y Ty Gwyn wrth Bryn Mawr, Cae'r Sgubor, Cae'r Mynydd, Cae, Tan yr Odyn, Cae Eithin and Cae ym mron y Cwn in Llangoed
BH836 1573 Keeper of the Leet and View of Frankpledge in the lands lately belonging to the dissolved Priory of Penmon
BH837 1573 Tyddyn y Marian Purwyn, Nant Gwion, y Vach
BH840 1574 Hanner Gwely Madoc in Penmon
BH841 1574 Hanner Gwely Madog Hen
BH842 1576 Cae Hen in Penmon
BH843 1579 Cae Glas in Penmon, garden between Penmon Wood and Cae'r Gynffon. Cae Cerrig, Llain Sian Owen, Gardd Meredydd and Murddyn Meredydd
BH844 1579 Cae'r Gynffon, close to Penmon wood
BH845 1579 The Orchard, Cae Hen, Caer Newydd ymhen y llyn, Cae Gwyman, Cae'r Olchfa
BH846 1581 12 virgates within the Marle Field in Maes Perfedd
BH847 1582 Yr Allt o fewn Cae'r Fron
BH848 1582 to 1583 Pentir Ucha
BH849 1583 Pentir Isaf, Penmon hare warren, Sychnant, Nant y Don, Dryll y Pwll, Yr Ardd yn y Llan, Maes Iddoc, Pont Dribech
BH850 1583 Cae Erw Skawen, Cae Marl, Talarau
BH851 1584 Tyddyn y Ty Hen, 1 close in tenancy of Rynolde y Gwydd, Dryll y Bryn Ger y Dolydd, Erw'r Mor, Y Prysse, Llan uwch ben y Gored, Dryll Dan Goed, Crypp y Wylfa, Erw Gefryn, Helyglwyn in Llangoed and Penmon
BH852 1584 Cae Erw Skawen, Cae Marl, Y Talarau
BH854 1586 Neuadd dre, Bryn Crach
BH857 1586 to 1587 Pont y Fydde, Y fron uwch ben Nith y Gigfran, Y fron uwch ben y Gored, Dryll dan y Tai (hare warren)
BH858 859 1587 Dryll y Mynydd Nant y Kawr, 8 virgates.
BH860 1588 Maes Perfedd
BH863 1589 Marian Purwyn
BH865 1596 to 1597 Y Llwyn ymhen y Coed in Penmon
BH866 1597 to 1598 Y Dryll Bach ar Ben y Fron
BH867 1602 y Marl (or Glyndwr) and Cae Carreg y Llwynog
BH868 1603 Y Dryll Bach ar ben y Vron (Y Dryll y Vach)
BH871 1606 3 messuages, one mill, one dove house
BH872 1608 Bryn y Geirchiog and Cae'r Pwll Tynaf. Cae'r Marl alias Glyndwr, Gored Harry
BH873 875 1697 ?? Rectory of Penmon and appurtenances
BH876 878 Fedw Fawr (millstones)
BH880 1618 land and buildings, possessions of the Priory of St. Seiriol
BH881 1618 to 1619 Priory of Penmon, rectories of Pemon and Llanddona, Chapelry of Penrhos
BH882 1619 Gwely Madog Hen
BH883 1619 to 1620 messuages in Penmon
BH886 1629 Cae Hen, Cae Newydd ymhen y Llyn, Llwyn yng nghae'r Gwenan, Cae Bach, Llwyn yr Olchfa, Cae'r Marian Purwyn, Cae'r Ysgawen, Cae yng nglan y Mor
BH888 894 1630 to 1631 Cae Ffynon Lwydan, Gallt Ffynnon Lwydan, Dryll yr Onnen Gam
BH895 1636 land in Pentir
BH896 1640 Llangoed Mill, Buartha, Cae Felin Newydd, mill pool. Fields in Llanfaes called Cae Maes Alys.
BH897 1642 certain parcels

BH898 1641 to 1642 Nant Mawr, Y Ty Gwyn wrth y Bryn Mawr
BH899 BH900 1641 to 1642 Nant Mawr upon Ty Gwyn
BH901 BH902 1642 to 1643 Erw'r Bolion, Cae Hen, Tyddyn yr Onnen Gam in Llangoed and Penmon
BH903 1646 Erw'r Bolion, Cae Hen, Tyddyn yr Onnen Gam in Llangoed and Penmon
BH904 1646 Tyddyn Rheinallt (Sling), Erw'r Bolion, Cae Hen
BH905 to 913 1647 to1648 Pulkyn near Ty Gwyn, Cae Ysgubor
BH917 1661 2 messuages in Lleiniog
BH920 'meares' and mearstones
BH922 1683 to 1684 Ty yn y Marian, Cae Tan y Graig, Cae Bryn y Ceirchiog (Llangoed and Penmon)
BH942 1710 Y Llain uwch ben Nant Gwyon bordering on Pentir Park
BH944 to 946 1711 rectory of Penmon
BH947 1715 Cae Tan y Graig and Cae Bryn y Geirchiog.
BH948 to 950 1718 Erw'r Bolion, Cae Hen, Llain Ceunant Gwion, Cae Perth y Gog, Sling (Tyddyn Rheinallt)
BH951 1723 Llain in Cae Perth y Gog, part of Cae'r Maes
BH952 1743 piscary of Penmon, called 'oyster dredging'

Maps and charts
Lewis Morris 1720s, Manuscript Surveys of Conwy Bay and the Menai Straits (Anglesey Record Office)
OS 1:2500 maps 1889

National Archives:
SC HenVIII 4705
SC HenVIII 4706
E 367/1999

British Library
Stowe MS 1023, Vol1 Anglesey, 96-99
The Builder (London) November,1855, 524

Anglesey Record Office, Llangefni.
Land Tax Assessments:
Penmon (WQT/68)
Llanddona (WQT/21)
Llangoed (WQT/52)
Tithe Maps and schedules:
Penmon,
Llangoed
Llanfihangel Din Silwy

National Library of Wales Manuscripts
Peniarth (Fryars) Collections
DE18 1706/7, Feb. 15
DE13-14 1677, Aug. 23-4 1

Drawing Volume 9, part 1 nos 40, 41 (Colt Hoare, Penmon, 1810)
Drawing Volume 69, acc.PB1041 (Evans, Penmon 1831)

Lambeth Palace Archives
04612 Architects plan 1850s
04612a, b Circulars and letterhead

National Monuments Record, Wales, Aberystwyth
NA/GEN/2000/025e
Several drawings of refectory building made in advance of conservation work March 1926