

Historical Research & Analysis at

Market Hall, Stanley Street, Holyhead

NGR SH 24630 82676



Report Number: CR47-2013



C.R Archaeology

Compiled by C. Rees & M. Jones

On Behalf of Anglesey County Council

Acknowledgements

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Results of Building Recording & Analysis at Market Hall, Stanley Street, Holyhead

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Summary

When the Market Hall was built in 1855 it was the first public building erected in Holyhead. It was commissioned by the Hon. W. O. Stanley, designed by architect Mr. G. Edwards and built by Mr. J. Thomas. The Market Hall performed a number of roles and in addition to its function as a covered area for traders it also housed an assembly room, the Corn Exchange and a library/reading room for the Holyhead Mechanics Institute. The Holyhead Water Company operated from the Market Hall and the 1st Anglesey Artillery Volunteers were recorded as having their depot at the building. The County Court sessions were held at the Market Hall every two months.

The Market Hall is of architectural significance as it is an exceptionally complete example of an open Market Hall. It is one of the earliest structures in Wales to have incorporated fireplaces in the design in order to enhance the comfort of the traders. Given the destruction or conversion of a great many Victorian market halls the survival of this example at Holyhead with its open hall is of significance in itself. The stone carving, in particular that utilised in the façade, is of a high quality and the building is of a high aesthetic quality.

The Market Hall served as a focal point within the community for a hundred and fifty years and as such is deeply important to the population of Holyhead. The continued closure of this key building has a detrimental effect on the town and the moral of the town. The regeneration of the venue is likely to have a positive impact and provide a focal point for the continued promotion of the heritage of Holyhead.

The Market Hall is currently listed at Grade II but in light of the research undertaken during this assessment it would seem appropriate that the current grade be re-examined to investigate the possibility that the Market Hall be listed at Grade II.*

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Appendix A. Holyhead Market Hall Listed Building Description

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1.0 Introduction

C.R Archaeology have been instructed by Anglesey County Council to conduct historic research and analysis on the above property. This work will compliment and expand upon existing reports which have comprehensively recorded the building in its current state. The building is empty but is believed to be structurally sound.

The Market Hall is situated in an urban setting and is located on Stanley Street (SH 24630 82676) in the centre of Holyhead, Anglesey (figure 1). When the hall was built in 1855 it was the first public building erected in Holyhead. It was commissioned by the Hon. W. O. Stanley, designed by architect Mr. G. Edwards and built by Mr. J. Thomas. The Market Hall performed a number of roles and in addition to its function as a covered area for traders it also housed an assembly room, the Corn Exchange and a library/reading room for the Holyhead Mechanics Institute. The Holyhead Water Company operated from the Market Hall and the 1st Anglesey Artillery Volunteers were recorded as having their depot at the building. The County Court sessions were held at the Market Hall every two months.

The building is Grade II listed (Record Number 5763 See Appendix A) and is located within the towns designated Conservation Area (www.holyheadforward). The extent of the Conservation Area is shown in figure 2.

The property is recorded on the RCAHMW database and The Royal Commission has assigned the NPRN Number 23139. The description listed is as follows “*Dated 1855. Built of local green shaley rubble with buff sandstone dressings and slate roofs. Distinctive mullion and transom windows. Rounded apex to central gable; ogee headed flanking gables. 3-window central bay with clock. Tripartite main entrance with semicircular arches with original wrought iron gates. Similar doorways and cross-frame windows to outer bays*”.

An Options Appraisal and Feasibility Study (Purcell, Miller Tritton 2011) which included a full drawn record, detailed building description with photographic survey and a condition survey was conducted in 2011 and this work will not be duplicated here. Additional photographs of the building exterior were taken with scales.

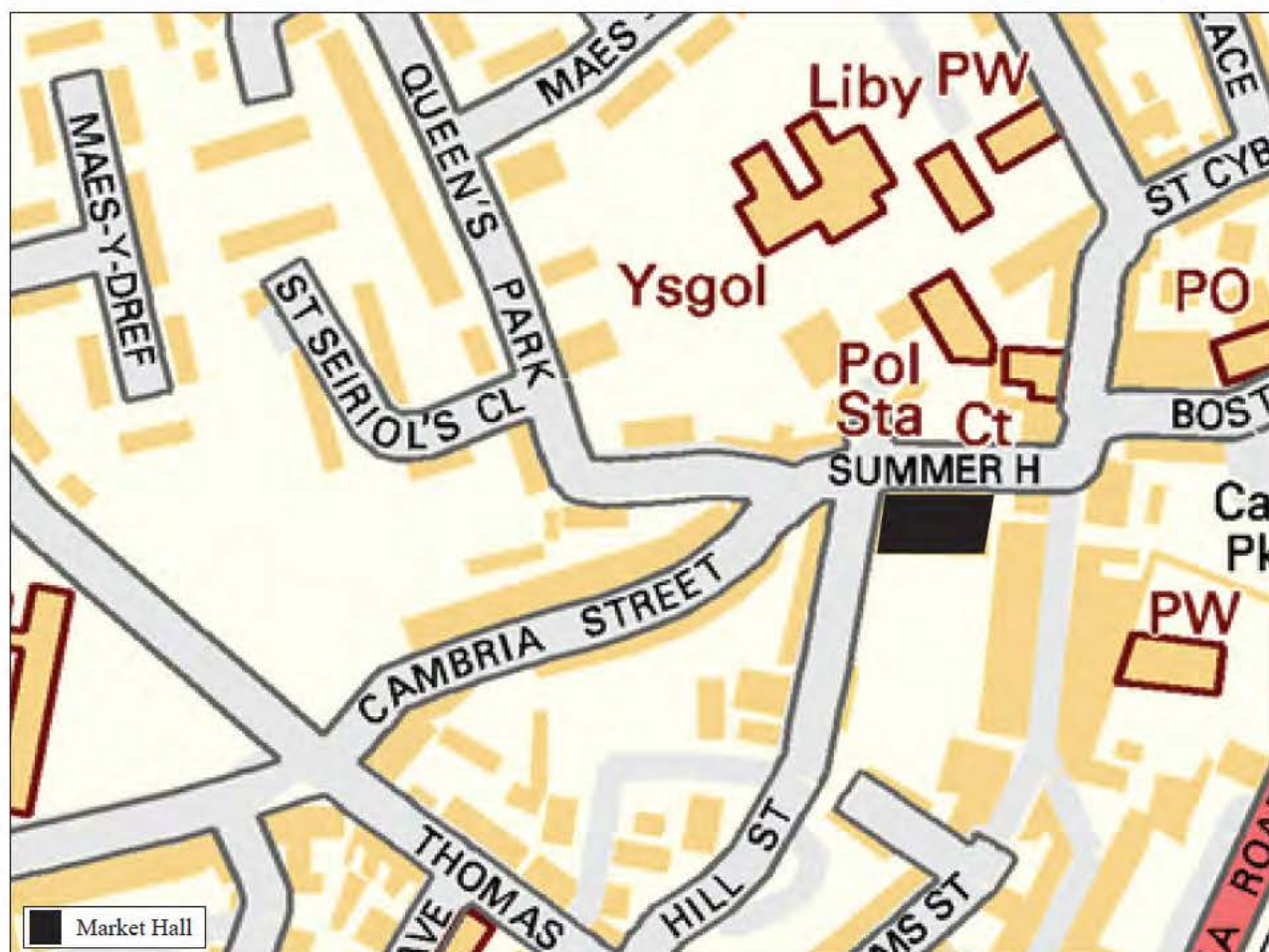
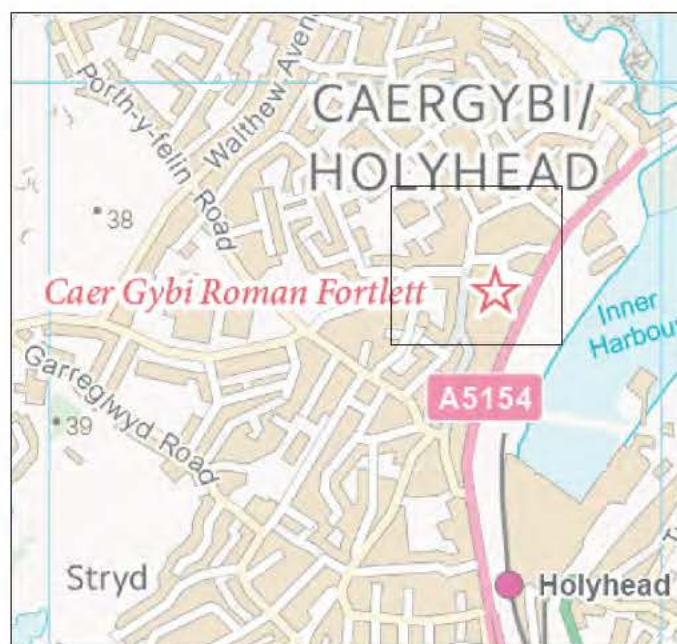
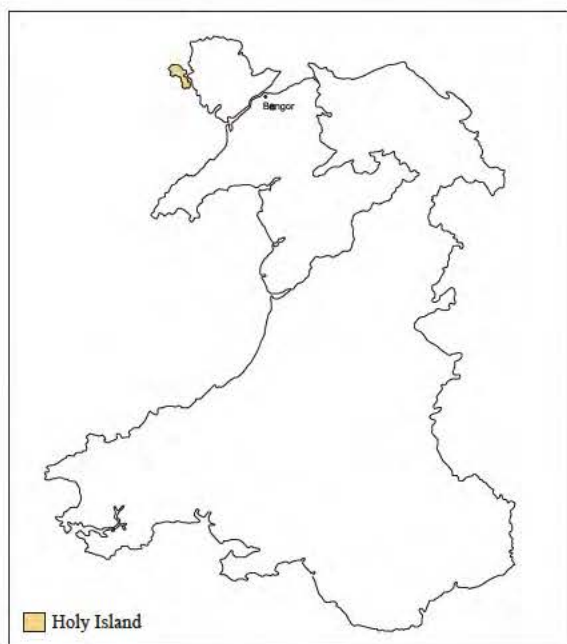


Figure 1. Market Hall Location Map
 (Source: OS Open Data Mapping Contains Ordnance Survey data
 © Crown copyright and database right 2013)

Atodiad XIV

Cynllun yn dangos terfyn presennol yr
ardal gadwraeth, lleoliad y prif adeiladau
a cyfeiriad golygfeydd

Appendix XIV

Existing conservation area boundary,
location of principle buildings
and direction of views plan

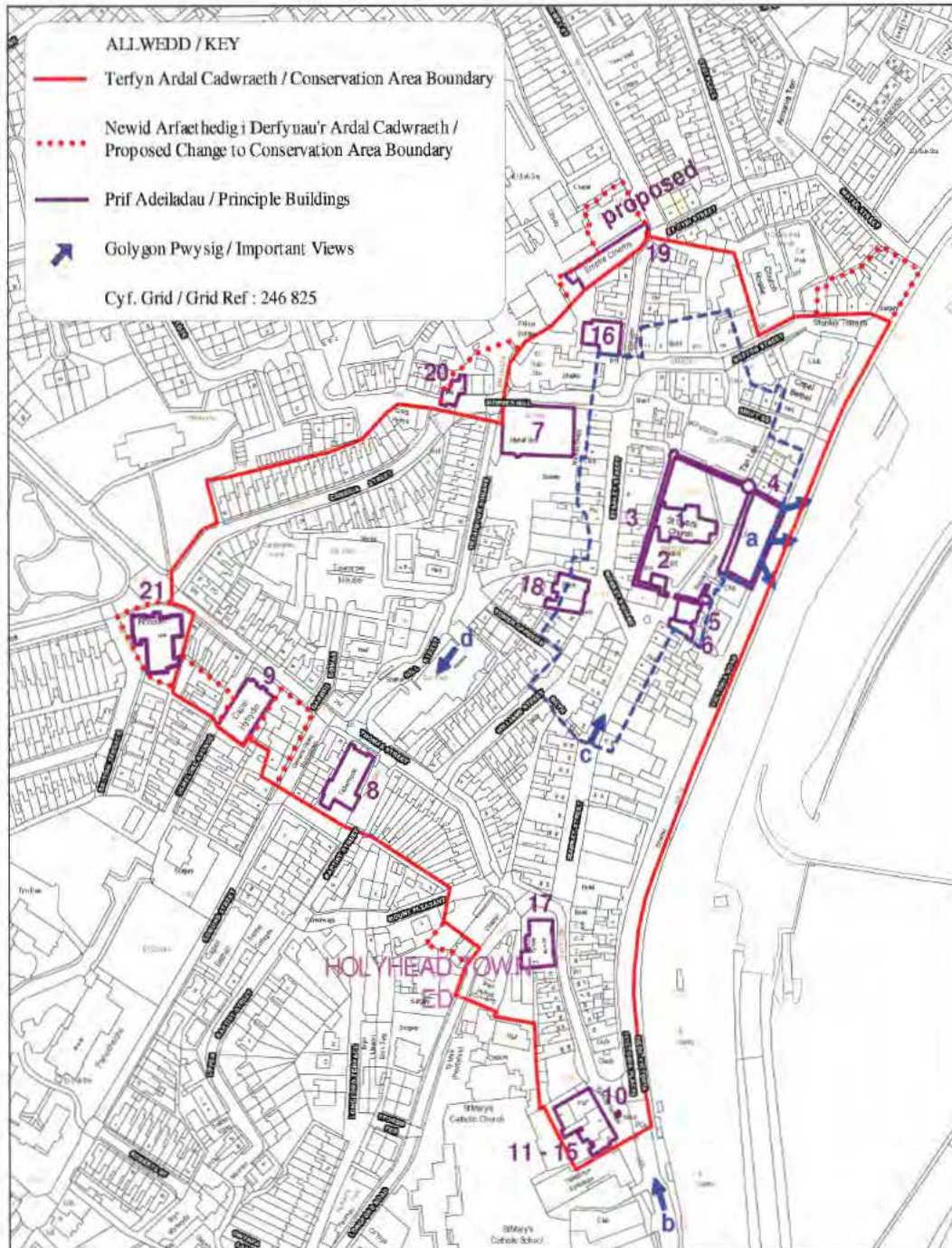


Figure 2. Holyhead Conservation Area Boundary (Source: www.anglesey.gov.uk)

2.0 Project Aims

The programme of works undertaken at the site aims to create a comprehensive history of the Market Hall. Particular emphasis has been placed on the social history of the building, concentrating on the types of traders using the market, the non-market uses of the building and compiling a pictorial record of the Market Hall and its users. The building has also been placed within the context of the development of Holyhead and the significance of the structure to the towns occupants will be discussed.

The aim of the scheme of works was to undertake desk based historical research exploring the history of the property. This information included a map progression, photographic illustrations, archival research, an examination of census records and a search for entries in historic trade directories which were utilised to compile a coherent narrative history of the site.

The work required to create a comprehensive Level 3 Photographic and Drawn Record of the site has previously been undertaken and will not be duplicated in this report.

3.0 Scheme of Works - Methodology

The methodology employed conformed to the requirements of the desk-based research requirement of a Level 3 Analytical Building Record as specified in *Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice* (English Heritage 2006) and The Institute for Archaeologists: *Standard and Guidance for the Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings or Structures* (Revised 2008).

The following points are detailed in *Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice* (English Heritage 2006).

The record created for the Market Hall, Stanley Street consists of:

Written Account Points 1-3, 5-13, 22

A supplementary photographic survey was also conducted.

3.1 Desk Based Research

A complete and coherent history of the site was compiled utilising information sourced from Anglesey Archives, Bangor University Archives, Gwynedd Archives and local libraries. A full map progression was undertaken along with a search of estate records, tax records, trade directories and general archival research. Web resources were also utilised.

The works were carried in accordance with the IfA Standards and Guidance for Historic Environment Desk-based Assessment (IfA 2009) and will include the information required to fulfil points 1-3, 5-9, 11-13 & 22 as specified in *Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice* (English Heritage 2006).

This material forms the historical background for this archaeological report. The report also includes the results of the photographic survey and an additional compact disc containing all site images in Tiff format.

3.2 Drawn Survey

Full plans and elevations of the property were produced by Purcell Miller Tritton and are included in the Options Appraisal and Feasibility Study.

3.3 Photographic Survey

A photographic survey of the Market Hall were undertaken by Purcell Miller Tritton and is included in the Options Appraisal and Feasibility Study. A supplementary photographic survey of the properties was undertaken by Matthew Jones of C.R Archaeology in October 2013. This work consisted of:

- 1) A photographic survey of the building exterior
- 2) A photographic survey of the building interior as taken from the outside of the building as access to the interior was not possible

The results of this photographic survey are included as Appendix B.

3.3.1 Equipment

A photographic survey of the building was undertaken using a 14.2 mega-pixel Sony A350 digital camera with a variety of standard and other lenses. Images were captured in RAW format for processing into high resolution JPG and TIFF files.

Where possible all exterior and interior elevations of the building were photographed with scales from ground level. Additional photographs were taken detailing important architectural features.

The methodology employed conforms to the requirements of photographic recording to the equivalent of a level 3 survey, as specified in *Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice* (English Heritage 2006) and will include works specified in points 1-9.

3.3.2 Timetable for Proposed Works

A photographic survey of the Market Hall, Stanley Street was conducted in October 2013. A further 5 days were utilised for archive research, report compilation and site archiving.

3.4 Staffing

The project was managed by Catherine Rees (BA (Archaeology), MA (Archaeology), PgDip (Historic Environment Conservation)). Site works were conducted by Catherine Rees and Matthew Jones. All staff have a skill set equivalent to the IfA AIfA level. CVs for all staff employed on the project can be provided on request.

All projects are carried out in accordance with IfA *Standard and Guidance* documents.

3.5 Monitoring

The project was not subject to monitoring by Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Services. A draft copy of the report will be submitted to Anglesey County Council prior to submission of the final report. Hard copies of the report will be lodged with the Gwynedd Historic Environment Record and at Anglesey Archives, Llangefni. A CD containing the photographic archive and a PDF version of the report will also be submitted to the RCAHMW, Aberystwyth.

3.6 Health and Safety

A risk assessment was conducted prior to the commencement of works and site staff were familiarised with its contents. A first aid kit was located in the site vehicle.

All staff were issued with appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for the site work.

This consisted of:

- Safety Helmets (EN397)
- Hi-visibility vests (EN471)
- Safety footwear – steel toecap and mid-sole boots and Wellingtons (EN345-47)

All staff have passed at least a CITB health and safety test at least operative level and carry a Construction Related Organisation (CRO) White Card for Archaeological Technician (Code 5363).

3.7 The Report

The report clearly and accurately incorporates information gained from the programme of archaeological works. It presents the documentary evidence gathered in such a way as to create a clear and coherent record. The report contains a site plan showing the locations of photographs taken.

The report includes:

- A location plan
- A plan illustrating the location and direction of any photographs or drawings in the text
- Full dimensional and descriptive detail
- A full bibliography of sources consulted
- An archive compact disc

A digital Adobe PDF version and a bound paper copy of the final report and will be lodged with Anglesey County Council, Gwynedd Historic Environment Record, RCHMW Aberystwyth and Anglesey Archives on completion of the project. The site archive including copies of all photographs in RAW and Tiff format will be deposited at Anglesey Archives.

3.7.1 Copyright

C.R Archaeology and sub-contractors shall retain full copyright of any commissioned reports, tender documents or other project documents, under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 with all rights reserved; excepting that it hereby provides a licence to the client and the local authority for the use of the report by the client and the local authority in all matters directly relating to the project as described in the Project Specification.

4.0 The History of the New Market Hall, Stanley Street, Holyhead

The New Market Hall was the first public building in Holyhead and was commissioned by the Hon W. O Stanley. It was erected in 1855 at a cost of £3,000. It performed a number of roles and in addition to its function as a covered area for traders as it also housed an assembly room, the Corn Exchange and a library/reading room for the Holyhead Mechanics Institute. The Holyhead Water Company operated from the Market Hall and the 1st Anglesey Artillery Volunteers were recorded as having their depot at the building. The County Court sessions were held at the Market Hall every two months. The building was a focus for community activity and remained as such until 2006 when the Market Hall closed.

The following section is intended to place the site in its historical context. In order to achieve this a history of the town of Holyhead has been compiled with particular emphasis on trade and market provision prior to the erection of the Market Hall. The wider history of the town from c.1840 will be examined in detail documenting the role of the Market Hall in the development of Holyhead until the present day.

4.1 Market Provision in Holyhead Prior to the Erection of the Market Hall

The town of Holyhead originally clustered around the Roman fort of Caer Gybi and the Sixth Century church of St Cybi was founded within the fort walls. The current church was built during the Thirteenth Century and it is believed that Edward I stayed at the fort in 1283 (www.anglesey.gov.uk).

The proximity of the Old Market Place to the church is indicative of an early date, and as the town grew up around this monument it is almost certain that this area functioned as a centre of trade from the Medieval period onwards. In their definitive tome “The British Market Hall” Schmiechen & Carls (1999) describe the traditional market as the most important economic and social centre of urban life from the Medieval period right up into the Nineteenth Century. In addition to housing numerous produce stalls it was also the location of the stocks, whipping post and pillory. As in Holyhead the market generally occupied a square in the town centre often at the junction of a number of streets and around a market cross (ibid: 3-4).

The fortunes of the town of Holyhead are closely interwoven with those of the harbour and the route to Ireland and as the shortest sea crossing, Holyhead was of key strategic importance in the governance of Ireland (www.anglesey.gov.uk). Holyhead functioned as a centre of trade and transport, albeit on a relatively modest scale, as is attested in a number of late seventeenth and eighteenth century sources. A number of interesting descriptions of Holyhead were written around this time which emphasise the vernacular and somewhat provincial nature of the town. In a discussion of this period the work of Williams (Williams 1950:53) draws on the work of Defoe in which he describes Holyhead as unpretentious and straw thatched but with “*good accommodation in lodgings and diet within*”.

A watercolour of the old market place was produced in 1776 (figure 3) provides the earliest pictorial record of the Market Cross and trading area. This area of the town shown is characterised by traditional stone built houses with small windows and thatched roofs. The caption describes the town as “*small, but being the station of the Irish packet-boats is much resorted to by passengers; five of these boats, stout vessels, well found and manned, ply backwards and forwards between this port and Dublin*”. A slightly earlier source of 1770 records Holyhead as “*little more than a fishing town, rendered considerable by being the place of general passage to Ireland*” (Unknown 1783: 18).

The Market Cross shown in the picture was erected by Holyhead curate Thomas Ellis in 1743 (www.holyhead.com/thomasellischool) and followed the earlier Medieval tradition of using a such a structure to mark a market square. It is unknown if this structure replaced an earlier example although the position of the trading place in close proximity to the church is indicative of a considerable antiquity to the use of this spot as a market.



Figure 3. 1769 Print of the Market Place, Holyhead (Source: Anglesey Archives WSD/421)

A 1783 account of Holyhead makes specific reference to the market and records that “*It has a small market weekly on Saturdays for butcher's meat, fish, fowl etc but little or no corn*”. This last statement is clarified in the notes section - “*When I say that no corn is sold at Holyhead market it must be understood that it is brought up here, and in most other places in Anglesey, for exportation, in their own granaries, by persons commissioned by several contractors for that purpose*” (Unknown 1783: 1 & 14). This account emphasises the small size and dominance of food produce in the old Market Place. It does not appear to be of a size to generate a large influx of people to the area and the main trading towns in Anglesey during this period were Beaumaris and Llangefni.

In the years leading up to the Act of Union with Ireland in 1801 Holyhead was to undergo rapid development, spurred on by improvements in transport networks notably the turnpike roads of the mid-late eighteenth century. These improvements were begun between Oswestry and Froncysyllte in 1756 and in 1765 the road across Anglesey from Porthaethwy to Holyhead was turnpiked (Quartermaine, Trinder & Turner 2003: 10).

The Act of Union between the Irish and British parliaments was passed on the 1st January 1801 and from this point Irish MPs and peers sat in the parliament of the United Kingdom. It was therefore necessary that there was a fast and reliable communication route between London and Dublin for

the transportation of mail, members of parliament, officials and when necessary troops. The current turnpike system, although much improved, was not sufficient to allow this particularly around the dangerous crossings of the Afon Conwy and Menai Straits (Quartermaine, Trinder & Turner 2003: 1-2).

The first elements along this route to be improved were the two ports of Dublin and Holyhead and works were begun on John Rennie's massive Admiralty Pier which protected the ports inner harbour. Works on this ambitious project were completed in 1821 (ibid: 3).

Between 1810 and 1824 the government spent £150,000 improving harbour facilities. This included the building of a pier at Salt Island and the creation of a "graving dock" which allowed ships to be floated for cleaning and repair. The improvements allowed the Post Office to use paddle steamers rather than the traditional sailing packets to take mail between Holyhead and Dublin. The early nineteenth century was a time of great hardship for the working classes of the United Kingdom with unemployment, social unrest and rising food prices and these works provided employment for local people and the prospect of work attracted a large number of incomers to the area. (Rowlands 1989: 15-16).

The employment and trading opportunities offered by the harbour development in Holyhead were very attractive and the town was to benefit from the influx of money and, perhaps of greater importance, an optimism in the assured future of the town. The increase in the status of the town was exemplified in 1821 when George IV visited Holyhead. The new-found confidence in the town is reflected in the population numbers and between 1801 and 1841 the number of inhabitants increased from 2,132 to 3,869 (Rowlands 1989: 15-16). 1801 was a key year for the population of Holyhead as, for the first time, it overtakes that of the Island's previous principle town of Beumaris (www.anglesey.gov.uk).

Telford's Holyhead road was completed in 1826 with the opening of the Menai Suspension Bridge (Quartermaine, Trinder & Turner 2003: 3) and by 1828 the coach journey from London to Holyhead had shortened to 29 hours and 17 minutes (Rowlands 1989: 24). This road, although intended primarily to take mail coaches and their passengers, generated a considerable volume of stage coach, posting and private travel along with a more limited amount of freight transport (Quartermaine, Trinder & Turner 2003: 5).

Despite being the first major civilian, state-funded infrastructure scheme of modern times the heyday of this route was limited to a relatively short period between the late 1820's and 1830's. Technological advances of the era were to rapidly supersede this great achievement and between 1837 and 1850 the successive opening of railways between London and Holyhead caused a steep decline in the traffic using the road. In 1851 Parliamentary funding for the maintenance of the road was stopped (Quartermaine, Trinder & Turner 2003: 3-4).

It was not possible to source contemporary descriptions of the market for this period but the growth in the population of and visitors to Holyhead would have led to an expansion in the size of the market in order to meet their needs. Later accounts describe the market as being held along the narrow streets of the town and the naming of "Market Street" would support this although we do not know the exact date when the name was given.

The next great phase of development in the history of Holyhead was to be heralded by the advent of the railway. Throughout the 1840's there was a programme to construct a railway across Anglesey and in 1848 the first train arrived in Holyhead (Rowlands 1989: 24).

The momentum of the preceding period was continued and further port improvements, in particular the building of the breakwater, attracted national attention due to the sheer magnitude of the operation (Rowlands 1989: 24). The population increase between 1801 and 1841 was eclipsed by that which occurred between 1841 and 1851 when it increased by a further 4,994 to reach 8,863 – a figure which shows a more than doubling of the population in ten years (Rowlands 1989: 16).

These new inhabitants had to be accommodated and the remaining rural characteristics of the town which had survived the earlier part of the century were rapidly lost and by the time of the production of the Tithe Map of the town and the main street outline as surviving today is largely established, although there was continued infilling within the street layout into the early twentieth century (Rowlands 1989: 16).

The period from the 1840's through to the 1860's was a boom time for Holyhead with an influx of people and money into the town. The prosperity of Holyhead continued throughout the late nineteenth century and the focus of the towns wealth was still largely reliant on the crossing to Ireland and the associated rail and harbour industries, both of which continued to develop apace

during this period (Haslam, Orbach & Voelecker 2009: 132-134). The erection of the Market Hall during this pivotal period is indicative of how the town developed to meet the growing needs of a population which was fast outgrowing the existing provisions.

There are sources dating from the period immediately before the erection of the Market Hall which describe the wares found in the old market place. In his 1854 tour of Wales George Borrow describes it thus *“Leaving the pier I turned up a street to the south, and was not long before I arrived at a kind of market-place, where were carts and stalls, and on the ground, on cloths, apples and plums, and abundance of greengages (a form of plum), — the latter, when good, decidedly the finest fruit in the world”*. Following a slight digression he continues *“I strolled forward, encountering more carts and more heaps of greengages; presently I turned to the right by a street, which led some way up the hill”*. He continues to recount a story of a man he met at the market and described in detail a strange encounter which highlights the cosmopolitan nature of the town in this period and the use of the market as a meeting place and focal point for the exchange of information (Borrow 1862: Chapter 42).

“Strolling about the market-place I came in contact with a fellow dressed in a turban and dirty blue linen robes and trousers. He bore a bundle of papers in his hand, one of which he offered to me. I asked him who he was. “Arap,” he replied. He had a dark, cunning, roguish countenance, with small eyes, and had all the appearance of a Jew. I spoke to him in what Arabic I could command on a sudden, and he jabbered to me in a corrupt dialect, giving me a confused account of a captivity which he had undergone amidst savage Mahometans. At last I asked him what religion he was of. “The Christian,” he replied. “Have you ever been of the Jewish?” said I. He returned no answer save by a grin. I took the paper, gave him a penny, and then walked away. The paper contained an account in English of how the bearer, the son of Christian parents, had been carried into captivity by two Mahometan merchants, a father and son, from whom he had escaped with the greatest difficulty. “Pretty fools,” said I, “must any people have been who ever stole you; but oh what fools if they wished to keep you after they had got you!” (Borrow 1862: Chapter 42).

A newspaper printed on the day of the opening of the New Market Hall provides a slightly less colourful picture of the old market the weekend before, listing produce and prices. *“Holyhead, June 16 – The market today was rather large – it was well supplied with all sorts of provisions – and the attendance was considered good. Prices were as follows :- Beef 7d per lb; mutton 7d; veal 6d; lamb*

6 ½d; bacon 10d; pork 6d; ham 11d; butter 10d to 11d; eggs 100 for 5s; old potatoes 10lbs for 6d; new ditto, 5d per lb; rhubarb 1d per bundle; fowls 1s 6d per couple”. It also describes the layout as being “held along the narrow streets of the town”. This demonstrates that the market was not confined to the Market Place and presumably the naming of Market Street would be indicative of a long standing overspill into neighbouring areas.

A retrospective comparison between the two markets was written in 1864 which once more highlighted the sprawling arrangement of the old market. “Years ago, the market was held in an open street called Market Street with booths lining it from the George Hotel to the Union Tavern. The street then presented a bustling scene every Saturday from about 10 in the morning till from 6 to 7 in the evening. Country farmers selling their wheat, followed by their good old dames, wearing their ancient steeple-crowned hats looking exactly like their own butterpots stuck on their ends; occasionally, farm servants, on their holidays, accompanied by their young female friends, their faces beaming with that broad honest grin of satisfaction and pleasure generally seen on the faces of the Welsh peasantry. These were the grand and most pleasing features of the old market place. But this is past, except for the shoe-market and seed market, which retain their ancient positions and features. The necessity for a covered market was very great, but it was no use in grumbling when there existed no person that would build such a place on his own responsibility or head a company to do that” (North Wales Chronicle 23rd April 1864).

4.2 The New Market Hall, Stanley Street, Holyhead

The New Market Hall on Stanley Street was built in 1855, during the aforementioned heyday of Holyhead. It opened on 23rd June and was noted much further afield than Anglesey and appeared in London paper the Metropolitan (Metropolitan 4th July 1855). An article was published in The North Wales Chronicle which described the building in great detail. This article gives the architect and builder and of particular interest is the record of the building inscriptions, parts of which have since been eroded and can not be read. This article has been reproduced in full below:

“Like most places in Northern Wales, the want of accommodation for an increased, and apparently increasing population has been seriously felt in Holyhead and as one most prudent step towards making up the deficiency the Hon. W. O. Stanley, M.P who ever since his accession to the Penrhos Property, has shown and evinced the greatest anxiety to improve the comforts of the inhabitants further manifested his good wishes by erecting a spacious Market Hall for the use of the town, the

markets being hitherto held along the narrow streets of the town, without the slightest means of at all contributing to the comfort of attending it, whether as sellers or buyers. This therefore being the first public building erected in Holyhead, we think it may not be uninteresting to give a description of it.

The building stands on the Northern side of Stanley Street, measuring 134 feet in length, and 85 feet in breadth. The style is Elizabethan; the rubble work being of blue stone from Mr. Stanley's quarries, of beautifully variegated colours from the iron therein contained forming in the structure of the edifice a light and agreeable contrast to the dressings of the doors, windows, cornices, pinnacles, quoins &c., which are made up of finely dressed Stourton stone.

The front elevation commands an imposing view from the main street overlooking the harbour and bay of Holyhead. It consists of 5 arched stone entrances secured by strong but neatly worked iron gates from the foundry of Mr. Ellis Williams: above which are placed four windows for the room up stairs, and a large handsome flat bay window supported by a richly moulded corbel. The head of this window which is over the principle entrance is divided into three panels, the centre of which bears the inscription in raised letters "Erected by the Hon. W. O. Stanley, M.P., of Penrhos." Inscribed in scroll work on the same panel are the words "Marchnadfa Caergybi". On the right hand panel is the shield and arms of the Owen's of Penrhos, and on the left are carved the arms of the Hon. Mr. and Mrs. Stanley. The cornice of rich scroll work finishes with a centre pinnacle all of Stourton stone. Above the centre window is a clock encased in a circular moulded stone cornice with the following inscribed in raised letters around it:- "Designed by J. Edwards, J. Thomas, Builder", with the year "1855" beneath.

The front of the building is made up of three Elizabethan gables each finished off with a light stone pinnacle. Entering through the middle archway, and ascending a beautiful flight of hanging stairs, made of Talacre stone, with iron balustrade and rails, we are introduced into three large rooms. The centre room measuring 41 feet by 33 feet, is a fine lofty room intended for public meetings and a general assembly room. On the left is spacious reading room and library for the use of the Holyhead Mechanics Institute; its length is 41 feet by 24 feet, divided by folding doors so that when necessary it may be thrown open for lectures, &c. On the right is another room 41 feet by 24 feet, intended for a Corn Exchange. The roof is made of open frame timber work stained in imitation of oak.

The immense area of the Market Hall is floored with good Holywell flags. The roof, consisting of open timber frame-work, is supported by two rows of Storetone stone octagonal columns, with moulded capitals, presenting a strong and handsome appearance. At the top of the market is a well with a pump for clean water; and the rain-water from the roofs is conducted into a large iron tank to be used for common purposes, such as washing vegetable, &c.

The number of stalls fitted up is 56, varying in size from 11 ½ feet square, to 9 feet by 6 feet, each being provided with a convenient fire place. The north side is fitted up with butchers stalls. In the centre are tables for basket women, which are made removable in order that the spacious area of the building may at any time be thrown open for holding large public meetings.

This spacious Hall was built at the sole expense of the Hon. W. O. Stanley, M.P., at a cost of £3000. The building was designed and superintended by his clerk of works, Mr. John Edwards, to whose architectural taste in combining elegance with durability it will ever stand as a pleasing monument. The contract for the work was executed in a very satisfactory manner by Mr. John Thomas, builder, of this town, to whom great praise is due for the excellent masonry; and workmanship in the construction of the building. The erection was commenced on the 27th of January last, and finished this week. It will be open for the public on Saturday, (this day)” (North Wales Chronicle 23rd June 1855).

This account was published before the Market Hall was opened and it appears to have been mistaken in one aspect – that of the clock, as although the carved stone aperture had been prepared there was no clock set into it at the time of the market's opening. It was still yet to be added in 1864 when an account notes “*The front of the building would be much improved should a proper clock be put in the place set off for that purpose; and the public would consider that a material convenience*” (North Wales Chronicle 23rd April 1864).

The week following the opening of the New Market Hall the North Wales Chronicle (30th June) recorded the market as: *“Holyhead, June 23. - There was an unusual crowd of people in attendance to-day, on account of the new market hall being opened for the first time to the public. The supplies were good; prices were as follows: - viz., Beef 7d per lb; mutton 6 ½d; veal 6d; lamb 5d to 6d; bacon 8d; ham 9d to 10d; butter 10d; lard 10d; new potatoes 3 ½d per lb; fowls 2s 10d per couple. The market was well stocked with all kinds of vegetables. Eggs 100 for 5s. The arrangements in the new market hall seemed to give general satisfaction”*.

A letter to the editor which appeared in the same paper the following week was from a correspondent who was decidedly more enamoured with the new hall and the language used expressed much more than *“general satisfaction”*.

“Sir; - Upwards of eighteen centuries have passed away since the Jewish elders said unto the World's Redeemer, in reference to a distinguished and benevolent individual - “For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue.” The inhabitants of Holyhead can say more than this in reference to the Hon. W. O. Stanley – they can say, “he loveth our town and hath built us, not only a synagogue whose spire points towards heaven, but he has also built us a Market-hall for the accommodation of both buyers and sellers. When the elders of the Jews waited upon our Lord beseeching him to go to the Centurion's house and “heal his servant who was dear to him, and ready to die,” they sustained their suit by observing “that he was worthy for whom he should do this.” And we ask, is not the great landed proprietor of this district worthy of that tribute of respect and honour which were awarded him last Tuesday at the public meeting? But for him the meat must have continued to be exposed in the dirty, dusty street, and the delicate female shuddering stand amid the winter's bitter blast. The consummation, however, so devoutly wished, is before our eyes, and a noble monument it is.

True, Sir, wealth has its responsibilities and its duties, and Mr. Stanley in erecting the Market-hall has discharged a duty which he, as a rich steward, owed to his Maker and to his fellow creatures, but when we consider the cheerful and generous manner in which he has done this, we feel he has laid us under peculiar obligations to him; and I hope such an expression of public feeling will be given as will be considered worthy of the man and the noble deed.

The flattering testimony given by Messrs. Jones and Owen, to the talented Artist, Mr. Edwards, and to the indefatigable contractor Mr. Thomas, must have been highly gratifying to their feelings, and was no more than they deserved. It could scarcely be expected in works of such magnitude that every species of casualty could possibly be prevented, but it is with great pleasure the writer records the interesting fact, that during the building of the New Church and the Market-hall, only two slight accidents occurred, and one was partly owing to the negligence of the boy who was injured. In conclusion I would just observe, for the encouragement of wealthy individuals, that although the outlay of Mr. Stanley has been great, there is every reason to believe that the revenue arising from rents &c., will be amply sufficient to remunerate him for his bold speculation; and no one will be more pleased than the writer to know this is the case”.

Despite the flattery employed in this letter it does hint at a somewhat ulterior motive for the erection of the Market Hall as given the population expansion at this time the potential income from the venture was considerable.

A ground floor plan of the Market Hall produced by architect Mr. Edwards and dated 1856 was sourced from Bangor University Archives (figure 4). This document shows the interior layout of the hall and marks the positions of the stalls to be rented by the traders. It is believed to be the earliest surviving image of the Market Hall. As mentioned in the newspaper article John Edwards was the clerk of works for Mr. W. O. Stanley and was the clerk for the building of St Seiriol's Church.

Although of unknown date a line drawing of the Market Hall was sourced from the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales which shows a somewhat idealised version of the building (figure 5). It appears to have been used as a showcase for Edwards work and although no other structures could be definitely attributed to him it does seem probable that Edwards also designed the Holyhead Lifeboat Station as the similarities between the two buildings are striking (figure 6). The attribution of the building to Lord Stanley's clerk of works is also supported by the patronage of the Lifeboats by Lady Stanley. This is demonstrated by an article in the North Wales Chronicle of 28th January 1865 which describes a dinner held at Penrhos by Stanley to which the “*gallant crew of this boat with the subscribers thereto were kindly invited*”.

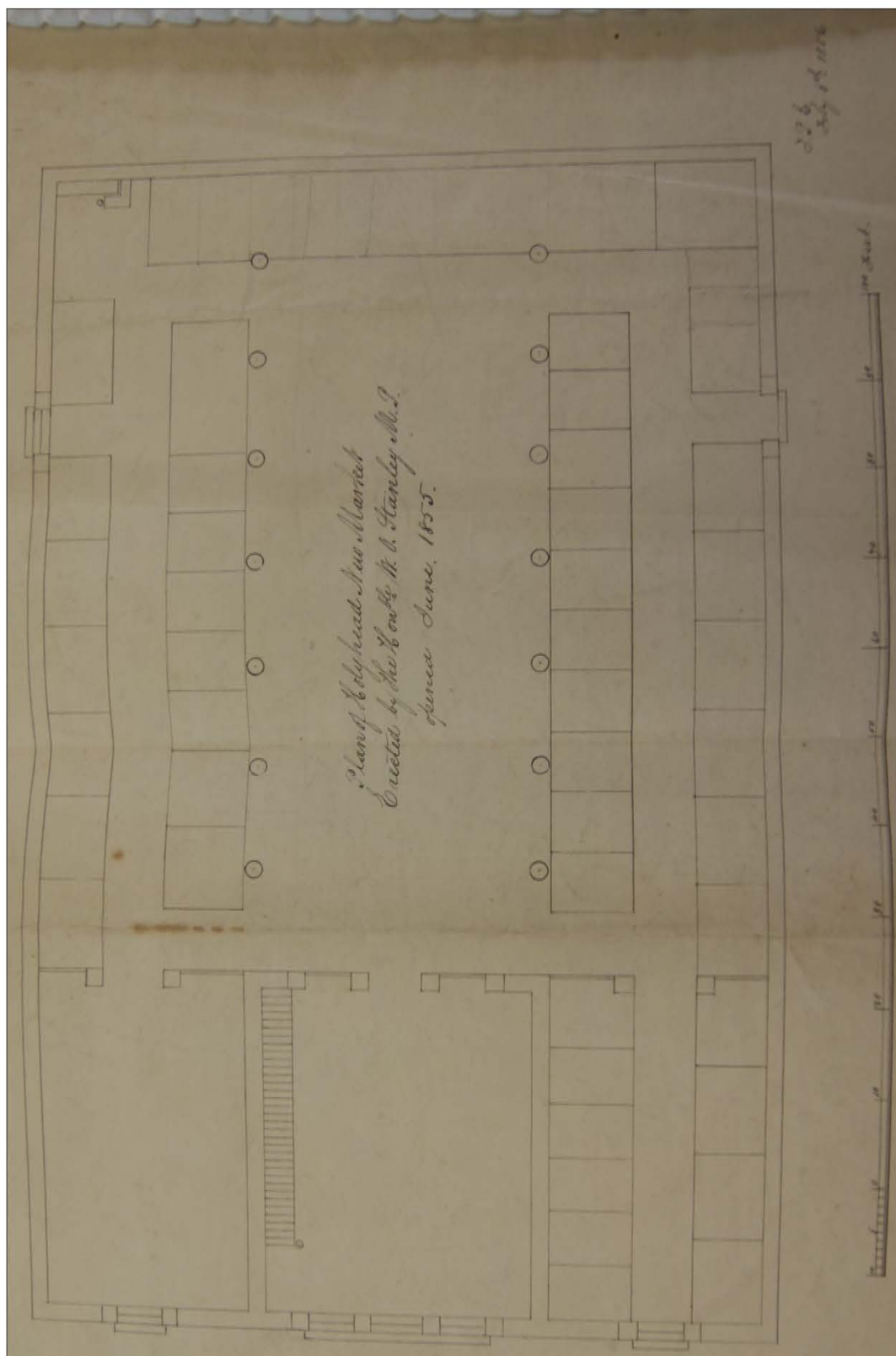


Figure 4. 1856 Plan of the Holyhead Market Hall (Source: Bangor University Archives Penrhos VI 168)

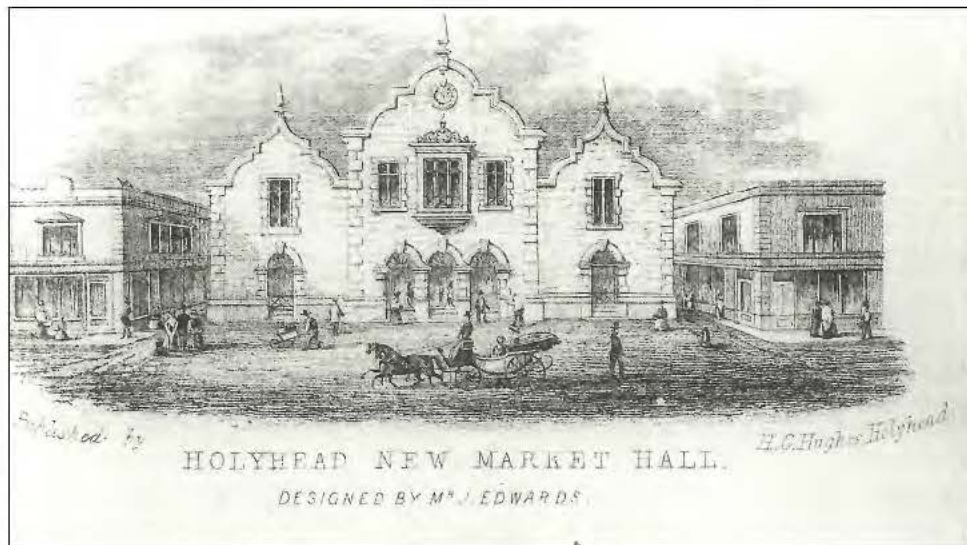


Figure 5. Idealised Version of Holyhead Market Hall.
In Reality the Front of the Building was Partially Obscured by Buildings on Stanley Street Which Pre-date its Construction. The Flanking Buildings Never Existed (Source: RCAHMW 881207/15)



Figure 6. Holyhead Lifeboat Station Showing Architectural Similarities with Market Hall.
It is Presumed to be by Same Architect

43 8. Sackey St.	Robert Thomas	son	husb	29	stone mason	de	Blanchy St.
	Ann de	wife	prob			de	Blanchy St.
	Richard de	son		3		de	de
44 9. Sackey St.	John Thomas	son	husb	43	stone mason	de	Blanchy St.
	Elizabeth de	wife	prob			de	Blanchy St.
	William de	son	11	18	stone mason	de	de
	James de	son	11	15		de	de
	John de	son		9		de	de
	Timothy de	son		17		de	de
	Elizabeth de	daughter		4		de	Wylphur
	Margaret de	daughter		2		de	de
	Jane de	daughter		1		de	de

1861	John Thomas	son	husb	29	stone mason	de	Blanchy St.
	Ann de	wife	prob			de	Blanchy St.
	Richard de	son		3		de	de
	John de	son		43	stone mason	de	Blanchy St.
	Elizabeth de	wife	prob			de	Blanchy St.
	William de	son	11	18	stone mason	de	de
	James de	son	11	15		de	de
	John de	son		9		de	de
	Timothy de	son		17		de	de
	Elizabeth de	daughter		4		de	Wylphur
	Margaret de	daughter		2		de	de
	Jane de	daughter		1		de	de

Figure 7 (Left). 1851 Census for Builder John Thomas

Figure 8 (Above). 1861 Census for Builder John Thomas

A search of historic trade directories and the census records has provided us with more information on builder John Thomas. When he built the New Market Hall he was around 47 years of age and would have been a very experienced stone mason. The 1851 Census (figure 7) records John Thomas and family as living in Turkey Shore, Holyhead. The household is composed of John, his wife Catherine and seven children ranging from 1 to 22 years of age. The occupation of his son William is also listed as stone mason and it is possible that neighbour Richard Thomas, also a stone mason, is related to the family. By the 1861 Census (figure 8) John Thomas has become a widower and is living with his four daughters. His occupation continues to be listed as mason and he is still living in Holyhead. Slater's Trade Directories of this period (1849 – 1856) record him under builders as “Thomas, John Tan Lan”.

The iron work used in the Market Hall was produced by the Black Bridge Foundry in Holyhead and the iron gates in the front elevation carry the name Ellis Williams. Although the foundry was to be operational for many years Ellis Williams had ceased to run the business by 1857 when he is recorded as a bankrupt in the Edinburgh Gazette of October 23rd. He is listed in the paper as “*Ellis Williams of the Black Bridge Foundry, Holyhead, Anglesey, Iron Founder*”. A little more detail is recorded in the London Gazette dated February 19th 1858 which states “*Richard Stevenson Esq., one of her Majesty's Commissioners authorized to act under a Petition for adjudication of Bankruptcy, filed on the 16th day of October, 1857, against Ellis Williams, of Black Bridge Foundry, Holyhead, in the county of Anglesey, Iron founder, will sit on the 4th March next at eleven in the afternoon precisely, at the District Court of Bankruptcy, in Liverpool, to Audit the Accounts of the Assignees of the estate and effects of the said bankrupt, under the said Petition, pursuant to the Acts of Parliament made and now in force relating to bankrupts*”. Slater's Trade Directory of 1850 records William Williams at Black Bridge so Ellis runs the business for only a few years. The iron gates are a rare survivor of this short period of the foundry's history and our research found no other examples of this date or bearing his name.

The Market Hall Traders

As detailed in the North Wales Chronicle Article of 23rd June 1855 the Market Hall had provision for up to 56 stalls which varied in size from 11 ½ feet square, to 9 feet by 6 feet, with the northern side fitted up with butchers stalls and the central area laid with tables for basket women.

A contemporary source (1864) details the vibrant market layout and provides an account of the staggering range of goods on offer. *“The building is situated in the very heart of the town, presenting in its handsome front the chief among the few ornaments which Holyhead possesses. It is divided into three compartments, being a large nave with two spacious wings. The wings with the upper part of the nave are divided into stalls. The nave is set apart for the woollen-drapers, stationers, booksellers, and news vendors, grocers, seedsmen and confectioners. In the lower end of the building are two large halls in which the butter market is held. This may reasonably be called one of the best supplied in Wales, and where a great quantity of fresh butter is now sold weekly at a rate of 1s to 1s 6d per pound. We also have a good supply of fowl at from 2s to 3s per couple. During their season geese are also abundantly supplied, from 3s 6d to 5s each. The meat market occupies from 32-35 stalls wherein good and wholesome beef, mutton and pork are always sold in abundance from 6d to 8d per lb according to quality. During storms, and in the winter season, when the New Harbour fills with vessels from 150 to 160 upwards averaging with 4 to 6 hands on each the Holyhead Market is greatly affected by the additional demand to supply the wants of such sea-faring men. A good number of butchers from the surrounding district of from between 10 to 15 miles faithfully supply this market with meat. The haberdashery and general ware occupy from 8 to 10 stalls. The potato market is held in a partly covered court to the left of the building. There yet remains a court in front of the building where poultry, green grocery, confectionery &c are sold. Each of the stalls inside the building is provided with a fire place, and the market is lit by 10 large gasliers suspended from the roof. A very substantial stone stairs leading into an upper storey divided into the county court room, commercial room, and further on to a room where concerts, lectures, &c are held. The public appear to increase in their appreciation of this excellent building by the fact that when it was first opened there were comparatively but a few stalls taken but at present they are almost all occupied”* (North Wales Chronicle 23rd April 1864).

The rate books for the Market Hall are held in the Penrhos Estate Collection at Bangor University Archives (Penrhos II 9-7-911). These books (beginning 1866) detail the names and amounts paid by traders although unfortunately it does not record the produce sold by the individuals. This is fleshed

out slightly by cross referencing with trade directories although it is primarily butchers who choose to advertise. Sutton's Directory of 1856 records John Jones (Stall 14), Owen Jones, John Morgan (Stall 17), William Owen (Stall 56), John Williams and William Williams as butchers trading at the New Market Hall.

It is clear from the record books that the vast majority of the traders were Welsh and many are likely to have come from Holyhead and the surrounding area. The surnames Jones, Owen, Roberts, Williams and Hughes dominate the list. Many traders can be traced through the records for many years and some traders retain their stalls for in excess of twenty years. There also seems to be no shortage of traders wishing to occupy plots and the Market Hall is operating at or near capacity for the majority of the nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries.

As detailed above, in addition to the traders selling their wares inside the Market are a number of sellers who operate outside the front of the building. These are shown on a number of late Nineteenth Century and Early Twentieth Century photographs and a somewhat idealised sketch (included as figures 9-12). These sources show the range of produce sold outside the Market Hall which can be seen to be crockery, fresh vegetables and poultry. A mobile fryer is also shown serving fresh fish and chips to market goers. Stalls were simple cloth covered and open tables with other wares laid on the ground. The scenes shown are bustling and the market is clearly well attended, indeed it is heartening to note that despite attempts at gentrification by the provision of indoor space out of the elements where the local ladies of substance may shop in comfort the traders have spilled outside returning to the earlier outdoor way of selling.

Holyhead Market Hall as a Community Centre

Holyhead Market Hall was of far greater importance to the town than simply as a centre of commerce and as mentioned above it housed a suite of 3 large rooms which were used for public meetings and events. It was built twenty years before the Town Hall and was used for many of the civic functions which one would expect to be undertaken in this establishment, many of which it retained after the Town Hall was opened.

Activities at the Market Hall took a myriad of forms including administrative, educational and entertainment. These functions will be discussed in detail below to demonstrate the range of events held here and to illustrate the centrality of the Market Hall to life in Holyhead.



Figure 9. Market Hall Pre-1906 Showing Stalls and Mobile Fryer in Area at Front of Market
(Source: Anglesey Archives New Acquisition Uncatalogued)



Figure 10. Market Hall Pre-1906 Showing Stalls in Area at Front of Market (Source: Anglesey Archives WSM381)



Figure 11. Late Nineteenth Century Sketch of the Market Hall (Source: Nation Library www.digidol.llgc.org.uk/)



Figure 12. Market Hall Pre-1906 Showing Stalls in Area at Front of Market (Source: RCAHMW 881526/16)

Administrative Functions

The Holyhead Market Hall performed a number of administrative roles and was the local Corn Exchange, County Court and headquarters of the 1st Anglesey Artillery Volunteers and The Holyhead Water Company.

The need for a County Court and Corn Exchange in Holyhead is a reflection of the rising population and prominence of the town and it is the largest population centre in Anglesey and therefore had want of these provisions.

The 1st Anglesey Artillery Volunteers were raised in Holyhead on the 14th December 1860 with John Jacobs as Captain. By 1861 Lord Stanley had become the Honorary Captain of the Corps and in 1863 the Anglesey Volunteer Corps and the Caernarfonshire Artillery Volunteer Corps were united to form the 1st Administrative Brigade, Anglesey Artillery Volunteers with the headquarters at the Market Hall. The Corps had disappeared by 1875 due to a lack of interest and support from local inhabitants (Owen 1989: 133-135). There are a number of accounts of the volunteers at the Market Hall and they were quite a spectacle when parading. On the 2nd December 1865 the North Wales Chronicle recorded that “*Anglesey Militia Paraded through town headed by the band of the Corps thanks to its reappearance under the efficient leadership of Mr W Jones of the Post Office the whole body marched to the large assembly room above the Market Hall which had been appropriately decorated for the occasion. A splendid dinner had been prepared by Mr Riva of the Rose and Crown Inn. Having arranged themselves at three long tables the members filled the whole area, the gentlemen invited including the honorary members of the corps being seated at a cross table at the upper end of the room*”. The paper on the 14th April 1866 reported that “*The 1st Anglesey Volunteer Artillery numbering 51 rank and file paraded in full dress at the Market Hall on Tuesday evening last at 7pm and headed by their fine band under the leadership of Mr William Jones marched to the New Battery on Salt Island, where two rounds of blank cartridges were fired from the big guns after which the corps returned through the town to the Market Hall where refreshments had been provided*”.

Given the rapid population expansion of Holyhead during this and the preceding decades the Holyhead Water Company was an organisation of vital importance. The increasing population density during the period of 1841-61 led to severe overcrowding particularly in slum areas, which together with poor hygiene and the new diseases brought from far flung travel led to numerous

outbreaks and epidemics during the nineteenth century including typhus, smallpox and cholera (Davies 2005: 190). The provision of clean drinking water was key in reducing mortality and the supply fell to Holyhead Water Company. A copy of the Water Works Clauses Act and a share certificate survive from this period and are included as figures 13 – 14.

Despite an initial prohibition of the use of the hall for religious or political purposes it was used as a place of worship by the Calvinistic Methodists during the enlargement of their chapel and for electioneering by Lord Stanley. In November 1868 a meeting was held at the Market Hall to congratulate Lord Stanley on his return as MP. A description of the event was as follows “*A very successful meeting was held in the Market Hall, Holyhead to congratulate Mr Stanley on his triumphant return and to afford him the opportunity of thanking his supporters. The spacious hall was tastefully decorated with flags and banners and it would have been difficult to mention a country whose colours could not be observed. The platform for speakers was exceedingly commodious and in front of it appeared a beautiful motto on which “Stanley forever” was prettily worked. The accommodation for the audience was also very complete. The assemblage numbered between two and three thousand*” (North Wales Chronicle 28th November 1868). In July 1894 a meeting of the Conservatives and Unionists of Holyhead and vicinity was held at the Market Hall (North Wales Chronicle July 14th 1894).

The breaking of these rules did pass unnoticed and a contributor to the North Wales Chronicle in January 1873 who observed that the Market Hall was used to the advantage of Stanley and rules were relaxed or enforced dependant upon what best suited its benefactor.

The Market Hall was also used by Lord Stanley to collect his rents and it is recorded in the Chester Chronicle of 15th December 1855 that on the 4th of that month W.O Stanley received his first rents at the property. To celebrate this occasion a “most sumptuous dinner” was provided at the Market Hall for the entire tenantry.

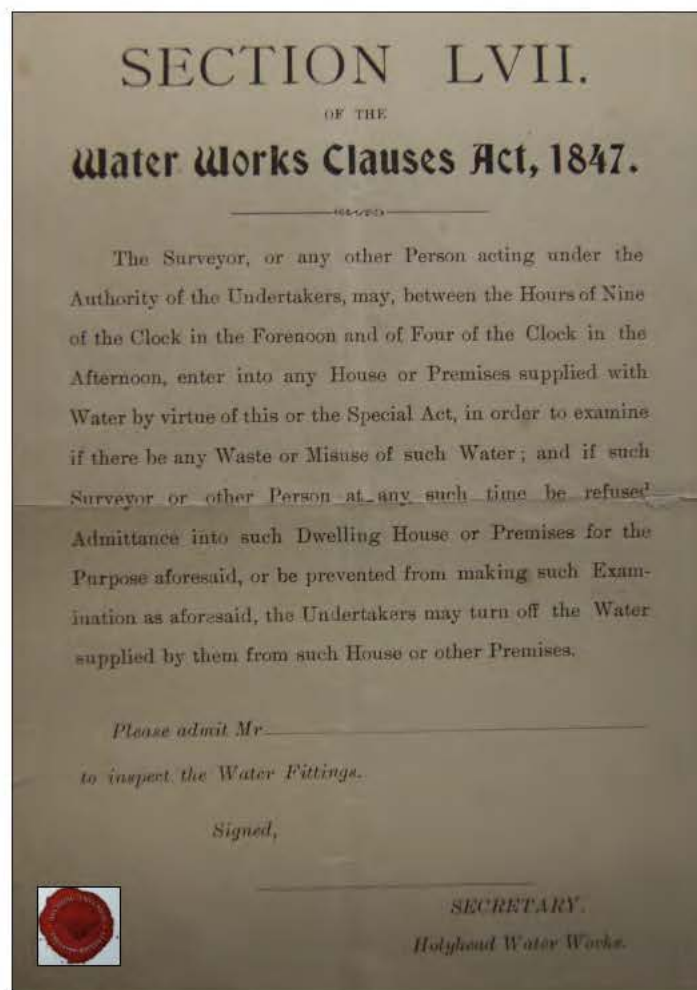


Figure 13. 1847 Water Works Clauses Act
(Source: Anglesey Archivies WM/2406)



Figure 14. 1880's Holyhead Water Works Share
Certificate (Source: Anglesey Archivies WM/1822)

Educational Functions

There was a room at the Market Hall which had been specifically put aside as a library for the Holyhead Mechanics Institute. The Mechanics Institute was a charitable foundation which opened its first school in Glasgow in 1823 and was founded upon the principle of self improvement and providing the working classes with the means to educate themselves. This would then supply employers with a better educated and technologically versed workforce. In rural economies such as found in much of Anglesey education would focus on the improvement of yields and land management. It was intended to be a grass roots movement but in smaller towns often required additional support from wealthy patrons to afford to pay for books and lectures, as well as to provide places of assembly (Walker 2012).

A letter from the secretary of the Holyhead Mechanics Institute to Lord Newborough dated May 1855 is retained by Gwynedd Archives, Caernarfon. It requests a donation towards the cost of books to form a library for its members. It gives a brief history of the Institution stating that it was founded in March 1852 with the aim being “*the mental and social improvement of chiefly the working classes in Holyhead and neighbourhood*”. It ends with the P.S “*Donations have been received from the Honorable W.O Stanley and others*” (Source: Gwynedd Archives XD2/24124).

The support of Lord Stanley for the betterment of the people of Holyhead is demonstrated by his involvement with this movement. These sentiments are also expressed when he addresses his tenants in 1855 when he “*spoke most kindly to his tenants, encouraging them to make improvements and feelingly expressed his wish that they would all be happy, assuring them that as far as it lay in his power he would assist them*” (Chester Chronicle December 15th 1855).

It is unclear as to exactly how long the Holyhead Mechanics Institute retained its library at the Market Hall and although listed in Slater's 1858 Trade Directory there is no mention of it in an 1864 account of the building. It is however clear that it continued to host lectures aimed at educating the public into the late Nineteenth Century as in 1887 the St John's Ambulance Association ran a series of talks which were well attended (North Wales Chronicle 2nd May 1887).

Entertainment Functions

The Market Hall was utilised by the people of Holyhead as a hub of activity and the entertainments offered by the Market Hall were extremely diverse. The following section has been compiled from newspaper articles primarily dating from the Nineteenth Century. It is by no means an exhaustive list of all the events held at the Market Hall but rather is intended to demonstrate the variety of activities available.

The earliest event about which information could be found was a concert given by the Ethiopian Serenaders in July 1855. The crowd was described as “large and respectable” (North Wales Chronicle 7th July 1855). Musical and variety concerts were a popular form of entertainment and the Market Hall attracted numerous performers, many presumably en-route to Ireland. These events pulled in huge crowds as is demonstrated in an account of the Christy Minstrels held in 1865 “*On Tuesday night the above renowned performers, which were engaged by Professor Whitworth paid a visit to Holyhead. A concert was held at the Market Hall which we must say we cannot but approve of. The room was crowded on the occasion everyone seeming to be well pleased. Between the different performances many laughable scenes were highly approved of by all present*” (North Wales Chronicle June 24th 1865).

The Market Hall as a venue hosted shows which brought the wider world to the towns inhabitants and in 1864 an “Original Panorama” of Dr. Livingstone's Missionary Travels was shown. Three showings were made on the same day, including a special one which was attended by hundreds school children from the Parish (North Wales Chronicle 23rd April 1864).

A Wild West Show with “*Great Original Grand Geographical Moving Panorama*” was held at the Market Hall in 1894 and the advertisement is included as figure x. It is interesting to note that such high profile events are still being held at the Market Hall so long after the completion of the Town Hall and it is testament to the enduring appeal of the venue.

The children of Holyhead were also catered for with events at the Market Hall and specific treats were arranged for them. In August 1894 the scholars of the St Seiriol's Church Sunday School were treated to tea and bunloaf at the Market Hall. Over 400 teachers and pupils met at the National School and paraded through the town to the hall where they were all catered for (North Wales Chronicle August 18th 1894). They also performed at the venue and when the Girls High School gave a concert in 1890 the Market Hall was recorded as being filled to overflowing (North Wales Chronicle December 20th 1890).

The Market Hall was used for a more sombre purpose in 1862 when a collection box was placed in the hall to collect funds for a memorial to the Late Prince Albert “*as many of the poorer of Her Majesty's subjects are anxious to have an opportunity of testifying their sympathy and good will by contributing their offerings however small to the National Memorial*” (North Wales Chronicle 24th May 1862). Other fund raising and local committee meetings were held at the Market Hall including a rummage sale in aid of the lifeboats (North Wales Chronicle 8th June 1895) and the Anglesey Agricultural Show committee meetings (North Wales Chronicle 14th July 1894).

4.3 Holyhead Market Hall During the Twentieth Century

During the earliest part of the twentieth century life in Holyhead continued much as it had during the nineteenth century. The twentieth century was less kind to Holyhead than the nineteenth and following the First World War it must be seen as a time of great decline and hardship for Holyhead and its inhabitants.

This decline was to begin in the 1920's when a number of episodes which were to prove disastrous for the town occurred. The first came in 1920 when the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company withdrew from the port ending 70 years of unbroken service and resulting in the loss of 350 jobs. This loss was compounded by the loss of the Royal Mail service contract to the London and North-Western Railway Company which led to the towns reliance on a single company. The dangers of this became evident when the LNWR merged with a number of other rail companies to form the much larger London, Midland and Scottish Railway Company and introduced scathing economies resulting in further job loss.

At this time relations with Ireland were changing and in 1922 Southern Ireland achieved home rule. Following this separation the diplomatic links between Britain and Ireland became strained and in 1932 a six year tariff war began which was to further feed into the precarious position of the town. In his work on the period John Rowlands records that *“The Trade War with Ireland was disastrous for Holyhead, because had it not happened the town's dependence on the LMS and the railway company's monopoly of the trade with Ireland, would have made them both relatively immune to the economic recession of the 1930's. Without those six long years of the Tariff War, Holyhead's limitations as a one company town could have been it's greatest strength. In fact as events turned out the fact that Holyhead was a one company town was it's greatest weakness in the 1930's”* (1989: 29-30).

The recession of the 1930's was on a global scale and unemployment was high throughout the country but for reasons detailed above Holyhead was particularly harshly hit leading Megan Lloyd George (MP for Anglesey) to claim in 1937 that Holyhead was suffering higher unemployment than all but the very worst areas of South Wales and Durham. Statistics record that unemployment in Holyhead was only to fall below 30% once during the 1930's and in December 1936 it hit the record level of 47.7%. Many families left the town in search of work elsewhere and during the 1930's the population fell by over one thousand. Contemporary observer accounts paint a bleak picture and stated that *“the town is in crisis – the most serious in its history”* (1931), *“there are hundred of men, women and children practically destitute”* (1933), *“anyone walking through the town would at once notice that Holyhead was a dead town; there was nothing there at all”* (1938) and *“we are worse off in Holyhead today than we have been in the whole history of the town. The town is poverty stricken”* (1939). It was only with the advent of the Second World War in 1939 that there was any improvement in the towns fortune – a fact that was bitterly noted at the time by the town clerk who remarked that *“apparently you cannot get anything for Holyhead unless you get a war”*. The war did however bring employment and government contracts to the area although Holyhead was never to return to it's late nineteenth century heyday (Rowlands 1989: 25 – 34).

Despite these difficult times the Market Hall was to retain its important role in the town and appears to have been slightly modified in the earlier Twentieth Century to meet the changing needs of the population. In 1948 much of the Penrhos Estate was broken up and the Market Hall was sold. A sale catalogue describing the lot is held in Anglesey Archives which gives a detailed account of the building and associated structures at that time. The Market Hall was recorded as:

“The Important Commercial Building
known as
THE MARKET HALL, HOLYHEAD

Situated in an imposing position in the centre of the town, with large outbuildings, etc. The area is about 2r 4p.

The Total Gross Income from this Property includes Variable Tolls and amounted to £437 1s per annum in 1947 (excluding part in hand).

The large building is substantially erected of stone, with slated and partly glazed double roof. Included is the main pillared hall, with doors to the yard and adjacent W.C, a central market hall and toll market with general stalls. Part of the entrance leading to the main hall is converted into dressing and changing rooms etc.

On the first floor are 2 rooms with licensed bar and lavatories. Main water, electric light and main drainage. Entrance from side yards are on the East and South, giving access to Trearddur Square and Summer Hill.

The outbuildings to the south include a stone and slated warehouse and a stone and corrugated iron workshop or store with concrete floor. Electric light, outside W.C and rear yard.

There is a range of timber and slated sheds at present used for garages and a small timber shed. The whole being pt. Ord. No. 114. The main Market Hall is let to Messrs J.B Roberts and F.P Farrell on lease expiring 11th November 1948, at £300 per annum, tenant paying rates. The club rooms are let to the Ex-Service Men's Club on Lease for 20 years from 23rd November 146, at £44 per annum, landlord paying rates (R.V. £30). The small warehouse and Estate Office are in hand.

The various Market Tolls which fluctuate amounted to £71 13s for the year ending 1947.

Another warehouse is let to the Holyhead Water Works on a half yearly tenancy at £4 2s per annum.

A small hut in the yard is let to Mr Owen Jones on a quarterly tenancy at £5 4s per annum.

The remaining sheds and a small piece of the yard are let to Mr R.R Hughes on a lease of 21 years from 6th December 1946 at £12 per annum.

The H.U.D.C pays 1s per annum for a drain in the market yard. The Holyhead Gas Co pays 1s per annum for gas pipe in yard” (Source: Anglesey Archives WM/1568/5).

The map accompanying this schedule can be used to identify the additional outbuildings and can be compared to earlier sources to trace the development of the area around the Market Hall. A progression has been compiled beginning at the earliest source to clearly show the property – the First Edition Ordnance Survey Map of 1888 (figure 15), through the larger scale 1890 Edition (figure 16), the 2nd Edition of 1900 (figure 17). The 1924 Ordnance Survey Map is used as the base map for the 1948 auction and as no changes are recorded only the annotated version has been included as figure 18.

This series of maps clearly shows that there has been no change to the footprint of the main building and that the outbuildings detailed in the auction listing appear on the First Edition Ordnance Survey and remain unchanged until 1948 edition. No changes were observed to surrounding buildings in Trearddur Square or the southern elevation. The changes to Summer Hill and Stanley Street happen between the 1900 and 1924 Ordnance Survey Editions. An additional property is erected on Summer Hill between these dates but this has little effect on the Market Hall. Of greater significance is the erection of shops on the corner of Summer Hill and Stanley Street which largely conceal the impressive Market Hall façade from view. A passageway was left to allow access through to the Market Hall and a terracotta wall plaque dates this event to 1906. This action would have greatly reduced the outside area available for use by traders.

The interior divisions have been altered and there are two rooms rather than three listed. A licensed bar and toilets have been added. It is unclear as to when this happened and it was not possible to examine the interior of the building at this time. We can however be certain that the licensed bar was added after July 1891 when a “*Return of Public Houses, Beerhouses & Grocer's Licences*” for the County was compiled as the Market Hall does not appear on this list.



Figure 15. 1888 First Edition Ordnance Survey Map Showing the Market Hall
(Source: Anglesey Archives)



Figure 16. 1890 Large Scale Ordnance Survey Map Showing the Market Hall
(Source: Anglesey Archives)

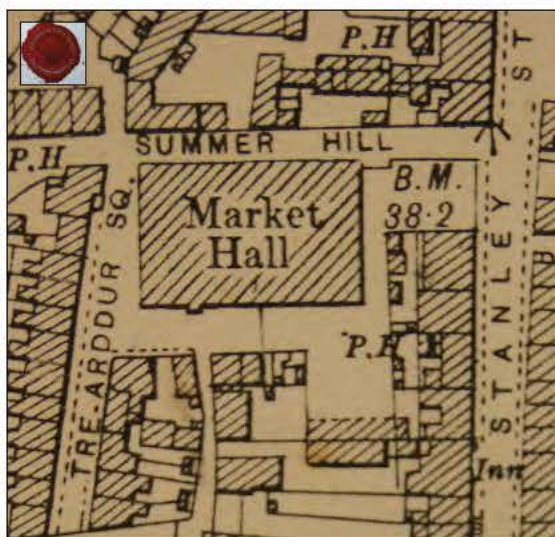


Figure 17. 1900 Second Edition Ordnance Survey Map Showing the Market Hall
(Source: Anglesey Archives)

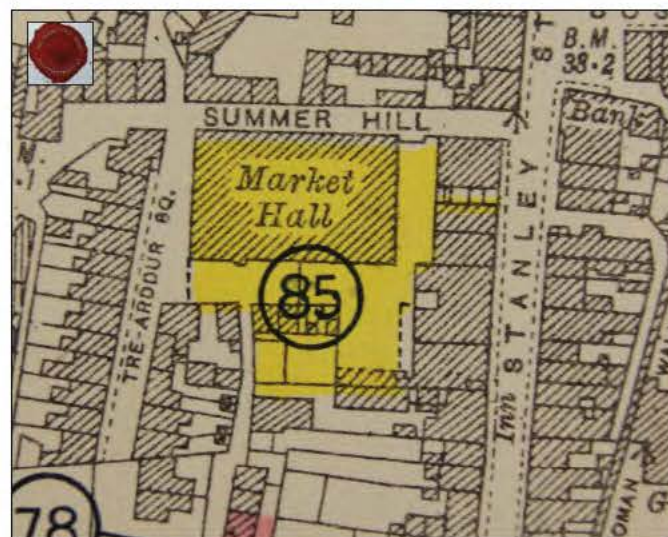


Figure 18. 1948 Annotated 1924 Ordnance Survey Map Showing the Market Hall
(Source: Anglesey Archives WM/1568/5)

Records relating to who purchased the Market Hall could not be sourced for this time period but it appears that for a period during the 1940's or 1950's wrestling matches were held at the venue. An undated plan of the ring and seating area were sourced from Anglesey Archives and are included as figure 19.

Very little further archive material exists for the later period of the Market Hall although there is undoubtedly a wealth of local reminiscence and documentary sources and memorabilia held by the people of Holyhead. If traders and patrons of the site could be engaged with through an oral history project or the like then information could be gathered which will prove invaluable to researchers and historians exploring Holyhead's past.

Haslam et al record that the Market Hall closed in 2006 (Haslam et al 2009: 131) but there are newspaper articles that place the date prior to this at c.1999. Since its closure various attempts have been made to find a way to utilise this important building. Local groups attempted to create a major community resource and although public meetings were held this plan failed to come to fruition (www.uk.local.north-wales.narkive.com).

The property was purchased by its current owner Paul Burgess around 2009 and an application was made to convert the hall into a café, restaurant and play area at ground floor level with eleven apartments at first and second floor level. A separate three-storey contemporary building was proposed to be erected next to the hall which was to be converted into a further 11 apartments (www.dailypost.co.uk). To date permission for this scheme has not been granted and the Market Hall is currently empty. It has been vandalised and windows broken and the site has earned itself an unfortunate position on the Decaying Wales website (www.decayingwales.com).



Figure 19. Undated Plans for Proposed Boxing/Wrestling Ring at Holyhead Market
(Source: Anglesey Archives WDAD/46)

5.0 The Significance of the Market Hall to Holyhead

Holyhead is a town of national significance given its location as the principle port between the British mainland and Ireland, and the Market Hall was erected as a direct response to the increase in population and visitors as improvements to the route were made. As the oldest public building in Holyhead the New Market Hall is considered to be highly significant to the town. It was built at a time when the town was fast losing its remaining agricultural characteristics and was firmly establishing itself as a centre for trade, commerce and administration. It is a representation of Holyhead in its heyday and the population of the town peaked at this time having more than doubled in the period between 1841 and 1851.

There are a number of key elements which add to the significance of the Market Hall as a building. The first is the association with Lord W.O Stanley of Penrhos. Stanley was a major benefactor in the town during a key time in its history and in addition to the towns Market Hall also built St Seiriol's Church and much of Penrhos House – both of which have since been demolished. Stanley was an important historical figure and in addition to having been Member of Parliament for Anglesey was a prominent archaeologist of his day. He had a particular interest in “Celtic Archaeology” and was heavily involved in excavations around Anglesey and North Wales including the Tŷ Mawr hut circles at Treaddur. The stone inscriptions and shields which adorn the Market Hall frontage remain as a monument to the man and his family.

The uses of the Market Hall are also considered to greatly enhance the attribution of historical significance to the building as archive research has demonstrated that the venue was not merely a centre for commerce but a hub of public entertainment until well into the Twentieth Century. Indeed the very use of the name Market Hall is to understate the sheer variety of roles the building has played which include amongst other things a library and a wrestling arena.

The Market Hall is of architectural significance as it is an exceptionally complete example of an open Market Hall. It is one of the earliest structures in Wales to have incorporated fireplaces in the design in order to enhance the comfort of the traders. Given the destruction or conversion of a great many Victorian market halls the survival of this example at Holyhead with its open hall is of significance in itself. The stone carving, in particular that utilised in the façade, is of a high quality and the building is of a high aesthetic quality.

The Market Hall served as a focal point within the community for a hundred a fifty years and as such is deeply important to the population of Holyhead. Anecdotally during our site visit we were approached by a number of local residents to enquire if the building was to be reopened and sharing their sense of frustration at it having been closed for so long. The Facebook site Old Holyhead also expresses similar sentiments when visitors comment on old photographs taken outside a thriving and busy market. The continued closure of this key building has a detrimental effect on the town and the moral of the town. The regeneration of the venue is likely to have a positive impact and provide a focal point for the continued promotion of the heritage of Holyhead.

The Market Hall is currently listed at Grade II. This is the most common listing grade and covers 92% of Listed Buildings. It requires that buildings be “nationally important and of special interest”. In light of the research undertaken during this assessment it would seem appropriate that the current grade be re-examined to investigate the possibility that the Market Hall be listed at Grade II* as evidence presented indicates that the structure is of more than special interest and much of the archive information was not presented when the original designation was applied.

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Archive Material (Sourced from Anglesey Archives, Llangefni)

WDAD/46 Undated Plans for Proposed Boxing/Wrestling Ring at Holyhead Market

WM/1568/5 1948 Penrhos Estate Sale Catalogue Including Market Hall

WM/1822 1880's Holyhead Water Works Share Certificate

WM/2406 1847 Water Works Clauses Act

WSD/421 1769 Print of the Market Place, Holyhead

WSM381 Market Hall Pre-1906 Showing Stalls in Area at Front of Market

New Acquisition Uncatalogued Market Hall Pre-1906 Showing Stalls and Mobile Fryer in Area at Front of Market

1888 First Edition Large Scale Ordnance Survey Map

1890 First Edition Ordnance Survey Map

1900 Second Edition Ordnance Survey Map

1924 Third Edition Ordnance Survey Map

Archive Material (Sourced from Bangor University Archives)

Penrhos VI 168 1856 Plan of the Holyhead Market Hall

Archive Material (Sourced from Gwynedd Archives)

XD2/24124 Holyhead Mechanics Institute Letter to Lord Newborough

Archive Material (Sourced from RCAHMW)

881207/15 Market Hall from Paper Heading in the Sansbury Collection

881526/16 Postcard of Market Hall Postmarked 21st March 1906

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Appendix A.

Listed Building Description – Holyhead Market Hall

Authority	Isle of Anglesey	Grade	II
Community	Holyhead	Date Listed	4/24/92
Locality		Last Amended	7/25/94
Post Code		Grid Ref	224630 382670
		Record No.	5763

Name **MARKET HALL, STANLEY STREET (W SIDE)**

Formerly Listed As

Street No, Name

Street Side

Location

In town centre on sloping site. Set back and above the street behind single storey shops; side and rear elevations to Summer Hill and Trearddur Square.

History

Dated 1855, designed by J Edwards Thomas (?), Builder - see inscribed surround to clock face. Commissioned by Hon W O Stanley of Penrhos to succeed the old Market Cross. The access off Stanley Street was remodelled in 1906.

Exterior

Substantial public building, storeyed at the downhill end and built of local green shaley rubble with buff sandstone dressings and slate roofs. Jacobethan frontage distinctive for its mullion and transom windows and shaped gables, the central bay of which is taller, advanced and more richly detailed. Central gable has rounded apex with faceted keystone while the flanking gables have ogee treatment. Plinth, quoins, gable parapets and window surrounds contribute to a mid C19 facade of more than usual interest. The 3-window central bay has clock face set within inscribed roundel; the windows have (?) Robert Smythson type faceted and buttoned panels; the central window has projecting stone architrave with weathered Welsh and English inscriptions and coats of arms to top. Tripartite main entrance below with chamfered semicircular arches, keystones and imposts together with original (dated 1855) wrought iron gates manufactured by Ellis Williams Black Bridge Foundry, Holyhead. Cross-frame windows to outer bays with similar arched doorways. Right hand side, which has been reroofed, has small-pane window with chamfered jambs and stone bracketed base to a former balcony; cross-frame window further on over modern doorway; two blocked windows retaining surrounds beyond and a fine semicircular arched doorway as on the front. 3-gables to top (rear) with simple roundels. On the left hand side the red brick chimneys have been cut down; otherwise similar detail including arched doorway towards top end. In town centre on sloping site. Set back and above the street behind single storey shops; side and rear elevations to Summer Hill and Trearddur Square.

History: Dated 1855; designed by J Edwards Thomas (?), Builder - see inscribed surround to clock face. Commissioned by Hon W O Stanley of Penrhos to succeed the old Market Cross. The access of Stanley Street was remodelled in 1906.

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arched doorway towards top end.

Interior: Retains iron staircase with scrolled newel and straight balusters.

Listed for its importance to Holyhead and as a prominent mid C19 town centre building with a well preserved facade.

Reference: D Lloyd Hughes & D Williams, Holyhead: The Story of a Port, 1981, p103.

Interior

Retains iron staircase with scrolled newel and straight balusters.

Listed

Listed for its importance to Holyhead and as a prominent mid C19 town centre building with a well preserved facade.

Reference

D Lloyd Hughes & D Williams, Holyhead: The Story of a Port, 1981, p103.

Appendix B.

Holyhead Market Hall - Photographic Survey



Plate 1. Market Hall Front Elevation



Plate 2. Market Hall Front Elevation



Plate 3. Market Hall
Front Elevation Central
Portion



Plate 4. Front Elevation
Southern Doorway



Plate 5. Front Elevation Central Doorways



Plate 6. Front Elevation Northern Doorway



Plate 7. Carved Detail Around Clock



Plate 8. Window
Detail Central Element



Plate 9. Carved Window
Detail Central Element

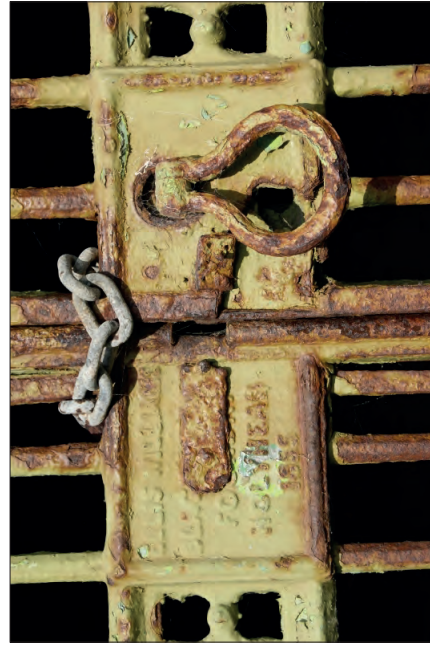


Plate 10. Gates from Ellis Williams, Black
Bridge Foundry, Holyhead, 1855



Plate 11. Gates from Ellis Williams, Black
Bridge Foundry, Holyhead, 1855



Plate 12. Market Hall South Facing Elevation



Plate 13. Market Hall South Facing Elevation



Plate 14. Market Hall South Facing Elevation



Plate 15. Market Hall South Facing Elevation



Plate 16. Market Hall South Facing Elevation

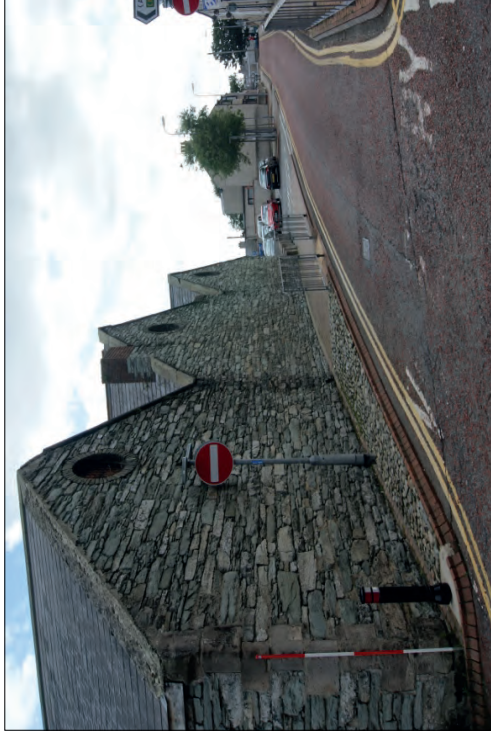


Plate 17. Market Hall Rear Elevation

Plates 18 - 22.
Market Hall
Rear Elevation

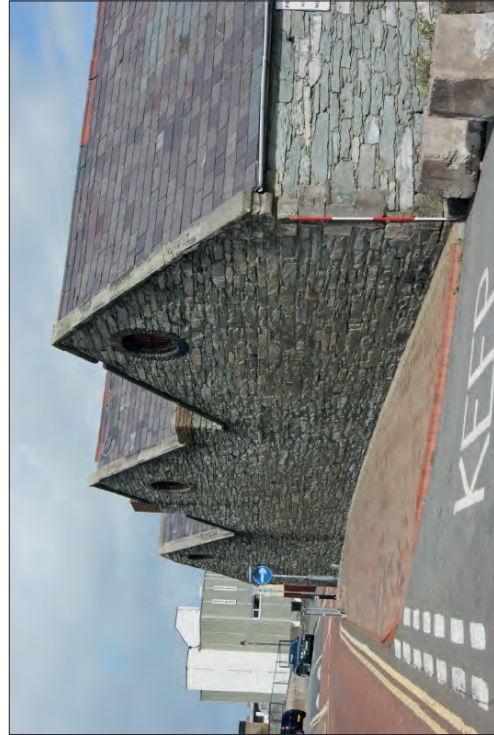




Plate 23. Market Hall
North Facing Elevation



Plate 24. Window Sill Detail -
North Facing Elevation



Plate 25. Blocked
Window in North
Facing Elevation

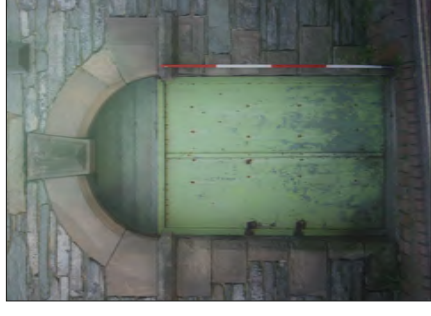


Plate 26. Upper
Doorway in North
Facing Elevation



Plate 27. Window Sill Detail -
North Facing Elevation



Plate 28. Lower Doorway in North
Facing Elevation. Ceramic Tiled Steps



Plate 29. Lower
Doorway in North
Facing Elevation



Plate 30. Blocked
Window in North
Facing Elevation



Plate 31. Market Hall
Interior Southern Room



Plate 32. Market Hall Interior
Central Room Showing
Original Staircase



Plate 33. Market Hall Interior
Central Room



Plate 34. Market Hall Interior
Central Room Showing
Blocked Archways



Plate 35. Market Hall Interior
Central Room Showing
Ceiling Detail



Plate 36. Market Hall
Interior Northern Room



Plate 37. Market Hall
Later Walkway



Plate 38.
Walkway
Date Plaque