

# CASTLERING ARCHAEOLOGY

REPORT NO. 241

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**1-3 OXFORD ARCADE**

**PANT-YR-AFON**

**PENMAENMAWR**

**CONWY**

---

**HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING**

**AUGUST 2006**

Event PRN. 45974

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**CASTLERING ARCHAEOLOGY    REPORT NO. 241**

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**1-3 OXFORD ARCADE  
PANT-YR-AFON  
PENMAENMAWR  
CONWY**

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**HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING**

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**CONTRACTED BY:    ANWYL CONSTRUCTION COMPANY LTD  
ANWYL HOUSE, MONA TERRACE, PRINCE EDWARD AVENUE,  
RHYL, DENBIGHSHIRE. LL12 4PH**

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**UNDERTAKEN BY**

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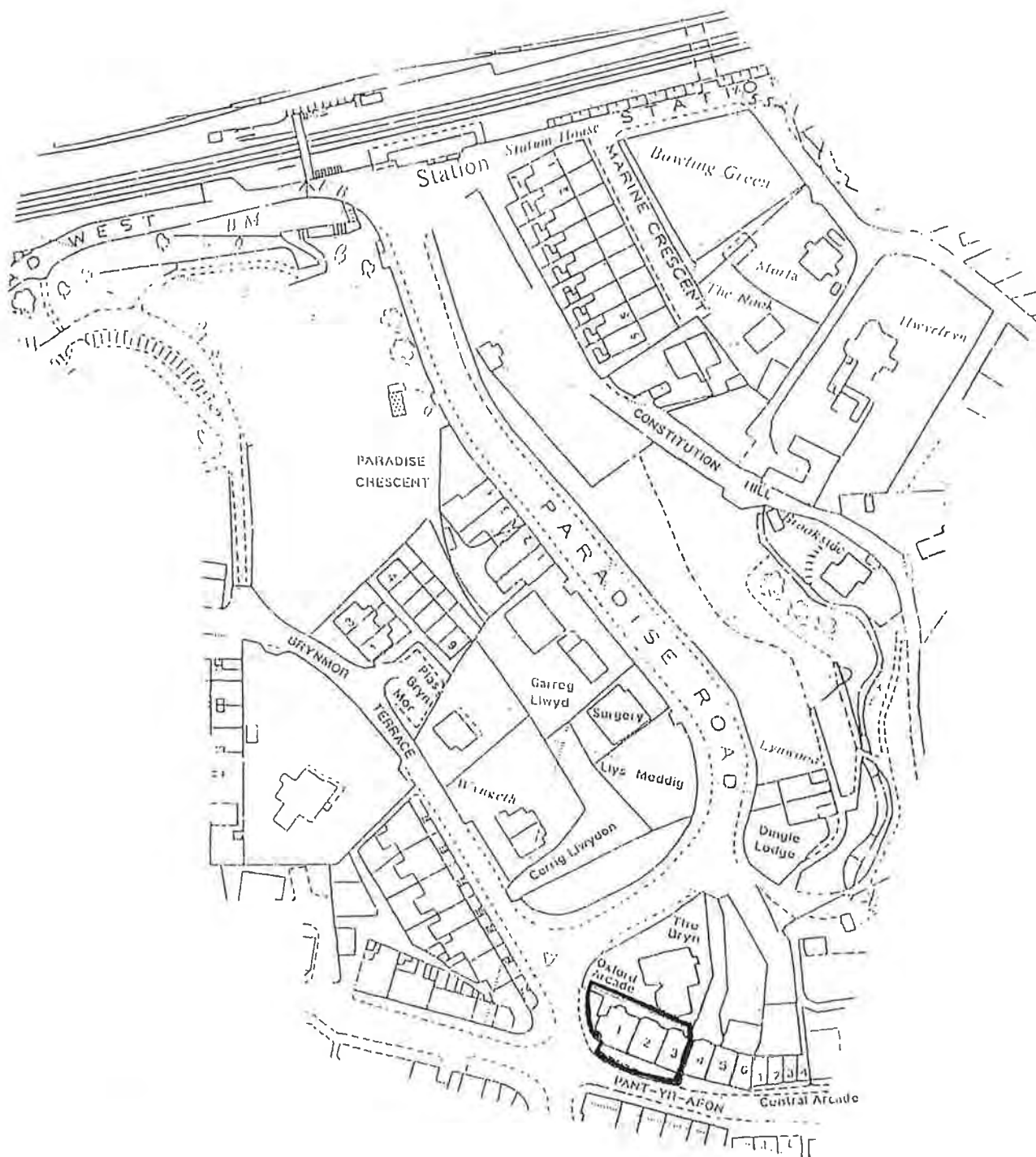


Fig. 1 Site location plan.

Scale 1:1250

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## SYNOPSIS

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This report contains the results of historic building recording undertaken in August 2006, at Oxford Arcade, Penmaenmawr. Oxford Arcade was commissioned in 1882 by local photographer John Jamblin. It was designed and built in the same year by the architect Nelson and included a public hall for the town. The hall occupied a large room on the first floor of the building with access via two concrete staircases. Jamblin's public hall was later used as a cinema which appears to have been above Owen's Confectioner's. A series of small shops continued to occupy the premises at street level until the building became unstable.

Plans for the restoration of the property are part of the Townscape Heritage Initiative set up in 2004, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Conwy Council and CADW. The four-year scheme aims to preserve and enhance the distinctive character of historic buildings, particularly Oxford Arcade in order to restore the seaside town centre to its former Victorian glory.

The railway brought Victorian holiday makers to the coast and the wealthy established holiday homes there. The most famous holiday maker was William Ewart Gladstone, the Liberal Prime Minister, a regular visitor to Penmaenmawr. Gladstone was first introduced to the town in the 1850s by Charles Derbyshire, the local quarry owner who had bought Pendyffryn Hall. Gladstone lived at Hawarden and could arrive by train within one hour.

With an increase in holiday makers, the town began to expand above the coastal road in the 1860s and a new shopping area was created on Pant-yr-Afon. Oxford Arcade fronts Pant-yr-Afon and was constructed in a Classical style which had become a tradition for buildings since Georgian times. The building is a fine example of how street frontage shops could be incorporated into the general façade of a building.

The Arcade building is currently in a poor state of repair, many of the windows have been boarded up and the premises are supported by scaffolding. Internally the building is considered to be unsafe and there is no access to the cellars, the front sections of which are vaulted where they extend under the pavement. The most historically interesting room in the building is the one most severely affected by natural decay. Jamblin's former public hall is completely scaffolded out. The scaffolding is necessary to support the roof which is in danger of falling in. The roof was constructed to be supported by four wooden trusses which have subsequently failed.

A photographic record of the building has been made 35mm and digital format. The current work has ensured that a record has been made of the buildings in their present state, prior to the restoration work.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

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1.1 Consultation in 2004 regarding Planning application No. 0/2866 to convert the retail unit, disused cinema and flat at property known as 1-3 Oxford Arcade, Pant-yr-Afon, Penmaenmawr was referred to the Planning Archaeologist at Gwynedd Archaeological Trust. The site is located within the town centre of Penmaenmawr at the junction of Pan-yr-Afon and Paradise Road (*Fig. 1*). The building lies within the town Conservation area and is considered to be historically significant. Consequently, in August 2004, Ashley Batten, Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, responded that prior to development a programme of historic building recording should be undertaken.

1.2 Proposed works will comprise restoration of the property, the demolition of a modern rear extension to the property, alterations to the fenestration and the installation of roof lights. Where appropriate, original features of the building will be reinstated and the works will respect the setting, form, materials and character of the original buildings on site. The development is part of the Townscape Heritage Initiative set up in 2004, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Conwy Council and CADW. The four-year scheme aims to preserve and enhance the distinctive character of historic buildings, particularly Oxford Arcade in order to restore the seaside town centre to its former Victorian glory.

1.3 In August 2006, Castlering Archaeology was contracted by Anwyl Construction Company Ltd to undertake historic building recording at Oxford Arcade following negotiations with Tarmaster Jones Architects, Deganwy.

The works were undertaken in August 2006 and the results form the basis of this report.

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## 2. AIMS

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2.1 The aim of the building recording is to provide a comprehensive historical record of the buildings / structures on site, prior to works on site. A rapid desk-based study has been undertaken in order to place the buildings in their historic context.

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## 3. METHODOLOGY

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3.1 The building recording has been undertaken within the broad specifications defined by RCAHME Level 2 Survey (2006.). Castlering Archaeology has abided by the *IFA Standard and Guidance for the Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings or Structures*.

### **Desk-based study**

3.2 The desk-based study has consulted relevant readily available records held by Penmaenmawr Library, Llandudno Library Local Studies Section and Conwy Record Office, Llandudno and relevant sources are listed in Section 7 of this report.

### **Photographic survey**

3.3 A photographic record of the building has been made 35mm and digital format. A selection of the photography is included for illustration in the report and the full photographic catalogue will be deposited at RCAHMW, Aberystwyth together with a copy of the report. Current photography has been restricted by the

scaffolding already in place on the building, particularly to support the roof structure above the former cinema. External photography undertaken by Tarmaster Jones Architects in 2005, prior to the erection of scaffolding is included as *Plates 3-5, 8 & 9* of this report.

#### Measured survey

3.4 A measured drawn record of the buildings has been undertaken by Tarmaster Jones Architects and the plans and elevations are included as *Figs 5 – 11* of this report.

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## 4. HISTORIC BACKGROUND

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4.1 Before the construction of the Chester to Holyhead Railway, Penmaenmawr was a small quarrying village in the Parish of Dwygyfylchi, served by a turnpike road across the mountains until that was replaced by Telford's coastal road, engineered in 1825. The advent of the railway in 1848 and the station in 1849 transformed the village.

4.2 The railway brought Victorian holiday makers to the coast and the wealthy established holiday homes there. The most famous holiday maker was William Ewart Gladstone, the Liberal Prime Minister, a regular visitor to Penmaenmawr. Gladstone was first introduced to the town in the 1850s by Charles Derbyshire, the local quarry owner who had bought Pendyffryn Hall. Gladstone lived at Hawarden and could arrive by train within one hour.

4.3 The town began to expand above the coastal road in the 1860s and a new shopping area was created on Pant-yr-Afon. Part of the new shopping area, was Oxford Arcade, a building commissioned in 1882 by local entrepreneur John Jamblin to include a public hall for the town. It was designed and built in the same year by the architect Nelson. Jamblin was a local photographer, who moved to Penmaenmawr from England. He set up a studio at Pant-yr-Afon prior to building Oxford Arcade. The first cartographic record of the building is the 1890 first edition OS map (*Fig. 2*) recording the property as 'Oxford Hall'. Jamblin apparently was left penniless after the costs of constructing the building and a public fund was started to help him. The fund was reportedly started by Gladstone with a donation of £5 (*Llandudno Local Studies Library local history folder*).

4.4 Trade directories throw some light on the past occupants of the Arcade. The directories were published from the 1820s for North Wales, but until coverage widened in the 1880s, only large towns were included. Porter's 1886 Postal Directory for Caernarvonshire records

John Jamblin, Photographer at Oxford Arcade,  
George Henry Brown, Fishmonger, Poulterer and Game dealer at No. 4 Oxford Arcade,  
Jacob Williams, the Original Bazaar at Oxford Arcade,  
John William Clarke, Confectioner & Baker at 1, Oxford Arcade and  
R.C. Evans, Grocer, Italian Warehouseman, Oxford Arcade.

By 1935 (*Cope*), D.H. Owen, Confectioner, has Refreshment Rooms at 1, Oxford Arcade and  
T. Roberts has the Star Supply Stores at Oxford Arcade, Pent-yr-Afon.

4.5 Jamblin's public hall was later used as a cinema which appears to have been on the first floor over Owen's Confectioner's, until the Crescent Cinema opened. A series of small shops appear to have continued to occupy the premises at street level until the building became unstable.

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## 5. THE EXISTING BUILDING

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5.1 The building is currently in a poor state of repair, many of the windows have been boarded up and the premises are supported by scaffolding. Internally the building is considered to be unsafe and there is no access to the cellars, the front sections of which are vaulted where they extend under the pavement. The most historically interesting room in the building is the one most severely affected by natural decay. Jamblin's former Public Hall, later utilised as the cinema on the first floor is completely scaffolded out. The scaffolding is necessary to support the roof which is in danger of falling in (*Plates 14 & 15*).

5.2 The first floor room has boarded floors and ceilings. The roof was constructed to be supported by four wooden trusses which have subsequently failed. In the southeast corner of the room, the projection room can be seen right of a balcony area (*Fig. 7 & Plate 14*). The balcony and projection room overhang a concrete staircase (*Plate 16*) which provided access to the cinema from street level on Pant-yr-Afon. A second concrete staircase rises on the west side of the building, providing access to the cinema and continuing to the second and attic floors. Two pairs of panelled doors provided access to the cinema from the top of the east and west staircases (*Plate 17*).

5.3 The first floor room contains few architectural features. A series of three air vents are located at head-height along the long walls (*Plate 19*) and a water hydrant is encased in a wooden cupboard on the south long wall (*Plate 20*). The first floor room will be lost during the conversion of the property into self-contained flats. Internally the remainder of the building comprises a series of small rooms, which are in a poor state of repair and bear no architectural features.

5.4 The exterior of the building is entirely cement rendered over brick below a slate roof with terracotta ridge tiles and a central cupola. In general the early use of concrete and / or cement as a construction material in the building bears testament to the quarry industry at Penmaenmawr. Charles Derbyshire's 19<sup>th</sup> quarry had gained a reputation not just for high quality granite to provide stone setts and ballast for the railway builders but also for the provision of stone suitable for making concrete.

5.5 The west elevation and octagonal tower are painted white with blue trim and a brick chimney rises up the west elevation (*Plates 10 & 11*). The two gables that project south at roof level are located above the two concrete staircases that flank the first floor cinema room. The six windows in the front (*south*) elevation have terracotta tiled panels below (*Plate 6*). Fenestration comprises wooden sashes but many of these have been boarded over. Street elevation fenestration is flush to the building and three bay windows project from the rear of the building.

5.6 The sloping arcade roof depicted on *Plate 2* has long since been removed but the ten cast iron piers that once supported the canopy remain in situ (*located on Fig. 6*). Prior to plans for the restoration, four shops occupied the ground floor between the two staircase entrances (*Plate 6*).

5.7 Overall the building presents a sturdiness typical of buildings of this era. Economic and social change in the Victorian period had brought about a demand for social buildings, many of which were privately commissioned. Wherever possible local materials were used but the advent of the railways enabled the transportation of building materials much easier. Bricks were used on Oxford Arcade in an area where previously the local stone would have been used for all purposes. Welsh slate had become popular replacing tiles in many parts of the country. Glass and window tax had been finally abolished by 1851, which favoured the inclusion of large windows. By the 1870s period, terracotta had become a fashionable decorative material. The Victorian concern for clean air is reflected in the air vents and cupola included in the Arcade. Oxford Arcade was constructed in Classical style which had become a tradition for buildings since Georgian times. The addition of the covered street walkway was made possible by the use of cast-iron piers, which had become increasingly fashionable in the mid-Victorian period. The architect has also added some finery in the form of the terracotta panels, pilastered doorways and architrave.

5.8 The building is a fine example of how street frontage shops could be incorporated into the general façade of a building. As part of the current works original features of the building will be reinstated and the works will respect the setting, form, materials and character of the original buildings on site. The report has ensured that a record has been made of the current condition of the building prior to works on site.



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## 6. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Castlering Archaeology would like to thank Anwyl Construction Company Ltd. for contracting the work and John Bond of Anwyls who accompanied the site visit; Bruce Fettis, Tarmaster Jones Architects, Deganwy, for negotiating the contract; Ashley Batten, Gwynedd Archaeological Trust; Mrs Priscilla Williams, Secretary of Penmaenmawr Historical Society and staff at Conwy Record Office, Llandudno.

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## 7. SOURCES

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Dixon, Roger & Methusias, Stefan, 1978, *Victorian Architecture*. London: Thames & Hudson

Porter's 1886 Postal Directory for Caernarvonshire

Cope's 1935 North Wales Directories

1889 first edition Ordnance Survey 25" map

Conwy Archives, Penmaenmawr photographic collection

Llandudno Library local studies folders

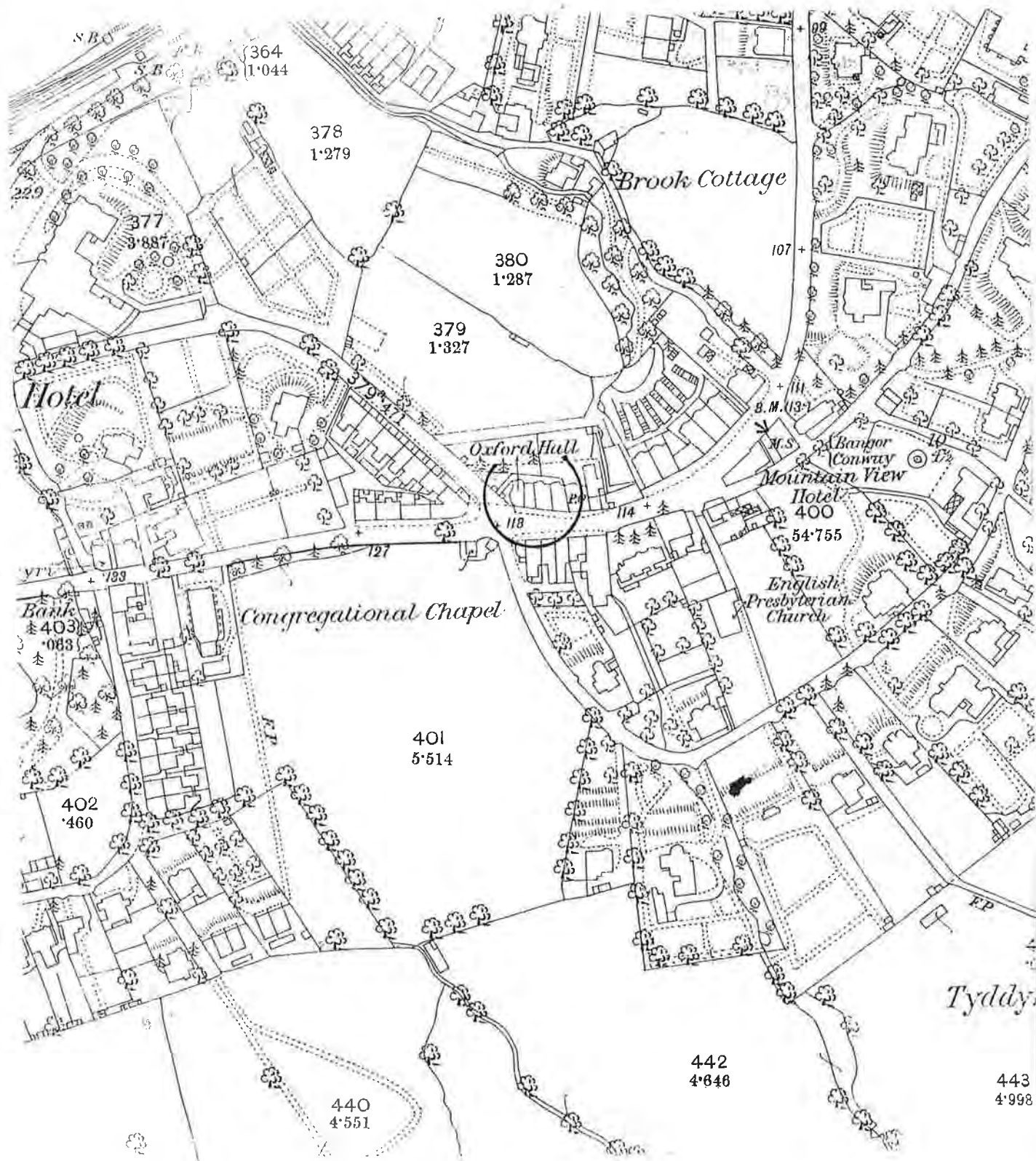


Fig. 2 Extract from the 1889 Ordnance Survey 25" map  
recording 'Oxford Hall'

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**J. W. CLARKE,**  
**» CONFECTIONER «**  
**REFRESHMENT ROOMS,**  
**1 OXFORD ARCADE, PENMAENMAWR.**

Birthday  
 AND  
 Wedding  
 Cakes  
 TO ORDER.



» Brides' «  
 Cakes  
 TO ORDER.

*Home-made Meat Pies, Biscuits & Cakes of all descriptions*  
*CELEBRATED POTTED BEEF.*  
*Cadbury's & French Chocolates. Huntley & Palmer's Biscuits.*

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Entries in Porter's 1886 Postal Directory of Caernarvonshire

Fig. 3 above: J.W. Clarke, Confectioner at 1, Oxford Arcade

Fig. 4 below: R.C. Evans, Grocer & Italian Warehouseman at Oxford Arcade

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**R. C. EVANS,**  
**Grocer & Italian Warehouseman,**  
**Oxford Arcade, Penmaenmawr.**

WILTSHIRE HAMS & BACON, HOME-CURED DITTO, SMOKED DITTO.  
 FRESH EGGS AND BUTTER DAILY.

CROSSE & BLACKWELL'S PICKLES AND JAMS.

Clotted Cream and Cream Cheese fresh daily.

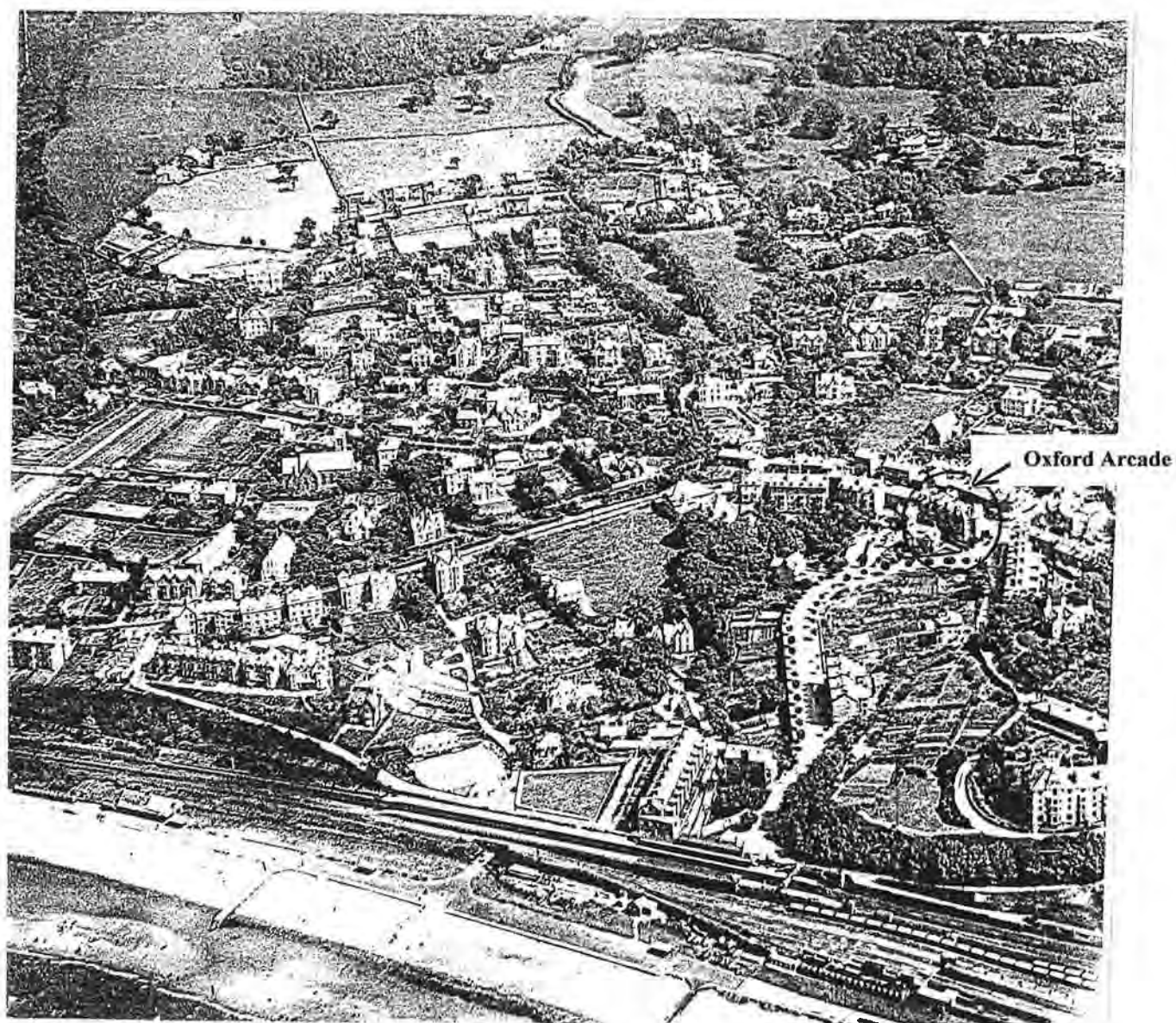
PEEK, FREAN & CO.'S BISCUITS, &c. FRESH BREAD DAILY.

---

**FANCY GOODS DEPOT.**

COALPORT WELSH COSTUME CHINA, MINTON CHINA, EARTHEN-  
 WARE, GLASS, TERRA COTTA FIGURES, &c. &c.

**CIGARS, PIPES, CIGARETTES, &c. &c.**



**Plate 1    Site location**

*(undated aerial photograph – Llandudno Library, local studies collection)*



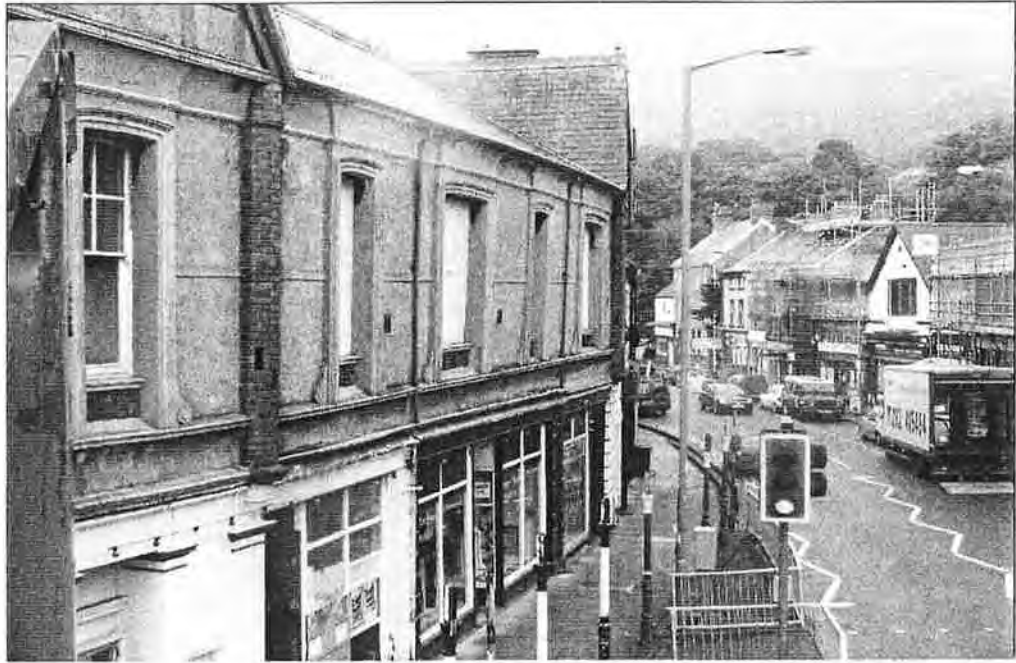
Plate 2 above: Late 19<sup>th</sup> century view of Oxford Arcade fronting the High Street (*Pant-yr-Afon*)

(*Conwy Archives Collection*)

Plate 3 below: Oxford Arcade front elevation photographed by Tarmaster Jones, Architects (2005).







**Plate 4 above:** Front elevation detail photographed by Tarmaster Jones, Architects in 2005.

**Plate 5 below:** Roof detail viewed from the west. Tarmaster Jones, Architects in 2005.





**Plate 6 above:** Front elevation of Oxford Arcade, view from the southwest, August 2006.

**Plate 7 below:** Front elevation of Oxford Arcade, view from the east, August 2006





**Plate 8 above:** Rear elevation of Oxford Arcade, photographed by Tarmaster Jones Architects in 2005

**Plate 9 below:** Rear elevation of Oxford Arcade, view from northwest, August 2006







Plate 10 *above*: Side (west) elevation of Oxford Arcade, photographed by Tarmaster Jones Architects, 2005

Plate 11 *below*: Side elevation of Oxford Arcade, August 2006





**Plate 12 *above*:** Front elevation window detail, August 2006

**Plate 13 *below*:** Front elevation former cinema ground floor entrance, August 2006







**Plate 14 above:** Oxford Arcade First floor room – Jamblin’s Parish Hall – later used as a cinema. View towards the east side of the room & the projection room in the top right corner.

**Plate 15 below:** First floor former cinema room. View towards the west side of the room.





**Plate 16 *above*:** Cinema concrete staircase that formed the eastern entrance off Pant-yr-Afon.

**Plate 17 *below*:** Door detail. A pair of double doors formed the east and west entrances to the cinema.





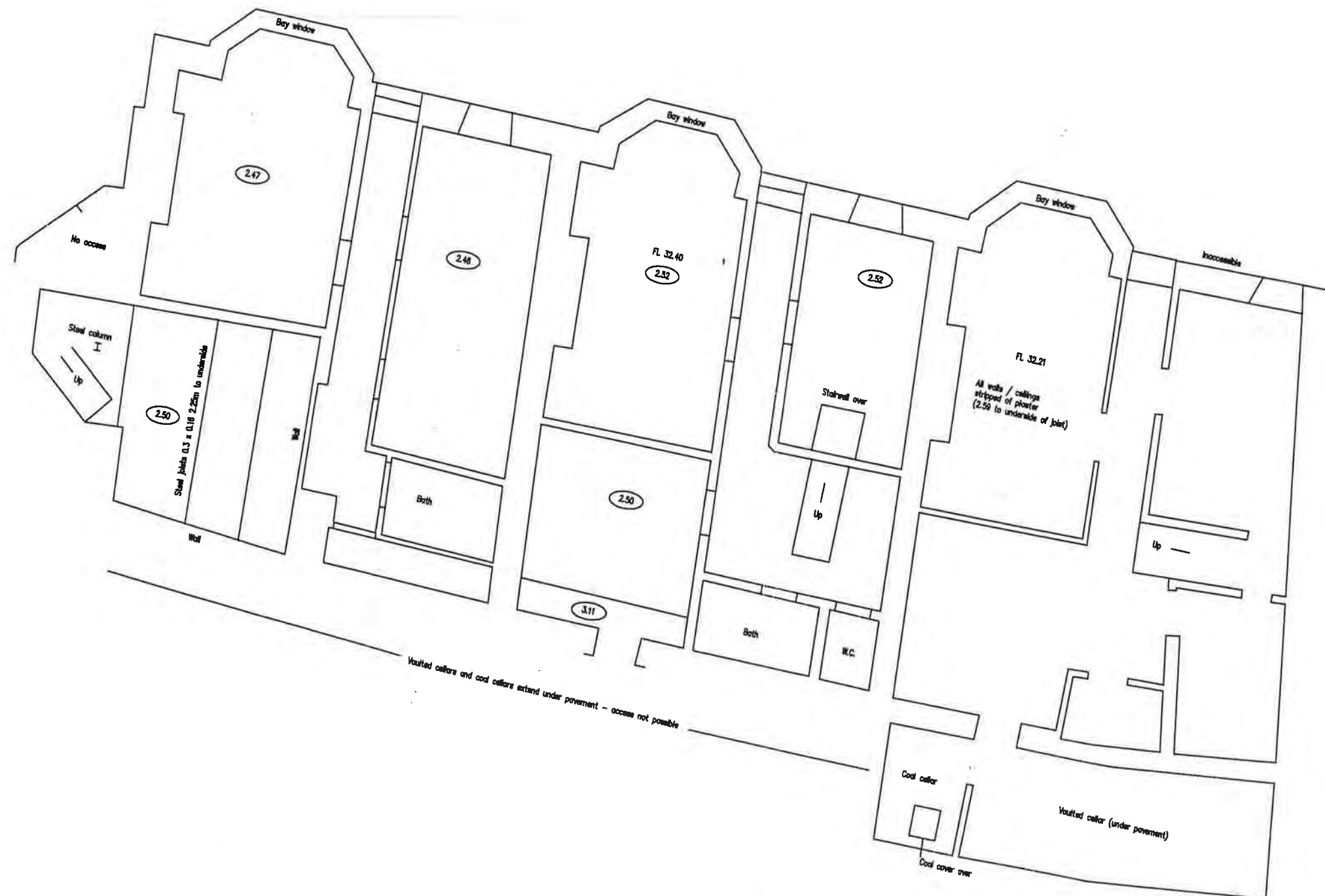
**Plate 18 above left:** Cinema / hall, example of the central heating system.

**Plate 19 above right:** Cinema / hall, one of a series of six air vents – three located on each long wall.

**Plate 20 below:** Cinema water pipe, presumably a fire safety requisite.




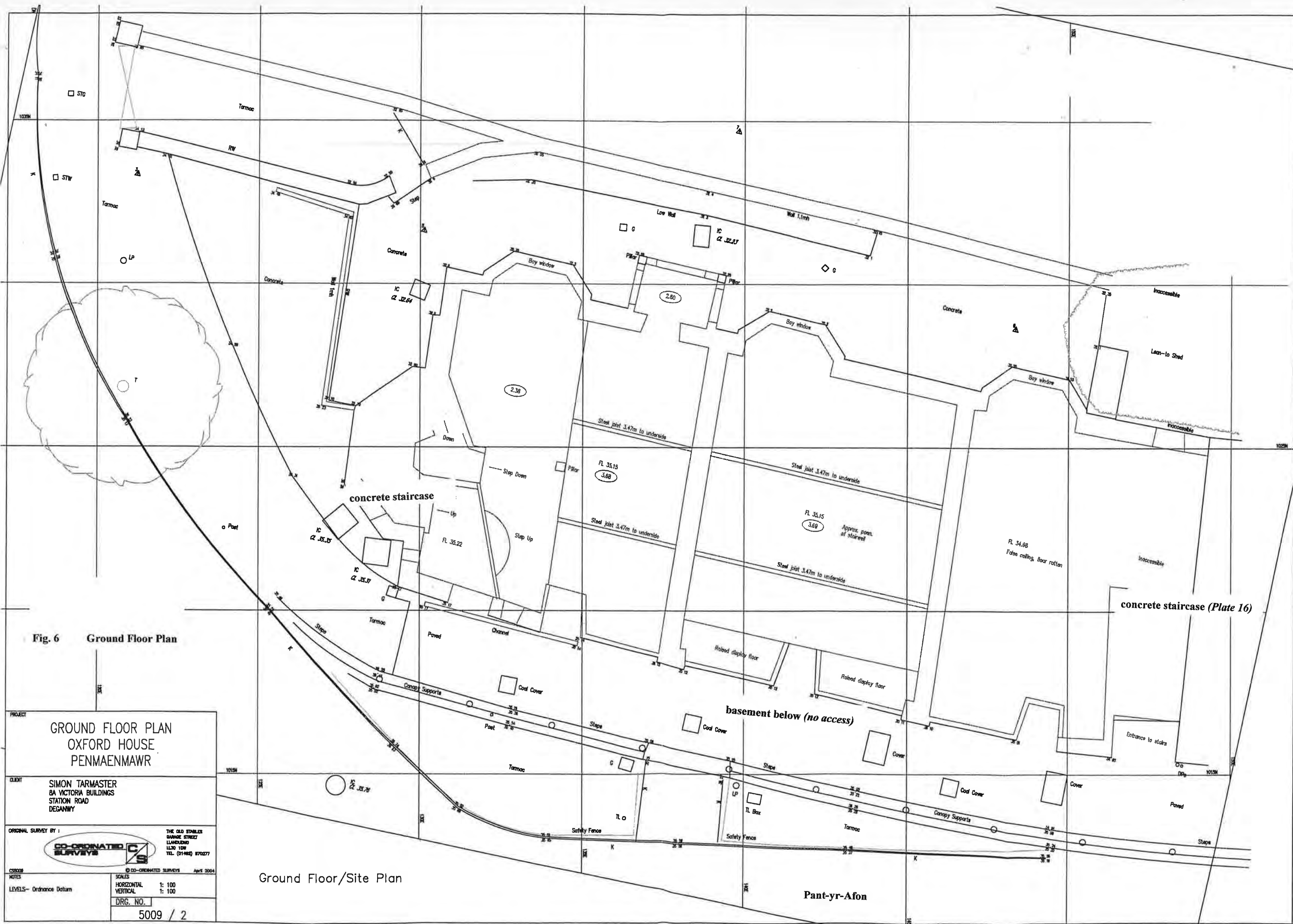




**Fig. 5 Basement Plan**

**Reproduced for reference only**

PROJECT		<p align="center"><b>BASEMENT OXFORD HOUSE PENMAENMAWR</b></p>	
CLIENT		<p><b>SIMON TARMASTER 8A VICTORIA BUILDINGS STATION ROAD DEGANNY</b></p>	
ORIGINAL SURVEY BY :		<p align="right">THE OLD STABLES GARAGE STREET LLANDUDNO LL30 1DW TEL: (01492) 670277</p>	
		<p align="center">© CO-ORDINATED SURVEYS      April 2004</p>	
NOTES		<p><b>SCALES</b></p> <p><b>HORIZONTAL      1: 100</b></p> <p><b>VERTICAL        1: 100</b></p>	
LEVELS— Ordnance Datum		<p><b>DRG. NO.</b></p> <p align="center"><b>5009 / 1</b></p>	



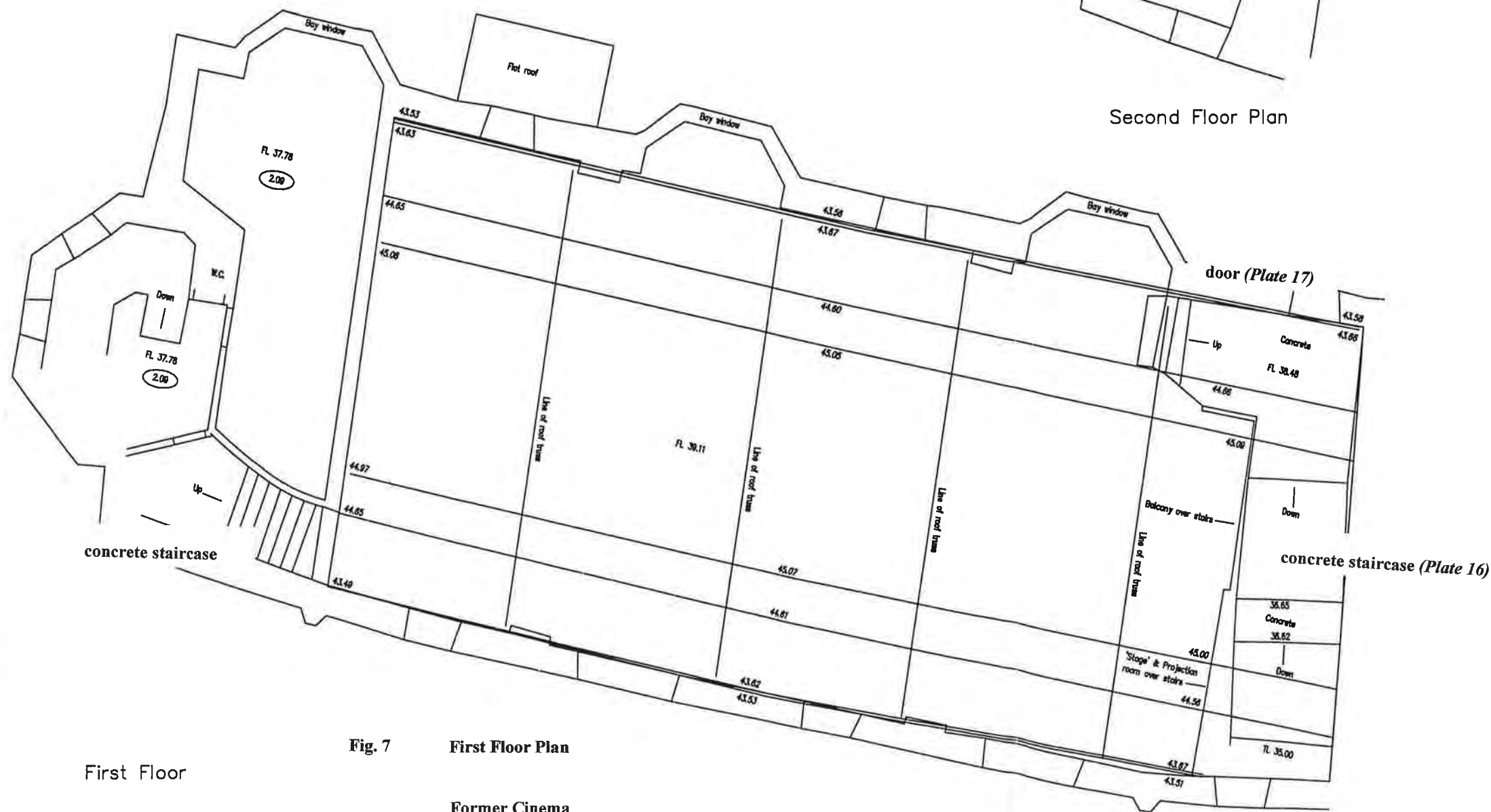
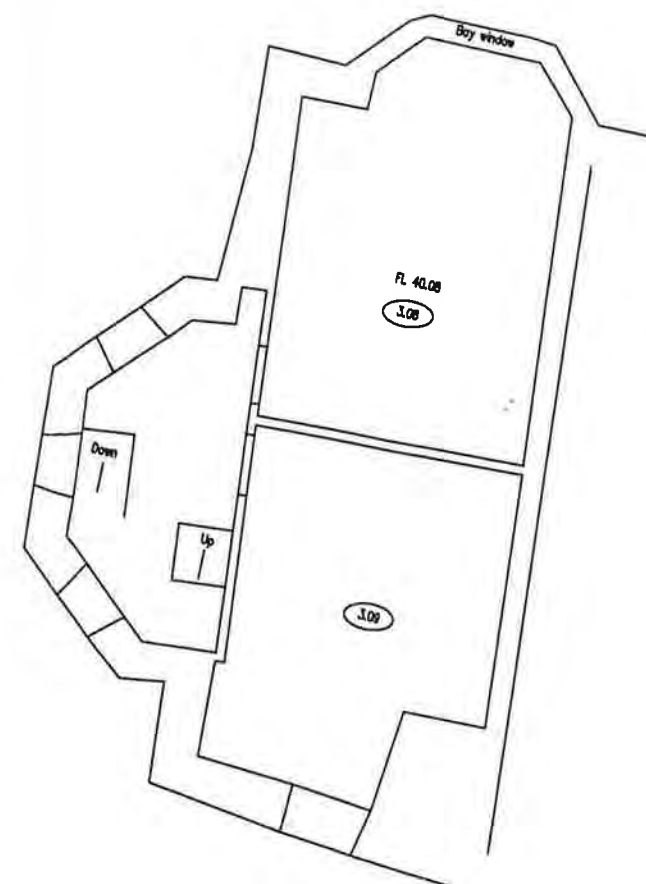
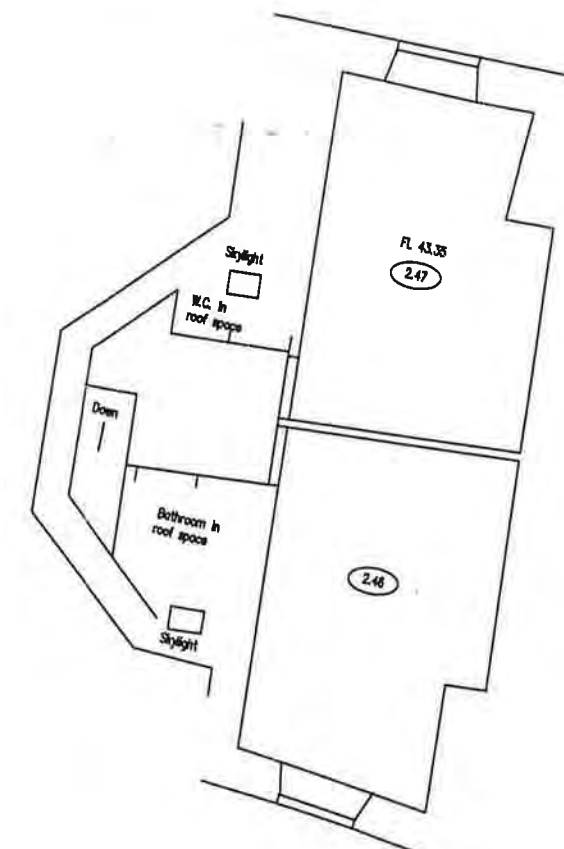



Fig. 7 First Floor Plan  
Former Cinema



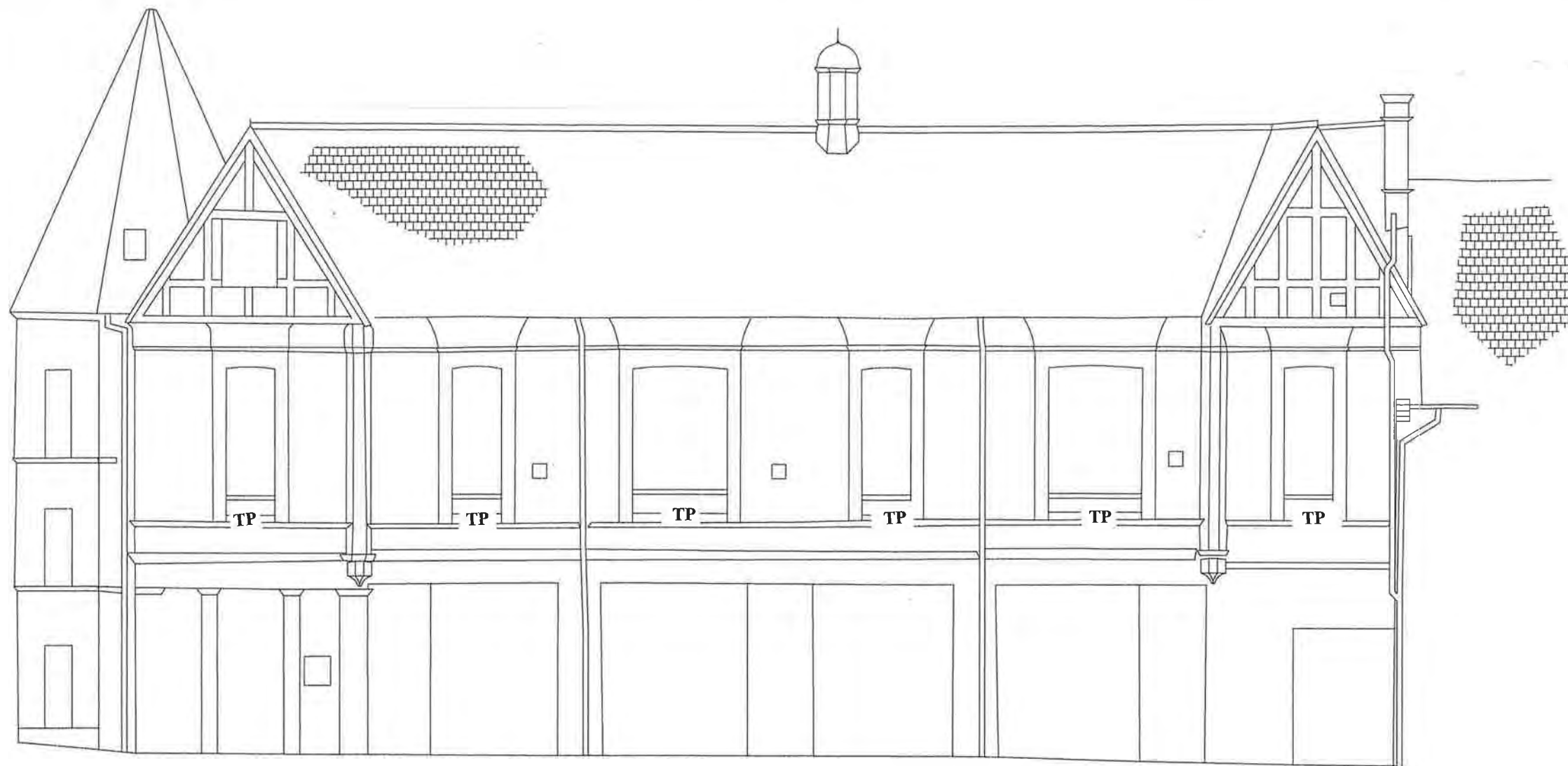
Second Floor Plan



Attic Plan

PROJECT	
FIRST, SECOND & ATTIC FLOOR PLAN OXFORD HOUSE PENMAENMAWR	
CLIENT	
SIMON TARMASER BA VICTORIA BUILDINGS STATION ROAD DEGANWY	
ORIGINAL SURVEY BY :	
	
<small>THE OLD STABLES GARAGE STREET LLANDUDNO LL50 1DH TEL. (01482) 870277</small>	
CS2008	© CO-ORDINATED SURVEYS April 2004
NOTES	SCALES
LEVELS- Ordnance Datum	HORIZONTAL 1: 100
	VERTICAL 1: 100
	DRG. NO.
	5009 / 3/4





Front Elevation

Fig. 8 Front elevation to Pant-yr-Afon

TP - Terracotta panels

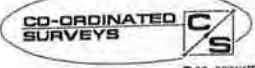
PROJECT		<b>FRONT ELEVATION OXFORD HOUSE PENMAENMAWR</b>	
CLIENT		<b>SIMON TARMASTER 8A VICTORIA BUILDINGS STATION ROAD DEBNIWY</b>	
ORIGINAL SURVEY BY :		 THE OLD STABLES GARAGE STREET LLANDUDNO LL30 1DW TEL: (01492) 870277	
CS2009		CD-ORDINATED SURVEYS April 2004	
NOTES		SCALES HORIZONTAL 1: 100 VERTICAL 1: 100	
LEVELS- Ordnance Datum		Dwg. NO. <b>5009 / 5</b>	



Fig. 9 Rear elevation

PROJECT		<b>REAR ELEVATION OXFORD HOUSE PENMAENMAWR</b>	
CLIENT		<b>SIMON TARMISTER 8A VICTORIA BUILDINGS SUTTON ROAD DEBNEY</b>	
ORIGINAL SURVEY BY :		 <b>CO-ORDINATED SURVEYS</b>	
NOTES		<small>THE OLD STABLES GARAGE STREET LLANDUDNO LL30 1DW TEL: (01482) 870277</small>	
LEVELS- Ordnance Datum		<small>CO-ORDINATED SURVEYS April 2004</small> SCALES HORIZONTAL 1: 100 VERTICAL 1: 100	
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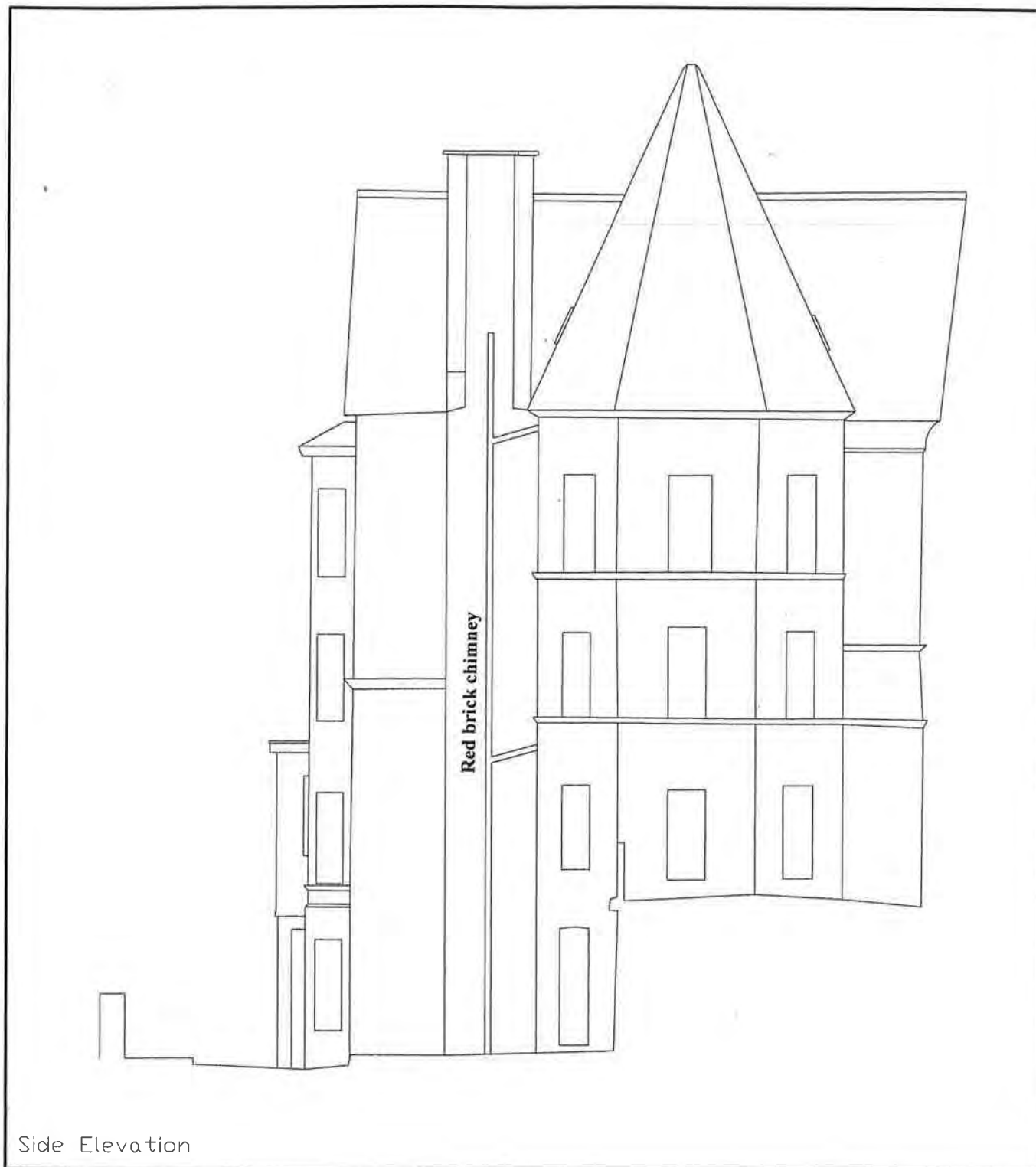


Fig. 10 Side (west) elevation

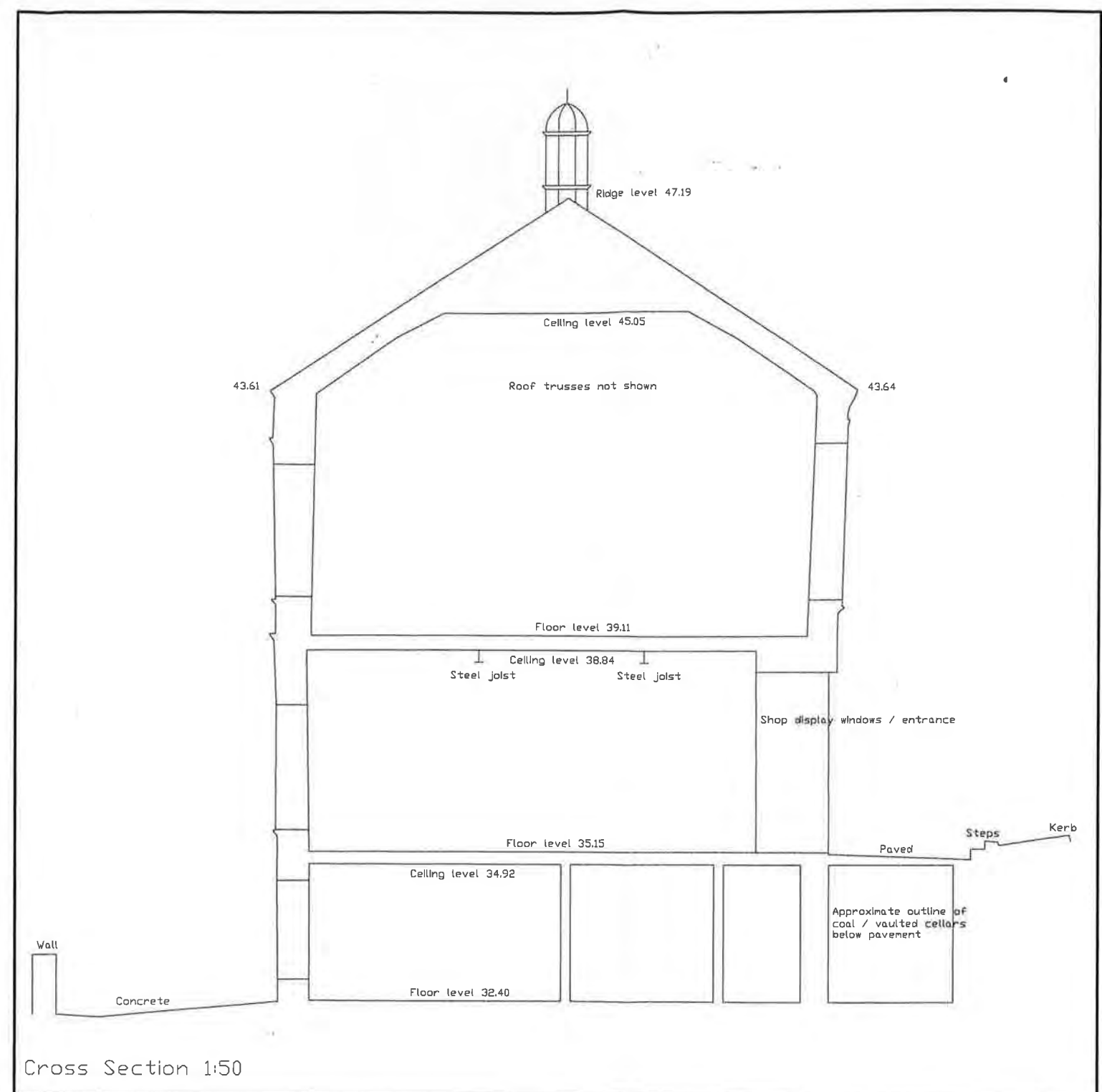



Fig. 11 Cross section

PROJECT		<b>SIDE ELEVATION &amp; SECTION OXFORD HOUSE PENMAENMAWR</b>	
CLIENT		<b>SIMON TARMISTER 21 VICTORIA BUILDINGS SEIXON ROAD DEBANY</b>	
ORIGINAL SURVEY BY :		 <b>CO-ORDINATED SURVEYS</b>	
NOTES		THE OLD STABLES GARAGE STREET LLANDUDNO LL30 10W TEL (01492) 870277	
LEVELS - Ordnance Datum		SCALES HORIZONTAL 1: 100 VERTICAL 1: 100	
		DRG. NO. <b>5009 / 7</b>	

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Project Design for Historic Building Recording**

**to be undertaken at**

**Oxford Buildings, Bangor Road, Penmaenmawr**

**Prepared by:**

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**[www.castleringarchaeology.co.uk](http://www.castleringarchaeology.co.uk)**

**July 31st 2006**

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### **1. Introduction**

This project design for historic building recording to be undertaken at Oxford Buildings, Penmaenmawr, prior to works on site, has been prepared by Pat Frost, Consultant Archaeologist, Castlering Archaeology, hereinafter 'the Contractor', following the general practice of archaeological recording of historic buildings in accordance with the broad specifications set out in RCAHMS Level 2 (*RCAHME 1999*).

### **2. Aims**

The programme of work is designed to record the standing buildings on site, prior to the proposed development. The limited desk-based study is designed to place the buildings in their historic context.

### **3. Methodology**

The desk-based study, photographic survey, report preparation and archive deposition will be undertaken by the contractor, who is a Member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists (*MIFA*). The contractor will abide by the *IFA Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology* and *IFA Standard and Guidance for the Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings or Structures*.

### **3.1 Desk-based study**

The desk-based study will consult cartographic and documentary evidence held at Conwy County Archives, Llandudno. The contractor will also consult with Penmaenmawr Historical Society.

### **3.2 Photographic record**

A photographic record will be made of all external and internal elevations of the building in 35mm and digital format, as far as these aims are possible. The contractor is currently informed that the interior of the property is in a poor state of repair, unsafe and scaffolding is in situ, which may prevent internal recording. The opportunity to record any surviving internal features may occur during works on site. The survey will include general shots to place the building in its setting and detailed shots of any noteworthy architectural features. The photographic record will be accompanied by a written description to complement the photographs included in the report.

The full photographic record will be individually labeled and cross-referenced. A set of photographic record sheets comprising the full archive will be deposited at the RCAHMW, Aberystwyth.

## **4. Report**

Following the photographic survey, an illustrated and bound report will be prepared in A4 format. The report will include as a minimum:

- a non-technical summary
- cartographic evidence
- photographic record
- plans where available
- descriptive text
- archive list

An appropriate number of copies of the report will be produced for the client, the local planning authority and interested parties within 10 working days of the completion of the on-site work. A summary of the results of the project will be submitted to CBA Wales for publication in the relevant section of the annual 'Archaeological Notes'.

## **5. Health and Safety**

The Contractor is an affiliated member of CBA and holds Insurance for Public and Employees Liability through the CBA insurance service. Appropriate Health and Safety legislation will be complied with. The Contractor operates according to the recommendations outlined in The Health and Safety Manual of the Standing Conference of Unit Managers (*SCAUM 1991*).

**Pat Frost, Consultant Archaeologist, Castlering Archaeology**

July 31st 2006