

***Survey Commissioned***

***by***

***Mr and Mrs Wickham***

***Surveyed***

***by***

***I.P. Brooks***

***Engineering Archaeological  
Services Ltd***

***Registered in England***

***Nº 2869678***

***Tai Bach, Maenan***

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## **Introduction**

### ***NGR***

**Centred on: SH 78953 68077**

### ***Location and Topography (Figure 1)***

Tai Bach is located on the eastern slopes of the Conwy valley, approximately 1.3 km north of Plas Maenan (Figure 1). The cottage sits at the end of a green lane running past a similar small cottage called Plas Cwta. It occupies a small block of land, the north western end of which is occupied by a small stream which marked the county boundary between Caernarfonshire and Denbighshire. The cottage is aligned approximately north-west to south-east and faces towards the north-east, overlooking the stream.

### ***Archaeological Background***

The cottage is not listed, however it is intended to convert the cottage of Tai Bach into holiday accommodation and therefore the current owners have commissioned this study to inform a planning application for the development.

## ***Aims of the Study***

To record the cottage of Tai Bach before it is developed as a holiday home, thereby contributing to the growing body of information on vernacular built heritage of North Wales.

## **SUMMARY**

Tai Bach is a small, two roomed cottage with a *croglofft*, which is typical of the type of cottage rented to labourers in North Wales. It also has a cow house attached to its south-eastern end. Documentary evidence suggest that the cottage was built before 1772 and was part of the Wynnstay Estate until late nineteenth century when it was sold into private hands.

The building is slightly unusual in that the dividing wall between the two rooms is of stone, removing the need for a central roof truss.

## Methodology

The records of the National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth, the Caernarfonshire Record Office, the Conwy Record Office, the Denbighshire Record Office and the archives section of the University Of Bangor were inspected for relevant records together with the online resources of Gwynedd Historic Environment Record ([www.archwilio.co.uk](http://www.archwilio.co.uk)) and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monument of Wales ([www.coflein.co.uk](http://www.coflein.co.uk)). It was also possible to inspect a range of documents in the ownership of the owners Mr and Mrs Wickham.

A measured sketch plan of the property was made on site with sufficient measurements made to allow a plan of the property to be drawn up in the office.

Photographs were taken with a Nikon D80 digital SLR camera at a resolution of 10.2 Mp to record both the general appearance and specific details of the building. The photographs were shot in raw (Nikon .NEF) format and then converted to jpeg (.JPG) format for illustration and manipulation.

## Survey

### Desktop Study

#### *Sources*

Wynnstay Rental for 1772-3 (National Library R47)

Eglwys Bach parish rental for 1730-1812 (Eglwys Bach Parish Registers 1730-1812. Vol. 7. Clwyd Family History Society)

Wynnstay Rental 1801-2 (National Library of Wales R60)

1841 census (Caernarfonshire Archives)

1847 Tithe map and schedule for Township of Maenan, Parish of Eglwys Bach. (Nation Library of Wales)

1851 Census (Caernarfonshire Archives)

1871 Census (Caernarfonshire Archives)

First Edition Ordnance Survey Map 1889

Conveyance 1889 (Private collection)

1891 Census (Caernarfonshire Archives)

Map of Maenan c1900. XM/Maps/407

1901 Census (Caernarfonshire Archives)

Abstract of title of representatives of Lemuel Pritchard deceased to a freehold property known as Tai Bach 1936

Mortgage re-conveyance 1936 (Private collection)

Conveyance 1936 (Private collection)

Conveyance 1958 (Private collection)

#### *Results*

As is usual for a small cottages, similar to Tai Bach, there are limited records which relate to the history of the cottage. The earliest record is the appearance of Tai Bach in the Wynnstay Rentals for the years 1772 – 1773 when it was rented by Evan Hughes for £1:5:0/year. This appears to have been a long term arrangement as Evan Hughes is still renting Tai Bach in the Wynnstay Rental of 1802 when the rent had risen to £1:10:0/year

By 1812 the property was being rented by William Owens and his wife Elinor, as the Parish registers for Eglwys Bach records the

baptism of their daughter, Mary Owen. It would seem likely that the Owens' family retained the tenancy as the Census Records for the Township of Maenan, Parish of Eglwys Bach records Robert Owens and his family living in the property between 1841 and 1881. It is likely that son, Robert Owens, took over the tenancy shortly before 1841 and the census returns documents the fortunes of the family over forty years. At its peak, in 1851, there were seven people living in this two room cottage consisting of Robert Owen (36), his wife Elinor (37) and their children Margaret (10), Mary (8), Evan (4), Elinor (3) and Ann (2 weeks). The census return also shows that the little over two acres, which was attached to the cottage, was not an economic holding as Richard Owens had to supplement his income as a labourer.

The 1847 Tithe Map and Schedule shows that Tai Bach was owned by Sir Watkin Williams Wynn Bart. as part of the Maenan Estate (which in turn was part of the Wynnstay Estate). The tenant at that time was Robert Owen with a total area of 2 acres, 2 roods, 25 perches (approximately 1.1 hectares) attached to the cottage. The tithe payment was split between 2d paid to the Parish Clerk of Eglwys Bach, and 5 schillings to the trustees of the alms houses and free school of Llanwrst.

It is not certain when the property was sold from the Wynnstay estate, by the time of the Census of 1891 the property is recorded as being empty, however in a conveyance of 1889 it is recorded as having been left to Mary Griffith by John Robert Griffith, in 1882, as the result of a will of 1881. This would suggest that shortly after the Census for 1881 the property was sold to John Griffiths who then subsequently died. Mary Griffiths retained the property for 17 years selling it to Evan Jones in 1899.

By 1901 the property was being rented by Lemuel Pritchard, who on the death of Evan Jones in 1905 bought the property. He retained Tai Bach until his death in 1936 when it was sold to John Frederick Kerry (a butcher) who retained the property in the family until it was sold to Owen Owens in 1958.

There is only limited map evidence for the development of the property. The earliest

depiction located is the "Old Series" Ordnance Survey Map LXXVII published in 1840-41 (Figure 2). The survey work for this map, however, took place between 1819 and 1820 (Harley and Oliver 1992). Whilst Tai Bach is not labelled the building is marked.

The Tithe Map of 1847 (Figure 3) does not show the buildings, however the associated schedule gives the names of the fields and the use to which they were put. These are summarised below:

Plot Number	Field name	Use
334	House and Garden	
335	Garden	
336	Cae Ucha	Pasture
337	Open land (waste)	Pasture
338	Cae Isa	Arable

The first detailed mapping is the First Edition Ordnance Survey Map, Caernarvonshire XIV.1 published in 1889 (Figure 4). This shows Tai Bach with its cow house attached to the south eastern gable and a probable pig sty attached to the cow house, a common feature in the slate quarrying areas on north-west Wales (Wiliam 2010, 71). A similar pattern is shown on the map attached to the 1889 Conveyance (Figure 5), however there would also appear to be a small, divorced, building to the south which is probably a toilet or "*Ty Bach*".

The map of Maenan was drawn about 1900 (Figure 6) is of insufficient detail to add to the detailed description of the property, the Ordnance Map Caernarvonshire XIV.1 published in 1913 (Figure 7), however, shows a similar pattern to that of the map attached to the Conveyance in 1889 (Figure 5). The only exception is the divorced building to the south which appears to be larger than that previously mapped and it is marked on the other side of a boundary. Neither the possible pig sty, nor the divorced building have survived to this day having been replaced by modern farm buildings.

## Building Survey

Tai Bach is a single storey cottage with an attached cow-house on its south-eastern gable. (Plate 1, Figure 8). It is constructed of poorly coursed stone boulder with limited use of squared quoins, particularly at the cow house end. The stonework has a lime mortar bonding and in places the wall appear to have been lime-washed. The cottage was under a slate roof, which has largely collapsed at the time of the survey, and has a single chimney (Plate 2) on the south eastern gable of the cottage.

The front elevation of the cow house (Plate 3) has a single doorway adjacent to the gable wall to the cottage and the gable end of the cow house, itself, is marked by a series of squared stone quoins. No evidence of the probable pig sty on the south eastern gable of the cow house survives, however this area is now occupied by a modern space frame agricultural building.

The house faces north-east with a central doorway flanked by two windows (Plate 4). These two windows (Plates 5 and 6) are wooden casement windows with stone lintels and cut slate cills. It is not certain whether the door (Plate 7) propped up outside the property is the original door to the property, however it is a four plank ledged door with strap hinges and a simple latch lifter. Whilst the strap hinges appear to be blacksmith made, the latch lifter would appear to be a later commercially made item. The door also retains two bands of decoration with cross decoration.

The north western gable end (Plate 8) has a single window opening at a high level which gave light to the *crogloft*. Most of the window frame is now missing, however the top rail survives suggesting that there was a wooden mullion dividing the opening. The window has a stone lintel, however the cill is missing.

The rear elevation of the property is slightly terraced into the hill-slope (Plate 9) with the terracing becoming deeper towards the south-eastern end of the building such that the ground level is close to the level of the window of the cow house. There is a single window (Plate 10) in the rear wall which gave light to the main room of the cottage. This has a metal frame, divided into two panes

horizontally, and a stone lintel. There is also a window in the rear wall of the cow house.

Inside the cow house is divided into two bays (Plate 11), each with a galvanised water feeder with two drinking positions suggesting the provision for four cows. Below the water basins is a trough running the width of the building consisting of a ceramic glazed trough set in concrete. The two bays were divided by metal bars set in a concrete dwarf wall (Plate 12). There were also bars in front of the trough, the mounts for which are bolted to the walls of the building (Plate 13). There is also a trough in the floor to help with the cleaning of building, which gave access to a drain below the front wall. The window in the rear wall (Plate 14) has a metal frame and cemented cill. Unfortunately the lintel is missing.

There is a blocked opening in the south eastern gable wall of the cottage (Plate 15) whose function is uncertain. Given its position the opening may have been related to the installation of the kitchen range on the other side of this wall.

The cottage is divided into two room on the ground floor, with only the south eastern room being heated. There is also a *crogloft* over the north western room. The main room is dominated by the range set in the south eastern gable wall (Plate 16). This is a closed range with an oven to one side and a water tank with a tap to the other. Above the tap is the inscription "Excelsior" representing the model type (Plate 17). Such ranges are of 19<sup>th</sup> century design representing an improvement to the cottage. The range occupies the original fireplace, which had a large wooden bressumer supporting the chimney breast. The southern side of the range has a slate surround consisting of sawn and planed slate slabs. The marking on the edge of these slabs (Plate 18) suggest that they were cut with a "Greaves" saw demonstrating that they were cut after the 1850's (W. Jones *pers. comm.*).

Two windows gave light to this room. That in the rear wall (Plate 19) had a fixed, metal frame with wooden lintel and cill. That in the front wall, however, had one opening leaf with a hand crafted latch (Plate 20) and latch lifter (Plate 21).

The main room was open to the roof (Plate 22) which was supported by four soft wood purlins and a ridge piece (Plate 22). There was no need for a central truss as the dividing wall between the main room and the bedroom was constructed in stone giving the necessary support to the purlins and ridge piece. This dividing wall also has an opening above head height which gave access to the *croglofft* (Plate 23). It is assumed that this opening was originally accessed by means of a ladder (Wiliam 2010, 71), however at a later date a steep staircase was added consisting of an “L” shaped flight in the western corner of the main room (Plate 24). The style of the balusters would suggest that the staircase was a twentieth century modification, possibly in the 1920’s or 30’s (Callow 2005, 438). This could be a modification made by John Frederick Kerry after he bought the property in 1936, or by Lemuel Pritchard after he had paid off his mortgage in 1927.

The ground floor bedroom was unheated, although the concrete pad in the eastern corner may have been for a freestanding stove (Plate 25). This is the only part of the ground floor which is not covered in slate slabs. The one window in this room is similar to that in the main room with similar blacksmith made fittings (Plate 26 and 27)

The supports for the *croglofft* were a mixture of squared and round softwood timbers (Plate 28, Figure 9) at a height of 2.04 m above the floor of the bedroom. Unfortunately on only one of these joists survives (Plate 29), however the stub ends of most of the other joists survive in the walls. Above this level, the window which gave light to the *croglofft* had a wooden lintel

## Conclusions

The cottage of Tai Bach is fairly typical of other small cottages within the slate quarrying areas of North-West Wales, conforming to the commonest plan form with an end chimney and central doorway, reflecting Smith’s “Type A” end chimney, regional house type (1975, 313). Its ground floor area of 27m<sup>2</sup> falling in the middle of the size range of cottages noted by Wiliam (2010, 76) of between 15 to 40 m<sup>2</sup>. The general exception is that the dividing wall between the main room and the bedroom was

constructed in stone removing the need for a central truss. The original cow house survives, however, the other ancillary buildings shown on the historic mapping have been lost.

It is likely that the cottage was built in the second half of the eighteenth century by the Wynnstay Estate as part of their rental properties. This would conform to “great period” of cottage building between 1750 and 1850 noted by Smith (1988, 311). These cottages were used to house the growing rural population, which after 1850 tended to decline with the increased movement of people to the towns. The use of slate or stone slabs for flooring is also a feature which increased from the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Wiliam 2010, 207)

The cottage shows some signs of having developed over time. The inclusion of a cast iron range is probably a nineteenth century improvement whilst the addition of a steep staircase to the *croglofft* probably took place in the early twentieth. The nineteenth century development within the cottage may be related to £300,00 spent by the Wynnstay Estate on improvements between 1862 and 1893 (Wiliam 2010, 76-77)

The cottage was associated with a small group of fields totalling a little over 2 acres (approximately 1.1 hectares) which was used for a mixture of pasture and arable agriculture, however this was not enough to provide a living with the records suggesting that labouring was the main activity of the tenants renting this property.



## Acknowledgements

This report was commissioned by Mr and Mrs A. Wickham who also allowed the documents in their possession to be inspected. The help of the various archives consulted is also gratefully acknowledged.

## References

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- Smith, P. 1988. *Houses of the Welsh Countryside. A study in historical geography (second edition)*. HMSO
- William, E. 2010. *The Welsh cottage. Building traditions of the rural poor 1750 – 1900*. Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales. Aberystwyth.



Plate 1: The northern elevation.



Plate 2: The chimney, looking SW





Plate 3: The northern elevation of the cow house



Plate 4: The northern elevation of the house



Plate 5: The eastern window in the front elevation



Plate 6: The western window in the front elevation





Plate 7: The possible original front door



Plate 8: The north western gable end





Plate 9: The rear elevation



Plate 10: The window in the rear elevation





Plate 11: The cow house looking south



Plate 12: The divider between the bays in the cow house



Plate 13: Fittings for the bars in front of the trough in the cow house



Plate 14: The window in the cow house





Plate 15: Blocked opening in the south eastern gable wall of the cottage



Plate 16: The range





Plate 17: Detail of the water tank of the range



Plate 18: Detail of the slate surround showing the saw marks





Plate 19: The window in the rear wall of the main room

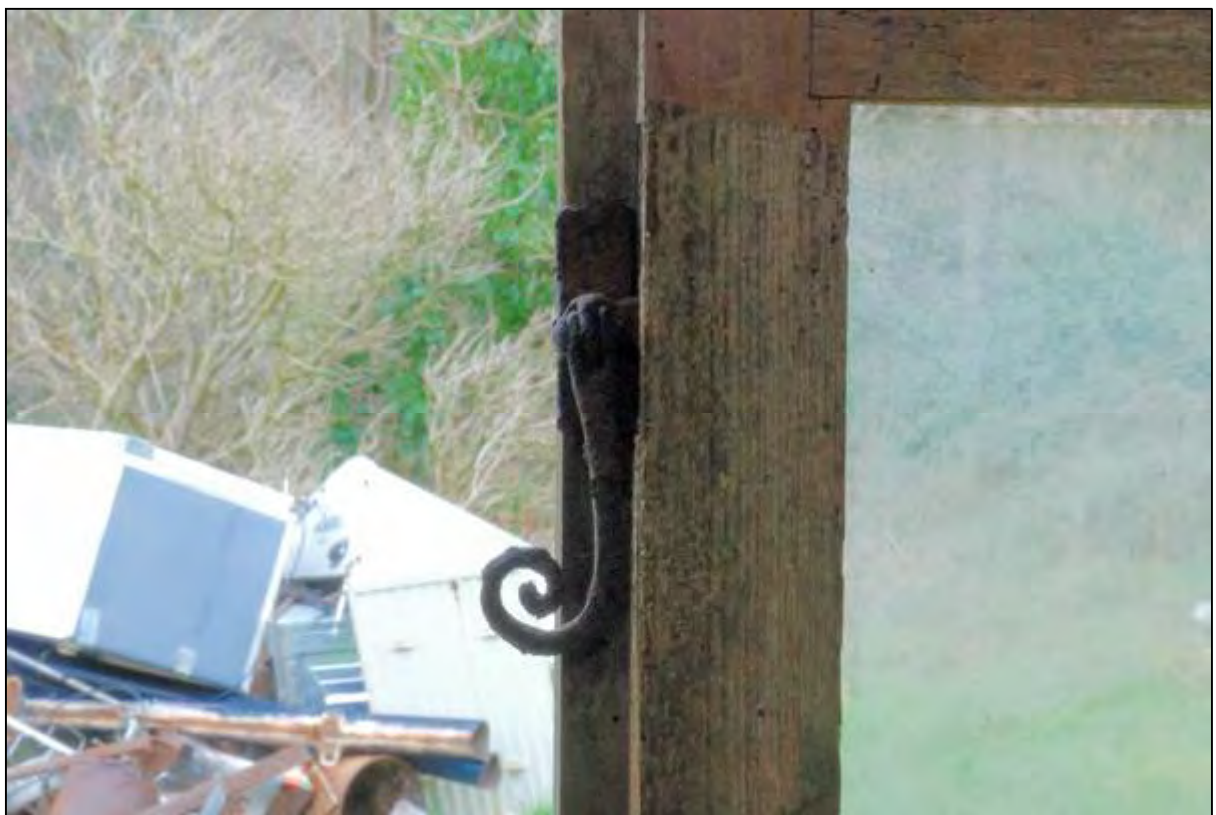


Plate 20: The latch on the front window of the main room





Plate 21: The latch lifter for the front window in the main room



Plate 22: The roof structure in the main room





Plate 23: Access to the *crogloff*



Plate 24: The stairs to the *crogloff*



Plate 25: The concrete pad in the eastern corner of the bedroom



Plate 26: The latch on the window in the bedroom





Plate 27: The latch lifter for the window in the bedroom



Plate 28: The supports for the *croglofft* and the upper window.



Plate 29: The surviving joist for the *crogloff*.



## Appendix 1: Historical Summary

Date	Person	Event	Source
1772	Evan Hughs	Rent	Wynnstay rental for 1772-3
1773	Evan Hughs	Rent	Wynnstay rental for 1772-3
1801	Evan Hughs	Rent	Wynnstay rental for 1801-2
1802	Evan Hughs	Rent	Wynnstay rental for 1801-2
1812	Mary Owen	Baptised, father William Owens, mother Elinor Owens	Eglwys Bach parish registers 1730-1812
1819-20		Initial survey by OS	Harley and Oliver 1992
1840-41		Old series map published	Harley and Oliver 1992
1841	Robert Owen (25, agricultural labourer), Elinor Owen (26), Margaret Owen (3 months)	Census	1841 census for parish of Eglwys Fach township of Maenan
1841	Margaret Owens	Baptised	Elgwyls-Bach parish records
1843	Mary Owens	Baptised	Elgwyls-Bach parish records
1844	Evan Owens	Baptised	Elgwyls-Bach parish records
1847	Owner: Sir Watkin Williams Wynn Bart. Tenant: Robert Owens	Tithe	Tithe schedule
1851	Robert Owen (36, agricultural labourer), Elinor Owen (37), Margaret Owen (10), Mary Owen (8), Evan Owen (4), Elinor Owen (3), Ann Owen (2 weeks)	Census	1851 census for parish of Eglwys Fach, township of Maenan
1851	Ellin Owens	Baptised	Elgwyls-Bach parish records
1854	Robert Owens	Baptised	Elgwyls-Bach parish records
1871	Robert Owen (56, farmer and occasional labourer), Elinor Owen (54), Evan Owen (26)	Census	1871 census of the parish of Eglwys Fach, township of Maenan

Date	Person	Event	Source
1881	Robert Owen (66, labourer), Ellin Owen (66), Sarah Ann Thomas (12, niece, scholar)	Census	1881 census of the parish of Eglwys Fach, township of Maenan
1891	Property empty	Census	1891 census of the parish of Eglwys Bach, township of Maenan
1882	Mary Griffith left property by John Robert Griffith	Result of will of 1881	Conveyance of 1889
1889		First Edition OS	
1899	Mary Griffiths, Thomas Blackwell Griffiths and Herbert Ashcombe Walker sells Tai Bach to Evan Jones		Abstract of title of representatives of Lemuel Pritchard deceased to a freehold property known as Tai Bach, Maenan 1936
1900?		Map of Maenan	XM/Maps/407
1901	Lemuel Pritchard (39, general labourer), Margaret Pritchard (37, wife), John Pritchard (14, general labourer), Margaret Pritchard (8), Sarah Pritchard (8)	Census	1901 census of parish of Eglwys Bach, township of Maenan
1905	Evan Jones dies, property sold to Lemuel Pritchard		Abstract of title of representatives of Lemuel Pritchard deceased to a freehold property known as Tai Bach, Maenan 1936
1906	Lemuel Pritchard	Buys property	Conveyance 1906
1908	Lemuel Prichard	Takes out mortgage of £100 on the property	Mortgage re conveyance 1927
1913		OS mapping	
1927	Lemuel Prichard	Mortgage paid off	Mortgage re conveyance 1927
1936	Jane Jones (wife of David Jones) sells Tai Bach to John Frederick Kerry	Jane Jones acting as an executor for the will of Lemuel Pritchard	Conveyance of 1936
1958	George Frederick Kerry (butcher) and John Ogwen Kerry (butcher) sells Tai Bach to Owen Owen	Sold for £3500	Conveyance of 1958

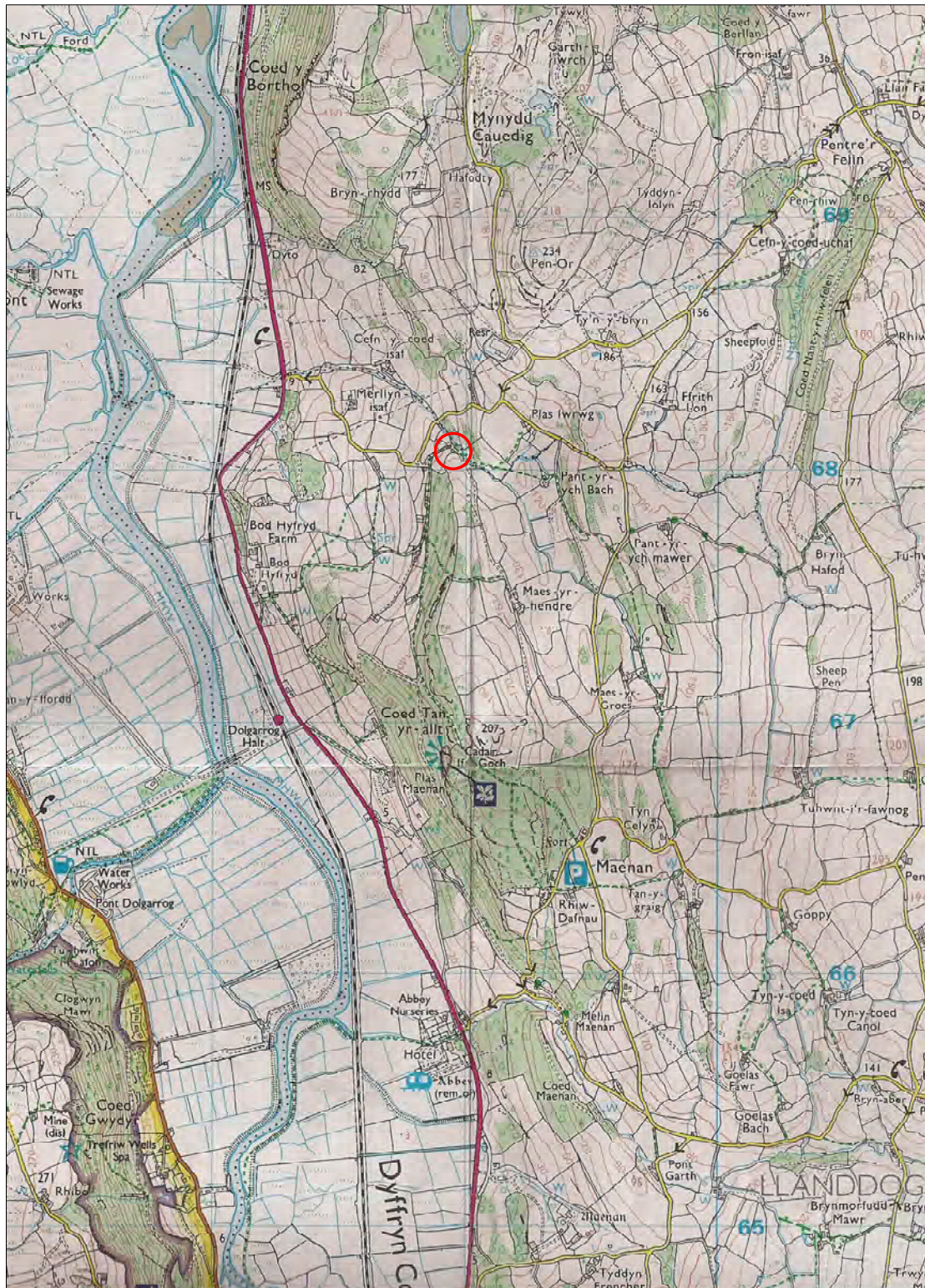


Figure 1: Location

Reproduced from the ExplorerTM OL17, 1:25,000 scale  
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The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Office  
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Figure 2: Extract from the Ordnance Survey "Old Series" Map XXVIII (1840-41)  
Not to Scale

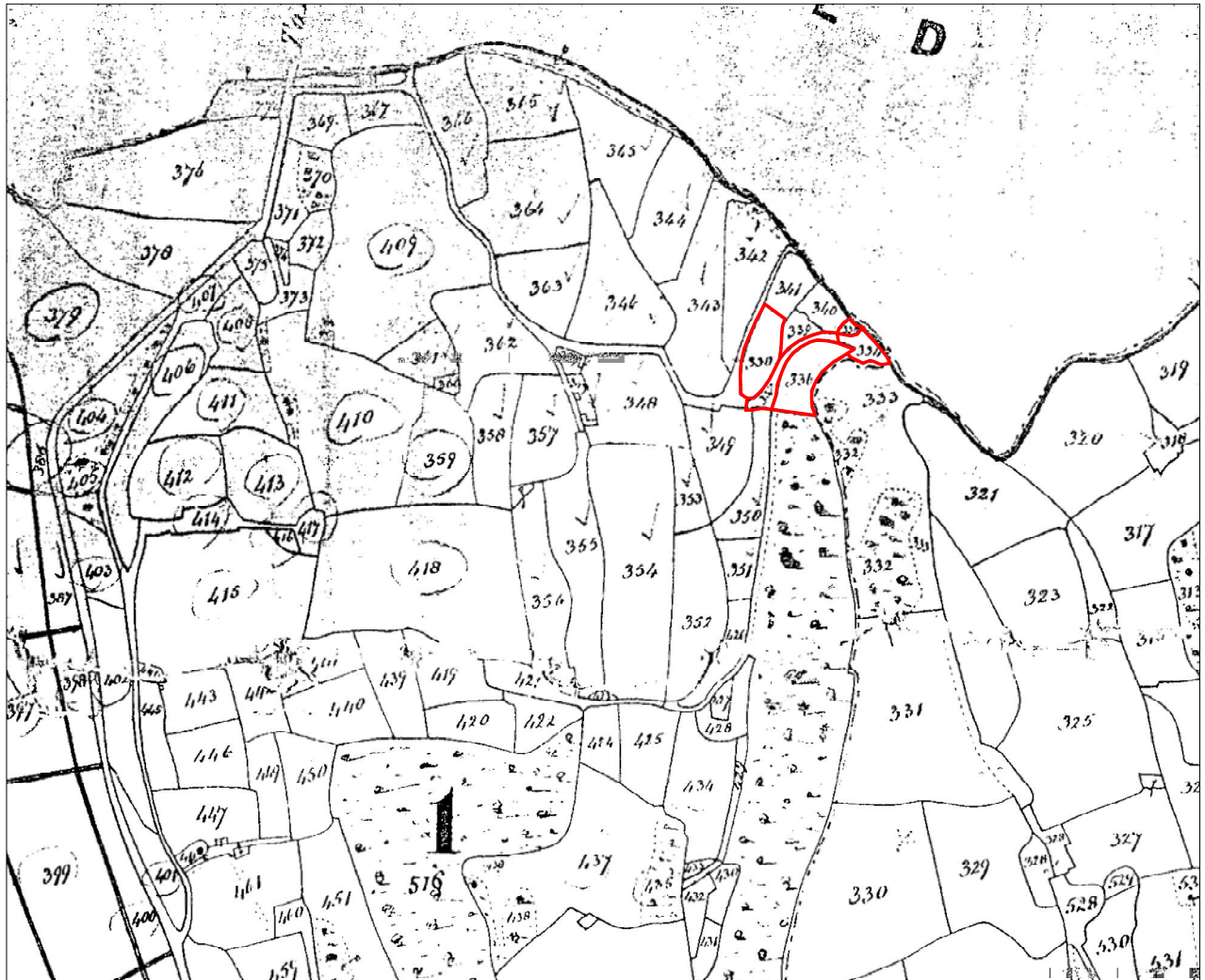


Figure 3: Extract from the Eglwys-Bach Parish,  
Township of Maenan Tithe Map 1847  
Not to scale

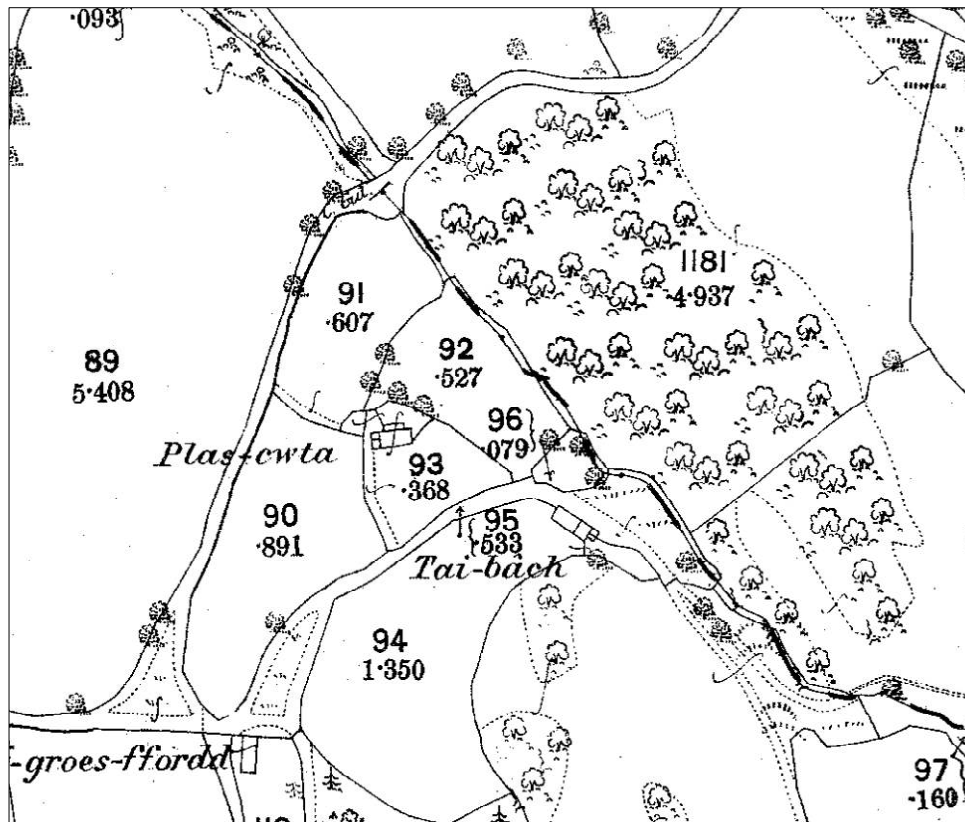


Figure 4: Extract from the Ordnance Survey, First Edition Map  
Carnarvonshire XIV.1 (1889)  
Scale 1:2,500





Figure 5: Plan attached to the 1889 Conveyance  
Not to scale

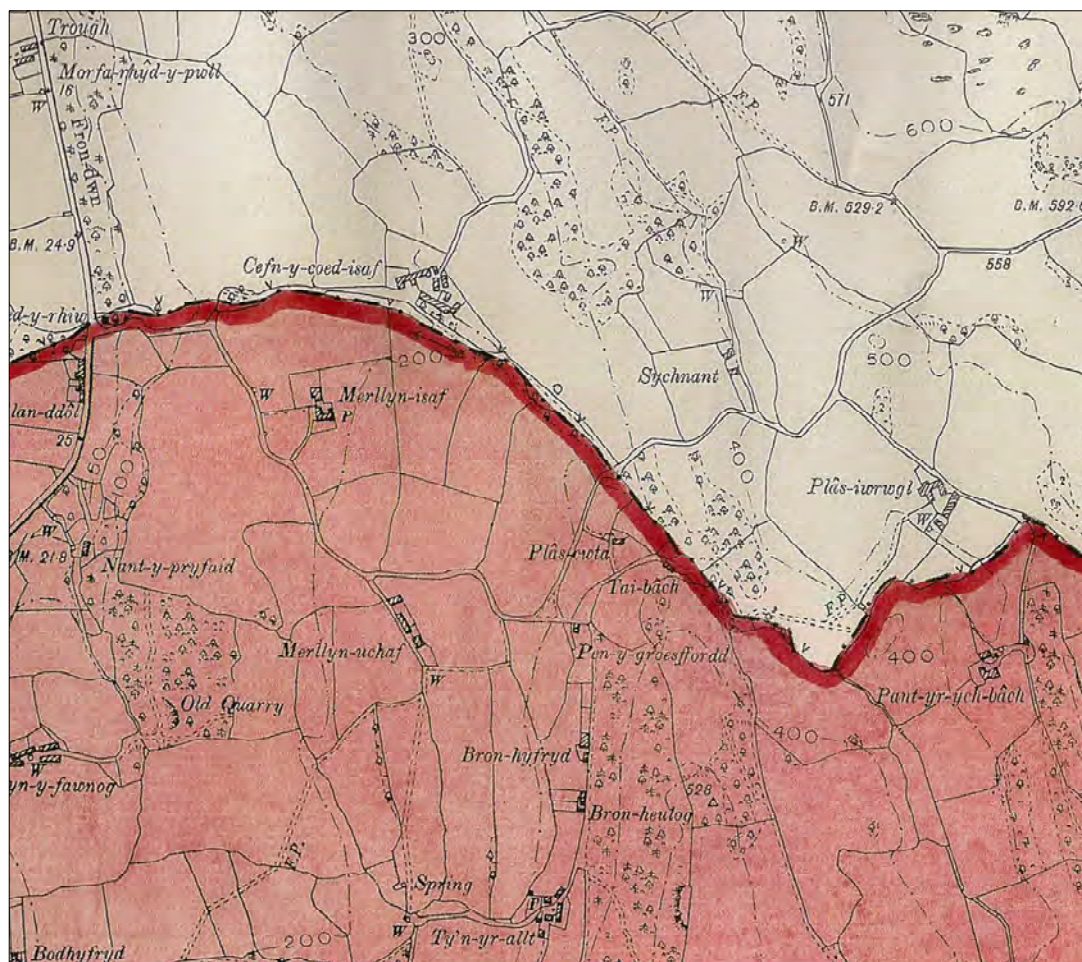


Figure 6: Extract from the Map of Maenan c 1900  
 Caernarfonshire Archive Office (XM/Maps/407)  
 Not to Scale



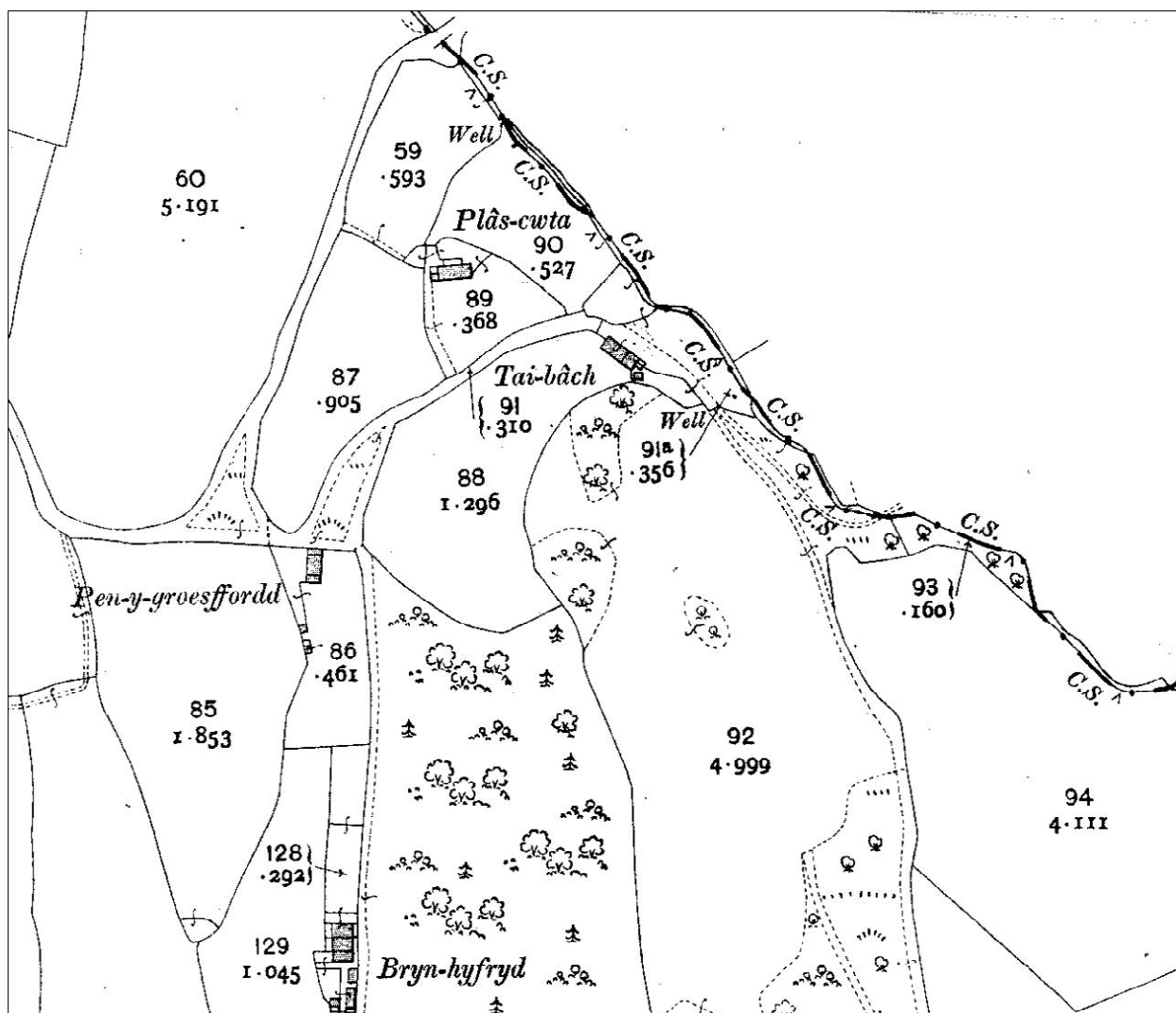


Figure 7: Extract from the Ordnance Survey, 1913 Edition Map  
Carnarvonshire XIV.1 Map  
Scale 1:2,500

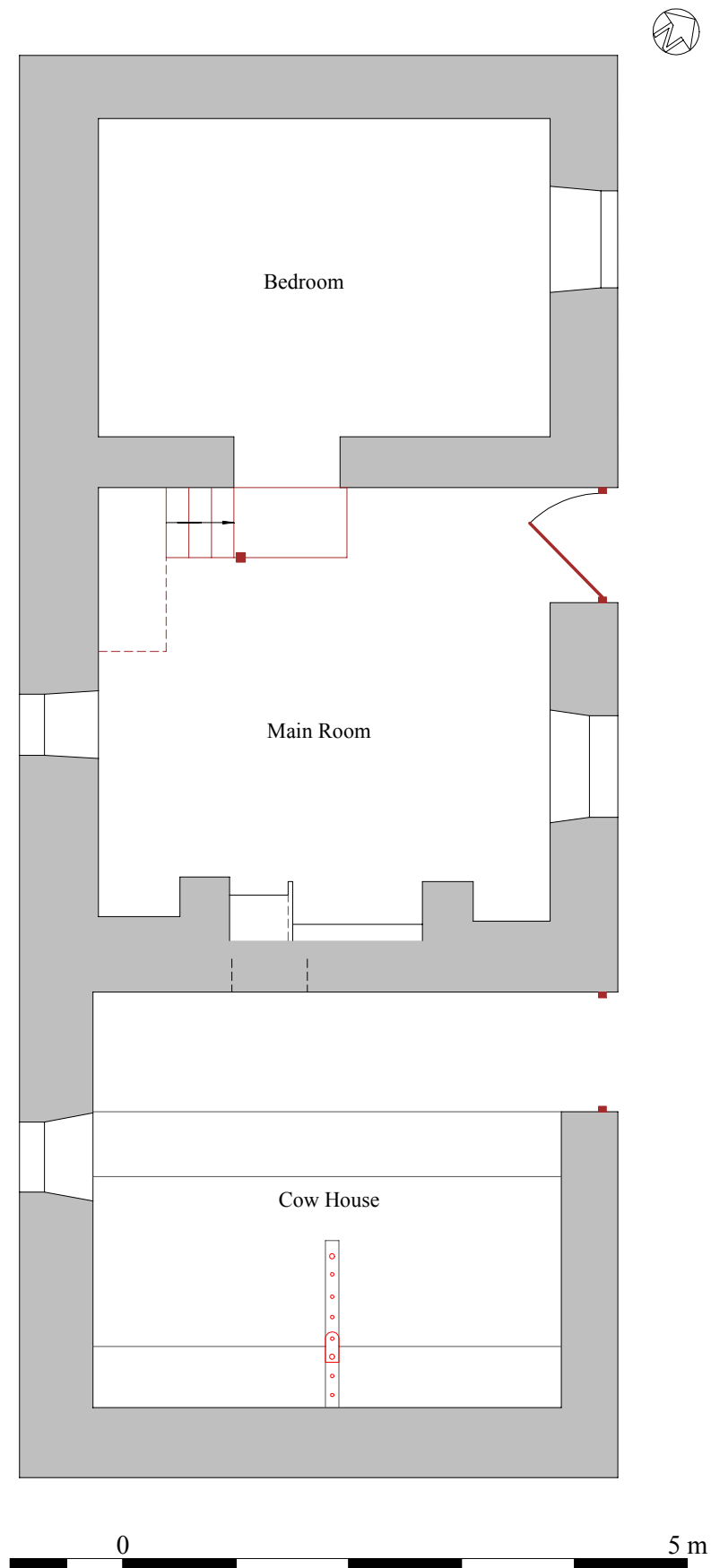
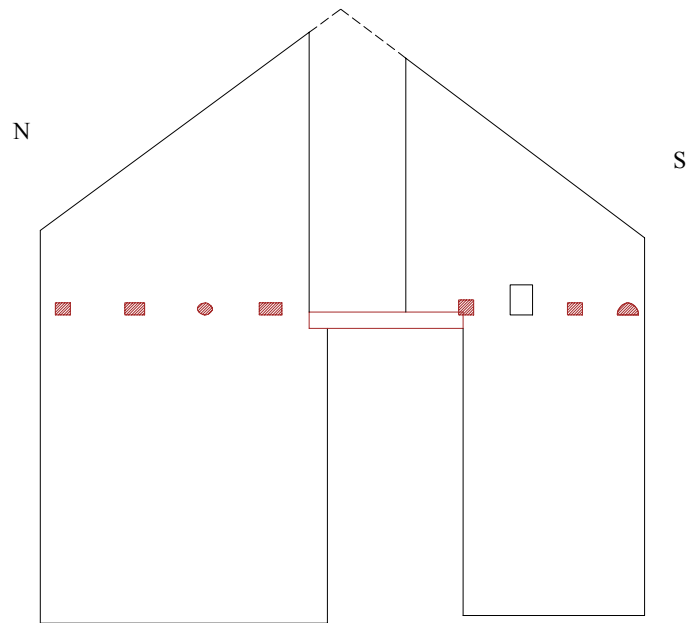
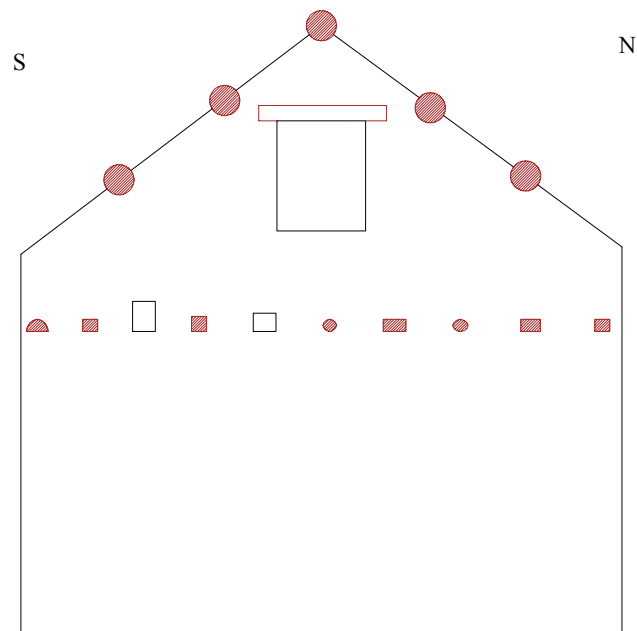


Figure 8: Plan  
Scale 1:16



Dividing Walls



Gable end



Figure 9: Sketch Sections  
Scale 1:50

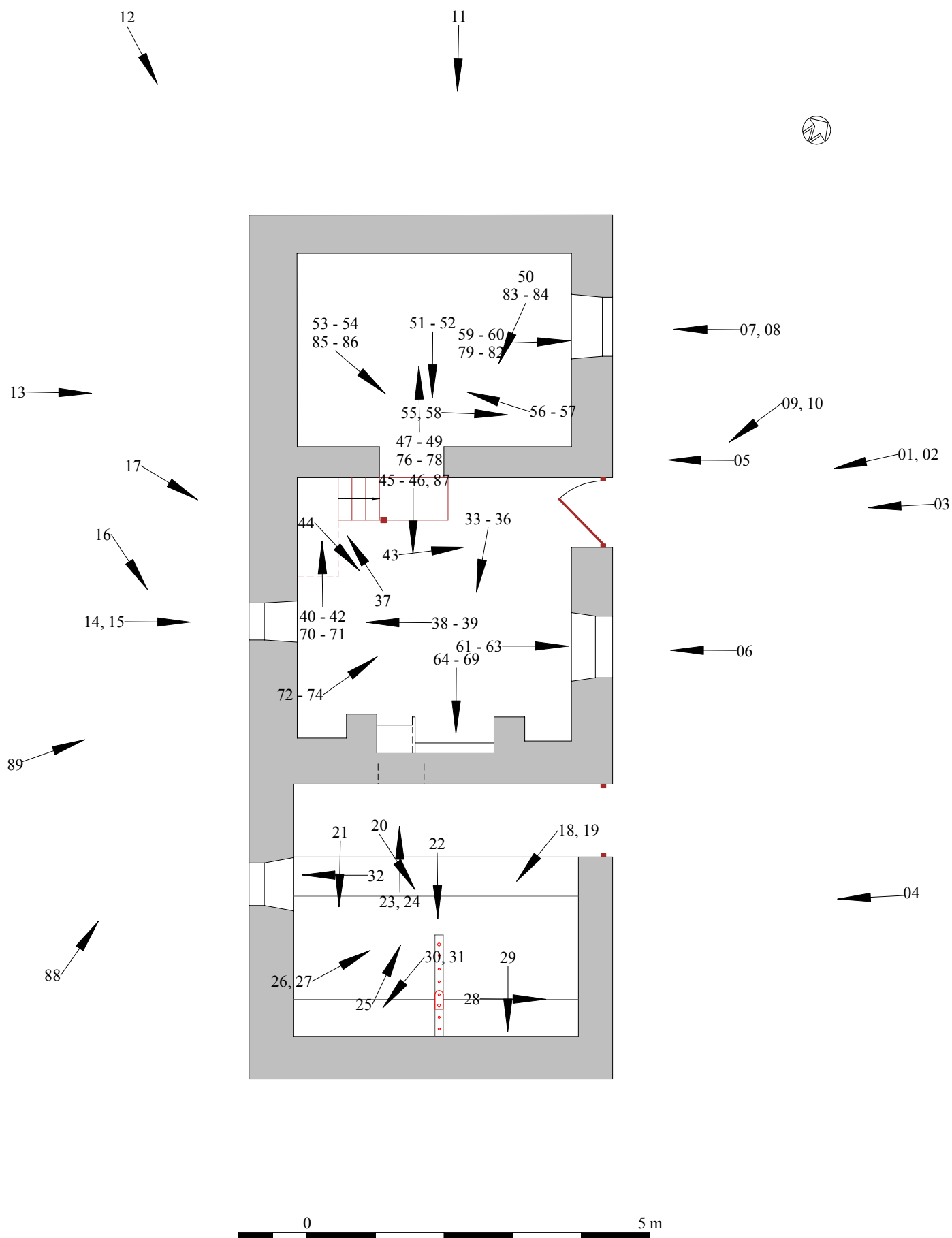


Figure 10: Location of the Photographs  
Scale 1:75