

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

Six Anglesey Houses

By DAVID LONGLEY

Dear Cambrians, thank you for asking me, as a President to write a paper of my choosing. I chose six Anglesey houses because I have worked on these houses, hands-on, and because they are all interest and different in their own way.

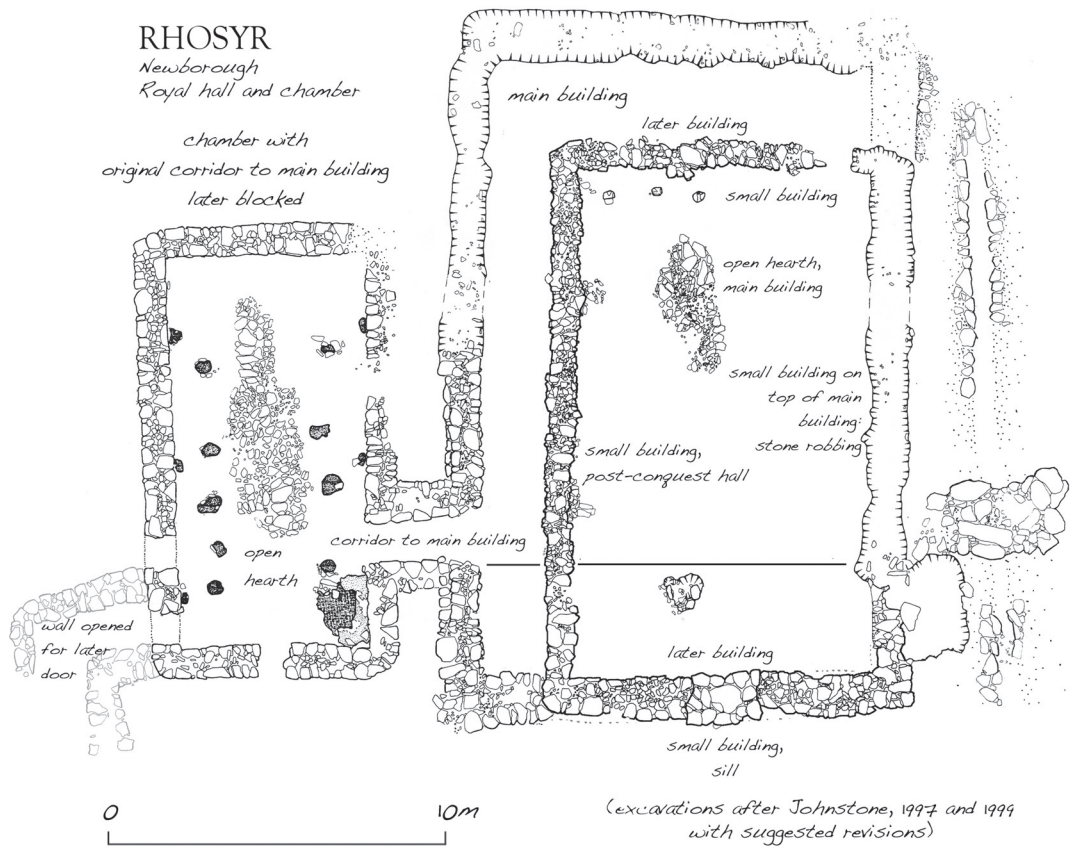
RHOSYR

Llys Rhosyr sits on the *maerdref* of Rhosyr on the highest ridge at Gallt Bedr (St Peter's Hill) adjacent to the church of that name. A neglected crossroad to the north-east, three hundred yards away towards the *llys*, was probably the nucleus of the bond settlement in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. There were administrative townships in almost every commote. There were royal halls, other buildings and bond tenants working on the royal demesne. Tenants in the commote would be responsible for repair of maintenance, fixing fences, repairing the lord's mill, carrying millstones and doing carriage work for the lord, and a horse.

In 1992 a very limited archaeological project began for the purpose of identifying the site of the *llys*. The field adjacent carried the name Cae Llys, the 'Court Field'. Major seasons of excavation ensued between 1994 and 1996, undertaken by the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust with student assistance from the University Colleges of Cardiff and Lampeter and financial support from Cadw and Ynys Môn. The excavations were directed by Neil Johnstone. The foundations of several buildings and part of the perimeter walls were excavated under several feet of sand.

In 1282, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, and in 1283, Dafydd ap Gruffudd, both died in the course of the war. Edward I established a new borough (Newborough) in 1303. The Welsh *maerdref* of Llanfaes in the commote of Dindaethwy was depopulated and the burgesses of Llanfaes were rehoused on over ninety acres of Rhosyr land. The two central buildings were originally conjoined but in time the association of the two were separated. The smaller building on the south side is 5.7 metres across, internally, and 11.6 metres from east to west. The clay-bonded stone walls are 0.9 metres wide. The drawings reflect more than one stage of the building. The first openings were in the side-walls, where a cross-passage, and a short corridor opens into the main hall. There is an open hearth, placed centrally between the two long walls and about two-thirds along to the west.

Returning to the smaller chamber we see at least two phases of the chamber roof. The earlier design of parallel arcade posts was replaced by one with crucks or wall-posts. The reason is most likely that the roof was thatched and was replaced after a fire, where there is evidence on the inside wall. Whether or not, slates were applied. The cross-passage in the chamber to the south was blocked on both long walls and a door opening at the south-east corner led to a dog-leg corridor. The corners of the walls are sharply rectangular on the inside but clearly rounded on the outside. Furthermore, it is said that the burgesses of Newborough petitioned to build a hall for themselves. Whether they were successful, or not, is uncertain. The smaller rectangular foundation has been thought to be the base of an aisle on the west and south sides



Rhosyr

Top Plan of the royal chamber and the main hall at Llys Rhosyr.

Bottom left Excavation of the chamber in the early 1990s.

Bottom right Aerial photograph of Llys Rhosyr, Newborough.

of the main wall. However, it would seem more plausible that the smaller, later, rectangular foundation was the substructure of the burgesses potential post-conquest hall.

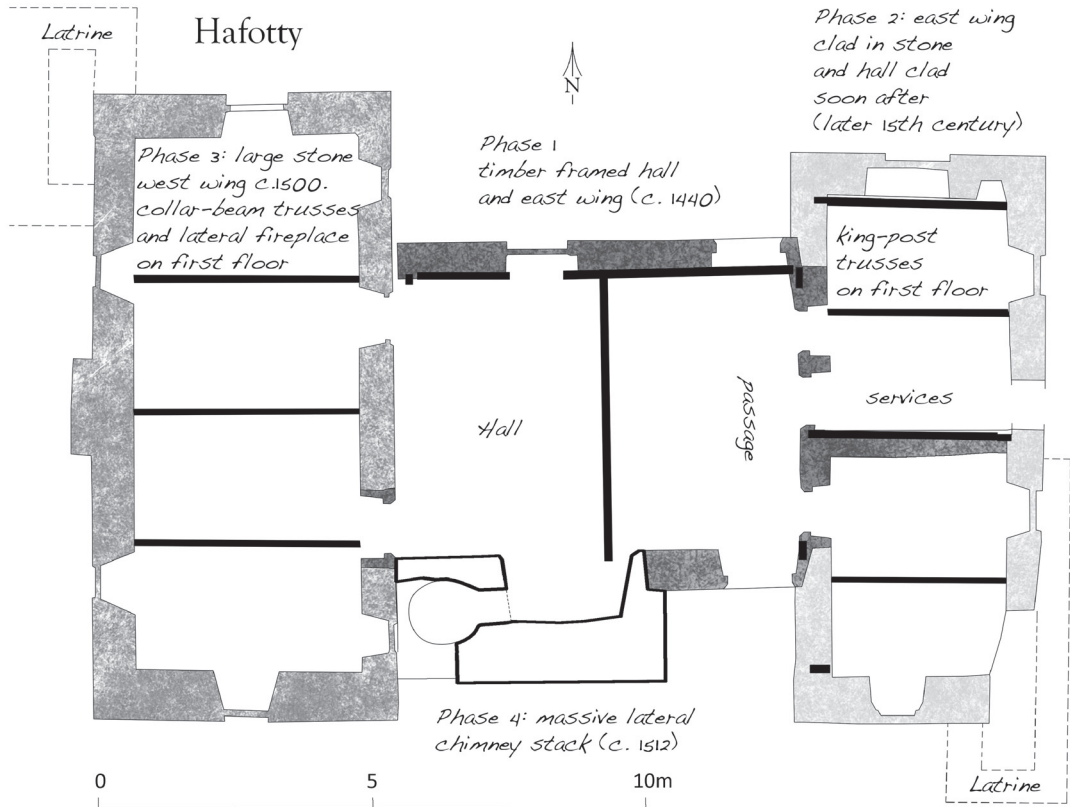
HAFOTTY

Hafotty is one of the earliest houses on Anglesey, a short distance away from Beaumaris. It has generally been said that the house was owned by Henry Norris, constable of Beaumaris Castle in 1535. In fact, it came into the hands of a quite different Norres family, of West Derby, Lancashire, in the 1440s. Thomas Norres was captain of the Beaumaris guard in 1439 and began to accumulate a significant estate in the area. He became an alderman in 1442 and 1443 and acquired the extensive lands of Sir John Kyghley, north of Beaumaris. He also acquired Hafotty in the hamlet of Bodardda in the township of Crymlyn at about that time.

The hall and east wing retain elements of its timber-framed origin in the wall posts which have survived, encased in masonry, when the house was remodelled in stone during the second half of the fifteenth century. Of interest are the king-post trusses in the hall and east wing, the demonstrably earlier elements of the structure, with arch braces and quarter-round moulding on the underside of the hall tie-beam. It has been suggested that the moulding detail displays influence from South Lancashire, Cheshire and north-east Wales.

More significant for this present purpose is the remodelling of the western wing which included the roof, supported by three large collar-beam trusses springing from the wall plates, a projecting lateral chimney stack to the west wall of the wing, and a fireplace in the first floor room or rooms if partitioned. The date of this work is around the very end of the fifteenth century or the first decade or so of the sixteenth century.

The township of Crymlyn, extending over part of the ecclesiastical parishes of Llanddona and Llansadwrn, must have been in royal hands by the early thirteenth century, between 1221 and 1247, and included the hamlet of Cefn Coch and Bodarddar ('Cremelyn cu'hamel de Kevengogh et Botarthar'). The adjacent township of Bancenyn was granted and confirmed to the prior and canons of Ynys Lannog (Penmon Priory) as part of its landed endowment by Llywelyn ap Iorwerth and his son David and Llywelyn ap Gruffudd and his brother Owain. Bodarddar remained freehold. A tenement within Bodarddar was acquired, around the middle of the fifteenth century, by Thomas Norres, as mentioned above, with other interests in Beaumaris. Letitia, his daughter, and wife of Thomas Norres of Speke, retained her interest in Hafotty as an inheritable asset and, after her death, her interest passed to her sister, Elizabeth Aspull. In 1498, Elizabeth's son, Thomas, transferred the property to his uncle, Letitia's son, Sir William Norres of Speke. Sir William Norres died in 1506 and was succeeded by his son, Henry. In 1511 Henry Norres transferred the property and all lands in that hamlet, to Richard Bulkeley of Beaumaris, archdeacon. The grant was signed at Hafotty. One of the first works carried out by the Bulkeleys was to insert a monumental fireplace into the south wall of the hall, where there had been an open central hearth or brazier previously. The fireplace has a four-centred arched head which includes the Bulkeley family motto *Si Deus Nobiscum, Quis Contra Nos* ('If God is with us, who is against us') and bull's head motif. This marks the apogee of Hafotty's architectural development, after which there would seem to be slow decline and decay.



Hafotty

Top left Plan of ground floor. *Left* View showing the two wings and the large lateral fireplace.

Opposite, top left The hall, part of the cross-passage, the king post, tie-beam truss and wall-posts. The house was timber-framed but clad in masonry in the late fifteenth century.

Opposite, top right West wing rebuilt in the late fifteenth to early sixteenth century; collar-beam trusses rather than king-post trusses in the east wing.

Bottom opposite The massive lateral fireplace installed in the south wall.



TUDOR ROSE

The burgage plots in Beaumaris are usually 80 by 40 feet in size. Tudor Rose, in its present footprint is very much reduced, being two-thirds of the burgage and more reduced by encroachment from the west and from the east in the south-east corner. The alignment of the hall is from north and south. There is a quite large wing at right-angles, along the roadside. There should be a second wing on the north side of the hall but there is none. There should be a door opening to the north wing but the door opens through to the open air. There are four trusses in the hall, one hard against the north wall and a fourth to the south. Plain principals and a tie-beam truss identifies the two-storey southern wing. Concave mouldings are carried along the underside of the braces interposed with foliate motifs. The collar-braces, the wall-braces and rose motifs meet there. There are two rows of trenced purlins, below and above the collar with the upper edge of the wind-braces pegged and slotted into the underside. The purlins are scarf-jointed at the trusses, enhanced with chamfered edges and stops and pegged to the principals.

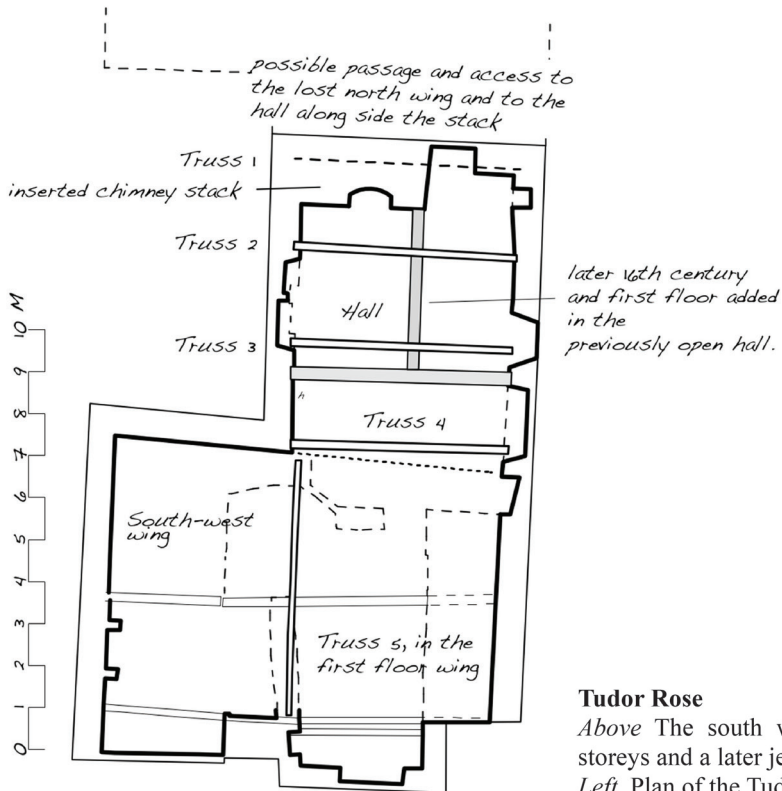
The two, very conspicuous, central trusses are stylishly decorative. The first truss is set against the north wall. Studs have created an opening for a door with a base slightly lower than the wall plate. Staves, wattles and daub fill in the wall. It is not certain whether the partition halfway up the north wall reflects the lost north-wing or, most probably, a component of the later first floor, built in the mid-sixteenth century. A fireplace and stack was installed against the north gable. Another fireplace was put in place on the first floor. A massive beam supported the joists and floorboards.

Although somewhat later, Tudor Rose was clad in stone, probably in the early sixteenth century. Hafotty, Llansadwrn, had also been a timber building and was also clad in masonry with significant components of the timber structure surviving.

The southern wing retains several features on the first floor which demonstrates its original timber structure with large beams at ceiling level extending along the original south-side. The beams are scarf-jointed and were supported by two vertical wall-posts which carried through two storeys to the ground floor. Large, heavy joists, tenoned into mortises on the south-side beam, carry across the central beam.

A jettied oriel window of close-panelled sides and front has been added to the south side of the eastern room and its weight has pulled some of the structural elements out of true. This is the most conspicuous external feature of Tudor Rose and probably the element which defines the house for many who pass-by or come to look at it. It is however, a later (sixteenth- or seventeenth-century) component of the house.

The first floor western room carries a gallery window and there is an indication of an additional small window between the gallery window and the truss. Both rooms are well lit from the south window and provide good viewpoints over Castle Street below. Later, Tudor Rose was clad in stone, probably in the early sixteenth century.



Tudor Rose

Above The south wall wing, on two storeys and a later jettied oriel window.
 Left Plan of the Tudor Rose.

Tudor Rose

Right The Tudor Rose motif under the collar of the third truss.

Below Studs for wattle and daub walls on the first floor, supported by a lateral beam and joists.



PLAS BERW AND CASTLE STREET, BEAUMARIS

The Plas Berw hall is an important building with several features of the late fifteenth century. Nevertheless, the later sixteenth century shows comparable significance, for our present purpose. Major works had taken place at Plas Berw, in the 1580s. Owen Holland who married Elizabeth, daughter of the second Sir Richard Bulkeley, in 1578, was actively expanding his estate, and also turned his attention to his house. Plas Berw had been a hall, open to the roof, with a service area at the north-west end, separated from the hall by a screens passage. The lateral fireplace and projecting chimney stack heated the hall. Behind the dais another screen partitioned private rooms on two storeys. Two doors, one on the ground floor and another, off-set on the first floor, indicate the position of an early external timber newel stair which gave access to the upstairs solar.

In 1580, or thereabouts, Owen Holland built a massive stair tower against the south-west wall at the solar or private end, overlapping slightly onto the wall of the hall. At the same time he inserted an upper floor in the hall and added a fireplace to the existing stack. A door on the first floor facilitated access to both the hall and the private rooms. The stair tower butts up against the wall and slightly overlaps the chimney stack.

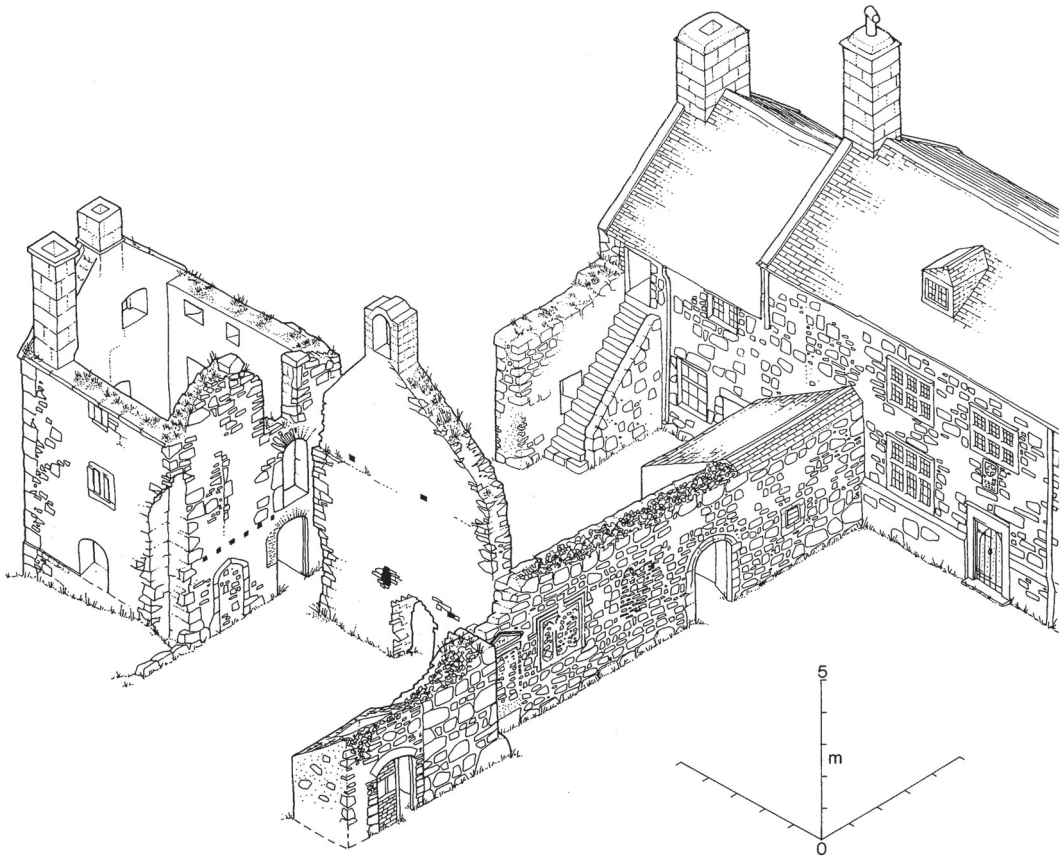
The windows in the first floor and attic space of the tower carry ovolo moulded mullions and jambs. One of the earliest occurrences of this style of window may be seen at Plas Mawr, Conwy, where their use is closely dated to the 1570s. Close parallels to the stone mullioned window can be found in the stair tower at Tŷ Mawr, Castle Street, the vestibule of the Beaumaris Court House dated to 1614, and at David Hughes School, established in 1603.

The significance of these parallels and associations is that the ground plan and use of space at Tŷ Mawr, Castle Street, is still within the late or sub-medieval tradition. The opposed doorways and the use of space in the treatment and disposition of the beams suggest this. It is possible that the huge stair tower was a secondary component in the sequence of a development of the house. It is suggested here at Tŷ Mawr, Castle Street, that the stair tower was added no later than the last two decades of the sixteenth century.

Family connections between the Bulkeley family and the Hamptons of Plas Berw were likely to ensure that each was aware of current developments. The dimensions of the two towers are very close, despite the difference in scale of the main buildings. Both towers carry stone mullioned windows with ovolo moulding on jambs, mullions and transoms. Both towers are set alongside their respective existing external chimney stacks in a way in which one wall of the tower butts against a main wall of the house as another butts against the chimney stack, slightly overlapping it. After 1600 we might expect more of a Renaissance feel if any major works were to be put in train at a property already in Bulkeley hands.

The false four-centred arched fireplaces on the first floor of the house on Castle St, Beaumaris, are in a style consistent with the mid to later sixteenth century. The rounded corbelled supports for the fireplace head in the east wall of the ground floor are of a style which runs through the rooms of Plas Mawr. The more rounded style of four-centred arch in the north wall of the ground floor has parallels with sixteenth-century fireplaces.

The second house along Bull's Head Street, Beaumaris, was built somewhat later than the adjacent house. The distinctive type of dove-tail collar-beam trusses suggest this, although the beams, chamfers and stops have little to distinguish them from the beams in the second house, except that they are generally less fancy than those in the larger house. The ground plan is unusual, with paired and opposite doors towards the centre of the long axis. The original plan mirrored that symmetry, which was lost by the requirements of various later patterns of use. Nevertheless, the original plan suggests that the property was divided, with a partition between the two pairs of opposing doors. The eastern half of this division carried ogee stops on the joists.



Plas Berw

Above Drawing of the stone wall hall, showing the cross-passage, the blocked fifteenth-century windows and massive stair-well which replaced the earlier timber newel. The early-seventeenth-century mansion stands at right-angles to the old hall.

Left Aerial photograph of the Plas Berw complex. The seventeenth-century mansion is in the foreground.

Plas Berw

Top right The Plas Berw stair tower.

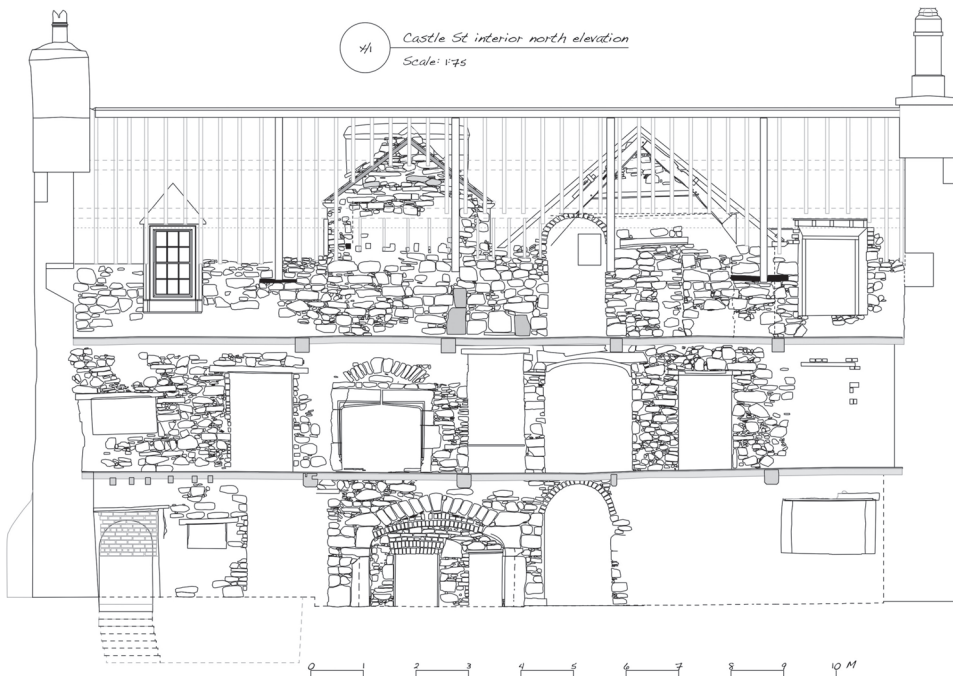
Bottom right The north wall of the old hall with a blocked, cusped window and another later opening, installed by Thomas Holland in the early seventeenth century, with a classical pediment.

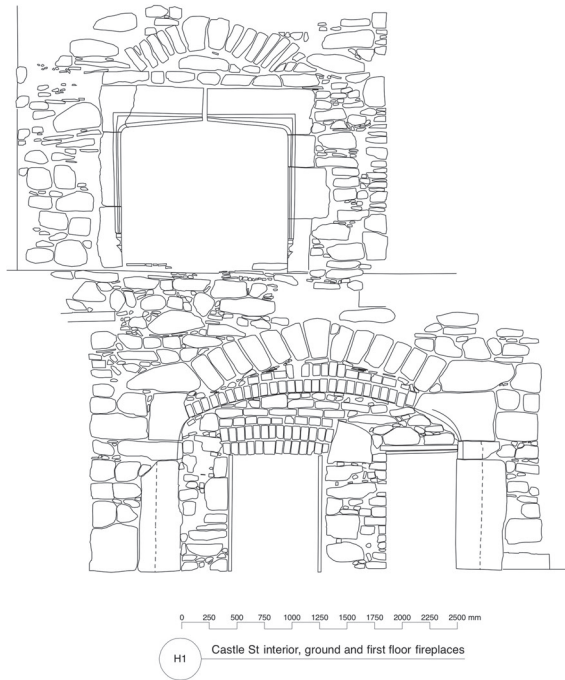




House 1: Castle Street frontage.

The two windows flanking the porch are reconstructions based on early 20th century photographs.





Castle Street

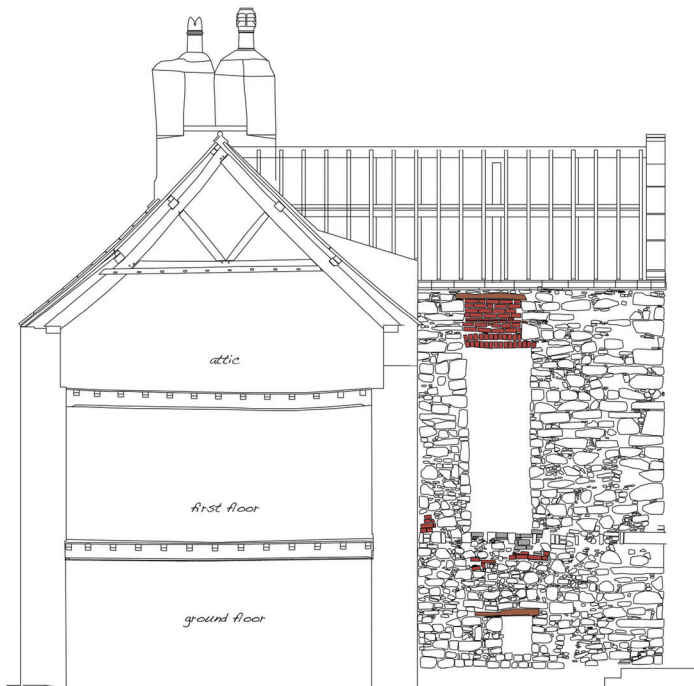
Opposite, top Castle Street façade in a late Georgian style.

Opposite, bottom The removal of plaster and other treatments show several late sixteenth/seventeenth-century details: chamfered beams and fancy stops; sixteenth-century fireplaces on each floor; collar beam trusses; and early windows.

Above left Detailed drawing of two sixteenth/seventeenth-century fireplaces on the interior back wall, ground and first floor.

Above right Photograph showing the gutting of the building.

Right The large late sixteenth-century stair tower built alongside the massive chimney stack, on the back wall and comparable to Plas Berw. The openings have ovolo jambs, mullions and transoms. Some of the long openings are a feature of nineteenth-century stair lights.



The elevation of House 2, showing beams on two levels and the massive bulk of the stair tower against it. The long opening on the north side of the stair tower is a product of the hotel years. The bricked-in openings are original.

The second house was probably built during the seventeenth century. A taxation account of 1662, written against two premises as one item, identified Lord Bulkeley as landlord of a dwelling house and cellar on Castle Street and Mr Owen Hughes as landlord for the New House. In 1664 Mrs Deane, presumably the tenant, accounted for her Dwelling House, the New House and cellar, together. This may not be a reference to the properties under discussion but it might quite possibly be so.

Changes were also made at Plas Berw. Owen Holland's son, Thomas, added a new Renaissance style mansion, at right-angles to the old hall, in 1615. This style of architecture, as in the new building at Henblas, was a radical departure in appearance and the use of space from the old layout. Nevertheless, Thomas Holland, at this time, was still prepared to add a new lateral chimney-stack to the old solar and introduced angled corner fireplaces to the ground and second floors of Owen Holland's tower, albeit that the new door to the old solar now supported a classical pediment.

PLAS COCH

Plas Coch is an important mansion house. The core of the ancient dynastic lordship of Porthaml is focused on two houses—Porthaml Uchaf and Porthaml Isaf. In general the 'isaf' designation usually denotes the superior of the two. Porthamel Isaf came to be known as Plas Coch in the sixteenth century. A legend over the door of the main porch tells us that the house was built by Dafydd Llwyd ap Hugh in 1569. The building was very considerably remodelled by Dafydd's son, Hugh Hughes. Nevertheless, several elements of the sixteenth-century fabric—blocked windows on the wings and the façade—which are of particular significance were identified during the course of the renovation and recording work. Plas Coch ('Red Mansion') took its name for the red gritstone from which it was built.

The structure was built in an innovative style which at once displays wide-ranging influences and marks the transition from the late medieval world to the modern, in terms of the disposition and use of space in a gentry house. The most striking outward appearance of the house is the ubiquitous red sandstone and gritstone used in its construction, the profusion of crow-step gables and the pinnacles which surmount them, together with the large stone mullioned and transomed windows and the Renaissance pediments which cap them.

Plas Coch's expansion was derived through leases and other devices in the property market, including acquisition of leases in former bond townships after the conquest of Wales in 1283. Welsh law prohibited the alienation of freehold land but transfers were often made through devices such as perpetual mortgages. By the sixteenth century property law was relaxed and prosperous estates acquired more land to the detriment of smaller properties. Bond land was often leased for services rendered to the Crown, especially during the sixteenth century, and by the early seventeenth century Crown land was sold outright. The second half of the sixteenth century was a particularly prosperous period at Plas Coch. Hugh became a lawyer at Lincoln's Inn, Queen's Attorney for North Wales, Member of Parliament, and High Sheriff. His marriage into the Montagu family brought further influential connexions.

The third Hugh Hughes died in 1764 with no children. Anna, heiress of the Bulkeleys of Brynddu and then, Sir William Bulkeley Hughes, took the name of Hughes. Debt forced Sir William to decamp to the Continent. But his son, William Bulkeley Hughes, turned the situation round in a forceful way and proceeded to implement a programme of exceptional building in the 1830s.

The mansion during the years between the late Tudor and Georgian periods did not change much over seven generations. There is a three-storey wing projecting eastward at the southern end of the house and a porch on the east façade. There is a kitchen wing, equally massive, set against the western rear of the house, 8.0 metres by 6.2 metres across. There is a square stair tower (but later than the Tudor period) and

the chimney stack, as mentioned, rising above the roofline. The original 1590s' windows are mostly intact or repaired. The details retain the ovolo jambs, mullions, transom and pediment, with similar openings and dormers. All the openings are symmetrical. The apex of the wings and gables carry crow-steps. There is a relatively small basement under the kitchen wing on the west side.

Plas Coch saw extensive construction work in the 1830s with the addition of a three-storey wing on the north side of the earlier house, a slightly smaller wing on the east façade and a dining room wing, again on three storeys. The works of the 1830s and 1840s included a billiard room in the upper western annexe. All this work was in very similar style and fabric to the original house. The evidence of the 1841 Tithe Survey indicates that further construction had taken place towards the west of the main house, comprising north, south and western ranges around an open courtyard. This was work of the later nineteenth century. A large stone staircase descends from the main house to the lower ground. The local topography slopes gently down towards what was the valley of a small stream and is now the location of an ornamental lake.

The main axis of Plas Coch runs north-south. A continuous ridge extends 27 metres from the north gable to the south gable, interrupted only by a chimney stack from the north gable. The northern end of the roof space is an addition of the early nineteenth century. The remaining extent is supported by sixteenth-century oak trusses, spanning 6.85 metres. The principals are, on average, 115 millimetres thick.

Truss 8 is a nineteenth-century king-post truss and marks the division between the nineteenth-century north extension, and the original hall.

Truss 2 stands out for several reasons. The raking struts, collar and principals are all cusped, unlike any of the other trusses in the main roof space. The struts have slipped and, on the west side, re-pegged. The principals may have been manoeuvred into position to accommodate the width of pitch of the roof, suggesting reuse. (Truss 2 is, nevertheless, one foot shorter in span than the other trusses.) The second truss identifies the difference between the stockier plain trusses and the single cusped truss. Radiocarbon determinations confirm a component of an earlier phase of the late sixteenth century mansion.

SOURCES

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Bangor Documents: Taxations 1662–64.

Beaumaris map and schedule, 1829, BH 8211.

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Rent and Revenues: 1756, 1780, 1771.

Crown rents: 1756–1841.

Cadw

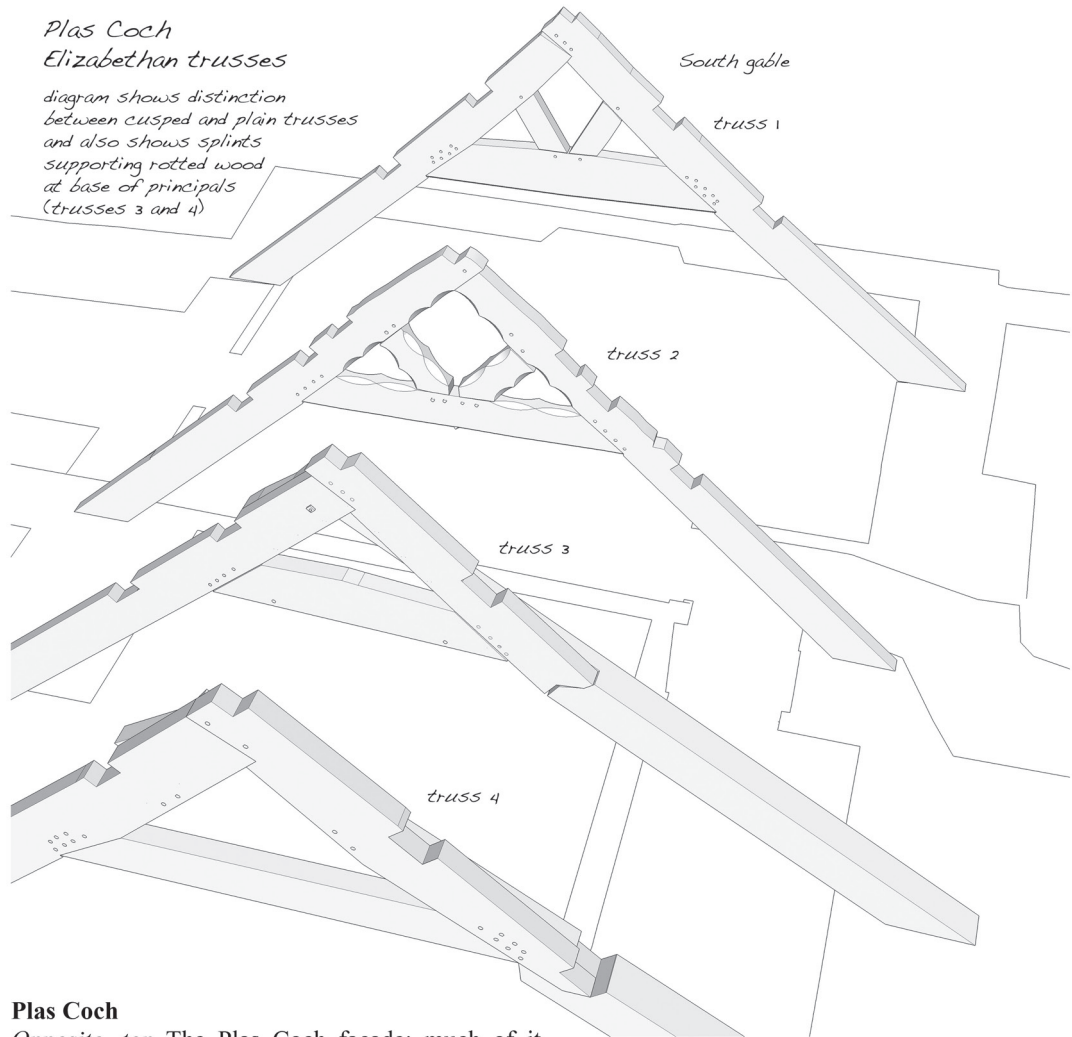
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Plas Coch

Opposite, top The Plas Coch façade: much of it is original including the openings: ovolo jambs, mullions, transoms and pediments.

Opposite, bottom left There are eight trusses in the attic. Truss 2 stands out since the raking struts, collar and principals are all cusped. Its earlier date is corroborated by dendrochronology.

Opposite, bottom right The back of the mansion. The stair-tower with a room and a pent roof added later; the large building adjacent to the tower is the kitchen wing.

Above The drawing describes a part of the attic truss.

Right There are several blocked openings on the sides of the wings: this is one where an original window has been blocked and partly reopened off-set.



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