

THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

The Old Farmhouse, Waen Farm Denbighshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF



CPAT Report No 531

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Report for Mr & Mrs P A D Jones

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In November 2002, the Contracting Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) was asked by Mr David Jones, Hafod-y-Coed, Tremeirchion, to provide a specification and quotation for a watching brief to be undertaken during the conversion into a dwelling of The Old Farmhouse, Waen Farm, a Grade II listed building (Record No 21924).
- 1.2 The watching brief requirements, requested by Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments, were that measured and photographic recording of the wall-plates and surviving timber framing of the building be undertaken, and that floor surfaces should be examined for early occupational evidence.
- 1.3 The CPAT quotation was accepted by Mr Jones in, and the watching brief was carried out in February 2003.

2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

- 2.1 Waen Farm is located at SJ 6430 3300 (Fig.1), and lies some 2.5 km east-south-east of St Asaph, in the community of Waen, and 1.5km to the west of the village of Tremeirchion. The Old Farmhouse has a southerly aspect and is situated on level ground adjacent to the present farmhouse and outbuildings which superseded it.
- 2.2 The farm is situated approximately 1km to the east of the River Clwyd and just to the west of a tributary, Afon Bach, at a height of 45m OD. The surrounding fields are mainly given over to agricultural pasture.
- 2.3 The underlying geology of the area consists of Lower Mottled Sandstone belonging to the Permian-Triassic period (British Geological Society map). Overlying this is a deposit of boulder clay of the Pleistocene period (Ordnance Survey Geological map). The soils of the immediate area consist of reddish, fine loamy and clayey stagnogley soils belonging to the Salop Association (Soil Survey of England and Wales map and legend).

3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Old Farmhouse, in origin an early 16th-century hall house, has been the subject of a number of structural changes throughout its existence. It does, however, retain many elements of its original timber-framed construction.
- 3.2 The structural sequence of the building consists of the following interpretation, which was largely based on the visible evidence: (see Figs.5, 6).
 - i) Constructed as a four-bay timber-framed hall house in the early 16th century.
 - ii) In the mid 17th century a stone back-to-back fireplace, with brick chimney structure, was inserted, the positioning of the east side of which required partial dismantlement of a 16th-century truss. (Truss 1; Plate 4). A slate slab floor was laid to the west of the fireplace in Bays 2 and 3, and ceilings were replaced in both end bays.
 - iii) Perhaps in the late 18th or early 19th century the external timber-framed walls were rebuilt in brick, the east and part of the north walls on a limestone plinth. Incised dates of 1835 in the plaster roof-lining of the west bay, and of 1839 in that of the east bay, may however, indicate a later 19th-century build. The three internal trusses were largely retained. Part of the north side of the fireplace was demolished to make way for a stair accessing the upper floor of the east bay, and the west fireplace was narrowed to allow for the insertion of a brick 'shelf' structure (Plate 2). The hall, occupying Bays 2 and 3 and previously open to the roof, had a ceiling inserted. Later, an outhouse was inserted into the north wall of the building to the west of Truss 2.

iv) The building was inhabited until the 1920's when the present farmhouse was built. Since then it has housed livestock and farm machinery.

- 3.3 No attempt will be made in this report to provide a complete description of the building, beyond the brief notes above.

4 WATCHING BRIEF (See Figs 4,5)

- 4.1 The initial visit to the farmhouse followed the clearing out of the building by the contractors, which exposed the surviving floor surfaces.
- 4.2 The remains of three internal trusses of the timber-framed hall-house were noted. Truss 1 had been partially dismantled to allow for the insertion of the 17th-century fireplace. The crucks are truncated on the north and south. Truss 2 is of open raised cruck construction, with an arch-braced collar-beam. The south cruck is truncated. While the north cruck is supported on a modern brick pier, its associated wall post survives within the later brick wall. Truss 3 is of raised cruck construction, with surviving sill-beam, double tie-beam, collar and studding. Wattle and daub infill survives on the upper level. The north wall-post remains intact while to the south the cruck has been truncated.
- 4.3 Both the north and south wall-plates survived the length of the building and were recorded as far as was practicable, the mortice holes cut into the underside of the timbers not always being accessible.
- 4.4 The north wall plate consisted of four scarf-jointed elements 4.70m, 3.60m, 1.90m and 3.80m in length (E-W), some 170mm in height x 110mm wide. Both the Truss 2 and Truss 3 wall-posts survived *in situ*, that of Truss 3 with its braces (Plates 5, 6). Where accessible, the underside of the wall-plate was examined for the presence of stave-holes.
- 4.5 The south wall plate consisted of three scarf-jointed elements, 4.80m, 4.70m and 4.50m in length and of similar profile to the north wall plate. It was not possible to examine the underside of the wall-plate for the existence of stave-holes. No adjoining timber survived the construction of the later brick wall.
- 4.6 Examination of Bay 1 revealed that the ground surface had been lowered into natural clay, to a level some 0.25m below the surface of the slate floor in Bays 2 and 3. Alignments consisting of two courses of brick had been laid down to support a boarded floor.
- 4.7 The slate floor occupying Bays 2 and 3, which constituted the hall of the timber-framed building, consisted of cut slabs varying in size to a maximum 1.5m x 1.25m and up to 50mm thick. The removal of the slabs revealed a deposit of clean yellow-brown sand, some 100-120mm in thickness, laid over slightly uneven disturbed red-brown clay. Cleaning of the exposed clay surface revealed the remains of a hearth structure to the west of the 17th-century fireplace (Fig. 5). Also noted was extensive animal disturbance adjacent to the north wall of Bay 2, which encroached towards the hearth remains.
- 4.8 An area of patchy charcoal and reddened burnt clay some 1.60m N-S by 1.00m E-W, interpreted as the remains of the 16th-century hearth, was exposed just to west of the later fireplace. The hearth was defined on its west and south sides by a shallow gully, some 50mm deep, into which were set small bricks, the remains of two of which survived, approximately 120 x 80 x 50mm in size (Plate 7).
- 4.9 The latest floor in Bay 4 consisted of modern concrete, which was not removed during the watching brief.

5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The results of the watching brief have provided a number of clues to the nature of the surviving structure and its earlier architecture. These are considered below.
- 5.2 In Bay 1, the lowering of the ground surface in the 19th century to accommodate a boarded floor, removed all traces of pre-19th-century flooring. Stave holes on the underside of the fireplace lintel are perhaps an indication that the fireplace was blocked off. In the 20th century, after the building was given over to livestock, the northern third of the room was partitioned.
- 5.3 In Bays 2 and 3, the 17th-century slate slab floor had, except for one or two peripheral slabs partially overlain by later brick walling, been relaid on clean sand, probably in the 19th century. The 16th-century floor, formed on the surface of natural clay, and the deposits above it upon which the slate floor was originally laid, were largely removed or disturbed during this operation.
- 5.4 The 16th-century hearth remains were truncated on the east during the construction of the 17th-century fireplace, and suffered further from animal disturbance on the north.
- 5.5 It was noted that a feature of the timber-framed construction was the incidence of stave-holes for wattle and daub infill being drilled into vertical members of the frame. Thus the anomalous existence of such holes on the underside of the wall-plates may be an indication of the presence of a window or doorway.

6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 6.1 The writer would like to thank the following for their assistance and co-operation during the watching brief: David Jones; John Evans, of Evans Brothers, the site contractors; Richard Sugget (RCAHMMW) for his helpful comments and Nigel Jones (CPAT) for assistance in producing this report.

7 REFERENCES

7.1 References

Smith, P, 1988 *Houses of the Welsh Countryside*, London: HMSO.

7.2 Cartographic Sources

Tithe Survey, 1845 *Map of the Townships of Cil Owain Bodeugan and Rhyllon in the Parish of St Asaph and County of Flint*.

Ordnance Survey, 1912 Third edition 1:2500 map (Denbighshire 8.4)

Ordnance Survey, 1973 *Geological Survey of Great Britain, Sheet 107, Denbigh* (Drift edition).

Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1983 *Soils of England and Wales map (Sheet 2 - Wales)*.

British Geological Survey, 1994 *The Rocks of Wales* (Geological map of Wales, Solid edition).

APPENDIX 1

BUILDING CONVERSION AT WAEN FARM, WAEN, ST ASAPH SPECIFICATION FOR AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AND BUILDING RECORDING BY THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The proposed development involves the conversion of a farm building into a dwelling at Waen Farm, Waen, St Asaph.
- 1.2 The building was originally timber-framed, dating to the 15th or 16th century and was inhabited until the 1920s, after which it was used to house livestock and machinery. It has now been listed by Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments who have required a programme of archaeological recording to be undertaken in connection with the proposed conversion.

2 Objectives

- 2.1 The objectives are:
 - 2.1.1 to undertake a watching brief during the removal of existing floor levels;
 - 2.1.2 to undertake a drawn survey of surviving and accessible timber framing;
 - 2.1.3 to prepare a report outlining the results of the archaeological works.

3 Methods

- 3.1 During the removal of existing floor levels an archaeological watching brief will be maintained to record any features or deposits of archaeological significance which may be revealed. All archaeological deposits and/or features noted during the watching brief will be excavated by hand and recorded by drawn section/plan and/or photography as appropriate. All photography will be in 35mm format black and white negative and colour slide.
- 3.2 The original wall-plate and surviving timber framing will be recorded at an appropriate stage of the development, following agreement with the contractor. A drawn and photographic record will be maintained as appropriate.
- 3.3 Following the on-site work an illustrated and bound report will be prepared. This will be in A4 format and contain conventional sections on: Site location, Topography and Geology; Historic Background; Watching Brief; Building survey; Conclusions and References.
- 3.4 The site archive will be prepared to specifications laid out in Appendix 3 in the Management of Archaeological Projects (English Heritage, 1991).

4 Resources and Programming

- 4.1 The watching brief will be undertaken by an experienced field archaeologist and overall supervision will be by Mr RJ Silvester, a senior member of CPAT's staff who is also a member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists. The duration of the watching brief will be entirely determined by the contractor's programme of work.
- 4.2 All report preparation will be completed by or with the assistance of the same field archaeologist who conducted the fieldwork.
- 4.3 Copies of the report will be deposited with the client within one month of the completion of on-site works. If appropriate, a short report will be published in *Archaeology in Wales*.

4.4 Requirements relating to Health and Safety regulations will be adhered to by CPAT and its staff.

4.5 CPAT is covered by appropriate Public and Employer's Liability insurance.

N.W. Jones
13th November 2002

APPENDIX 2

SITE ARCHIVE

Photographic archive

2 colour slide films
2 black and white print films
1 colour print film
1 APS film

Watching brief archive

2 A1 site plans (1:20)
2 A1 site elevation drawings (1:10)
2 A2 archive plans (1:50)

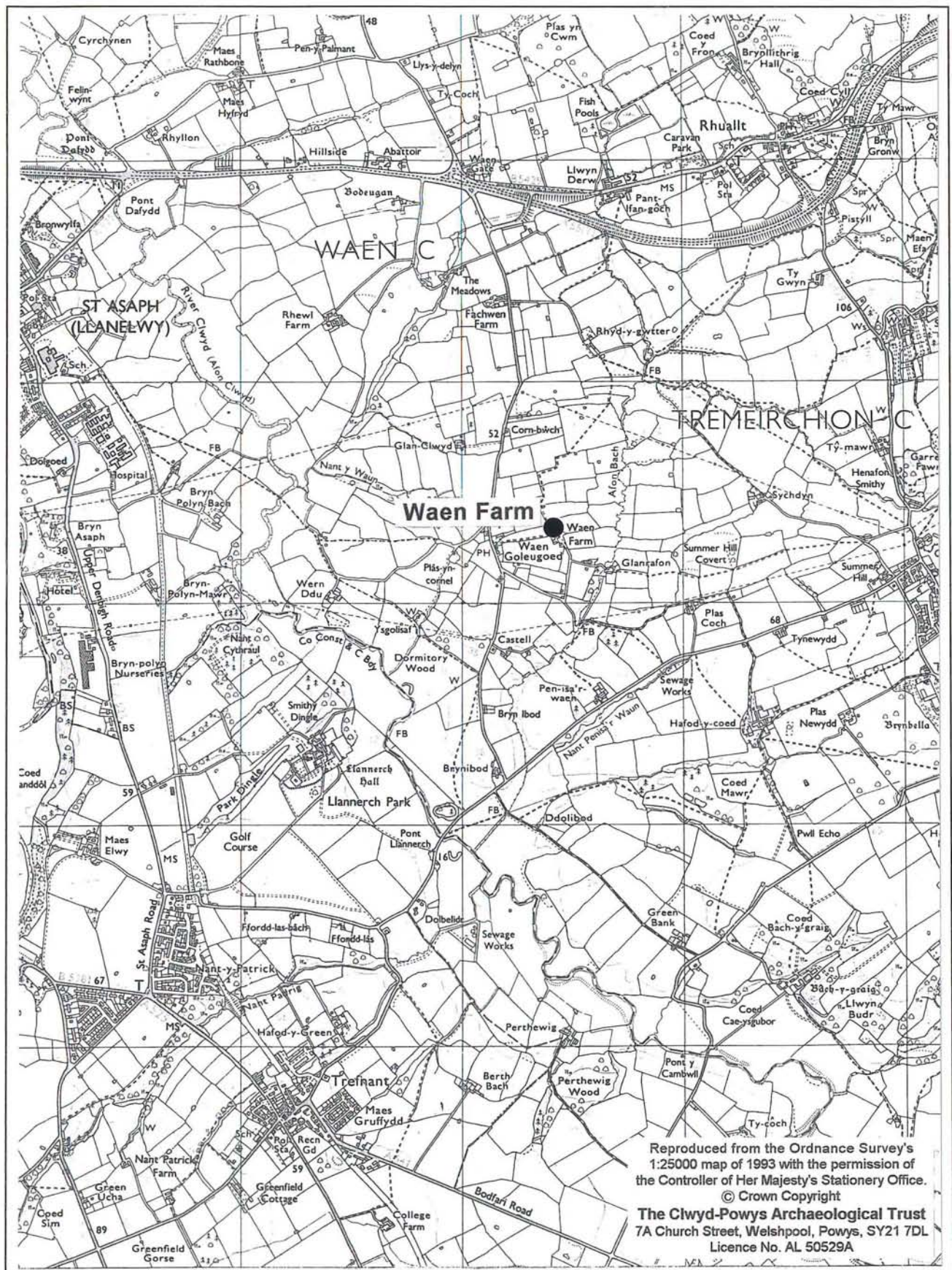


Fig. 1 Location of Waen Farm, Scale 1:25,000

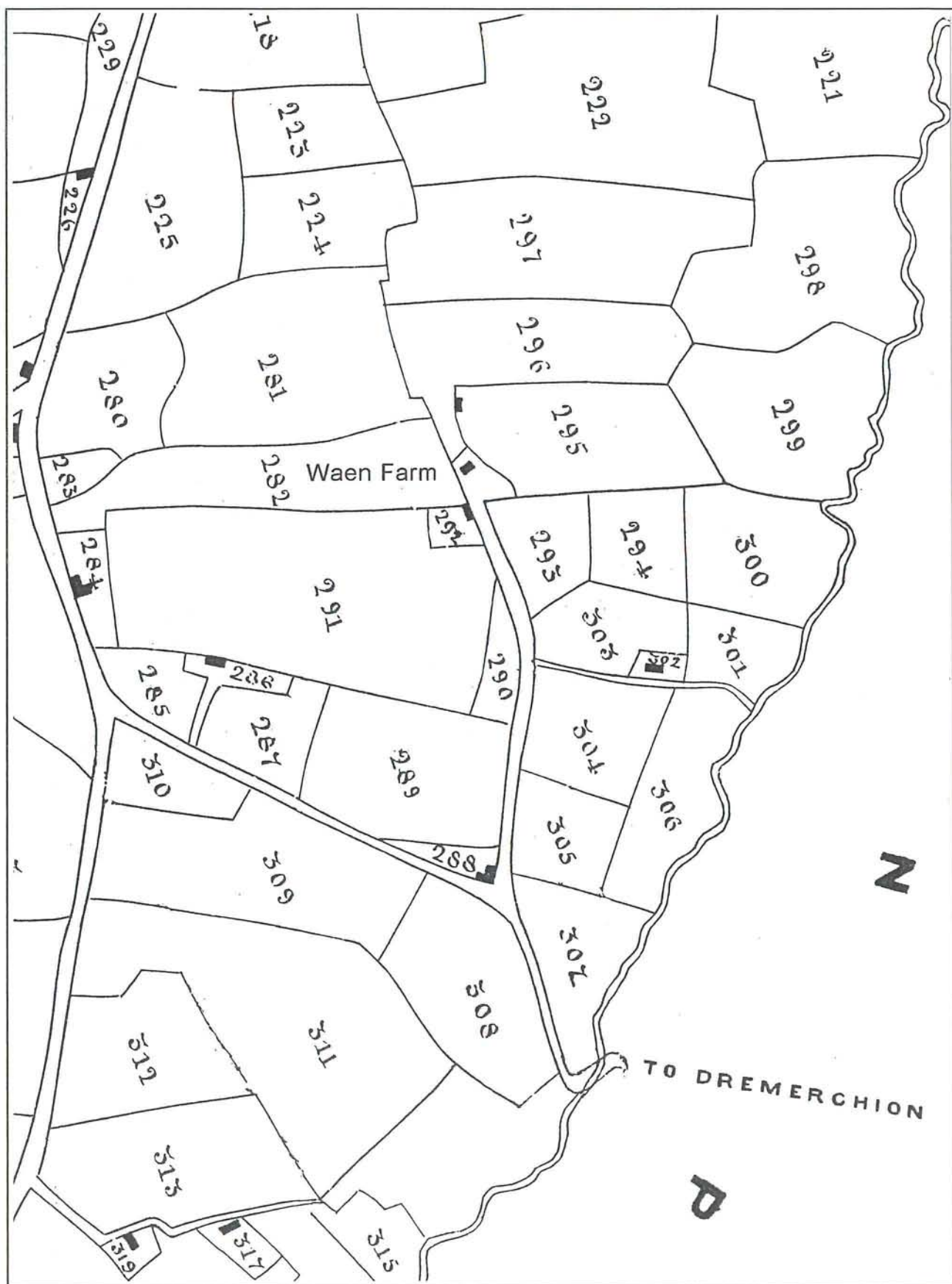


Fig. 2 Tithe Survey, 1845

Fig.3 Ordnance Survey 3rd edition 1:2500 map extract, 1912

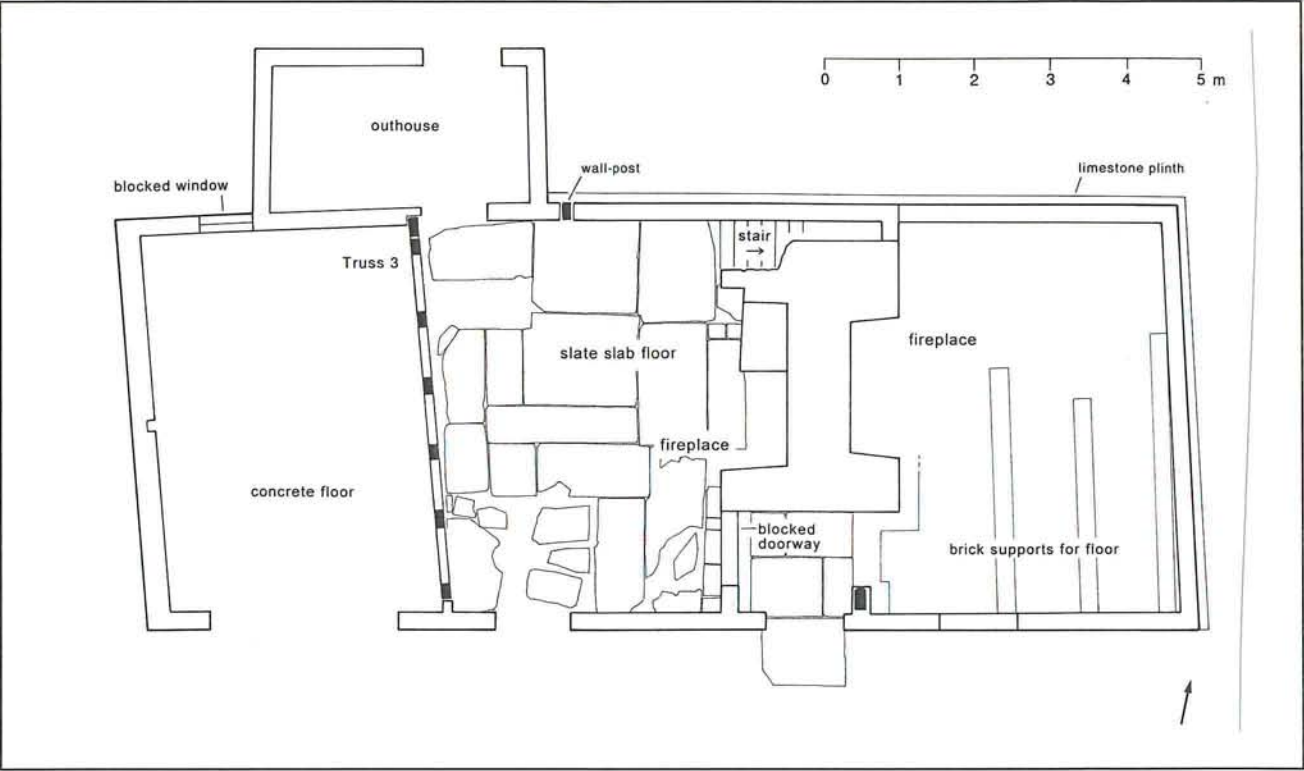


Fig. 4 Plan of the Old Farmhouse, 2003. Scale 1:100

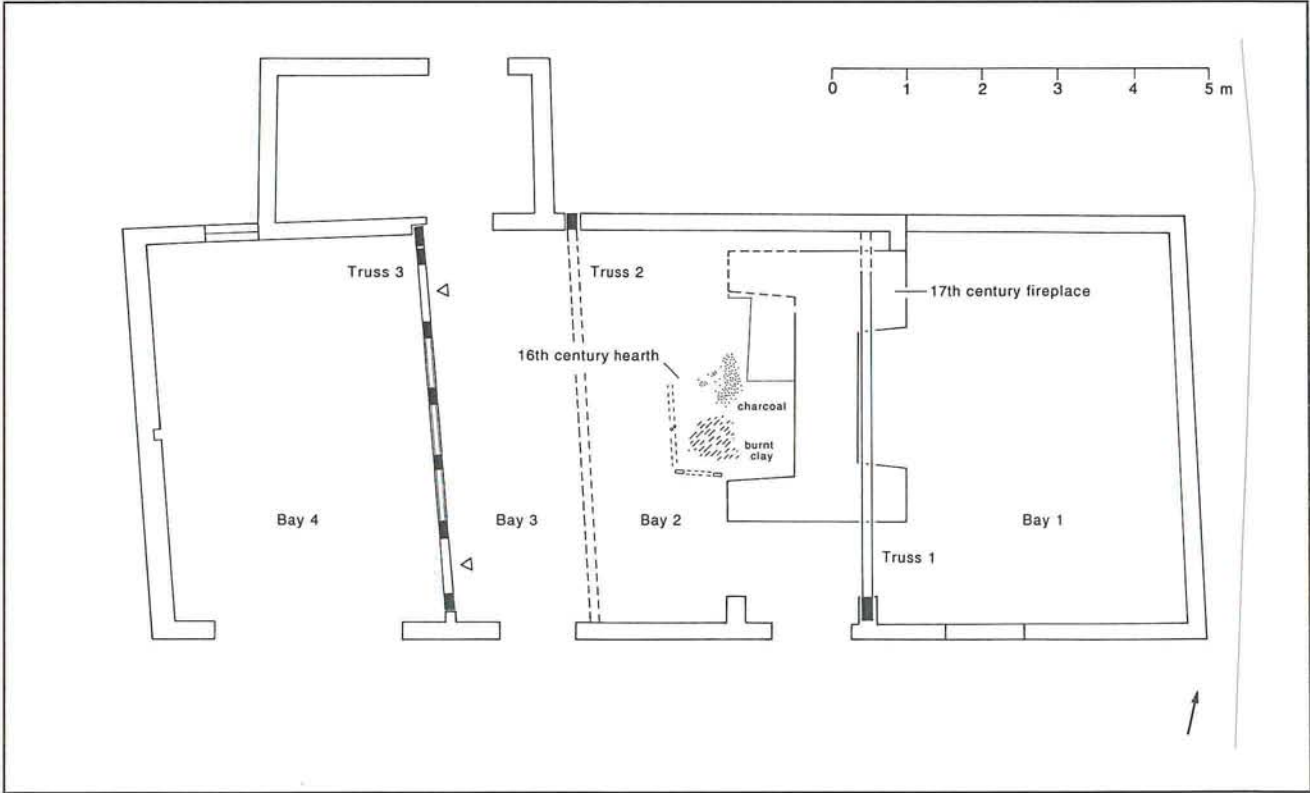


Fig. 5 Plan of the Old Farmhouse showing the main elements of the timber framing and the location of the early hearth. Scale 1:100



Plate 1 The Old Farmhouse, view from the south. Photo CPAT 1344.01



Plate 2 West side of the 17th-century fireplace and the slate slab floor. To the left of the fireplace is access to the later stair, while on the right is the blocked doorway. 2m scale. Photo CPAT 1343.16



Plate 3 East side of the 17th-century fireplace, 2m scale. Photo CPAT CS03/24.24



Plate 4 Truss 1 and the inserted 17th-century chimney structure, from the east. The truss was truncated on the right to allow for the stair. Photo CPAT 1343.22



Plate 5 Truss 2 wall-post / wall plate adjacent to the 19th-century outhouse, from the north. 2m scale. Photo CPAT CS03/24.11



Plate 6 Truss 3 north wall-post / wall plate, from the north. Photo CPAT 1344.27



Plate 7 The 16th-century hearth, from the west. 1m scale. Photo CPAT CS03/25.23