

TAN-Y-CLAWDD BARN ON HIGH ST.
JOHNSTOWN
PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORDING REPORT



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Summary

The buildings at the site at High Street Johnstown originated as the agricultural buildings of a farm named as Tan-y-Clawdd on the first edition Ordnance Survey 1:10560 map when it also had a farmhouse with several small outbuildings to the east and a smithy to the north. The farmstead stood on the eastern side of the road that became the B6505 High Street or Ruabon Road through Johnstown and would have been a significant feature on the road which ran through a landscape of agricultural and industrial land.

The buildings form an inverted L-shape with one range running S-N and the other W – E. The buildings occupy a sloping site, falling from W-E and the side that faces the road is dug into the slope (although later road improvements may also have built up material against this face, so the western façade is one and a half stories in height with the drop of the site giving a full two storeys on the eastern elevation of the W range and along the N range which faced onto the farmyard.

The original core buildings are stone built with red, ceramic tiled roofs. They have several additions including an early lean-to on the end of the West Range and a brick built lean to on the south elevation of the North range. Finally, a 20th C brick shed and various other small lean-to structures were added to convert the building from agricultural to light industrial use.

The industrial conversion has removed or masked features of the agricultural use but from surviving traces the buildings appear to have been for storage in an upper level and either storage or animal housing (probably cattle) on the lower level of the West Range, there being rows of blocked ventilator slits and a blocked pitching door opening. The North Range may have been similarly for livestock below and storage over with a stable or cart shed at the eastern end, this last much mutilated by the later alterations although the later additions have largely masked the original parts of the building.

The presence of asbestos in the wall finishes and structure of the later additions made it impossible to safely open up areas of the building's interior to elucidate details recorded externally.

As such it is a fairly typical set of vernacular farm buildings probably dating from the later 18th or early 19th century and heavily altered in the 20th as the farming economy changed and the buildings became redundant and were converted to light industrial use. The Ruabon area was known for the production of brick and tile and the tiled roof may reflect an early use of industrial materials in the 19th C as the industry developed and the original buildings required re-roofing or may be a feature of the 20th C alterations although the added, brick, lean-to sections are roofed in corrugated, fibrous cement sheet boards so on balance the tiled roofs are likely to be earlier.

The photographic record creates a record of the building as it was just prior to demolition and recorded relevant visible features. No features that could be considered unusual for this type of building were noticed during the recording survey and no recommendations for further investigative work are made.

Author

This Building Recording Report was prepared by Peter McCrone of McCrone Archaeology, Consultancy and Contracting Services. The author is a Member of the Chartered Institute for Archaeology (MCIfA) and holds, amongst other qualifications, a B.Sc. (Hons) degree in Archaeology and a Postgraduate Diploma in Buildings and Heritage Conservation. The author has many years of experience of the historic environment of Britain and particularly of NW England and has had a long-standing interest in traditional or vernacular houses and farm buildings.

Site Location

The building is located at SJ 30154 45712. The barn stands on the eastern side of the B6505 High Street/ Ruabon Road in the settlement of Johnstown, 5km southwest of Wrexham. Johnstown is one of a group of, originally small, villages and hamlets, in some cases related to mining and other industrial activities, which have grown over the decades and form a polyfocal settlement (Figures 1 – 4).



Figure 1 National location within UK

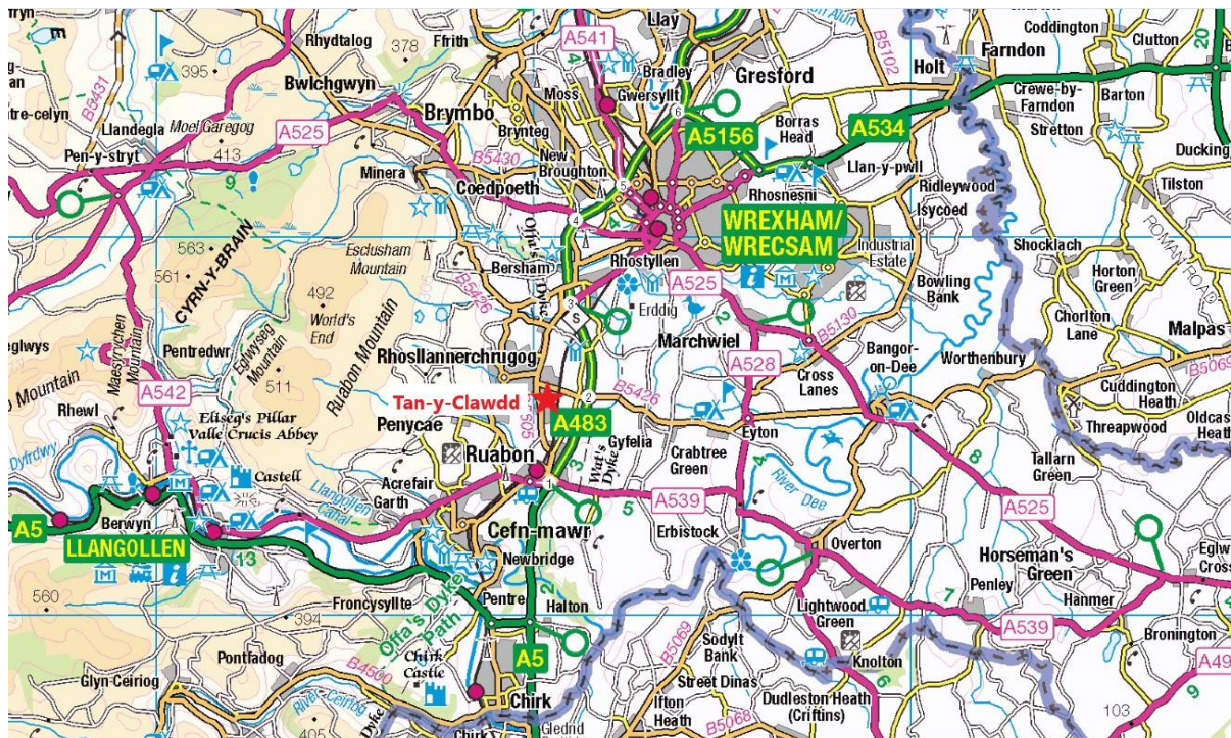


Figure 2 Tan-y-Clawdd barn in Johnstown, Regional location



Figure 3 Johnstown local map with location of barn

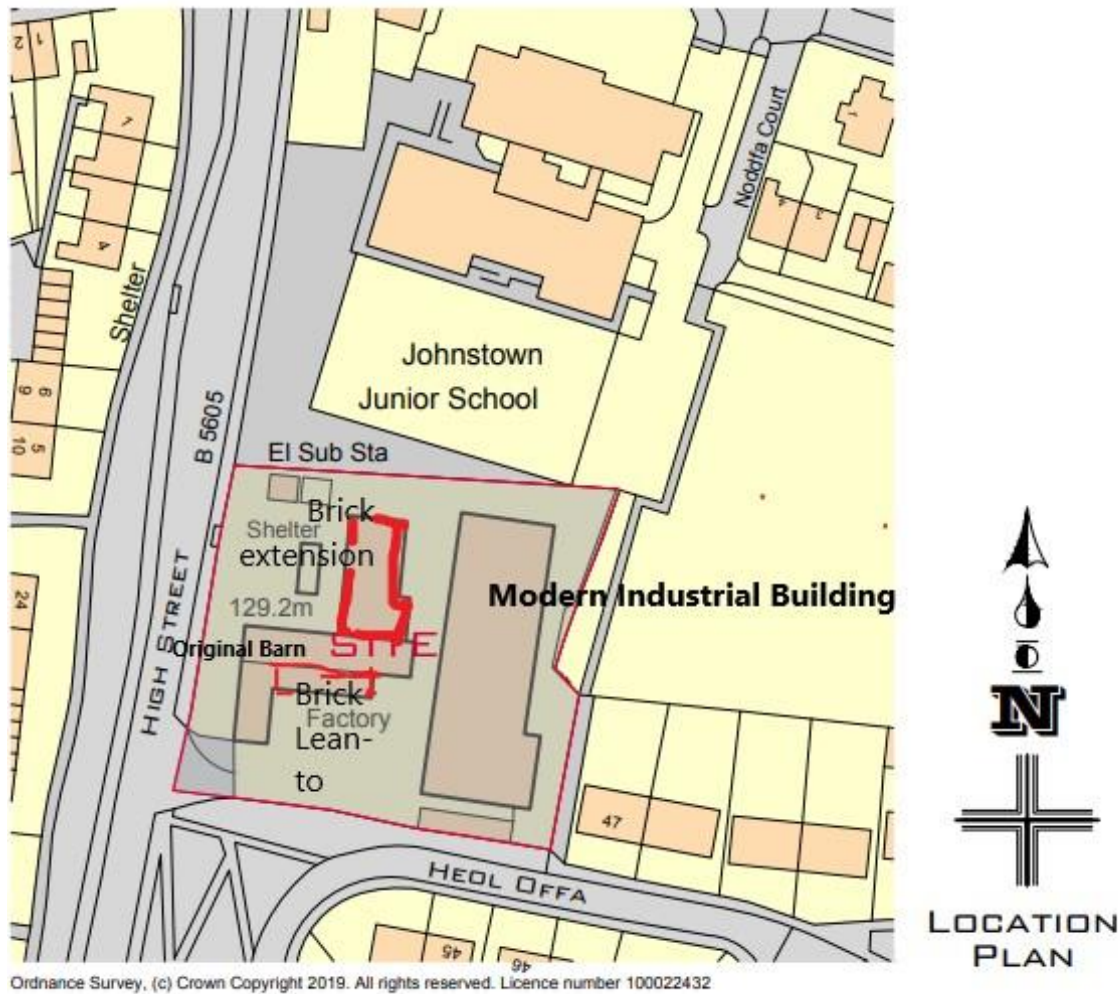


Figure 4 Site, detailed plan (after Parry Davis Architects)

The site covers 0.35 ha. with modern industrial buildings, the former farm building (being the only one of heritage interest) and areas of hard standing and some developing scrub vegetation. The site slopes from W – E with a fall of c. 1m between the west and east sides of the West range and of c 1.75 m between the west elevation of the west range and the east gable of the North Range. The modern road level of the B 5605 is c 1.5m above the ground level adjacent to the west elevation of the West Range. The buildings were used for light manufacturing until recently (Figures 5 - 7).



Figure 5 Site from SW view of the site



Figure 6 View of site from NW



Figure 7 Buildings from NW

1. Introduction

1.1. CIRCUMSTANCES OF PROJECT

1.1.1. Gower Homes Ltd have applied for planning permission to re-develop the site of Tan-y-Clawdd which was originally a farmstead but had been re-used for light industrial purposes in the latter half of the 20th century. CPAT (Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust) as archaeological advisors to the Local Planning Authority advised that a photographic record of the building should be made prior to its demolition. This report has been prepared to fulfil the requirements of that planning condition.

1.2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1.2.1. The aim of the project was to carry out a photographic record of the buildings.

1.2.2. The objective of the project was to produce a photographic record that allowed an appraisal of the historic fabric and any changes to it prior to its demolition.

1.3. PLANNING BACKGROUND

1.3.1. Following an application for planning permission to demolish the existing buildings on the site and develop it for new housing, the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT), as archaeological advisors to Wrexham County Borough, the Local Planning Authority, advised that a Photographic Record should be made of the former agricultural buildings on the site prior to their demolition. This is in line with Planning Policy Wales, 11th edition (Welsh Government 2021).

6.1.27 If the planning authority is minded to approve an application and where archaeological remains are affected by proposals that alter or destroy them, the planning authority must be satisfied that the developer has secured appropriate and satisfactory provision for their recording and investigation, followed by the analysis and publication of the results and the deposition of the resulting archive in an approved repository.

1.4. METHODOLOGY

1.4.1. Recording work was undertaken with consistency with the relevant standards and procedures of the Chartered Institute for Archaeology (CIfA) as set out in Standards and Guidance for Standing Building Recording (CIfA 2014) and generally accepted best practice.

1.4.2. Limitations were imposed due to the presence of asbestos in the structure of the buildings and particularly in friable wall finishes which precluded, on health and safety grounds, the removal of plaster or any opening up

works within the buildings. The presence of a modern industrial building on the site and the size of the site made some overall views from some directions impossible to capture.

1.4.3. The overall setting, views and details of the structures were recorded photographically, using a Nikon D3100 with a resolution of 14.2 megapixels, with a Nikkon18-55 mm lens. Photo editing used Picasa 3 software on a Toshiba laptop.

1.4.4. An assessment of historic OS maps was carried out to identify changes in the plan form of the building and developments of its site and setting over time.

2. Historical Background

2.1. BACKGROUND

2.1.1. The 1st edition Ordnance Survey 1:10560 map shows a farmstead named as Tan-y-Clawdd (The Place Below the Hedge or Bank) in the location of the development site. This comprised an irregular L-shaped building which is probably the barn that is the subject of this survey, and a farmhouse with several small outbuildings. Immediately to the north of the barn is a smithy (Figure 8). The line of “Offa’s Dyke remains of)” is marked running alongside the road that is now the B5605 to the north of Tan-y-Clawdd and this is presumably the “bank”. To the north there are two further farms named Tan-y-Clawdd, that immediately to the north being suffixed “canol” on a later edition of the map with the northern one being Tan-y-Clawdd-uchaf”.

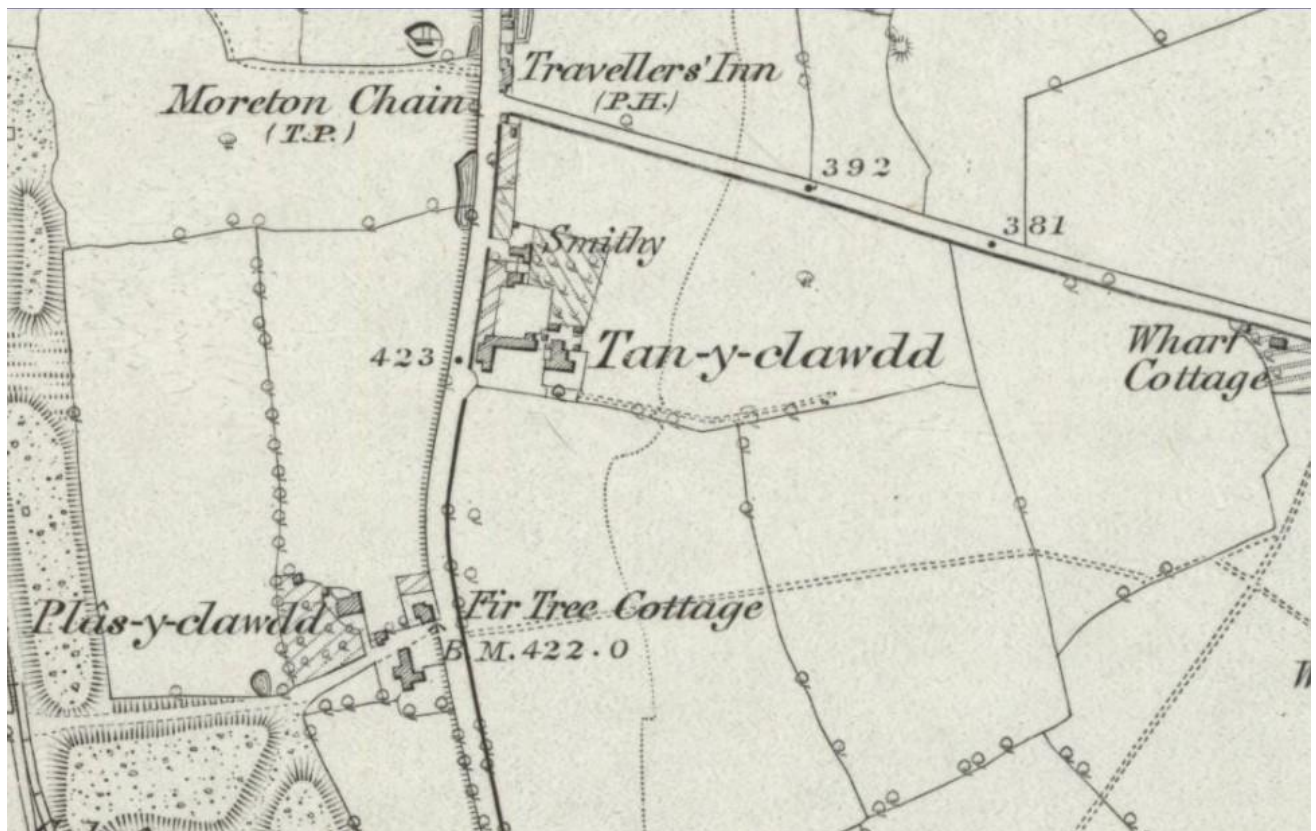


Figure 8 1st ed OS 1872-3 Denbighshire XXXV

2.1.2. Later editions show the buildings relatively unchanged but with the farming, industrial and residential landscape changing around the farm. The 1938 revision (published 1949) of the OS map shows this relatively unchanged farmstead; by the 1949 Revision, published in 1953, the brick built shed on the north side of the North Range is shown.

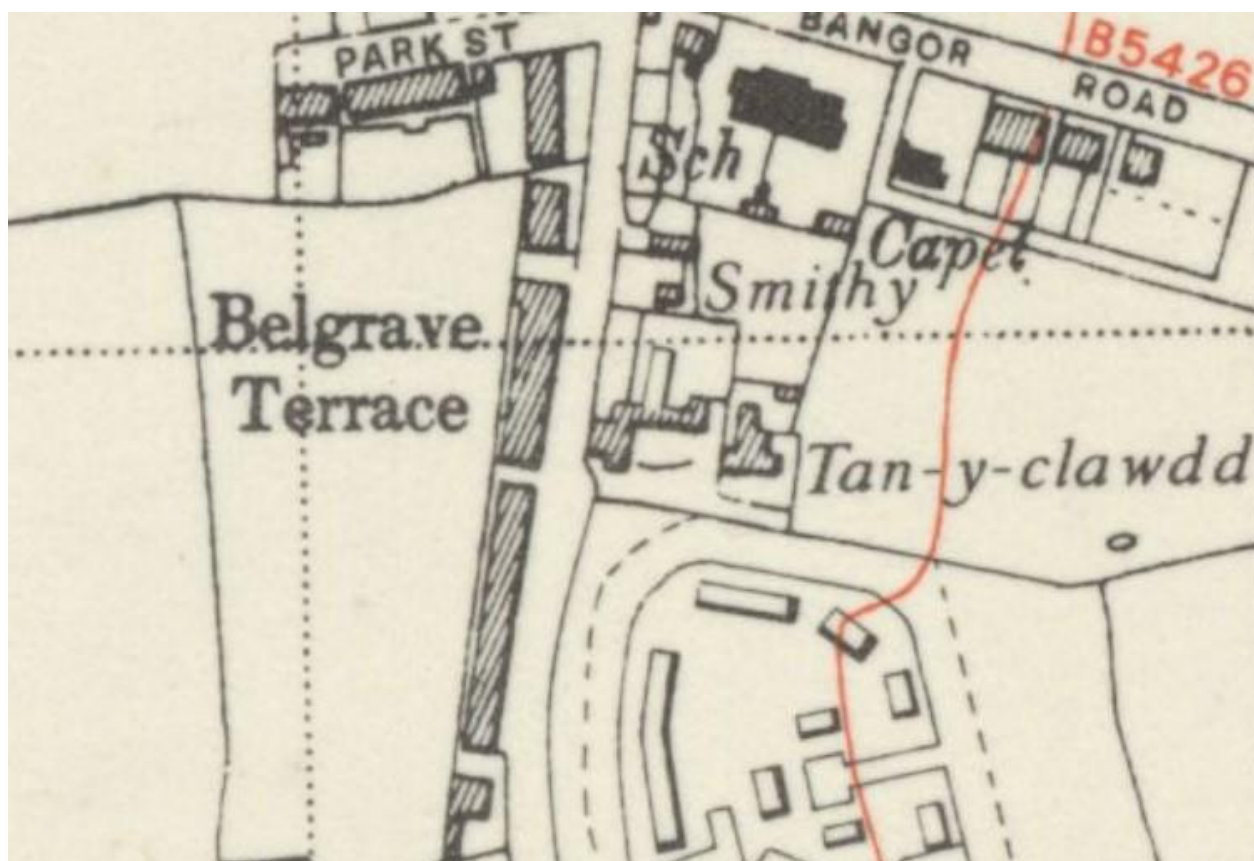


Figure 9 OS 1872-3 Denbighshire XXXV

3. Building Description

3.1. EXTERNAL DESCRIPTION

3.1.1. The building will be described from with the assumption the site is orientated with the cardinal points of the compass, with the B6505 running S-N along the West side of the site. Descriptors for different parts of the building complex are shown on Plan 1 which also shows the direction of the photographs by red arrows. As a guide, the closer the arrow to the feature, the more detailed the photo (Photo Plan 1).

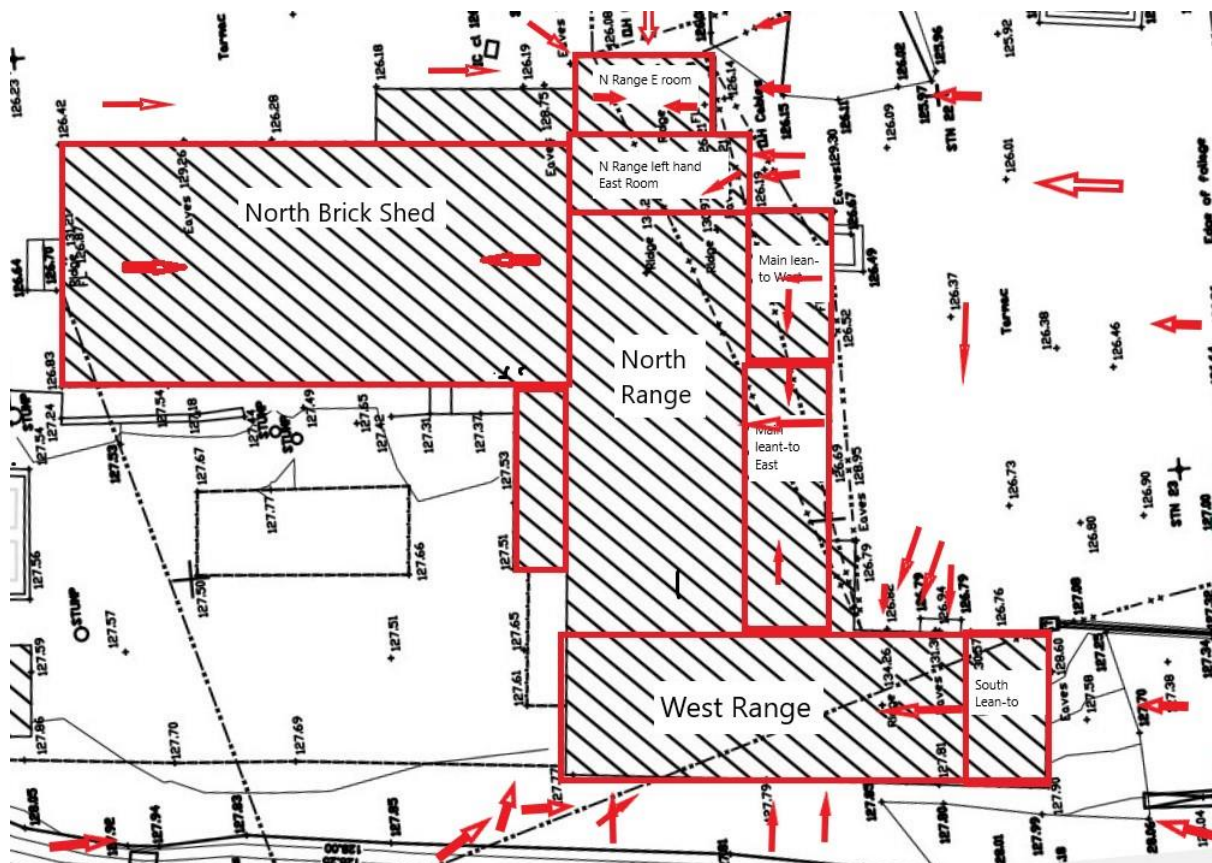


Photo Plan 1

3.1.2. The building appears to have been built as an L-shape with one range running S-N (described hereafter as the West range) parallel to the road to the west, and, at the northern end of this, a W-E range (described as the North range). The barn is stone built, largely in random rubble, with roughly dressed thin quoins and appears to have had a ground floor with a loft above throughout.

3.1.3.A stone-built lean-to has been added to the southern end of the West range, a brick built lean to along most of the southern elevation of the North range and a brick built, single story shed added to the north elevation of the North range, running S-N from the eastern end (Figures 10 - 12).



Figure 10 West range South gable and South lean-to



Figure 11 North range South elevation with added brick lean-to



Figure 12 Brick shed added to North elevation of North Range

3.1.4. The main building and southern lean to are covered with red, unglazed, ceramic tiles (probably locally produced from one of the brick and tile works centred around Ruabon) with spiral decorated finials one of which was loose and which is stamped “Dennis Ruabon” and with the letters S T and 90° graffitied onto the underside, along with rows of triple prick holes which may be to help key the tiles to mortar or to speed the drying process (Figures 13 and 14). The brick built lean-to, and the brick single story range are both roofed with corrugated, fibrous cement sheet.



Figure 13 Ridge finial tile side view



Figure 14 Roof finial tile, underside

3.1.5. Northern Elevation

- 3.1.5.1. The north elevation has the later brick range attached towards its eastern end and two small lean-to structures of timber and corrugated iron sheet towards the western end. The latter are probably related to the 20th C industrial uses of the building, and both have ventilator pipes protruding through their roof (Figure 15)



Figure 15 North range, north elevation, later lean to structures.

3.1.6. Single Story Brick Shed

- 3.1.6.1. The single storey brick shed was built towards the eastern end of the north elevation of the North Range. The shed has a small enclosure formed by brick pillars and a flat roof at the southern end of its east elevation (Figure 16).



Figure 16 Brick shed addition to E end North elevation of North range from NE

3.1.6.2. Above the level of the eaves of the brick shed is a square window into the upper level of the North Range. This has a flat timber lintel, with several circular holes possibly indicating it is reused from an earlier building. Below the current cill joints in the stonework suggest the cill of the window has been raised slightly (Figures 17 and 18).



Figure 17 North range North elevation Eastern end



Figure 18 North range North elevation eastern end upper window detail

3.1.7. Eastern Elevation of the North Range

- 3.1.7.1. The eastern elevation of the north range is a gable end with a window, possibly originally a pitching window for a hayloft, in the upper part (Figures 19 and 20).



Figure 19 East gable of North Range from SE



Figure 20 East gable window

- 3.1.7.2. One of the original stone quoins appears to have been lost and replaced with brickwork (Figure 21).



Figure 21 Brick patch replacing stone quoin NE corner of North range

3.1.8. Southern Elevation of the North Range

- 3.1.8.1. The south elevation of the North Range of the stone barn is largely obscured by the brick lean-to that has been built against the original buildings wall (Figure 22). This has an additional brick outshot at the western end, butted against the eastern face of the West Range (figure 23).



Figure 22 Lean-to on South elevation of North Range



Figure 23 East elevation of West range with lean-to outshot

- 3.1.8.2. At the eastern end there is a pedestrian doorway with a substantial, curved, wooden, lintel below a segmented arch of dressed stone adjacent to the western end of the brick lean to (Figure 24).



Figure 24 North range East end of South elevation

- 3.1.8.3. This appears to be the surviving remnant of a wider arched opening, perhaps for a wagon or cart shed. The original opening has been altered by cutting away the left-hand half of the lintel, underbuilding it and creating a new opening to the left of the remodelled doorway which has removed the other part of the original opening (Figures 25 and 26).



Figure 25 Detail of remaining part of original doorway West end South elevation North range.



Figure 26 Altered original and later inserted openings at Western end, South elevation North Range

- 3.1.8.4. Above the openings is a single window under a shallow, segmented stone arched lintel. The wooden lintel of the window is shaped to fit below the stone to allow a rectangular glass pane to be used. The window cill appears to be stone and cement and may be a repair to replace a rotted timber cill (Figure 27)



Figure 27 Upper floor window at E end of South elevation of North Range

3.1.9. Southern Elevation of the Lean-to

- 3.1.9.1. The south elevation of the lean to has a pedestrian door, three windows which are currently boarded up and a garage door of the “up and over” type on the outshot abutting the West Range wall (see Fig. 11 above).

3.1.10. Southern Elevation of the Western Range

- 3.1.10.1. The southern elevation of the West Range is obscured on its northern part by the North Range and the lean to. The southern end (left when facing) is the east elevation of the single-story lean to on the south gable end. This has a window, currently boarded up, under a segmented stone arched lintel and with the with the right-hand jamb formed by the primary phase building’s quoins. The cill is composite, made up of mortared, flat, red ceramic tiles (Figure 28 and 29).



Figure 28 East elevation of lean to on South gable of West range



Figure 29 Window detail

3.1.10.2. Straight joints below the window jambs show that this was originally a doorway (Figure 30)



Figure 30 Straight joint below lean-to window

3.1.11. Eastern Elevation of the West Range

- 3.1.11.1. The eastern elevation of the West Range has a door at the southern (left hand) side, the left jamb of the door being against the gable wall of the barn (Figures 31 and 32)



Figure 31 Eastern elevation of Southern end of West Range



Figure 32 Detail of door at South end East elevation of West Range

- 3.1.11.2. To the right of the door, and approximately 400 mm above current ground level is a blocked ventilation slit. This is approx. 500 mm high and 75mm wide (Figure33).



Figure 33 E elevation of barn blocked ventilator

- 3.1.11.3. It is not known if the interior of the ventilators splay into the interior of the building as the interiors have been plastered (see below Fig. 45)
- 3.1.11.4. The upper floor has a pair of windows immediately below the eaves. Both are blocked with modern shuttering. The timber frame of the southern window is visible and the cill appears to be a composite of red, ceramic tiles and cement. The northern window has a large ventilation pipe protruding (Figures 34 and 35).



Figure 34 West Range, upper floor's window with metal sheet blocking



Figure 35 West Range, upper floor n window with ventilator pipe

3.1.12. Western Elevation of the West Range

- 3.1.12.1. The western elevation of the West Range faces onto the B5605 and currently presents a superficially rather blank face (Figure 36).



Figure 36 Western elevation of West Range from NW

- 3.1.12.2. Originally the elevation had a row of vertical ventilation slits just below eaves level and another row approximately a metre above current ground level (Figures 37 and 38)



Figure 37 West elevation West Range Blocked ventilator slits below eaves



Figure 38 West elevation West Range Blocked ventilator slits at lower level

To the left (north) of centre is a vertical straight joint in the masonry. This does not run down to ground level and may indicate a remodelling of a building with an enclosed yard prior to the surveying of the 1st edition O.S.



Figure 39 West elevation West Range Vertical straight joint

- 3.1.12.3. To the right of centre of the elevation is a blocked opening at ground level, the slightly curved upper edge perhaps indicating that the original lintel was curved (Figure 40).



Figure 40 West elevation West Range blocked former opening

- 3.1.12.4. To the right of the blocked ground floor opening is a blocked opening to the upper part of the building. This has a surviving timber lintel and is blocked with modern concrete blocks and may be a former pitching door (Figures 41 and 42).



Figure 41 West elevation West Range blocked pitching door



Figure 42 West elevation West Range blocked opening detail

3.2. INTERNAL DESCRIPTION

3.2.1.1. Internally the buildings have been extensively adapted for light industrial use which has masked most of any internal features that might have survived. The wall finishes were reported to contain asbestos and so it was not possible to open up any areas to check for original features behind the plaster.

3.2.2. Interior of North Brick Shed

3.2.2.1. The interior of the north brick shed is a single open space with tubular steel roof trusses and roof lights. There are several blocked windows in the walls and a door in the northern gable, the main access to the building is from the south (Figures 43 and 44).



Figure 43 Brick shed Interior view to North



Figure 44 Brick shed Interior view to South

3.2.3. The West Range

- 3.2.3.1. The West Range has features relating to its latest, light industrial uses. There is a doorway blocked with concrete blocks. doorway at the northern end. It was not possible to determine if this was an original feature for the agricultural uses or inserted for industrial use (Figure 45).



Figure 45 West range interior from Southern end

3.2.4. The North Range

- 3.2.4.1. The lean to attached to the North Range is subdivided by an internal brick partition. The south wall of the original barn has been taken down in places to create open space to the barn building. Any historical features relating to the barns agricultural use are masked by plaster finishes (Figures 46-48)



Figure 46 Lean-to West room interior looking East Middle window on Right



Figure 47 North range barn interior from lean-to



Figure 48 North range lean-to East room West elevation partition wall

- 3.2.4.2. The two rooms at the east end of the North Range are those which may originally have been accessed from the yard by the timber-linteled doorway which has been reduced with a partition inserted to subdivide the space. On the west elevation of the left-hand room (West East Room) is a blocked doorway with brick blocking in a stone dividing wall of the original barn (Figure 49).



Figure 49 North Range room behind large opening at Eastern end West elevation with blocked doorway

- 3.2.4.3. The westernmost room of the range has been created by subdividing the end of the original larger interior space with a concrete block wall (Figures 50 and 51).

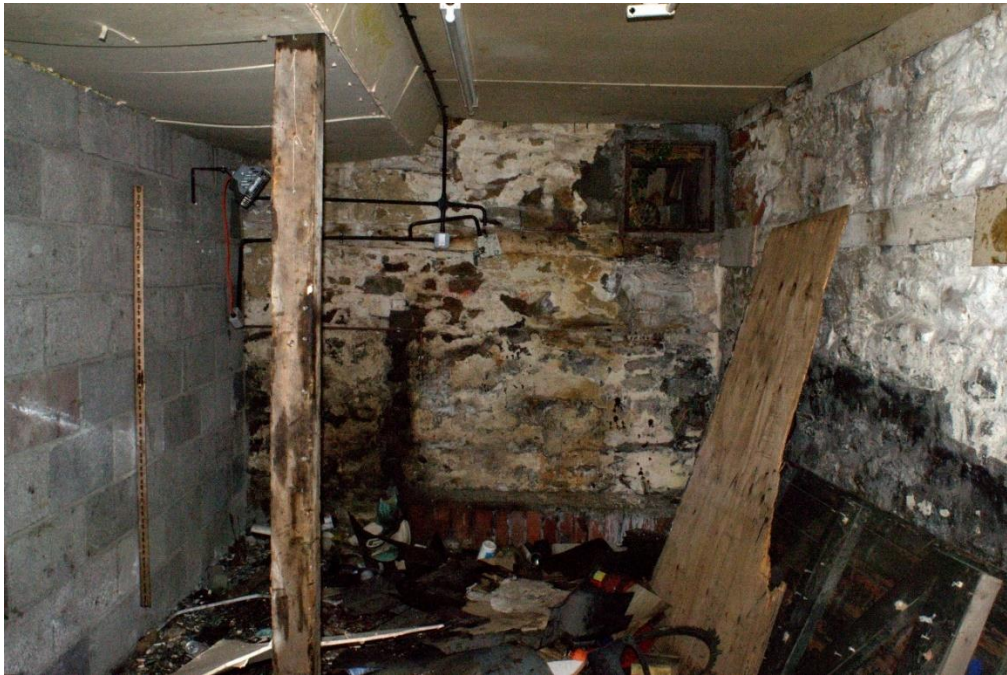


Figure 50 West room of North range from doorway

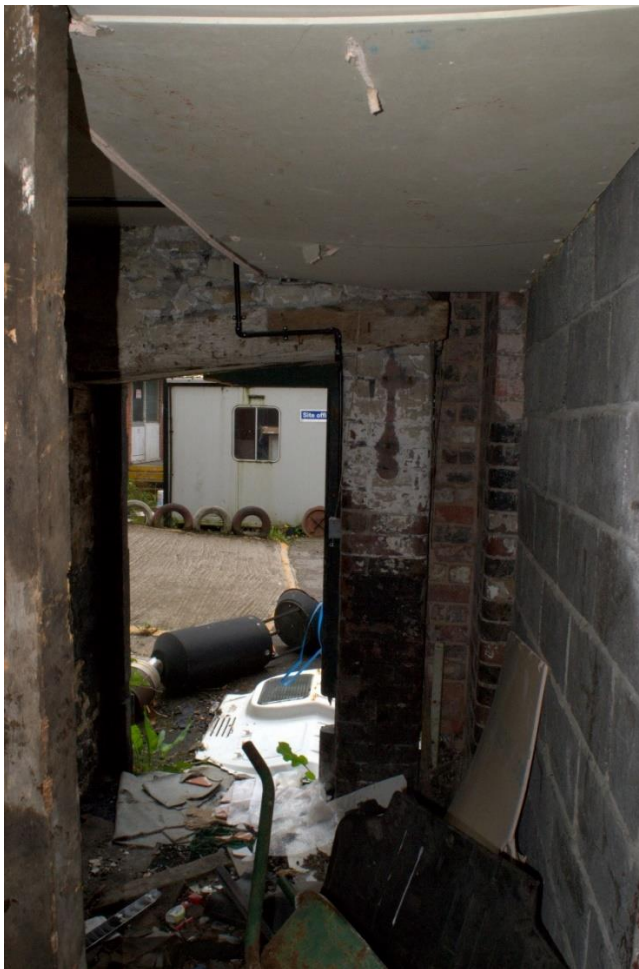


Figure 51 West room North Range view to doorway

4. Conclusion

4.1. THE FORMER TAN-Y-CLAWDD FARM

4.1.1. The buildings at the former Tan-y-clawdd farm are a much altered and somewhat mutilated set of former agricultural buildings, forming the main buildings of the farmstead. The location close to Pla-y-Clawdd and the naming of the two Tan-y-Clawdd farms to the north as “canol” (“middle”) and “uschaf” (“upper”) may indicate this was the first farmstead built, perhaps at a time of enclosure and agricultural improvement as the population of the country increased and people moved off the land and into industrial enterprises thus creating markets for increased food production. A long series of wars with France during the 18th and early 19th centuries, culminating in the Napoleonic Wars and the Battle of Waterloo, would also have increased demand for foodstuffs, both to feed a burgeoning navy and army and to replace exports cut off from the continent.

4.1.2. Their original function was probably a combination of livestock housing with lofts above the stalls for storing fodder, the former vents being to allow hay or straw stored in the loft to be ventilated and livestock in the lower level of the building to get fresh air.

4.1.3. The date at which the farm went out of use as an agricultural establishment has not been researched but is perhaps related to the construction of the brick shed on the northern side of the North Range and of the lean-to on the southern elevation of the same. This was possibly related to the use of the building for light industrial purposes in WWII from the dates of the maps before and after the construction although again this cannot be certain without further documentary research.

4.1.4. The final proposal for the demolition of the buildings and the re-use of the site as a “brownfield” development site is again reflective of changing economic circumstances in the locality and the wider region.

4.1.5. The photographic record creates a record of the building as it was just prior to demolition and recorded relevant visible features. No features related to the agricultural use that could be considered unusual for this type of building were noticed during the recording survey and no recommendations for further investigative work are made.

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