

# Recent Emergency Buildings Recording in Wales

by

RICHARD SUGGETT

*The Royal Commission's (RCAHMW) Emergency Buildings Recording team is responsible for the survey of historic buildings threatened with destruction, substantial alteration, or by serious decay. It deals with all types of standing structures, but a key aspect of the work is the recording, under the terms of the Town and Country Planning Acts, of listed buildings for which consent to demolish, or alter substantially, has been granted.*

Over 500 notifications of applications for listed building consent were received by the Royal Commission from the Welsh unitary authorities during 1999/2000, and the number will continue to rise as Cadw's community resurvey programme, to be completed in 2005, increases the number of listed buildings in Wales. Emergency recording is a major point of contact between the Royal Commission and the unitary planning authorities and is especially important given the relative weakness of amenity societies and recording groups in Wales. The consultation process generates for the National Monuments Record of Wales (NMRW) important archival material, especially plans and photographs, relating to listed buildings that are by definition structures of special interest.

The decision to record is inevitably a balance between the Royal Commission's own priorities and the expectations of local planning authorities and heritage organisations. Recording has to be selective, and the decision to record depends on an assessment of the degree of threat, the nature of the existing record of particular building types in the NMRW, the resources available, and perceptions of the importance of a building. The sites described here and in these *Transactions* in previous articles on 'Recent Emergency Recording' are only a selection of recent cases, but most categories of sites are represented with the exception of military buildings. This is not an exhaustive review of all categories of threatened buildings but it is an attempt to place emergency recording within the context of recent economic and social changes.

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Richard Suggett was head of RCAHMW's emergency recording team from 1995 to 2000. He is the author of a study of John Nash (National Library of Wales & RCAHMW, 1995) and RCAHMW's forthcoming volume on late-medieval houses and their transformations in Radnorshire.

Twentieth-century changes in land use have been hugely and obviously destructive of historic buildings and landscapes. Afforestation has had an enormous impact on historic landscapes in the twentieth century, especially in upland Wales. However, with the felling of mature plantations historic buildings, some of importance, can and do reappear and may be recorded and conserved. Opencast mining is even more destructive than forestry and can remove whole landscapes and their historic buildings permanently. Any proposed scheme is usually accompanied by an assessment of the buildings and landscapes likely to be affected. Sometimes the results are startling. Heather James's account (in *The Uses of Place-names*, ed. Simon Taylor, Edinburgh, 1998) of the rejection of the Gwaun Henllan opencasting scheme in Camarthenshire, partly on the grounds that Gwaun Henllan was one of the earliest documented place-names in Wales, should be required reading for those involved in the planning process.

The Royal Commission receives many enquiries about threatened vernacular buildings. In many ways RCAHMW's record of vernacular houses is remarkable, with Peter Smith's overview in *Houses of the Welsh Countryside* (1975), the county *Inventories* of the stone-building traditions in Glamorgan and Caernarfonshire, and the forthcoming volume on the late-medieval and Tudor timber-building tradition in Radnorshire. Nevertheless, vernacular houses still have the capacity to surprise. **The Rose and Crown** at Gwyddelwern (below), an early storeyed house, illustrates an unusual meeting of the stone- and timber-building traditions that has been precisely dated to 1570-2. However it has been the relatively recent discovery of the strength of the late-medieval building tradition in upland Wales that has been really surprising. Many farmhouses incorporate a cruck-truss, although the early origin of a house is often only apparent during dereliction (**Bryndethol** and **Tŷ-draw**, below). This very precious inheritance is easily erased and for many houses of late-medieval origin the post-war period has been the final phase of survival in an economy that has become progressively less profitable.

Traditional farm buildings are the main category of vernacular buildings most at risk in Wales. They are the most numerous but least protected of vernacular buildings, and certainly not fully understood as a building type. Eurwyn Wiliam's important overview of *The Historical Farm Buildings of Wales* (1986) makes the points that farm buildings can be very localized building types, and although they often involved considerable investment their building chronologies are barely understood. Traditional farm buildings have become redundant because of their inappropriateness to modern farming and because of farm amalgamation. Adverse pressure affects traditional farm buildings in all parts of Wales. In upland Wales whole farmsteads (farmhouse as well as farm buildings) can become derelict through farm amalgamation (**Bryndethol**, below). In the lowlands, particularly in south Monmouthshire and the Vale of Glamorgan, the buildings of the farmstead can become the nodes for new residential development in the countryside. Farm consolidation is a process of some historical depth (**Tŷ-draw**, below), but it has been gathering pace in the twentieth century and may accelerate in the twenty-first.

Small-scale cottages as well as substantial farmhouses are at risk, particularly in north and west Wales, partly from dereliction and partly from unsympathetic development. Contrary to popular belief, many of these cottages are not of great age. The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries saw the construction of many thousands of cottages, especially in areas that were historically wastes and commons. Cottages, somewhat paradoxically given their rural locations, not only housed craftsmen and labourers but also provided a vast reserve army of labour that serviced the mines and quarries of industrial nineteenth-century Wales. Relatively unaltered cottages are rare, especially in their historic landscape settings (cf. Judith Alfrey in Cadw's *Heritage in Wales*, no. 12, Spring 1999), and have survived very unevenly. In Carmarthenshire and Cardiganshire cottage architecture in the clay-walled tradition has virtually disappeared in the second half of the twentieth century. Even thirty years ago the clay-walled cottage was relatively common. Today, probably less than a dozen clay cottages survive with a full complement of vernacular craft features (scarfed crucks, fireplace hood, and thatch preserved under a tin roof), although there are still fragments to record. Cottages in north-west Wales still survive in some numbers because of their robust stone construction, and significant examples even when roofless can be rescued from dereliction (**Cae'r-gors**, below).

Welsh farms and smallholdings are generally freehold, but the rise of freehold farming in Wales is a relatively recent phenomenon, barely 100 years old. There was a great shift in power from landlords to tenants with the late-Victorian and later break-up of the great estates, as John Davies has documented (*Welsh History Review*, 7 (1974-5), 186-210). H. M. Vaughan in *The South Wales Squires* (1926) has a memorable picture of an increasingly eccentric class deprived of their social and political relevance. In mid-nineteenth-century Wales ninety per cent. or so of farms were tenanted from landowners; by 1950 sixty per cent. were owner occupied. Sales of land began in the 1870s and accelerated until the 1920s, the boom ending in 1922. The result was the abandonment of numerous country-houses that had required an army of servants to run and a deep pocket to maintain. Many mansions became derelict, vanishing behind a sea of rhododendrons, and eventually irretrievably ruined as Tom Lloyd has documented in *The Lost Houses of Wales* (1986). The case of **Cefn Mably**, one of the greatest south Wales houses, is noted here. Cefn Mably has managed to survive despite sale, adaptation as a hospital, and a disastrous fire. The gutted house and adjacent parkland are being redeveloped for luxury housing.

It is appropriate to mention here the plight of the large nineteenth-century houses of the industrialists, entrepreneurs and prosperous professional middle class. These houses were often built on the peripheries of towns where they have become engulfed in later housing and are now prime sites for redevelopment and conversion. They were often built from excellent materials with lavish and sometimes idiosyncratic decoration. **Stelvio House**, the home of a maritime entrepreneur, has already been described (*Transactions*, 43 (1999), 133-4); **Penbryn**, a littérateur's house, is described below; Talygarn in Glamorgan, the home of G.T. Clark (*ob.* 1898),

industrialist and antiquary, is now a redundant hospital but still full of important decoration, and awaits recording.

Social and economic changes combined with shifts in public policy have led to the loss of many nineteenth- and twentieth-century institutional buildings, particularly hospitals, law courts, and town halls. Changes in local government, especially the creation of new unitary authorities, have led to many municipal buildings becoming redundant. The **Old Town Hall, Blaenavon**, described below, is characteristic of the interest of these buildings. The effects of the reorganization of the court service, especially the 1971 abolition of the quarter sessions and assizes, has perhaps not been as profound in Wales as in England, and several Crown Courts function in historic buildings, notably at Carmarthen and Haverfordwest, but there are a number of disused magistrates' courts.

Hospital reorganization has been a striking aspect of recent public policy. Hospitals of different type and origin have closed; some were adapted workhouses and country-houses (e.g. **Cefn Mably**), others were purpose-built, including the splendid 1930s sanatorium at Sully, Glamorgan, which now stands empty. However, the emptying of the asylums has been the most dramatic change, and here public policy was allied with advances in drug technology, especially the development of long-acting tranquillisers and other medication. The asylums were sometimes like self-sufficient towns and so vast they can only be appreciated as entities from the air. **Denbigh** (*Transactions*, 41(1997), 93-4) and Abergavenny (Pen-y-fal) asylums were recorded after closure, and Carmarthen during closure. The core asylum buildings are often of very considerable architectural and social interest. Additions and additions to additions characteristically mark the expansion of asylums as patients, especially the elderly, accumulated in growing numbers of architecturally undistinguished wards.

It is important to emphasize the architectural and social diversity of Wales. In particular, the industrialised south, especially the coal and iron towns of the south-east, dominated the rest of Wales in terms of population. Most industrial communities are nineteenth-century in origin and depended on heavy industries that have disappeared, in some case more than a generation ago. It is sobering to realize that there is today only one working deep-mine in south Wales. Fortunately, there has been an enthusiastic and knowledgeable community of industrial archaeologists in Wales since the 1970s. The latest study of a vanished industry, Stephen Hughes's *Copperopolis* (RCAHMW, 2000), is particularly important because it relates the building history of Swansea to its industrial history as a copper town.

The collectivist social traditions of the industrial towns often found expression in workingmen's clubs and institutes that combined education, leisure and politics in a remarkable way and were often considerable buildings. The Blaenavon miners' institute (1893-4), for example, built at the same time as the town was granted UDC status, dwarfed the town hall. Many of these institutes have declined as their communities' core industries have declined. Swansea's **Working Men's Club and Institute** was noted earlier (*Transactions*, 41 (1997), 98) but a range of institutes needs recording in industrial communities from Flintshire to Monmouthshire.

Friendly societies formed an older and broader collectivist bedrock in both industrial and rural communities. It has been estimated that in Monmouthshire some thirteen per cent. of the adult population belonged to friendly societies by 1831. They provided unemployment and sickness benefits to their members as well as a decent burial, but they declined with the growth of the welfare state. Generally, the friendly societies did not have their own premises but met in public houses. It was particularly pleasing to be able to record one of the last friendly society meeting-rooms in Monmouthshire at **The Fountain Inn** in Troedrhwiwgwair village.

The economy of south Wales was restructured after World War II, and heavy industry gave way to manufacturing. The replacement manufacturing industries have in some cases now declined. The most notable example is the **Dunlop Semtex Factory** at Brynmawr, Britain's first listed post-war building, a monument to social and architectural innovation that now awaits demolition. Technological change has radically altered many industries and made obsolete many specialist processes. The miniaturising effect of technology can be very striking. At **Gwasg Gee** (*Transactions*, 44 (2000), 111-2) computer technology has rendered redundant a range of specialised buildings that may yet become a printing museum. In tele-

communications new technology has made obsolete the old exchanges that had enlarged inexorably as the numbers of subscribers increased. The banks of redundant selectors, now looking quaintly archaic but only thirty years old, recorded at Shotton before decommissioning were a particularly striking example of the miniaturising effect of digital technology (Fig. 1).

Urban restructuring has accompanied economic reconstruction. The greatest urban redevelopment has been at Cardiff. There **Cardiff Arms Park**, the iconic rugby stadium, and the Empire Pool were recorded before demolition (*Transactions*, 43 (1999), 126-7). Both were significant buildings, architecturally and socially. Cardiff Arms Park, largely built from locally produced materials, very much expressed the

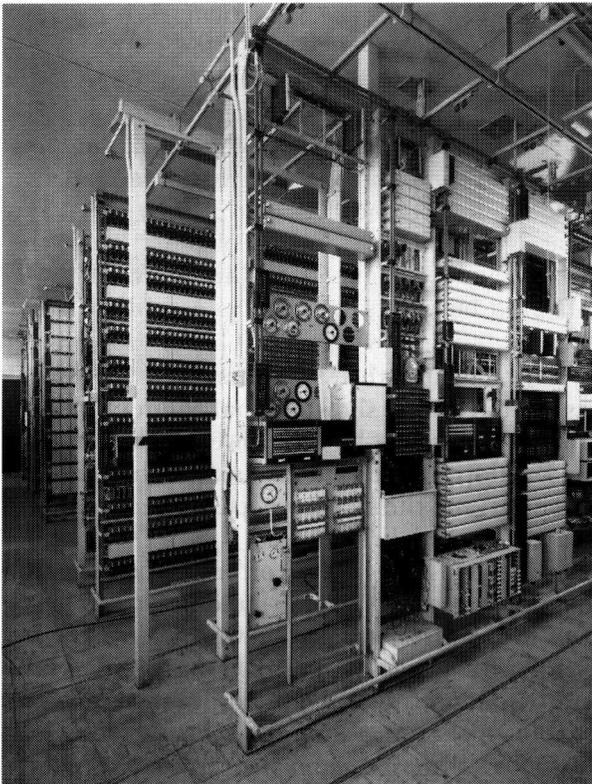


Fig. 1

transformation of the Welsh economy in the 1970s, especially during the golden era of Welsh rugby, and was an episodic focus for the expression of a unified Welsh identity. Cardiff Arms Park has been replaced by a stadium that is international in design and construction. The building of the millennium stadium has also involved the demolition of **The Empire Pool**, Cardiff's first modernist public building, which opened in 1958 to mark Cardiff's new status as the capital city of Wales (granted in 1955) and represented the ending of post-war austerity. A major aspect of recent urban policy has been the redevelopment of Cardiff's docklands through the Cardiff Bay Development Corporation. A new waterfront capital is taking shape at **Cardiff Bay** where the newly flooded inter-tidal zone will form the back-drop to the proposed National Assembly of Wales Building and the Wales Millennium Centre. The Millennium Centre is to express architecturally aspects of Welsh heritage in design and materials.

Increasingly, Welsh heritage is presented in terms of building history, and the emergency recording team is being asked on more occasions to record a variety of buildings as much for their cultural significance as their architectural interest. Different building types are the expression of multiple historical experiences rather than a single national experience. However, some ways of life have been more national than others. RCAHMW's chapels project has been particularly important because this building type, although architecturally eclectic, reflects a historical experience that linked both rural and urban Wales in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. There is growing interest in architectural heritage in Wales and recognition of its richness and diversity. Increasingly, the vernacular building tradition is found inspirational. The early, dominant timber-building tradition interests those developing sustainable building resources. For others, the stone-building tradition, especially the massive masonry tradition of Snowdonia, can express the idea of cultural continuity and resilience (*cf.* **Cae'r-gors**, below). Growing numbers of successfully restored buildings show that demolition is not the inevitable end for a badly dilapidated building. *Tŷ-mawr*, Castell Caereinion (nominated 'building of the year' by The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors) has been particularly important as an exemplar showing that vulnerable and complex buildings can be restored at the eleventh hour. However, the recency, scale and concrete construction of the **Dunlop Sementex Factory** makes this building a very challenging case for conservationists, and the structure, partly because of its sculptural qualities, arouses passionate likes and dislikes.

Emergency recording is an onerous responsibility. Very often the investigator is the last person to cast a professional eye over a particular building and to make a record that must serve posterity. A broad historical overview is essential when selecting buildings to record and for interpreting them. Contextualising a dilapidated building restores its historicity and can make the difference between demolition and conservation. To try to understand why and when a particular building was constructed, the social as well as the architectural interest of a building has to be unravelled. This is entirely consistent with the wording of the 1992 Royal Warrant that instructs the Royal Commission to survey and record 'monuments

and constructions connected with, or illustrative of, the contemporary culture, civilisation and conditions of the life of the people of Wales?.

NOTE

This article incorporates the substance of a talk given at Cadw's Built Heritage Forum in November 1999. The photographs are the work of Iain Wright, location photographer at RCAHMW. I must thank Charlotte Bradbeer and Stephen Croad for asking me to contribute this overview of recent emergency recording work in Wales, and Peter White and RCAHMW's editorial committee for enabling me to do so.



Fig. 2

Tŷ-draw from the south-west looking towards Mynydd Mawr

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DENBIGHSHIRE

Tŷ-draw, Llanarmon Mynydd Mawr

Tŷ-draw (Fig. 2) is a late-medieval hall-house with a characteristic downhill site at about 850 feet above sea level. The house classically exemplifies the platformed siting of a late-medieval upland hall-house – often a revelation to those who have not seen such a site. Above the house is the former open upland pasture of Mynydd Mawr; below the house are the enclosed fields of the farm. Tŷ-draw stands without the clutter of modern farm sheds and seems to have been an early casualty of farm amalgamation, the old house downgraded to an outlying field barn and cattle shelter. Latterly, the building has become very dilapidated, losing most of its roof and the

lower-end truss. The archbraced central cruck-truss with its decorative boss still stands, providing a glimpse of the past glories of the two-bay open hall, but it is doubtful if the surviving superstructure will last another winter. Tŷ-draw will become an archaeological site, one of many platforms – usually enigmatic – that are scattered throughout the Welsh uplands. The case is particularly poignant because Peter Smith and Douglas Hague in the 1950s drew attention to Tŷ-draw as a remarkably complete medieval hall-house with great refinement of craftsmanship (*Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 107 (1958), 109-20). Dendrochronological analysis of similar sites allows us to say that it was probably built in the fifteenth century, one of many halls of parish gentry status that were built in the reconstruction of society after Owain Glyndŵr's revolt.

#### Borras Hall, Wrexham

Emergency recording is undertaken in advance of radical restoration schemes where important evidence for building history may be uncovered briefly. Borras Hall (Fig. 3) is a substantial farmhouse that has been empty for some time and which it is planned to restore. Following the removal of internal plaster it has become clear that the present H-plan brick farmhouse incorporates the hall and solar wing of a very substantial late-medieval timber hallhouse. Borras Hall can be identified with Plas ym Mwras, so named in documentary sources but assumed lost, the hall



Fig. 3

The main front of Borras Hall; the window to the right is designed to overlook the farmyard

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belonging to the Brereton family that was celebrated for its hospitality in a number of sixteenth-century Welsh poems.

Borras Hall belongs to a small group of ambitious gentry hallhouses in north-east Wales distinguished by box framing rather than cruck framing, large halls, and lavish solar wings. The open hall was large: some thirty-three feet in length from upper to lower-end trusses and about fourteen feet high to eaves' level. The storeyed solar wing was exceptionally large – some fifty feet in length, and perhaps the largest surviving timber solar wing in Wales. Some important details survive in the wing, including traces of wall-paintings in the first-floor chambers. The ground-floor parlour was set over a stone-built basement. The basement has a lamp niche (Fig. 4) supported by a shield of arms: a reverse chevron between three roughly-placed roses. The reverse chevron is unusual and not connected with the Brereton family; the detail is puzzling. The *Welsh Herald Extraordinary* commented that the shield may have been carved by an inexperienced carver. Alternatively, the shield of arms may not represent a particular coat of arms. Welsh coats of arms were not necessarily 'fixed' in the fifteenth century and could be decorative.

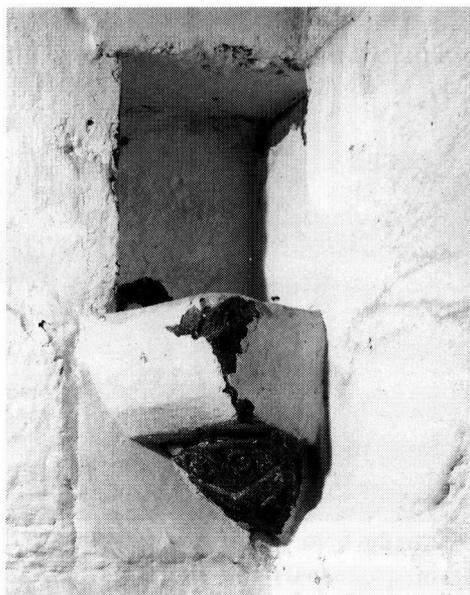


Fig. 4

The lamp niche at Borras Hall

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### Bryndethol, Llangollen

Derelict farmhouses are a common sight in many parts of upland Wales and will increase in number as the process of farm amalgamation intensifies. Both farmhouses and farm buildings can be abandoned and deteriorate very quickly once the roofs have been stripped. Bryndethol illustrates the process: there increasing dereliction of the house has exposed a medieval core that includes a base-cruck – a very notable discovery that awaits detailed recording. As was often the case, an attitude of make-do-and-mend in relation to the farmhouse co-existed with substantial investment in farm buildings which are excellent examples of the crafts of mason and carpenter. The farm buildings are very derelict. The eighteenth-century barn (Fig. 5), repaired in 1919, has lost its roof covering and the trusses are very vulnerable. This four-bay barn with large opposed doorways is unusual on two counts. First, the building is an example of a combination range that houses barn and (at a lower level) cowhouse. Combination ranges of this 'split-level' type appear in the eighteenth century, but their chronology and distribution are not well understood. Secondly, the form of construction is unusual: the barn is stone-



Fig. 5a & b  
Bryndethol barn: exterior  
and interior  
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walled except on the east side where there is half-height timber framing; the two-tiered square panels have an unusual form of infill or 'noggin' with horizontal planks slotted into grooves in the studs.

## GLAMORGAN

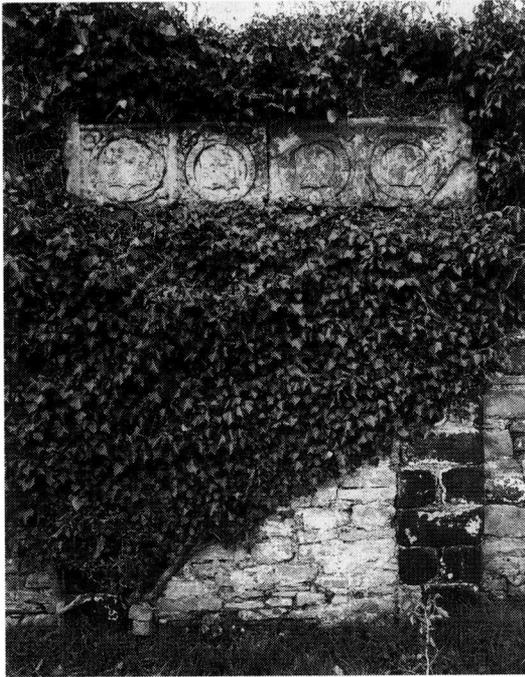


Fig. 6  
Heraldic stone before removal  
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## Longford Court, Neath

The rediscovery of lost architectural ornament that can be described as a minor work of art is satisfying. An elaborate heraldic stone (Fig. 6) was discovered when ivy was removed from the garden wall at Longford Court, a large nineteenth-century house, and recorded at the suggestion of John Richards, curator of Neath Museum, who established its provenance. The stone formed the lintel of a garden doorway and had been reset upside down to take advantage of its flat upper edge. The stone is an elaborate sixteenth-century heraldic fireplace lintel with four shields of arms that can be securely identified. A number of lintels of similar type have been noted in RCAHMW's *Glamorgan: The Greater Houses* (1981), 30. This example is particularly fine, of an oolitic Bath stone rather than the locally available Sutton stone, and was probably carved by specialist masons outside

Glamorgan. The lintel was almost certainly removed from Neath Abbey mansion, less than a mile away, and the dimensions of the lintel suggest that it was formerly placed over the long gallery fireplace. The shields of arms belonged to powerful landowners in south Wales, three of whom were created Knights of the Garter, with whom the Herberts of Neath Abbey could claim kinship. This display of kinship and patronage links would have been particularly appropriate in the long gallery – a characteristic status feature of the Elizabethan great house that was often decorated with portraits and emblematic indicators of family influence and connections (cf. Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House* (1978), 100-3). The heraldic lintel was probably still in place in 1684 when Dineley observed coats of arms 'often repeated' at Neath Abbey. The stone seems to have been removed (probably broken in the process) and reset as a garden feature c. 1800 judging from the distinctive copper-slag blocks in the garden wall. It is satisfying to record that the lintel has been removed to Neath Museum for conservation and display.

## Cefn Mably House, Llanedeyrn

The break-up of the great estates resulted in the abandonment of numerous gentry houses which, because they required an army of servants to run, were in effect white elephants unless miniaturised or converted to other uses – hospitals, hotels and, latterly, homes for the elderly.

Cefn Mably (Fig. 7), the home of the Kemeys-Tynte family, illustrates the process. This house was the centre of a great south Wales estate that had existed in embryonic form since the mid-fifteenth century and was dispersed in the twentieth century. Sales of estate farms began in 1915, and the greater part of the estate was disposed of in three days in September 1920 for £227,000. The house was finally sold and became an isolation hospital for patients with tuberculosis, the scare disease of the time. Survey by RCAHMW (*Glamorgan: The Greater Houses*, 159-67) had suggested that the historic core of this enormous house was a large lateral-chimneyed hall with a cross-wing, courtyard and gatehouse. Cefn Mably Hospital was badly affected by fire in 1994, and planning permission has been obtained for the development of the house and parkland. The building development aims to preserve the greater part of the historic shell of the great house, although the fire-damaged interior has been largely gutted and cleared. The process has brought to light dressed-stone features unseen for several centuries that help refine the interpretation of the pre-1600 phasing. In particular, the late-



Fig. 7

Interior of the gutted hall at Cefn Mably looking towards the dais end

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sixteenth-century hall with dais-end oriel and a dressed-stone lateral fireplace (Fig. 8) has re-emerged. The oriel cuts across the relieving arch of a parlour-wing window suggesting that the hall has been reconstructed against a solar cross-wing that dates from an early phase of the estate.

Fig. 8

The hall fireplace at Cefn Mably showing several phases of adaptation. The jambs and relieving arch of the sixteenth-century fireplace have survived, but the lintel has been removed. The last phase is an early nineteenth-century rubbed-brick faceted hearth

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Tynyrheol, Tonna  
Tynyrheol (Fig. 9), a small country-house in an industrial locale, has a distinctive symmetrical five-bayed main elevation, hipped roof and bracketed eaves; the stone walls are rendered and boldly quoined. The chimneys have been demolished, the dormers removed, and some of the upper floors have collapsed. The plan of the house is straightforward. It is of central-entry type with parlour and dining-room on either side of an entrance passage which leads to a rear kitchen-wing set over a barrel-vaulted cellar. Tynyrheol had a Restoration-style elevation but the observable detail is relatively



Fig. 9

Front elevation of Tynyrheol  
*RCAHMW Crown Copyright*



Fig. 10  
Detail of the porch  
RCAHMW Crown Copyright

late, certainly no earlier than 1800, and undistinguished apart from the semi-circular porch (Fig. 10). The porch is a sophisticated example of late-Georgian carpentry, made in a specialist workshop, with a convex outer part and a concave inner part. The structure is actually circular with a diameter of six foot six inches (1.98 metres). The side panels and doors have multi-paned windows with fine glazing bars and there are reeded pilasters to the curved inner doorway. The porch is a magnificent and fragile example of the Regency bow that has survived against the odds. Details of construction suggest that the porch is an integral rather than an inserted feature. The earliest documentary reference to the house occurs in 1831 when a notice appeared in *The Cambrian* advertising a School for Young Ladies at Tynyrheol, near Neath, run by the Misses Thomas.

### MERIONETH (now DENBIGHSHIRE)

The Rose and Crown, Gwyddelwern

The Rose and Crown (Fig. 11) was recorded at the suggestion of Ian Gough, Denbigh-shire's senior conservation officer, after elaborate timber framing came to light during building works. It is one of the most interesting vernacular houses recorded as part of RCAHMW's emergency recording programme, and the structure has been subsequently listed by Cadw.

The Rose and Crown





Fig. 11a (*opposite*) & b  
Exterior and timber gable of The Rose and Crown  
*RCAHMW Crown Copyright*

(formerly Tŷ-mawr or 'great house') is a large storeyed house of hearth-passage plan-type. The house is a very unusual combination of stone and timber construction. The ground-floor walls are roughly-coursed rubble, but the first-floor lateral walling is timber-framed with close-studding and panels of lozenges. The gable ends are timber-framed with robust pilasters and ornate framed panels to an upper jettied gable. Remarkably, the trusses are set on posts that descend through the stone walls and rest on padstones at ground level. There was no evidence for timber framing at this level. Internal timber detail included post-and-panel partitions and the rarely encountered remains of a ground-floor pre-glazing window with shutter grooves. The fireplace is not bonded into the lateral walls. The principal problems of interpretation were: whether the fireplace was an

insertion in an open hall; did the posts of the trusses relate to a lost clay-walled phase (as has been suggested); was the diverse timber detail of the same date? Extensive dendrochronological sampling, informed by RCAHMW's survey of the house, was able to determine that all the timber features were constructed from timber felled between 1570-2. The Rose and Crown was a new-built house of hearth-passage type, the ornate timberwork at first-floor level announcing that this was a new *storeyed* house.

#### CARMARTHENSHIRE

##### Penbryn, Llangunnor

Penbryn (formerly Mount Pleasant), overlooking the Tawe valley, is a double-pile villa with a grand pilastered five-bay front with balustraded eaves (latterly obscured by unsympathetic additions). The eighteenth-century house was remodelled in the 1840s and replanned about 1870 by Sir Lewis Morris (1833-1907), a popular and prolific Victorian poet on historical themes, who (it was said) did not succeed his friend Tennyson as Poet Laureate because of Queen Victoria's disapproval after learning of Morris's common-law wife. The main interest of the house is the romantic-antiquarian restyling of the interior that gave the impression of an ancient

family residence. A 'Morning Call' by an *Illustrated London News* reporter on the prospective poet laureate at Penbryn in June 1894 described the 'pretty panelled hall, low and old fashioned' with armorial shields over the fireplace and hanging pedigrees on the stairs, and the library with a ceiling of intersecting pitch-pine beams furnished from the profits of Morris's poetry. The reporter was particularly struck by a series of painted inscriptions in the principal rooms, 'a mode of decoration which the bard thinks is wholly his own' (Fig. 12).



Fig. 12

A couplet from *The Epic of Hades* (1876-7) on the beams of the stair-hall:

'Tho' knowledge be a steep which few may climb +  
Yet duty is a path which all may tread.'

'Waste Not Want Not' over the dining-room doorway

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Remarkably, the inscriptions in gold lettering on a deep-blue background (now faded) seen in 1894 still survive on the beams and cornices of the wrecked stair-hall and morning-room. The inscriptions are couplets from Sir Lewis Morris's poems, with mottoes and proverbs in English, Welsh, Italian and other languages. The Morris family motto has pride of place above the fireplace with the mottoes of the Boleyn family (from whom Morris claimed descent) and Queen Elizabeth I alongside. There is some high-Victorian seriousness: 'Waste Not Want Not' is set over the dining-room doorway; 'Rest And Be Thankful' is painted above the withdrawing-room; a peremptory 'Remember!' at the side of the fireplace surprises the reader after the other mottoes have been perused.

Sir Lewis Morris died in 1907 and the family connection with the house was broken in 1929. The subsequent unfortunate history of the house included the destruction of the roof in a storm. In its final phase Penbryn became a country club and hotel. The closure of Penbryn Country Club led to extensive deterioration of the fabric, and a full photographic record was made of the inscriptions before demolition of the house.

#### Ebenezer Chapel, Tumble

The derelict, boarded-up or even burnt-out chapel is a familiar sight throughout Wales. It is difficult to convey the pain that this causes to those for whom the chapel has been an important part of their personal and community identity. The Royal Commission has in progress a chapels recording project that aims to compile a basic text and photographic record for all chapels in Wales, and complements Cadw's thematic chapels survey which is listing chapels in advance of community resurveys.

Chapels are far from uniform architecturally. There are all sorts of themes and variations in chapel architecture ranging from early barn-like rural chapels to big-fronted urban chapels. Ebenezer (Fig. 13a) is a characteristic late gable-fronted chapel, broadly neo-classical in style, named and dated 1901 above the central Venetian window. The building history of Ebenezer Chapel spanned the twentieth century. The Calvinistic Methodist cause was established in 1892, a vestry was first built which served as a temporary chapel, and a chapel was built to designs donated by John Jones, the steward of a local estate, and opened in 1901. The entire cost of £1,600 was raised from within this community. The congregation later divided when a controversial minister Thomas Williams (Tom Nefyn) was excluded from the ministry in 1928 and founded a non-denominational meeting-house (Llain-y-delyn) which still stands. Ebenezer closed in 1998 because of a dwindling and elderly congregation, and was finally demolished in March 1999 at a cost of £3,000. The photograph (Fig. 13b) shows the interior in process of gutting. The pews have been cleared away, the deacons' enclosure has been removed, and the characteristic three-sided balcony supported by fluted cast-iron columns is about to be dismantled. The grained woodwork of the balcony and the fine panelled ceiling dominated the chapel interior. It is ironic that a new appreciation of the craftsmanship of the period has developed as more and more interiors disappear

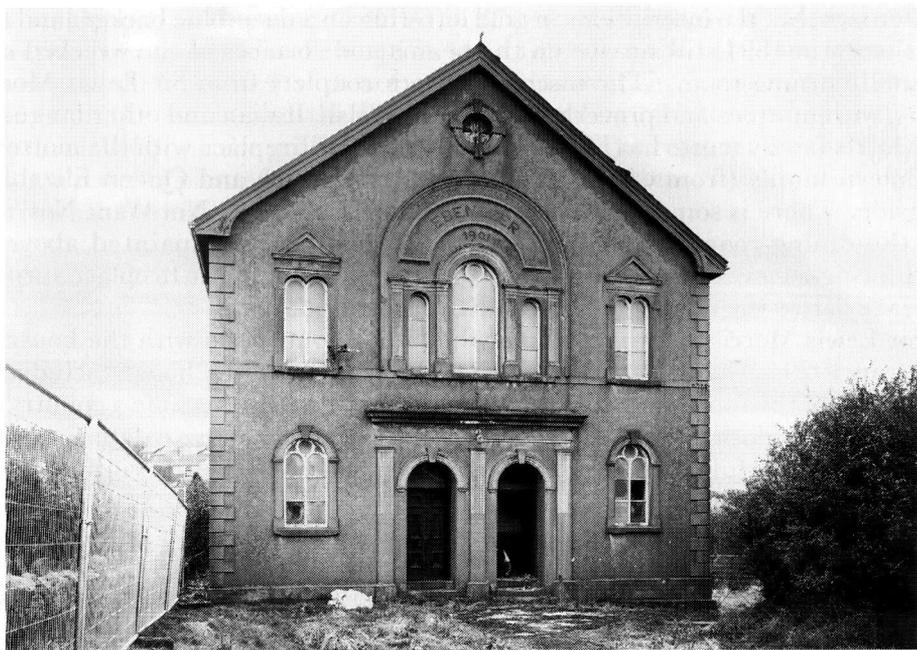


Fig. 13a & b  
Front elevation and interior of Ebenezer Chapel  
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(cf. John Harvey, *The Art of Piety*, 1995). The crafts of the plasterer, joiner, wood-grainer, metal-worker and glazier flourished in the heyday of competitive chapel building in the second half of the nineteenth century. Very often, as in this case, the joinery is not considered salvageable, or is too labour intensive to dismantle, and chain-saws are employed to cut up the interior woodwork. The profits from a chapel demolition can be quite small; perhaps between £2-3,000 might be realized – considerably less in real terms than the sum that was raised within a community to build its chapel in the first place.

## MONMOUTHSHIRE

The Fountain Inn, Troedrhiwgwair.



Fig. 14

Exterior of the Fountain Inn with the first-floor meeting-room to the right  
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Troedrhiwgwair, a later-nineteenth-century village in the Sirhowy valley of little more than several terraces of colliers' houses, became newsworthy when the mountain behind the village started to slip. Several houses have been abandoned

and demolished and others are empty. As in so many Valley communities town and country are intermingled. The Fountain Inn (Fig. 14) that served the village was formerly a farmhouse and an interesting example of the local vernacular hearth-passage (longhouse) plan-type with an upper parlour wing. However, the real interest of the house lies in its adaptation as a public house with the reconstruction of the former downhouse as a long- or meeting-room. The first-floor long-room or 'Buff Room' (Fig. 15) is so-called because it is the meeting-room of a branch of the Royal and Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes. The friendly societies were very active in the Valleys, an aspect of the collective nature of community life, and provided benefits for their members who paid a regular subscription. There was a symbiotic relationship between public houses and the friendly societies. A friendly society would meet regularly at a particular pub, and the landlord would provide a room and fire in return for the members' custom. The Buffs' Room at the Fountain Inn is one of the last – if not the last – friendly society meeting-rooms that – amid twentieth-century clutter – still retains its late-nineteenth-century furnishings. The members' benches line the walls, with a place of honour reserved for society officials marked by a large pair of buffalo horns suspended from a canopy. The society papers were probably placed in the lockable cupboard alongside the framed certificate of affiliation. The meetings were conducted in secret, and the spy-hole in the door (visible in the photograph) was an important aspect of the ritual of admittance of members and exclusion of non-members.



Fig. 15

Interior of the 'Buff Room'  
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Old Town Hall, Blaenavon



Fig. 16  
Main elevation of the Old Town Hall,  
Blaenavon  
*RCAHMW Crown Copyright*

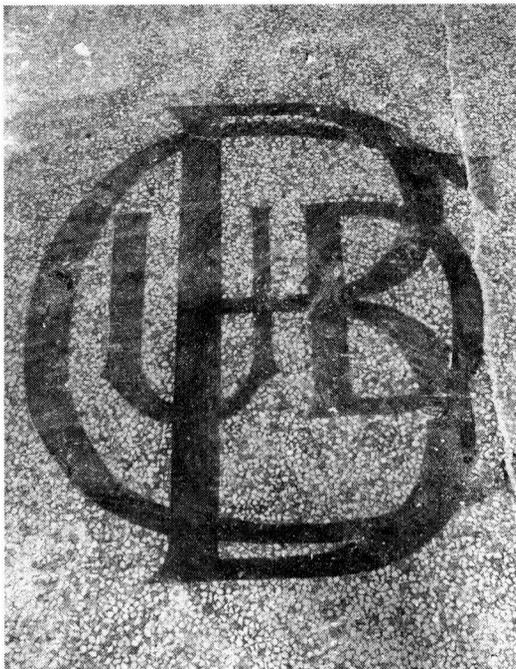


Fig. 17  
Lettering expressing municipal pride in the  
entrance hall  
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Blaenavon was an important industrial town associated with the development of the iron and steel industries. The remarkable relict industrial landscape, which includes the largely nineteenth-century town, has been included in the World Heritage List. Blaenavon was granted urban district status after the 1894 Local Government Act created a new hierarchy of parish, urban districts (populations under 50,000) and county boroughs (over 50,000). The great Victorian and Edwardian town halls, often designed by distinguished architects, are a well-known aspect of urban architectural history, but the more numerous municipal offices of the urban districts built after 1894 are less well known and were often designed locally. Blaenavon town hall (Fig. 16) is a good example of municipal architecture to local designs on a prominent site. The municipal offices were reconstructed according to designs by John Morgan, the council surveyor and architect, and opened in 1930. An older building was extended, given an angled corner, and unified by render, rusticated to first-floor level, bold quoining, and sash windows. The building has a functional balcony over the entrance but is otherwise plain up to the eaves level where a flourish of ornament, especially ball finials and shaped pediments, was introduced which echoed an earlier generation of municipal architecture. Internally there is an imposing entrance hall with a grand stair with art-deco styling and patterned granolithic floor proudly incorporating the initials of the urban district council (BUDC) in interlinked serified letters (Fig. 17). The building was perhaps intended as a hopeful sign after almost a decade of depression in the coal trade, but the closure of the iron and steel furnaces (Blaenavon Works) in the 1930s was an additional blow to the local economy that continued to decline until the war. The old town hall has been empty since 1993 with the creation of the new unitary authority of Torfaen County Borough Council which plans to adapt the building as a library.

#### Dunlop Semtex Factory, Brynmawr

The Dunlop Semtex Factory was Britain's first listed post-war building, graded II\* in 1986. The story of its innovative design and social purpose has been well-told in Victoria Perry's *Built for a Better Future* (1994). The factory, which made flooring used in schools and hospitals, was built as part of the post-war economic restructuring of the Valleys and opened in 1953; many of the workers were former miners. The Architects' Co-operative Partnership and Ove Arup & Partners produced a design that was eclectic and exciting. The factory was designed around a vast manufacturing space with nine concrete shell-domes or vaults pierced by 'oculi' (Fig. 18). The central work space was skirted on two sides by storage and milling ranges with undulating roofs, and a brutalist service range fronted the lake (Fig. 19). The architects were proud of the socially progressive features of the design that eroded the distinctions between workers and managers and included a common entrance ramp (removed) and shared canteen. The dereliction of the factory obscures the superb sculptural quality of the manufacturing space. Listed building consent has been granted for the demolition of the main block, and its destruction appears to be imminent. The detached boiler-house (Fig. 20) with its striking parabolic roof and helical stair (removed) alone will survive.



Fig. 18  
Dunlop Semtex Factor, Brynmawr  
Interior of manufacturing space  
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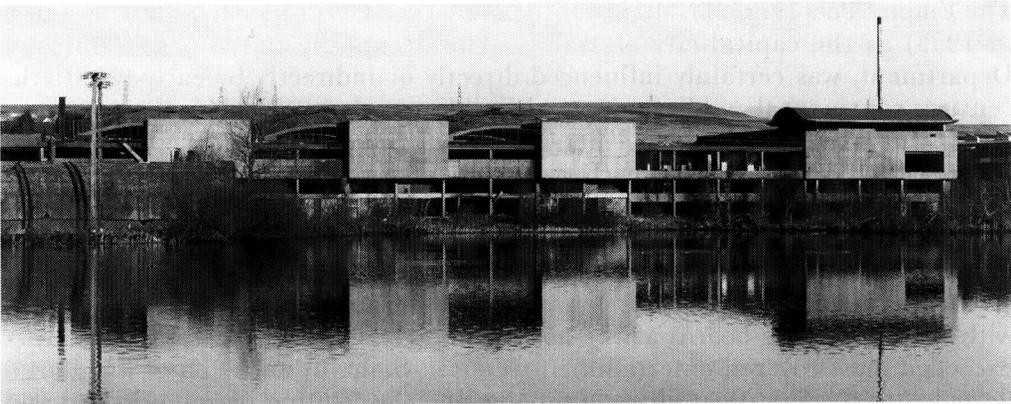


Fig. 19  
Dunlop Semtex Factory, Brynmawr  
Service ranges seen from the lake  
*RCAHMW Crown Copyright*



Fig. 20  
 Dunlop Semtex Factory, Brynmawr  
 Boiler-house at first-floor level  
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#### GLAMORGAN

##### Empire Pool, Cardiff

The Empire Pool (Fig. 21), opened in 1958, marked Cardiff's new status (granted in 1955) as the capital city of Wales. The design, by the City's Architects' Department, was certainly influenced directly or indirectly by early-twentieth-century continental public/industrial buildings. In particular, there was an interesting passing resemblance between the main elevations of the Empire Pool and the 1908 A.E.G. Turbine Factory, Berlin. The Empire Pool was a functional brick-clad, reinforced-concrete and steel-framed rectangular block with a barrel roof and rather severe front with a high, slightly projecting, glazed entrance bay. Internally the pool had an auditorium plan. The long pool (originally fifty-five yards, later reduced to fifty metres) was flanked by tiered red and grey tip-up seats, with the high diving-boards at the north end. The capacity for 1,772 spectators exceeded most covered entertainment venues. Stairs at each end of the glazed foyer led to the first-floor changing-rooms and the inviting parquet-floored and chromium-embellished second-floor café that symbolised the end of post-war austerity.

The Empire Pool and Cardiff Arms Park, both stylish public buildings, were Cardiffians' favourite post-war buildings and formed an interesting leisure group

adjoining the transport buildings of the central railway (1932-4) and bus stations built on the site of the nineteenth-century terraces of Temperance Town. The Empire Pool was photographed in May 1998 before demolition to make way for the Millennium Stadium.



Fig. 21

The Empire Pool with a glimpse of Cardiff Arms Park behind left  
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### Cardiff Bay

Cardiff's docklands have been transformed by the Cardiff Bay Development Corporation between 1987 and 2000. The policy of redevelopment aimed to reintegrate Cardiff and its docks and create a new waterfront capital city. A major aspect of redevelopment has been the construction of a barrage that has created a new freshwater lake by impounding the estuaries of the rivers Taff and Ely which run into the Bristol Channel at Cardiff Docks. Cardiff Bay has one of the greatest tidal movements in the world – some forty feet between high and low tides – and the effect of the barrage will be to submerge the old inter-tidal zone (Fig. 22). The Royal Commission has photographed wrecks, coal staithe, and other aspects of



Fig. 22

Cardiff Bay: the old Pier Head Building (1896-7) with the proposed site of the National Assembly of Wales building to the right viewed from the coal-staithe in the old inter-tidal zone  
*RCAHMW Crown Copyright*

marine heritage before the intertidal mudflats are permanently flooded with the completion of the barrage. The new lake is part of an ambitious policy of urban redevelopment that aims to re-present Cardiff as one of the world's waterfront capital cities. The lake will form the backdrop to the proposed National Assembly of Wales building and will be approached from the city centre by a new avenue (Bute Avenue).

#### CAERNARFONSHIRE

##### Cae'r-gors, Rhosgadfan

There are numerous roofless cottages in Gwynedd, but Cae'r-gors (Fig. 23) has special significance because it was the early home of Kate Roberts (1891-1985), whose novels record the way of life of the cottagers – the crofter craftsmen and quarrymen of north-west Wales. Cae'r-gors, built in the first half of the nineteenth

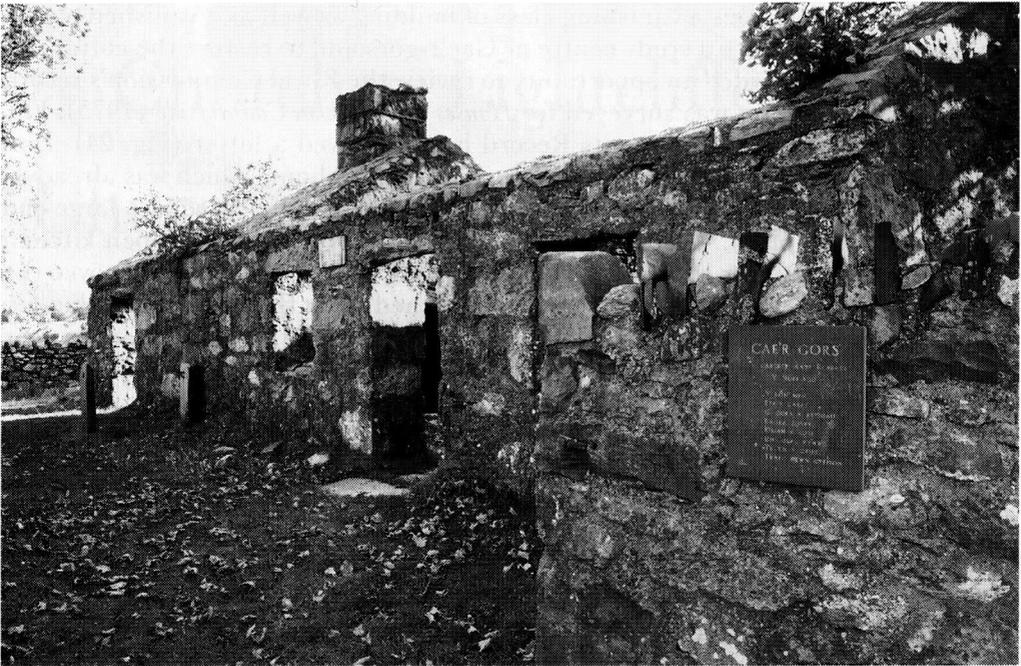
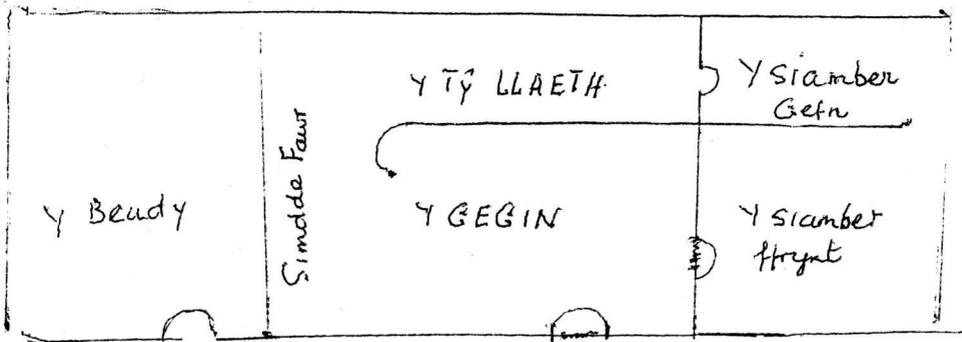


Fig. 23  
Cae'r-gors before restoration  
RCAHMW Crown Copyright



*Y Dafnod was over the siamber Ffrynt  
entered by a ladder*

Fig. 24  
Sketch-plan of Cae'r-gors with named rooms by Dr Kate Roberts (1972)

century, now exemplifies a vanishing class of building as well as a vanished way of life. A scheme to create a study centre at Cae'r-gors and to restore the cottage as a small museum provided an opportunity to review the Royal Commission's record of the site. Cae'r-gors was surveyed for *Houses of the Welsh Countryside* (1975), Fig. 184, and the National Monuments Record has preserved a letter (Fig. 24) from Kate Roberts to Peter Smith in 1972 describing her old home which was already a roofless ruin. The kitchen (*y gegin*) was open to the roof and heated by a large end chimney (*y simdde fawr*). A stone partition at the entry divided the open kitchen from the storeyed outer rooms. There was no stair, and the loft (*y daflod*) over the front parlour-bedroom (*y siamber ffrynt*) was reached from the kitchen by a ladder. An added rear lean-to housed a dairy (*y tŷ llaeth*) behind the kitchen and a rear bedroom (*y siamber gefn*) behind the front room. A small cowshed (*y bendy*) had been built against the upper gable end.



Cardiff Bay, the old Pier Head Building (1891-7) with the proposed site of the new Wales Building (1970-4) and the proposed site of the new Wales Building (1970-4) in the foreground. The new lake is part of an urban redevelopment plan to re-present Cardiff as one of the world's great capital cities. The lake will form the backdrop to the proposed Wales Building of Wales building and will be approached from the north by the new Bute Avenue.

Cae'r-gors was one of the earliest houses in Cardiff. There are numerous other houses in Cardiff of special significance because it was the early home of Kate Roberts, whose novels record the way of life of the miners and quarrymen.