

# AN APPLE STORE AT TYPICCA FARM, DRYSLWYN

## STANDING BUILDING SURVEY APRIL 2009

Report No. 2009/52



TYWI AFON YR OESOEDD



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## DYFED ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

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### AN APPLE STORE AT TY PICCA FARM, DRYSLWYN STANDING BUILDING SURVEY

Gan / By

**Duncan Schlee & Will Steele**

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**CONTENTS**

<b>SUMMARY</b>	<b>1.0</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>2.0</b>
<b>METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>3.0</b>
<b>HISTORIC BACKGROUND</b>	<b>4.0</b>
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>5.0</b>
External Elevations	5.1
Internal Elevations	5.2
Additional Observations	5.3
<b>DISCUSSION</b>	<b>6.0</b>
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>7.0</b>
<b>SOURCES</b>	<b>8.0</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>9.0</b>
<b>ILLUSTRATIONS</b>	<b>10.0</b>
<b>PHOTOGRAPHS</b>	<b>11.0</b>

## **1.0 SUMMARY**

On the 24<sup>th</sup> April 2009, the Dyfed Archaeological Trust led a day school instructing community volunteers in techniques of standing building survey as part of the Exploration Tywi! project.

The day focused on the recording of a small vernacular building (built using regionally distinctive building styles) at Ty Picca Farm. Although it is small, the building is interesting because it has been used, altered and repaired over the years and many of its original characteristics have survived. The building is notable in that it retains clom (earth walling) and rounded corners, once common building styles which have long since fallen out of use.

The project aimed to make an accurate record of the building, which is now in a poor state of repair, as well as securing a better understanding of its constructional techniques in order to inform a possible scheme of future restoration. A detailed drawn, descriptive and photographic record was made noting the appearance of the building and construction methods. Documentary sources held within the Historic Environment Record held at the Dyfed Archaeological Trust and the Carmarthenshire Archives Service were examined.

Dating the building is problematic due to the lack of detailed accurate maps before about 1840, and the absence of diagnostic features. What is clear from the cartographic sources however, and what adds to the special appeal of the building is that it is a rare survivor of a farmstead layout from before the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, while the farm around it has changed. This may be because it had a specific function in relation to the orchard in which it sits.

The building at Ty Picca has been repaired and altered many times. As a result working out its original appearance has been difficult. The corrugated iron which covers the building today has helped to preserve it and has probably replaced a former covering of thatch.

With this evidence it is hoped to restore the building using suitable and local materials, so that its connection with its location in the Towy valley can continue into the future.

## **Acknowledgements**

Thanks are given to the volunteers who participated in the recording day, Eleri Davies and Nell Hellier of Tywi Afon Yr Oesoedd and Ken Murphy of the Dyfed Archaeological Trust who provided support. Special thanks are offered to Roger Evans for permission to record the building.

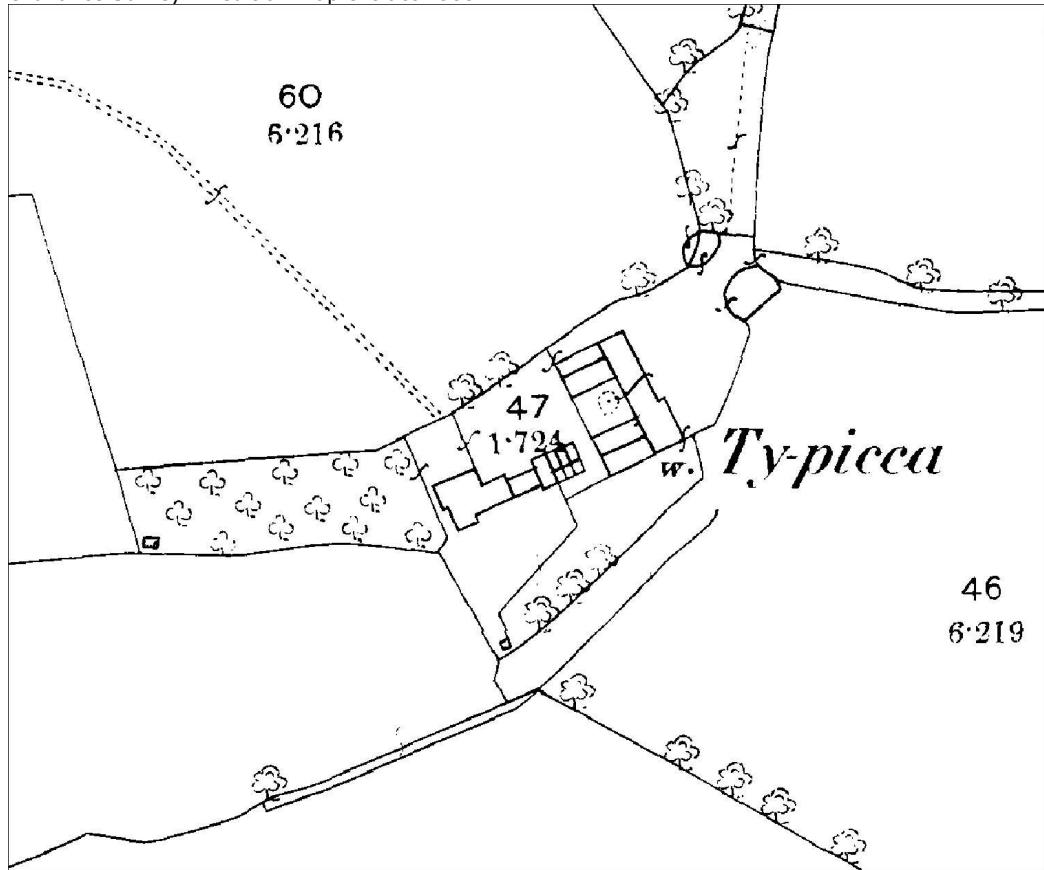
## 2.0 Introduction

On the 24<sup>th</sup> April 2009, the Dyfed Archaeological Trust led a day school instructing community volunteers in techniques of standing building survey as part of the Exploration Tywi! project. Exploration Tywi! is part of Tywi Afon Yr Oesoedd, a project funded with support from Heritage Lottery Fund, Rural Development Plan, Welsh Assembly Government, Countryside Council for Wales, Carmarthenshire County Council and the National Trust.

The day focused on the recording of a small vernacular building which lies within the corner of an historic orchard at Ty Picca Farm, Dryslwyn (NGR SN54152067) in the middle Tywi valley. Although now derelict and altered, the building is notable in that it retains evidence of regionally distinctive building styles which have long since fallen out of use. For the purposes of this report it is described as an apple store although, as yet, there has been no documentary, oral or other evidence to confirm this.

The project aimed to make an accurate record of the building, which is now in a poor state of repair, as well as securing a better understanding of its constructional techniques in order to inform a possible scheme of future restoration.

Ordnance Survey 1<sup>st</sup> edition map extract 1888



### **3.0 Methodology**

A detailed drawn, descriptive and photographic record of the building was made noting the appearance of the building and construction methods.

The drawn record comprised measured elevations, a measured cross section and a measured plan. Drawings were made to a scale of 1:20.

The photographs were taken on a digital SLR camera and have been downloaded in the archivally stable TIF format, however for the purposes of the report they are also converted to JPEG format. A selection have been annotated and included within the report.

The methodology for the project loosely corresponds to the Level 3 guidelines as specified in English Heritages "Understanding Historic Buildings: a guide to good recording practice" , 2006.

The project archive will be collated and catalogued in accordance with the National Monuments Record (NMR) guidelines and recommended procedures and will be deposited within the NMR with a copy in the regional Historic Environment Record.

### **4.0 Historic Background**

The regional Historic Environment Record held at the Dyfed Archaeological Trust was investigated and records held at the Carmarthenshire Archives Service were also examined. The apple store is not included in the regional Historic Environment Record and achieves little mention in the documentary sources. Cartographic sources do provide a record of how the farmstead has developed over the years however.

The origins of the farmstead have not been researched in detail, but Ty Picca is mentioned in documents of 1753-9 (Manors of Lady Anne Vaughan). The earliest available map (Cawdor Vaughan Golden Grove Estate Map Book Vol 1 1781-6) records the farmstead in a different arrangement to that found today, comprising two buildings in a loose L-plan with the long orchard enclosure and apple store then absent. The map is a rough schematic representation, not drawn to scale and may not provide an accurate representation of the layout at that time. The tithe map (c.1840 Llanegwad Parish) gives the earliest large-scale accurate depiction. The pattern of farmstead enclosures visible today had been established including the long orchard enclosure and building although an orchard is not specifically identified and the tithe apportionment field name (*Cae Cwnc*) adds little to our understanding.

The next available detailed map, the Ordnance Survey 1<sup>st</sup> edition (1889), shows the farmstead layout much as it is today with the present building layout depicted for the first time and the orchard and apple store recorded.

## **5.0 Description**

The apple store is a traditional small vernacular building constructed from clom or earth walling on a low stone base. The building is situated in the corner of an historic orchard some 70 metres to the west of the farmhouse and farm buildings. The fabric of the building has undergone considerable repair and rebuilding during its lifetime. At the time of the recording it had been abandoned and was falling into disrepair.

It is constructed on an east-west alignment with the entrance in the east wall. The base is up to 0.9m in height constructed of local stone, bonded with an earth mortar. Lime mortar is used in some areas and presumably relates to later phases of rebuilding. About 0.9m of clom walling sits on the stone wall. The composition of the clom was not examined in detail although typically this would have comprised a mixture of soil, particularly clay and silt, gravels, straw and other organic matter. In common with some other earth walled buildings of the region, the apple store has rounded corners although these are confined to the rear wall only. Whether the now altered front wall once mirrored this arrangement is a matter for conjecture.

The original roof structure is today evidenced only by a hardwood A-frame truss, wooden pegged and positioned roughly centrally within the building. The bottom of the roof trusses were set into the wall tops some distance back from the outer wall edge. A tin roof covered the building latterly.

The building has experienced mixed fortunes having seemingly been the subject of substantive repairs on at least two occasions. There is evidence that the southern wall has been substantially rebuilt. These works would also have necessitated the removal and reinstatement of the roof. The inclusion of brick in the repaired wall section suggests that this happened in the later 19<sup>th</sup>/ early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Modern repairs have influenced the present appearance, when a red brick single skin wall was built up against the rear (west-facing) wall, a cement render was applied internally and a concrete floor added. Cemented into the wall tops is a flat corrugated iron ceiling. Above this was a corrugated tin roof with narrow deal boards nailed onto the purlins below.

### **5.1 External Elevations**

The external elevations varied greatly attesting to the extent of alteration to the historic fabric of the building over time.

#### **5.1.1 Front, east-facing elevation**

The front elevation is entirely of stone rubble construction, bonded with a lime mortar. The ruinous walls today stand to a reduced height. Possible straight joints suggest that the opening once spanned the full width of the interior before it was narrowed to form a standard width doorway. The interior is concrete rendered internally. An imprint of a former doorjamb is evident in the edge of the concrete wall render.

#### **5.1.2 Rear, west-facing elevation**

The rear elevation is of stone construction to a height of approximately 0.9m with a clom superstructure. As in other areas this wall height is now diminished since the action of water has led to slumping of the earth walling.

A red brick, single skin wall has been built on the inside of the stone and clom wall which has a few Caernarfon slates on edge between the brick and earth, possibly remnants of former slate hanging. The brick wall is rendered internally.

The arrangement changes towards the south end of the elevation where stone replaces clom in the upper wall courses. The stone walling survives to eaves height.

#### 5.1.3 Side, south-facing elevation

This elevation still stands to eaves height. It is entirely of stone construction and shows evidence of having been substantially rebuilt. Ragged joints visible externally identify the extent of the rebuilding which encompasses the middle section of the wall. The rubble stone coursing which characterises other parts of the building is here replaced by stone brought to rough courses. Occasional bricks within the wall structure suggest a later 19<sup>th</sup>/ early 20<sup>th</sup> century date for this repair. Limewash traces on the masonry suggest reuse. A concrete wall render obscures the internal elevation of the wall.

#### 5.1.4 Side, north-facing elevation

The north side wall is the most complicated elevation, showing evidence of several phases of alteration and rebuilding. This wall still stands predominantly to eaves height, although the external wall face has since weathered away leaving only the wall core visible. The wall has a rubble stone base, originally with a clom superstructure which appears to have been latterly repaired with lime mortar and stone. The central portion of the elevation had a square window which was later blocked with stone and lime mortar. The wooden lintel partially survives, otherwise visible in relief against the internal concrete render. There are no other clearly discernible openings visible.

### 5.2 Interior Elevations

All interior elevations of the building are today obscured by a cement render which masks the original wall fabric and features.

### 5.3 Additional observations

A lean-to formerly abutted the north elevation of the building. The lean-to is absent from the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition Ordnance Survey map (1906), although it does appear on the 1955 Meridian Aerial photographs, giving an approximate date for its construction. Excavation of the surrounding rubble revealed a wavy edged concrete foundation pad formed by laying the concrete when the corrugated iron sides were already *in situ*. The owner noted from personal memory the lean-to used to be accessed by a doorway in the east wall.

## 6.0 Discussion

Dating the apple store is problematic due to the lack of detailed accurate maps before about 1840, and the absence of diagnostic features. What is clear from the cartographic sources however, and what adds to the special appeal of the building is that it is a rare survivor of a farmstead layout which was in existence until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century but was then remodelled.

Clom buildings were once fairly widespread in the region; commonly, but not exclusively found in areas of poorer building stone. They were characterised by the presence of a low stone base, thick walls and tended to have rounded corners. It was not until from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with coming of the railways and the arrival of mass produced building materials that these vernacular traditions began to be decline. Clom, for example was often found hand in hand with thatch, a material which was almost universal until the 1840s and continued well into use in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Lloyd, Orbach and Scourfield 2006, 10). Other vernacular roofing materials included slate and tile stone.

So what of the example at Ty Picca? It is clear that at least two of the walls would have been clom construction although later repairs have since removed or obscured the original material in other areas making further interpretation problematical. The building once had a window in the north wall although this has since been blocked and it would appear that the east facing front wall has been altered over the years.

The roof has also been much altered: the central A-frame truss had been removed and reinstated, probably by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century following structural repairs whilst the other roof material present today (corrugated tin, machine sawn purlins) is modern. Excavations around the north and west walls uncovered no evidence of the other roofing materials (eg. slate or tile stone) which might commonly be expected to survive had they been used.

Some clue may lie in the position of the A-frame which is bedded into the wall tops some distance back from the wall edges; this would allow for the depth of material found in a thatched roof whilst inhibiting the standard construction of a slate or tile stone roofs. Thatch of wheat, rye, oats, rushes or water reeds with an under thatch of fern or gorse would once have been widespread in the region;

*"On the rafters are laid rough boughs and twigs as a lower layer, on which is again placed another layer, of rushes, heather or fern, which in turn is covered by a proper thatch of straw." (The Land Commissioners 1896 in Peate 2004, 174).*

The construction and appearance of thatched roofs varied in the region: although the half hipped gable was common with thatch wrapped around the eaves, fully pitched gable roofs were also widely found. Thatch was either secured by wooden pegs or straw rope.

There is little written about Welsh orchards and still less on the storing of apples. Whilst apples could be stored outside, undercover storage was standard practice in many areas (Williams-Davies 1984,14) and purpose built apple stores do exist. Certainly there would have been a need for storage space for such a crop which kept under the right conditions could be made to last for many months.

Just as the appearance and construction of the building has changed over the years, so has its function. The apple store is derelict today, although has been used by the present owners in the past for storage and occasionally housing livestock. Past uses could have included storage, perhaps for a cart, cider press or other machinery.

In the event of work to the building being carried out, an archaeological watching brief may further the interpretation and understanding of this enigmatic building.

### **7.0 Recommendations**

It is recommended that in the event of further work being carried out to the apple store it is advised that the following procedure should be adopted:

- The removal of any fabric should be overseen by an archaeological watching brief to record additional historic or archaeological features or information relating to its construction.
- Excavating a small area around the modified east side of the building should be considered in order to better establish the extent of the modifications (eg. whether this elevation had rounded corners like those found to the rear).

### **8.0 Sources**

Historic Environment Record for Carmarthenshire

#### **Maps**

1753-9 Manors of Lady Anne Vaughan (CRO)

Cawdor Vaughan Golden Grove Estate Map Book Vol 1 1781-6 (CRO)

Tithe Map & Apportionment for Llanegwad Parish 1840

Ordnance Survey 1<sup>st</sup> edition (1889) Carmarthenshire Sheet 40.04, 25"

### **9.0 Bibliography**

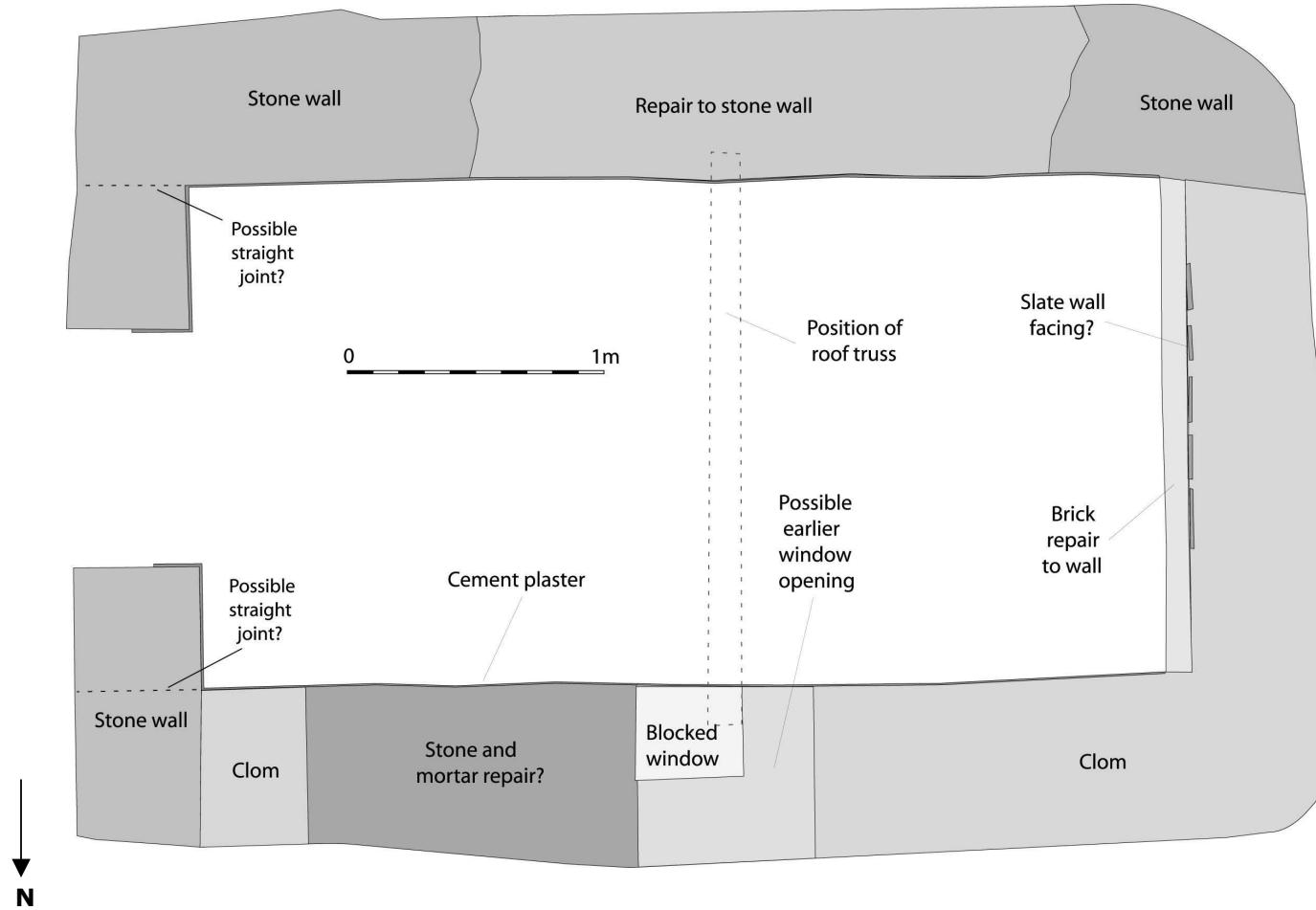
Lloyd, T. Orbach, J. & Scourfield. R. 2006 The Buildings of Wales:  
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Peate, I. 2004 The Welsh House: A Study in Folk Culture. Llanerch Press,  
Lampeter

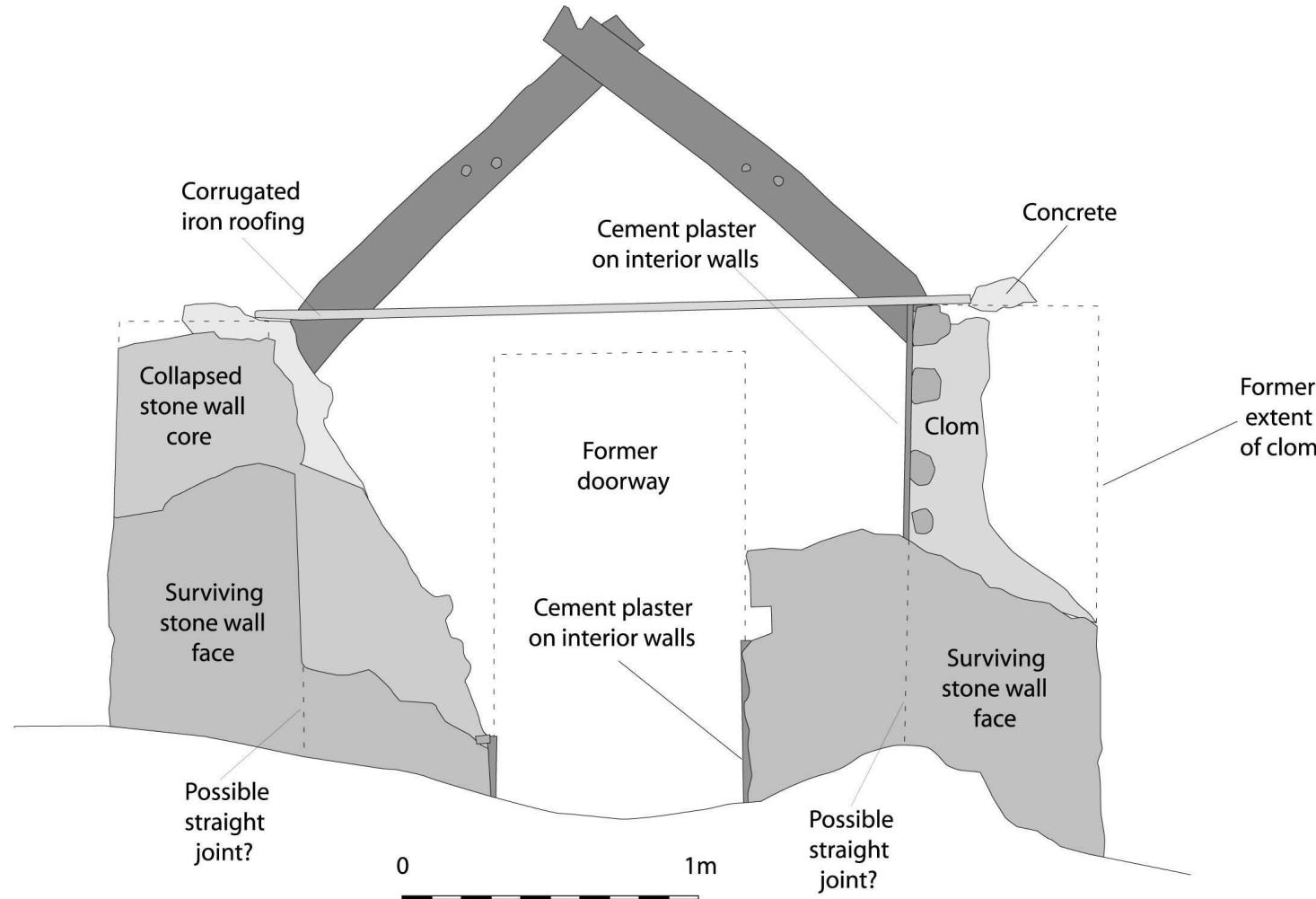
Williams-Davies, J. 1984 Cider Making in Wales National Museum of Wales (Welsh  
Folk Museum)

English Heritage 2006 Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good  
recording practice. English Heritage, Swindon

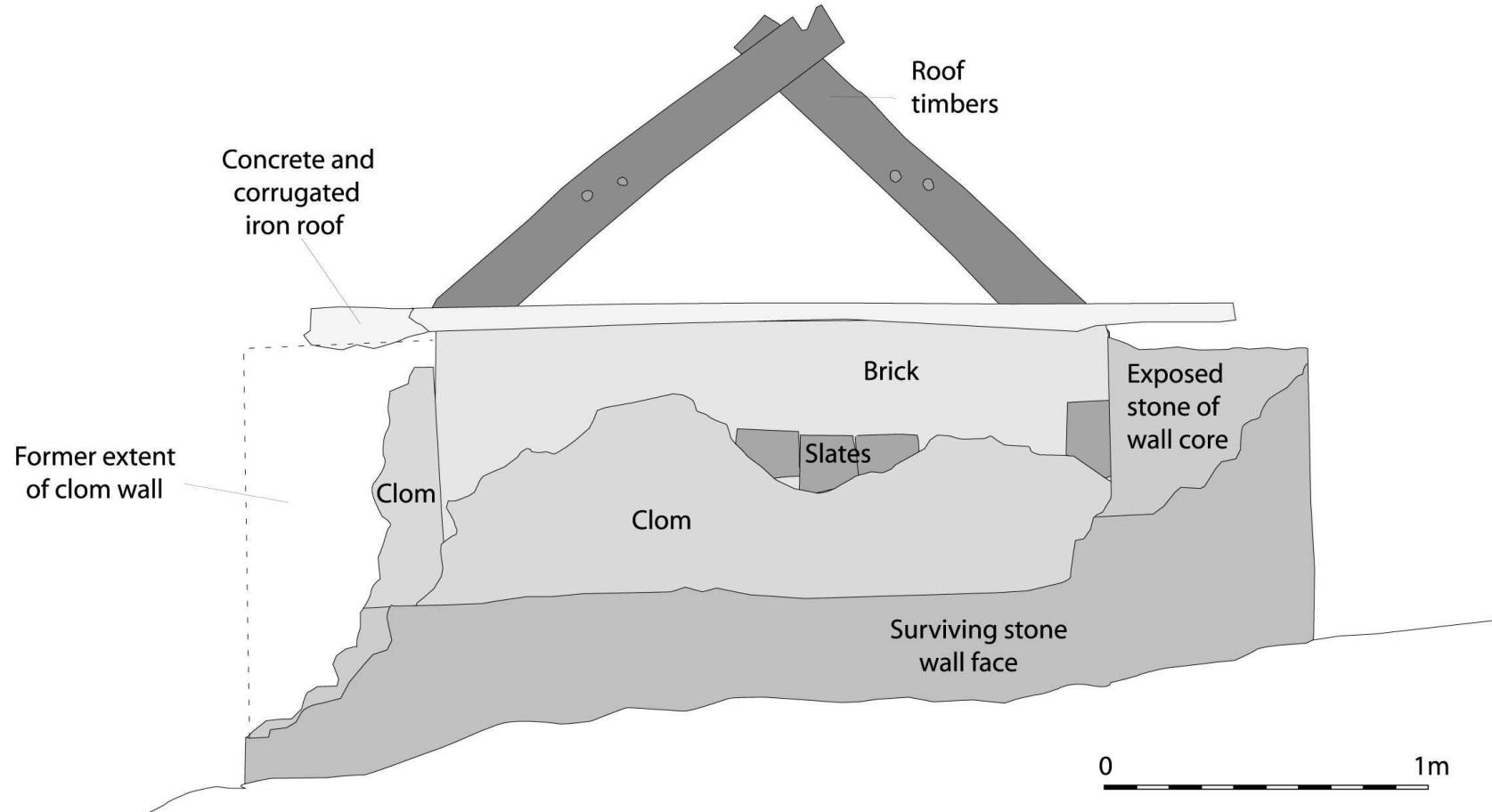
## 10.0 Illustrations



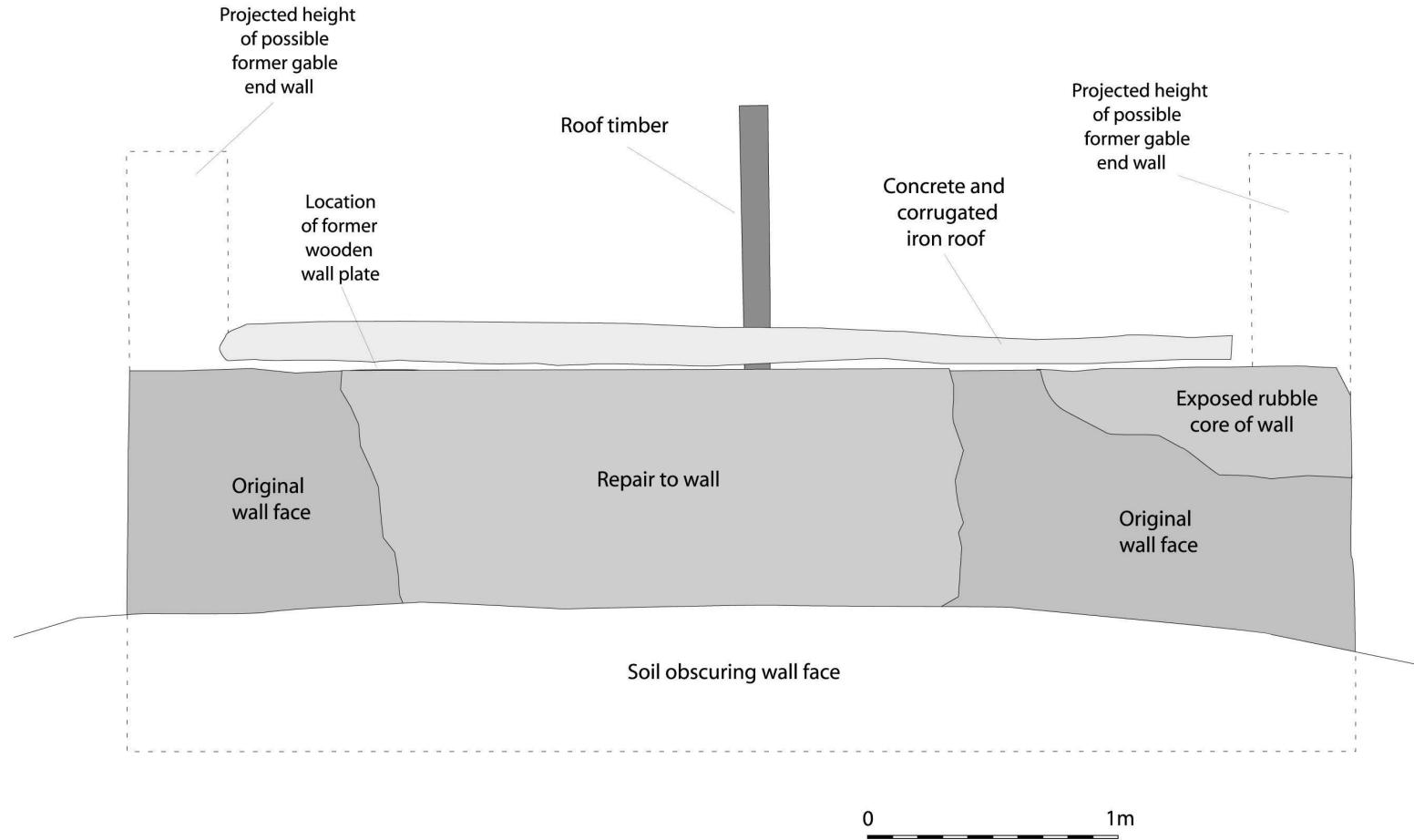
**Figure 1:** Floor plan



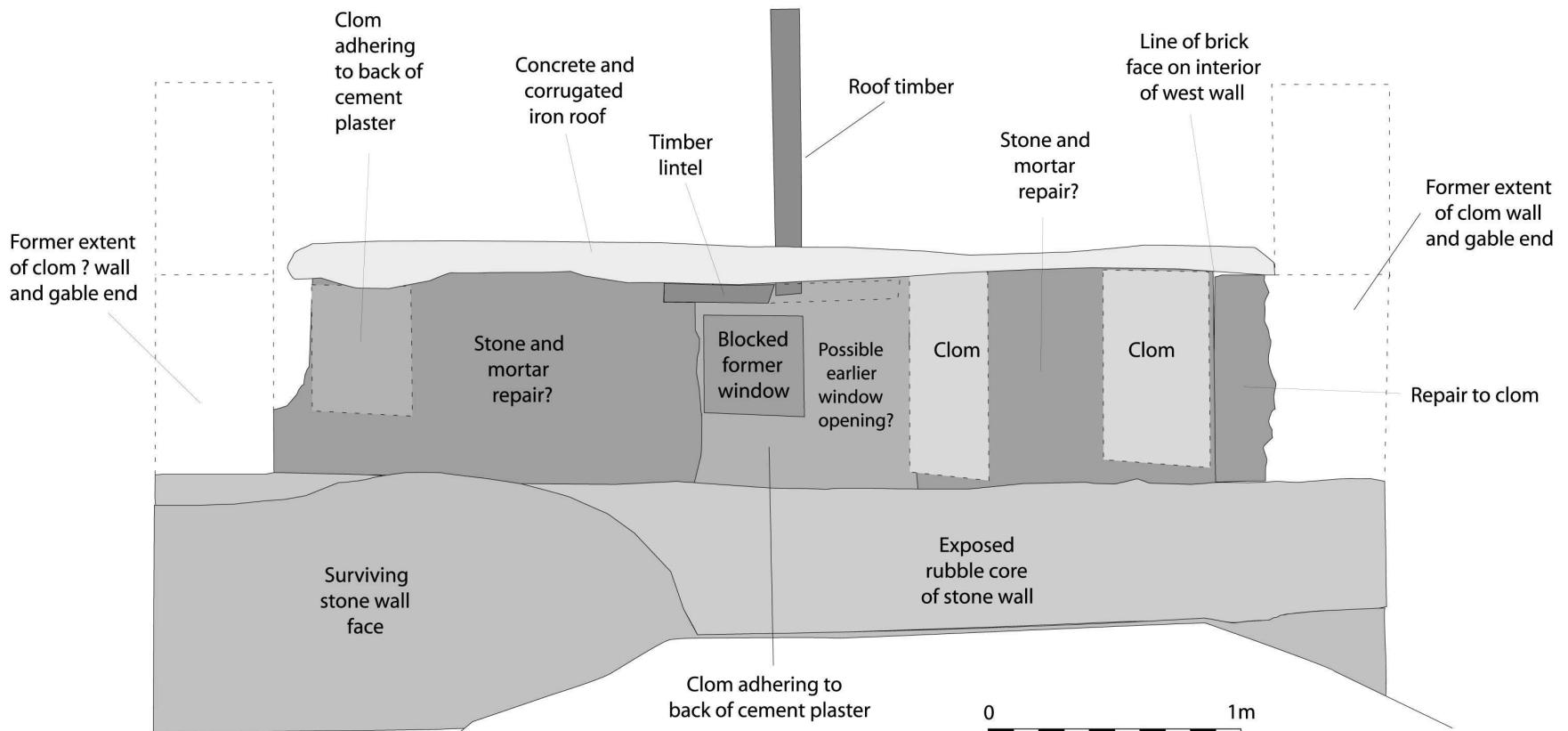
**Figure 2:** East facing elevation



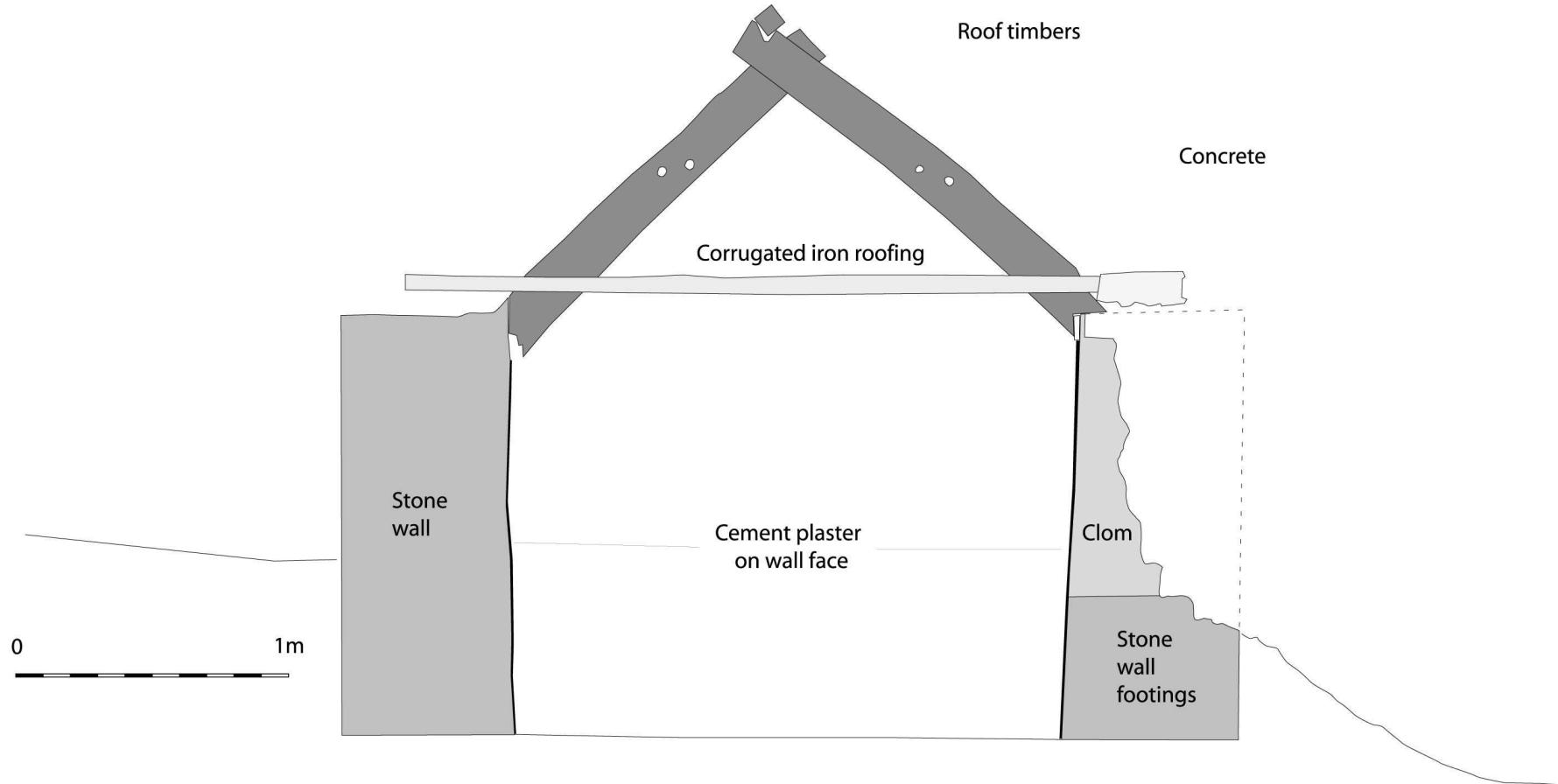
**Figure 3:** West facing elevation



**Figure 4:** South facing elevation



**Figure 5:** North facing elevation



**Figure 6:** Cross section

## 11.0 Photographs



**Photo 1:** General view



**Photo 2:** Front external east-facing elevation



**Photo 3:** Rear external west-facing elevation. Facing south-east



**Photo 4:** Detail of rear external west-facing elevation



**Photo 5:** Rear external west-facing elevation (looking north)



**Photo 6:** External south facing elevation (looking east)



**Photo 7:** External north facing elevation



**Photo 8:** Detail showing blocked window (external north facing elevation).



**Photo 9:** Detail of roof truss. Facing north-east.



**Photo 10:** Building Interior. Facing west.



**Photo 11:** Detail of roof truss. Facing west.



**Photo 12:** Detail of roof structure