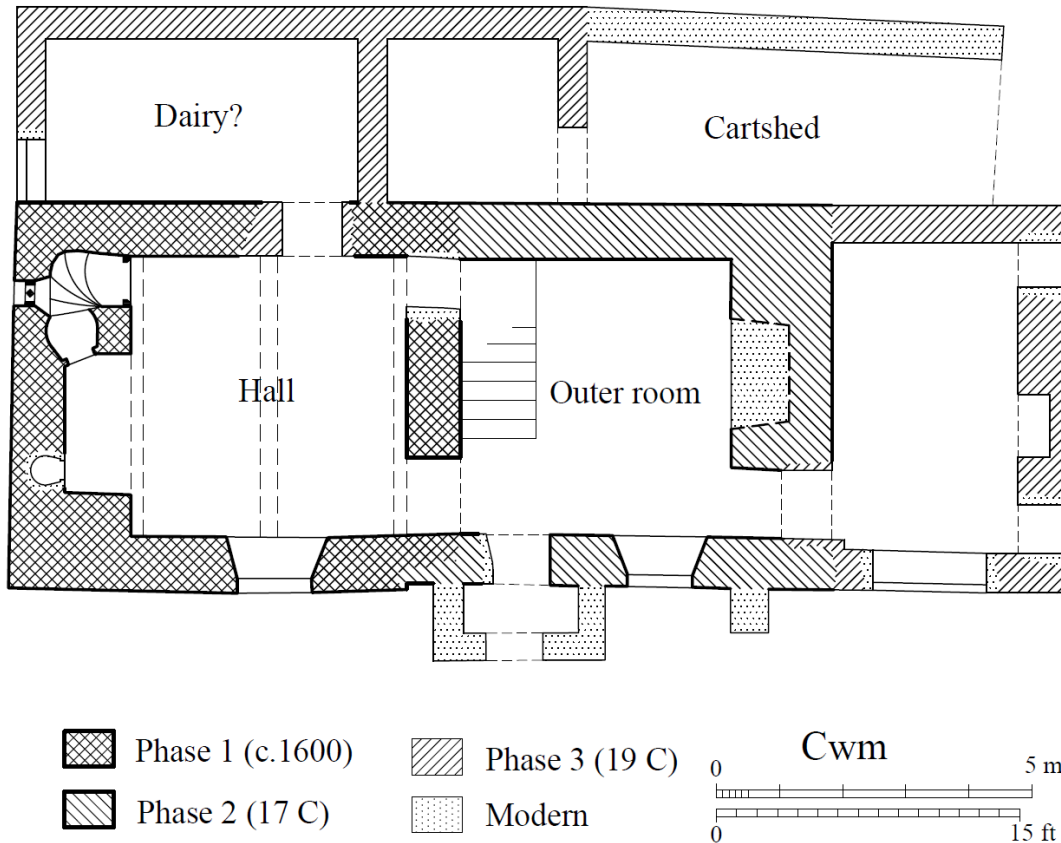


Name: Cwm

OS grid ref: ST 161 903

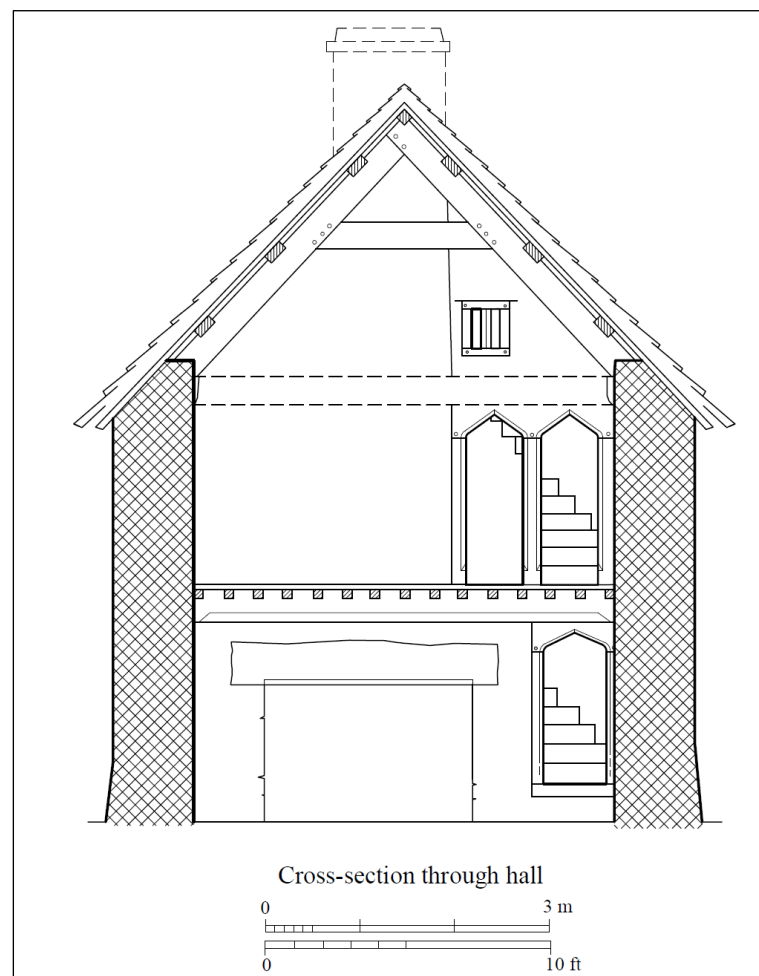
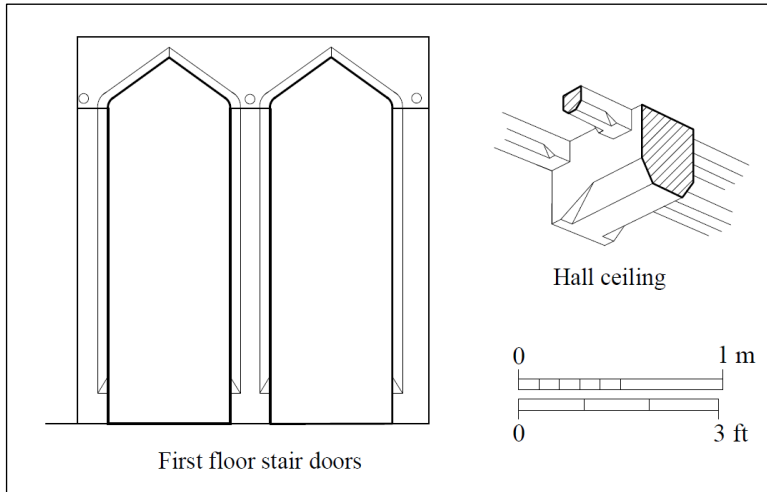
Parish / Location: Bedwas



**Description:** as the name suggests, Cwm lies in a little valley, a tributary of the river Rhymney north of Caerphilly. A road separates the house from the outbuildings (none of which appear much earlier than c.1800 and were not surveyed). The house has rendered walls, a modern slate roof and rows of symmetrically arranged windows. The external appearance suggests a typical nineteenth century house, but internally there is ample evidence that part of the structure may be as early as c.1600. It is separated into three parts – a hall, outer room and a more recent addition on the downhill end. A modernised lean-to range at the rear includes a cart shed and possible dairy.

The earliest timberwork survives only in the uphill unit, designated as the **hall** on the above plan, and it is evident that it consisted of just a single room; but this small size was compensated for by height – there are two full floors plus attic, so the little house would have had a tower-like appearance when first built. Indeed, Cwm very closely resembles the added parlour block at Llanhilleth, and has similarities to two other local farms, Ty-isaf and Bedwas House. The hall has a heavy beamed ceiling with close-set joists, all having medium chamfers and diagonal stops. On the end beams, however, the direction of the stops is reversed, so that they appear almost like broach stops. A wide fireplace recess occupies almost the width of the upper gable wall, and has a timber lintel stopped dead against the jambs. There are two ovens, though it appears that only the one under the stair is original. A Tudor-arch wooden door with a high pointed head leads to the stone stair (now disused) which also retains an intact two-light diamond mullioned window.

The **first floor** has been modernised and the only early feature remaining is the fine paired Tudor-arch doorways at the head of the stair. Such paired doors also survive at Llanhilleth and Maes-y-cnyw. There was a central ceiling beam (now cut away) that supported the roof truss. It is possible that this floor was divided into two chambers by a partition along the missing beam (as per Llanhilleth), as the owners recall seeing a pair of blocked windows in the rear wall. There is no sign of a fireplace on this floor.

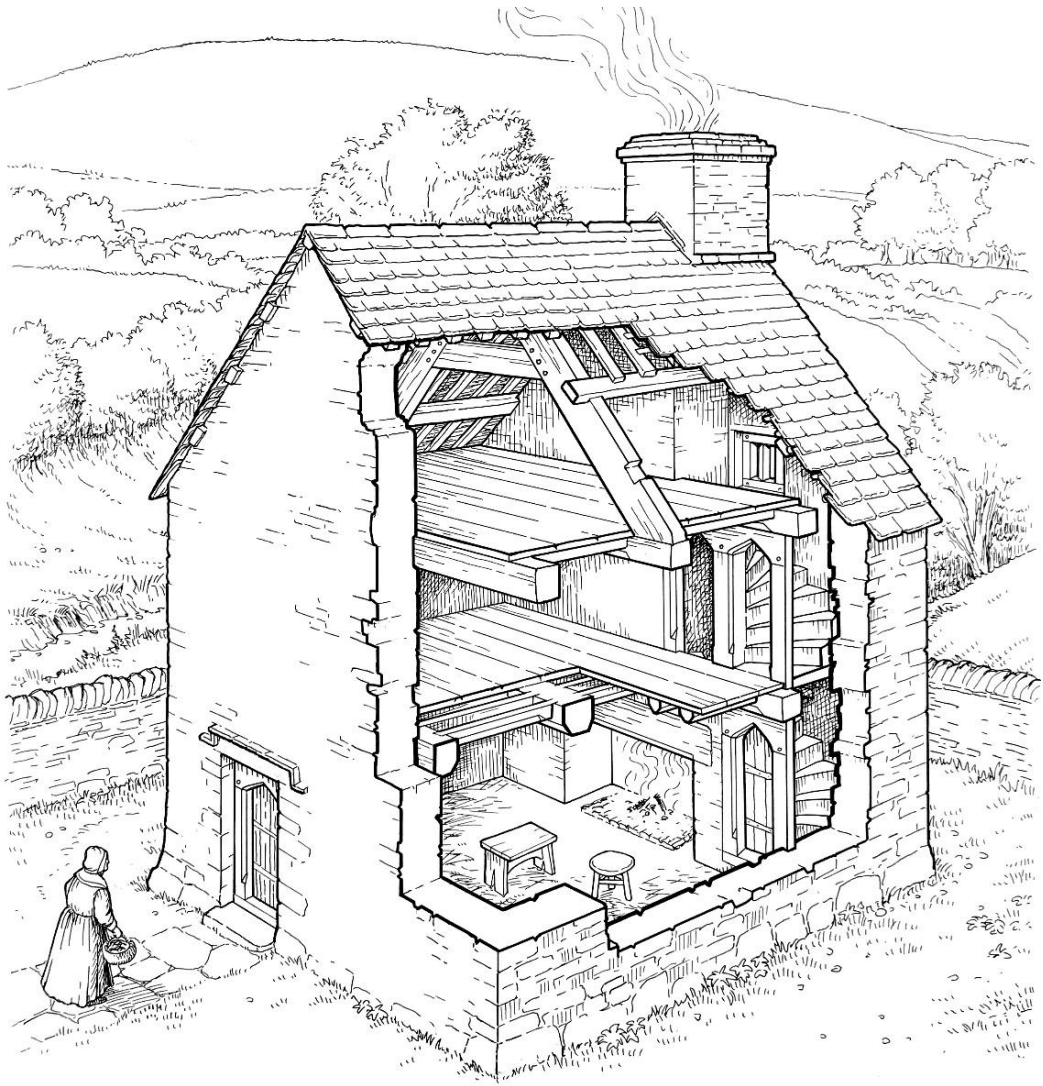


A second winding stair (of wood) leads to the unheated **attic**, which had a larger two-light mullioned window (recently removed). There is a single massive truss, unchamfered, with a mortice-jointed collar and three rows of trencled purlins.

The house is currently entered through a small added porch that leads into the **outer room**. This is roughly the same size as the hall and had a gable fireplace in the end wall, although it is now blocked, and the chimney removed. This room now contains the main stair and has been so thoroughly modernised that no early features survive. A doorway beside the fireplace may have been a cupboard recess that has been knocked through into the third room, another modernised addition to the range, which also had a gable fireplace. Further extensions to the ground floor are completely modern and are not shown on the plan.

**Development:** the surviving timber details clearly indicate that the upper end is earliest, perhaps dating to c.1600 or earlier. The entrance is in the gable wall opposite the fireplace (rather than beside the fireplace in the more commonly encountered hearth-passage plan), and so Cwm is considered to be an example of the rare 'end entry houses' (HWC pg.220) of which about a dozen examples exist in neighbouring Glamorgan (RCAHMS pg.433). Such houses are invariably single celled structures. However, it is worth considering whether the hall at Cwm was built as a standalone unit, or if it is a fragment of a larger structure. The front wall of the house displays considerable irregularity, and it is quite conceivable that the hall was an addition to the outer room, and not vice-versa. If the outer room was built first, then it may have been a little house of hearth-passage plan, to which the hall was a secondary parlour. This theory is offset by the absence of any early timberwork in the outer room - but this could be the result of extensive modernisation. A clinching factor

in understanding the development of Cwm would be the discovery of any blocked windows (and the direction they faced) in the gable wall separating both units.



*Cutaway reconstruction of the hall block at Cwm*