

Bagillt Gaol?

Controversy surrounds the building locally referred to as 'The Gaol', recently claims have been made that this was originally an armoury; however no evidence has yet been presented to support this. Below is reproduced the text of the survey made by the Royal Commission on Ancient Monuments into the building;

Bagillt Lock Up

Village lock-ups are a distinctive minor public building-type, intended to serve as temporary gaols, which were generally built from 'county funds' after approval of a scheme at the Quarter Sessions. Early examples are late-eighteenth-century in date but the building-type extends into the late nineteenth century becoming obsolete with the construction of purpose-built cells or 'strong-rooms' within police stations.

Description

The lock-up at Bagillt is a purpose-built single-storied rectangular structure. It is stone-built on a plinth with prominent dressed-stone quoins. Internally there are two intercommunicating cells, separated by a brick wall, each lit by a high slit window in the long elevation. Access from the outside was by a single doorway in the south gable end. The lock-up is strongly built. The stone walls are set on a plinth that provided a secure stone-built foundation, the windows are very narrow, and the doors were of iron. The roof is particularly remarkable. Four tiers of diminishing, cantilevered and iron-cramped sandstone slabs provided a secure roof with a capstone over seven feet above floor level.

Dating

This lock-up is difficult to date but probably belongs to the later phase of lock-ups. Early examples tended to be single-celled and were sometimes designed as eye-catchers (e.g. the circular and vaulted 'clinks' at Ruabon and Barmouth). The architectural details at Bagillt - internal brickwork, pecked quoins and machine-cut sandstone slabs - are consistent with an early or mid-Victorian date. Quarter Sessions records (Flintshire and Denbighshire Record Offices) show that lock-ups were provided for industrial settlements in north-east Wales ca. 1860-80: at Saltney (1864), Rhosllannerchrugog (1870-3), and Connah's Quay (1878). The construction date of the lock-up at Bagillt is not recorded in the Session's records but in March 1878 at the Petty Sessions 'it was announced that there was a growing need for providing a lock-up in the populous neighbourhood of Bagillt, (More About Bagillt, compiled by Ceridwen Eluned Meese, 1991). This is, however, difficult to reconcile with the depiction of the lock-up on the O.S. 25-inch map based on survey in 1870. Further research may provide a construction date but it is reasonable to suppose from the details of construction that Bagillt

lock-up was built sometime later than 1850 and probably after 1860. It is therefore an unusual survivor from the last phase of lock-up construction.