

## **CIfA Cymru Timber Day**

Over 20 people attended the Timber Buildings day school, held in the Owain Glyndwr Centre in Machynlleth. Six speakers from diverse backgrounds and experience provided an insight into the varied aspects of buildings themselves, their phases of development, the nature of timber used, architectural detail and wider setting. Both academic and commercial experience was represented.

Ross Cook, of Archaeodorus, explained the science behind dendrochronology, the biological composition of wood, identifying appropriate samples in the field, and the array of types of test that can be undertaken and the viability of others methods and wood types. The establishment of a chronological database, starting from modern and overlapping back, means 12,000 years of information with various woods.

George Nash spoke on the Tilley Project, a village heritage lottery funded research project into the dating of the houses, their history within the village and the history of the village. A valuable example of the benefits of community engagement, with a defined purpose and outcome. 27 houses were examined (9 are listed) out of a cluster of 35, the timbers, carpenters marks were examined, as well as historic mapping and estate records. Information was fed into the HER and a book published.

Margaret Dunn, Discovering Old Welsh Houses, spoke on the work of volunteers working to identify the histories of pre 1700 Welsh Houses, using communities and owners, and working with the RCAHMW. In identifying historic houses and buildings that are appropriate for dating as part of house histories projects, the timber samples, architecture, of unlisted buildings are sampled and recorded. Identification of some features and dating means detailed phasing can be made.

Stephen Briggs spoke on the history of Baltic Softwood Timber, inspired by researching his own house, and nearby church. Initial researching led to shipping accounts, estate papers and newspapers of the time, gaining detailed information of types and grades of timber, the place of origin and destination, and the ships it was imported in. The imports can be traced to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century in Wales.

Ian Brookes, of Engineering Archaeological Services, spoke concerning a property within the Medieval town of Conwy, in the planning process for conversion. It was considered to be 16<sup>th</sup> century (form a datestone) and with dating from the timbers (the cruck dated from 1441/2), trial pits and other examination proved to be a Medieval building, with later alterations, extensions and rebuild phases.

Richard Suggett of the RCAHMW, gave many examples of buildings with crucks and their identification in earlier and later buildings, their distribution and date range. They are mainly located to the north east, and east, of Wales, and the border, and appear to relate to a higher social class of housing. Documentary evidence notes dates of c1300 on, appearing physically from early 15<sup>th</sup> century, with the classic period of mid 15<sup>th</sup> to mid 16<sup>th</sup> centuries.