

THE BUILDINGS OF MOREFA BORTH

- the Marsh Harbour

Ceredigion



That part of Borth Village on a pebble bank with the sea on one side and the Cors Fochno marsh some reclaimed and the railway on the other. In the distance is the River Dyfi. Photograph Michael Lewis

Photographs and History by BERYL LEWIS

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MIN Y DON

Morfa Borth - the Marsh Harbour

On the east side of the High Street. Built possibly as early as 1802 by a Benjamin family of carpenters. In 1829 a master mariner and his wife lived there. By 1881 it was called a Libanus Place Cottage after the Chapel (later the Gerlan) which was built behind it.



Min-y-don is a single storey cottage under a gable roof parallel to the High Street, with its chimney on the north side and the most important room in the cottage, the living room/kitchen would have been that side. The walls and chimney are rendered. The walls are mud with stone footings, and there is a party wall with the Craft Cabin next door. Today there is no front door at the centre front, instead a small extension with a shallow lean-to roof on the north side has the front door. It is a modern door. The

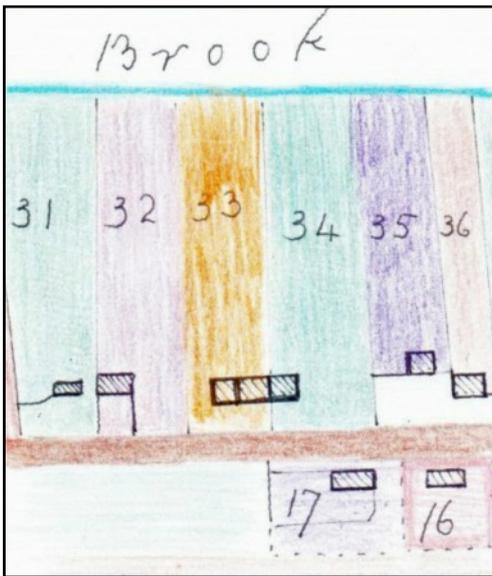
traditional front door in the centre front leading into a passage would have reduced the sizes of the front rooms considerably. The front windows have been enlarged and are modern canted bay windows in the style of casements. There is a small front garden enclosed by rendered walls and a wooden gate.



ABOVE The front in 2009.

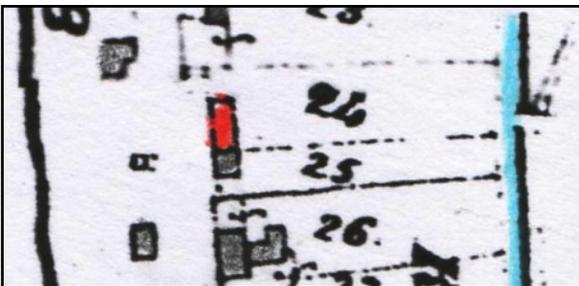


LEFT The rear of the cottage in 2017. There is a roofed extension at the side and the back. In 1886 after the Chapel was built there was only a narrow area at the side and back and the extension partly fills it. The cottage has a right of way into the long garden behind the Craft Cabin.



LEFT On the earliest map we have, dated 1829 it is the northernmost of a pair of cottages on Number 33. The ground on which they were built was the embankment of shingle, and considered by the Manor court as 'waste'. Number 33 was enclosed in 1802, and measured 1 rod and 16 perches - that is just over a quarter of an acre. By 1829 two cottages, part of a terrace of three, were built on it. John Benjamin rented them from the Crown who owned the manor. He lived in the one on the right which was the largest. Min-y-don was on the left. At the end of the garden was a brook of fresh water.

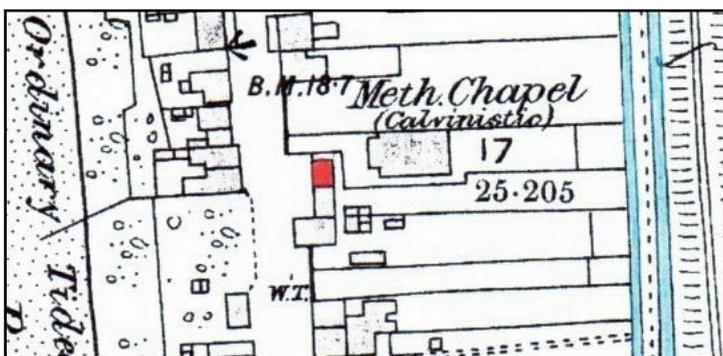
(Copied from NA LRRO/1/3060 which was a painted map.).



BELOW LEFT On the Tithe Apportionments Map for Llanfihangel Genau'r Glyn, Cyfoeth township of 1848 there is more information. The cottages were Number 24, and both were John Benjamin's. In the cottage now Min-y-don, lived Margaret Morgan, born about 1807, a young widow of only 32 years old with young children, Anne 9, John 6 and a baby of six months. Loss of a husband so young suggests her husband had been a seaman. (NLW)

John Benjamin and his father were carpenters, and their home was at Glanwern at Ty Gwyn -formerly Cwm Cethin. It is likely his father built a Morfa Borth cottage for his son and the other either for his family or to rent out. The two homes shared the garden. At the end of the garden was a brook of water, the tailrace from the Glanlerry Corn Mill (now gone) with water from the River Lerry and two small streams.

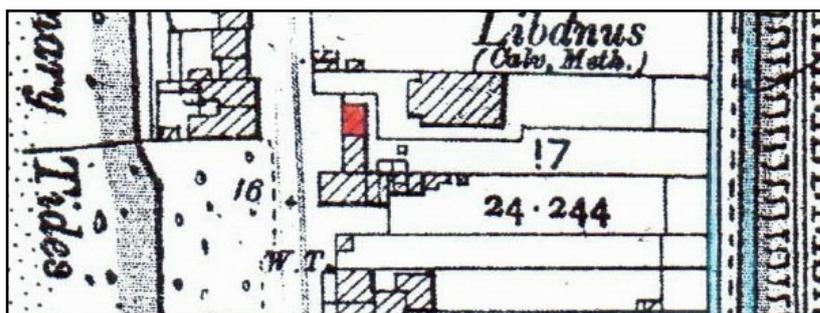
By the Census of 1851 there was a master mariner and merchant seaman in the cottage, Evan Evans, aged 47, born at Gwastad, (Upper) Borth and his wife Margaret. She had married twice, and had a son David Morgans, 15 and a daughter Mary Morgans, 13. She had another son David and a daughter Margaret from her second marriage. What is interesting is that Margaret was born at Cwm Cethin Glanwern, now Ty Gwyn so she was one of the Benjamin family. By the Census of 1861 Evan had died and Margaret was a widow of 'independent means' so her husbands had left her well enough off. There was a granddaughter Martha Anne Dyson aged 4 and her daughter Margaret aged 22 was still single.



LEFT On the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map of 1888, surveyed in 1886 the cottages are easy to see. Min-y-don is marked in red. By then the Chapel had been built and the railway had come. The 'brook' was still there. The Benjamin family still owned the cottages and gave some of their land for the Chapel (Map Cardiganshire, III.10)

A cottage in Borth at that time had a front door and passage with the living room/kitchen one side and the best bedroom the other, and a tiny room at the rear and a ladder or stairs to rooms in the loft. It probably began with a thatched roof of reeds from the marsh. At the 1891 Census Margaret was still there, by then a very old lady of 83. Her 22 year old grand daughter Martha A. Morgans a local girl was looking after her. Both women spoke only Welsh. In the cottage next door was Elizabeth Benjamin aged 43, unmarried and with her 'own means'.

At the 1901 Census it is not possible to say who lived there as some cottages were left out, either they were empty or the owners were away.



LEFT There are few changes in this detail from the 25 inch map of 1905. The two cottages still shared the long garden, and the two tiny buildings in the garden could have been a Ty Bach (outside lavatory) and a pigsty.

In 1910 for a tax planned but not levied, the cottage and garden was valued at £40. Its address was still 'Libanus Place'. Elizabeth Benjamin still lived next door, and David John Richards lived in Min-y-don which was owned by Elizabeth Lloyd of Cym Cethin (Ty Gwyn), a widow aged 62,

In 1925 the Libanus Place cottage was owned by Thomas Lloyd of Cwm Cethin (Ty Gwyn) and the tenant was Isaac Pritchard.

By 1934 and still in 1949 the cottage was owned by Isaac Pritchard. He was a boot maker and repairer who lived at Welfare. He only had to pay £2 Rates for the cottage - the Council's value for an old mud built cottage. Isaac Pritchard was a valuable member of the village. In November 1924 he had been the founder and the president of Borth's Literary and Debating Society which met in the Libanus Chapel (Cambrian News). In 1924 he was involved in getting a reservoir for a water supply for Borth. He was clerk of the committee. In 1949 he was an 'elder' at the Chapel, and vice-chairman of the Parish Council. (Borth Review National Library of Wales).

In 1962 Min-y-don had its Welsh name meaning 'at the edge of the waves', and Miss Catherine Pritchard was leasing it out. She called it a 'furnished bungalow', with a living room, two bedrooms, a bathroom, a kitchen and hot and cold running water. (Handbook and Guide to Borth, Private Collection). Miss Pritchard was a valuable member of the community too, on the committee's of the Youth and Social Club, and the British Legion Women (Borth Review, National Library of Wales). She was still paying the rates in 1963. No-one was on the Electoral Roll for the cottage which suggests she was still leasing it out - possibly as a holiday cottage (Electoral Roll and Rates, Ceredigion Archives).

Today the cottage has some land at the rear of the Chapel, but there is still a right of way into the long garden behind the Craft Cabin. The 'Brook' is now a dry ditch, the water diverted to flow into the sea at a pipe near the Lifeboat house. The Benjamin's cottage next door has become the 'Craft Cabin'. Its owner also owns Min-y-don.

(The author would like to thank the present owner for his help with this article).

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Tai'r Borth / Houses of Borth
gan/by Beryl Lewis
[cyf/ref ADX/1629]

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Hoffem ddiolch i Beryl am fod mor garedig â chaniatáu i ni rannu ei gwaith â'r gynulleidfa ehangaf bosibl.

Ceidw Beryl Lewis yr hawlfraint yn ei gwaith ac mae'r hanesion yn cael eu rhannu at ddibenion preifat ac ymchwil yn unig.

Houses of Borth consists of over 350 histories of individual buildings, lavishly illustrated with photographs, maps and documents. All the files are available from our website: <https://www.archifdy-eredigion.org.uk/tairborth.php>

We would like to thank Beryl for her kindness in letting us share her work with the widest possible audience.

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