

# 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

*This work is for research and educational purposes only.*

# MIRELLA

Morfa Borth - the Marsh Harbour

Formerly Number 1 London Place. Built by 1851 by a Hughes master mariner for his family on ground his family had owned since 1822 and still in the possession of his descendants in 1925. Later called Ratchford Cottage.



*ABOVE The cottage in 2009.*

Mirella is the northernmost of a terrace of three cottages, and is one and a half storeys high, double fronted, with dormer windows in the roof with barge boards edged with curves and a finial. The windows were modern but in the style of the old sash windows. The front door in 2015 was rather 1930s in style but has since been replaced. It opened directly on to the street. The roof is tiled and there is a stone chimney on the northern end with one chimney pot and a shared chimney on the south end of the roof. Access to the back of the cottage is by a passageway in between itself and Acorn. There is a garden stretching down to the ditch - a former brook which is shared with Acorn.

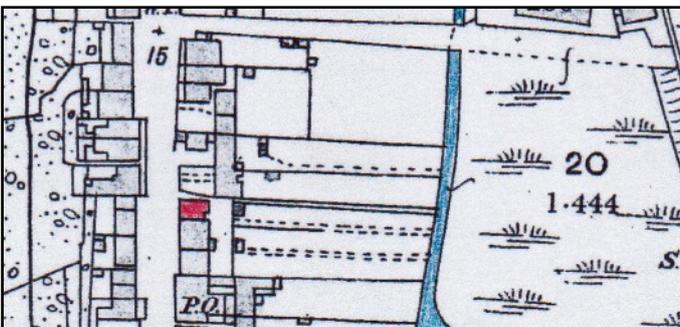


*LEFT the timber clad rear of the cottage which has an extension of a bare two storeys. ABOVE Mirella's garden is in the foreground. Acorn is on the right.*

The ground this cottage stands on was enclosed in 1820 by Hugh Hughes from the pebble embankment thrown up by the sea, and called 'waste' because it was no use for farming. The ground measured one rod and 19 perches, that is over half an acre and extended to a brook with fresh water. The London Place cottages had not been built on this ground yet, only a cottage that would become Acorn (Number 44, Map 1829, National Archives LRRO 1/3060)

By 1848 Ann Hughes, probably the widow of master mariner John Hughes owned the ground, He was a master mariner, a captain of wooden sailing vessels and with shares in many of them which would have provided a good income for his family (Register of Shipping Aberystwyth, Ceredigion Archives) The cottages that would become Number 2 London Place and Bwthyn-y-wern had been built but no Mirella yet - just one very tiny building on that ground (Number 37, the Tithe Apportionments Map for Llanfihangel Genau'r Glyn, Cyfoeth Township. NLW)

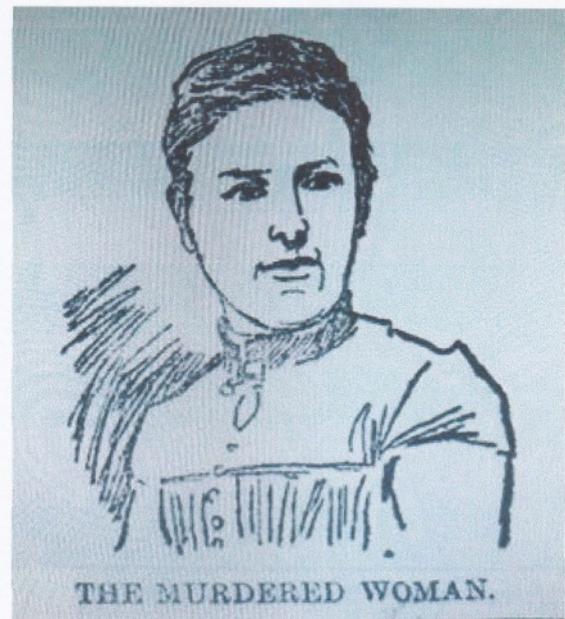
By 1851 Mirella had been built, joined on to the earlier cottages, and in the 1861 and 1871 Census's we can pick up the family living there. David Hughes, a mariner, born in about 1824 in Borth, and his wife Margaret, also born about 1824 in Glanwern. They had a son Hugh and daughters Catherine and Mary. In 1871 David was still at sea. By 1881 their daughter Catherine born about 1853 had wed a mariner called Thomas Richards, and had a son David Hughes Richards, and a younger son John. They went to live at Upper Borth.



*The Hughes cottage in 1886 is marked in red, it was smaller than Numbers 2 and 3 and there was a back yard, and then a narrow garden extending to the brook with a footpath. At the end of the yard was possibly a Ty Bach - outside lavatory (Detail from the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map of 1888 surveyed in 1886, Cardiganshire NW III.10)*

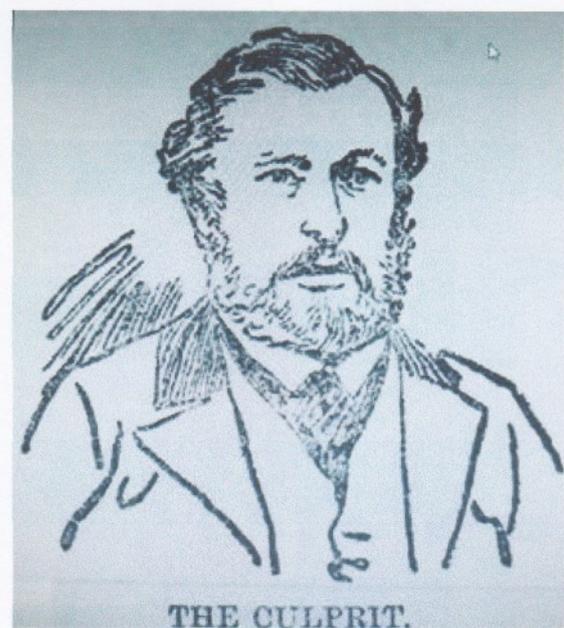
In the Census of 1891 the younger daughter of David Hughes, Mary born in Borth about 1857 had wed a mariner James Davies, and they were living in the cottage, which Mary owned jointly with her sister Catherine. Mary had no children and she worked as a dressmaker.

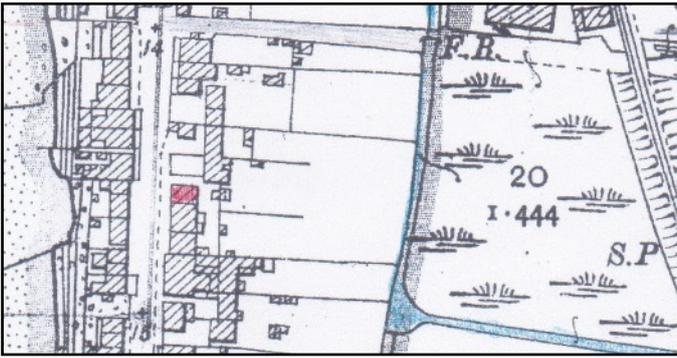
In 1894 sadly, Mary, alone in the house, was murdered by her sister Catherine's husband Thomas Richards. There had been a feud between the sisters and their husbands. James Davies had £200 deposited in a bank in Aberystwyth. This was a good sum - he was hoping it would give him a good retirement at home. Thomas Richards pretended to be James Davies at the bank and withdrew £40 in gold sovereigns which he posted home to his wife Catherine, then he went to Borth and murdered Mary. David Lewis in an article about the murder wrote that the cottages were traditional single storey cottages to which a second storey had been added. A reporter from the Western Mail described the interior of Mary Davies's cottage as 'a perfect picture of cleanliness and comfort, with a dresser containing old china and crockery' and a number of religious and other books nearby (Cambrian News covered the story and there is a well researched article in Ceredigion Volume XVI number 2, 2010 by David Lewis Jones; 'A Death at Borth in 1894; the Capture, Trial and Execution of Thomas Richards').



*ABOVE and RIGHT These drawings appeared in a newspaper at the time. The old chimney of the cottage was taller, the north wall was exposed rubble stone, and The Railway Inn next door had not spread as far as this cottage (Drawings courtesy of Amanda Shaw and Dr Terry Davies)*

The cottage became the property of Catherine the widow of the executed man. She moved there, and in the 1901 Census was there with her son David aged 21 a mariner. He went on to have a good career at sea (Dr Terry Davies Borth Mariners website).





LEFT Catherine's cottage in 1904. The cottage was much the same - but it did not have a fenced back garden of its own - it seems this was then shared with Acorn who probably owned it. The Rees family who owned Acorn were related to the Hughes's and their descendants (A detail from the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map revised in 1904 and published in 1905, Cardiganshire NW III.10).

BELOW In this detail from an old postcard London House with a shop window is on the right and then two cottages. Mirella is at the far end and then Number 2. We cannot see Number 3 as the cottages were set back a little from the road. Mirella had tiny upper windows. The workers were probably laying a water pipe (Postcard by Williams of Borth, courtesy of the Amgueddfa Ceredigion Museum)



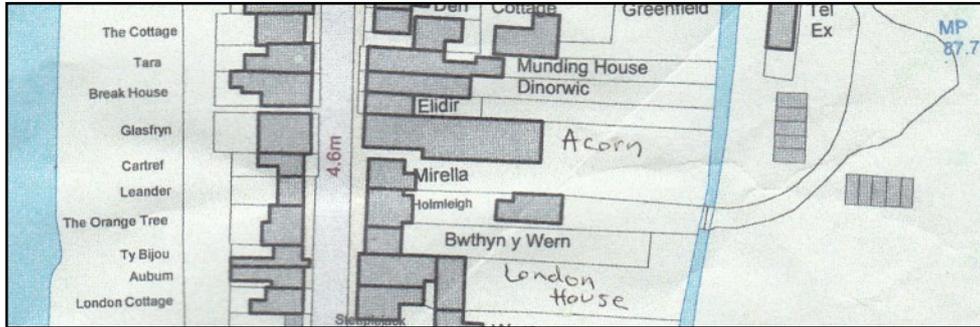
In 1910 for a valuation for a tax planned but not levied the cottage was valued at £90. There would have been £3.4s to pay, £4 gross. Catherine was living there, and she was still there in 1925 aged 62. In 1911 at the Census the cottage had four main rooms. This would not include any scullery. Catherine Richards aged 58 was working as a charwoman. She spoke both Welsh and English. By 1934 Catherine still owned the cottage but had a tenant W. J. Evans.

In 1949 paying the Rates for the cottage, still called 1 London Place, had been Laura Thomas, but this was crossed out in the Council's list, and replaced by the name Alan Jones, and the name Ratchford Cottage (Ceredigion Archives).

In 1957 N. Dutton paid the rates and the cottage had its name Mirella. He was still paying the rates in 1963 and on the electoral register he was Frederick W. Dutton (Ceredigion Archives).

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*BELOW Today there is an extension on the south side of the rear of the cottage and it still shares ground at the rear with Acorn (Detail from a Council 25 inch Map courtesy of Councillor Ray Quant when assisting research for a local event).*



*LEFT Mirella in 2015 with a new front door*

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Mae **Tai'r Borth** yn cynnwys dros 350 hanes sy'n ymwneud ag adeiladau unigol ac mae'r hanesion wedi'u darlunio â chyfoeth o ffotograffau, mapiau a dogfennau. Mae'r ffeiliau ar gael ar ein gwefan: <https://www.archifdy-eredigion.org.uk/tairborth.php?lang=cy>

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

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**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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