

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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MÔRWYLFA Morfa Borth

On the beach side in the northern part of Borth High Street. Replacing a 'Mariner's Cottage'. Built after 1910 but by 1921.



Môrwylda is the southern half of a pair of tall semi detached houses of two storeys with an attic floor under the roof. They are single fronted and under a gable roof parallel to the street, but each with a bold gable with a pair of windows at right angles to the roof. Each has a red brick chimney on the outer edge of its roof with room for four chimney pots (flues). The side wall of Môrwylda has a tile hung section at the top, otherwise all the walls are rendered. The front is decorated

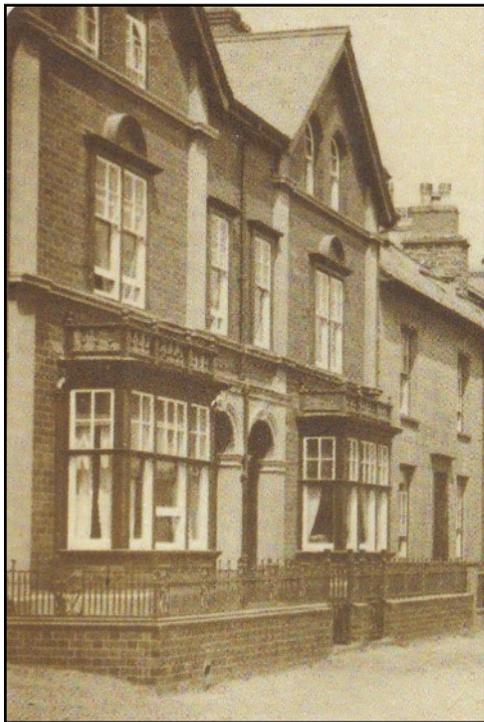
with a bold pilaster strip each side punctuated near the top by a string course (line of moulding) below the top



pair of windows. Arches top these windows and are echoed by an arch over the front door. There is a modern window with four lights on the second floor. Otherwise all the windows have small lights in their top section. The ground floor of both have square bay windows. Around the front door is a classical frame in the rendering with a keystone. The hall is lit by a generously sized window above the front door. The front door pattern of lights is in keeping with the windows. The narrow front garden is enclosed by a red brick wall topped by some very pretty railings and it has a front gate. A tiled path leads to the front door. This pair of houses with their 'modern'



The railings are in the 'Art Nouveau' style.



simplification of the old features are some of the most handsome in Morfa Borth.

ABOVE This detail from a postcard sent in 1921 shows us the original front of the building. There was a second bold string course below the second floor windows, and bold moulding on the top of the windows. The bay windows were topped by a balustrade with knobs on its pillars. A third arch shape is over the second floor large window. The houses were brick, quite likely red brick as these can just be seen in the photograph. Rendering showed up the pilaster strips and the framing of the front door. Care was taken in the decoration of the fronts of these houses.



RIGHT The houses in about 1955. (Details from Postcards in a Private Collection)

The name 'Morwydfa' means in Welsh 'sea outlook'. They may have been built with letting to holiday makers in mind. Sometime after 1922 in Môrwydfa six bedrooms and two sitting rooms with back premises adjoining the beach were offered to holiday makers (The Illustrated Borth Guide, Aberystwyth Public Library).

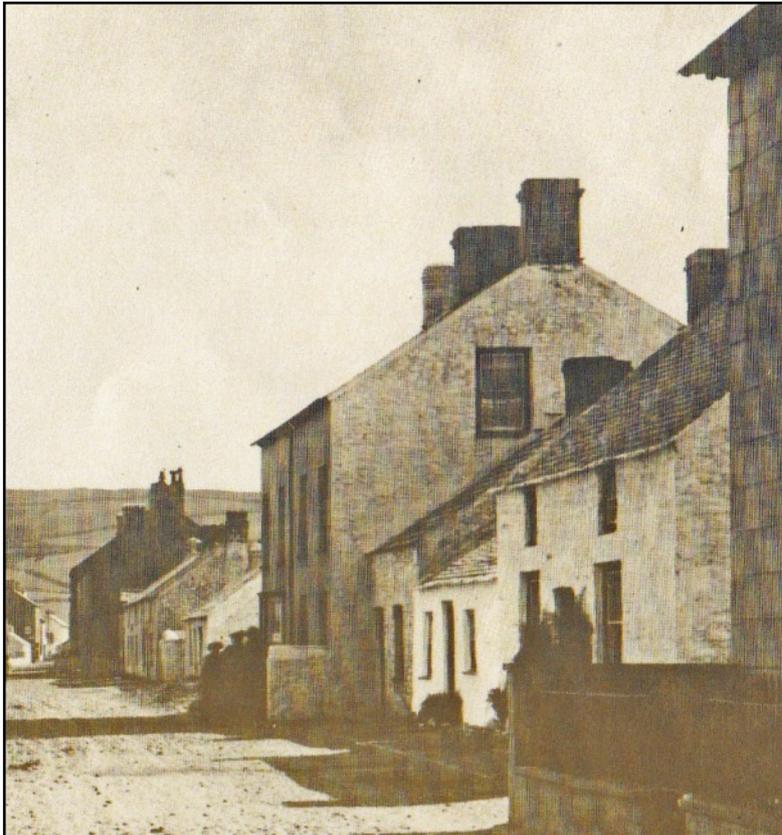
Paying the rates as the owner and occupier of Morwydfa in 1925 was Evan Davies. He paid £14, gross £18.18s. This was considered a valuable house. Mr Davies lived there with his wife. In 1934 and 1938 paying the rates was Esther A. Davies who replaced Evan Davies.

In 1945 wit votes for the house in the General Election were Eirlys Williams and Elizabeth C. Williams, and in 1949 E. L. Williams paid the rates.

Elizabeth C. Williams paid the rates in 1963 and David and Jane Pugh had votes for the house so were probably living there (Rates and Electoral Registers, Ceredigion Archives).

In 1968 Mrs Williams advertised a 'bed and breakfast boarding house with the six bedrooms and two sitting rooms' (Guide Book, Ceredigion Archives) There was no phone yet in the house.

The pair of houses replaced a 'Mariner's Cottage'.

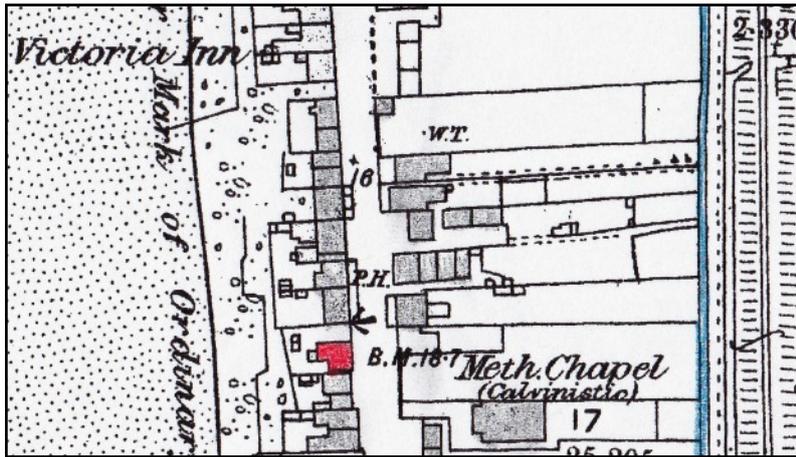


LEFT In about 1895 the first house on the right was the Mariner's Cottage. It was a rubble stone building - the stones are visible through the whitewash on the gable end. It was a much better built cottage than the much older small cottage next to it which is now the site of Ystwyth.

The ground for this house is the stone bank thrown up by the sea and called 'waste' by the Crown Manor who owned it as it was no use for farming. On a map of 1829 it was beach (National Archives LRRO 1/3060) The road had been there for centuries, it was used in the twelfth century and was a turnpike road by the 1770s. It led to a ferry from Ynyslas to Aberdovey and was a quick

way to North Wales. Fresh water for the cottages and houses came from a brook behind the buildings on the other side of the road. In 1848 the site was still open ground. (Tithe Apportionments Map Llangihangel Genau'r Glyn, Cyfoeth Township - on line at CYNEFIN - National Library of Wales).

However on a map of encroachments belonging to the Crown Manor in 1859 the cottage is marked, and next to it on the south was another cottage which became Ystwyth. It was Number 18b and there was a passage to the beach in between them (Map National Archives LRRO 1/3060) It was a decently wide plot for this cottage with ground to spare room on the north.



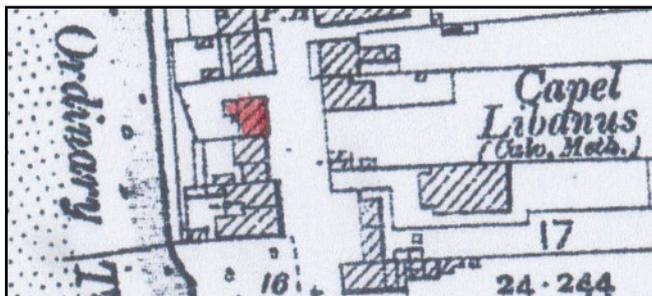
LEFT The cottage in 1886 is marked in red. There was plenty of room beside it to fit the new Môrwylfa and Môrlan on to this plot. (Detail from the Ordnance Survey 25 inch map surveyed in 1886 and published in 1888. Cardiganshire III.10)

It is not possible to trace the people in the cottage in the 1861 Census, as none of the cottages had names. By the

1871 and 1881 Census in the cottage was Jane Davies, born about 1843 and already a widow aged 28 in 1871 She had three children; Ellen in 1871 was a baby, Margaret Jane 15, Elizabeth 13, and Kate 11. They were all born in Borth. In 1881 Mrs Davies is listed as a 'grocer' and her home had the a name 'Mariner's Cottage'. Perhaps her husband was a mariner - or a mariner built it. Several widows earned a living for their family running a shop in their cottage.

In the cottage in the 1891 Census a mariner was there, Captain Thomas Davies, an elderly and probably retired ocean going mariner aged 77. Jane Davies was not there, but her children were and they were grandchildren of the Captain. Lizzie was 20 and Kate 22 and both were dressmakers. Margaret J. Davies was 15, and also in the cottage was a grandson of the Captain, William Williams aged 19 and already an ocean going mariner. Terry Davies writes that the Captain had a bell and would summon the villagers when he had something important to tell them which he had read in the Shipping Gazette. He was formerly of the sloop 'Venus' ('Borth; A Seaborn Village, p. 18.)

In the 1891 Census in the cottage was an 81 year old widow, Jane Davies, perhaps the Captain's wife? Also there was Margaret Jane Humphreys a granddaughter of the Captain, and she was a dressmaker. (Mrs Jane Davies had moved to Glan-y-don House next door).



LEFT The cottage in 1904. (Detail from the Ordnance Survey 25 inch map revised in 1804 and published in 1905. Cardiganshire III.10)

In 1910 for a tax planned but not levied the cottage was valued at £67 and the owner and occupier was Jane Davies. There would have been £3 to pay, £3.15s gross. Interestingly the place was named as 'Maeswylfa'.

In the 1911 Census in Mariner's Cottage was Margaret Jane Humphreys, then 34, unmarried and working as a charwoman. The place was still small - listed with only four main rooms though there was likely to be a back kitchen in the extension behind it which would not count at the Census.

By the 1925 Rates Mariner's Cottage had gone and Evan Davies was living in the newly built Morwylfa with £14 to pay (Rates Ceredigion Archives).



ABOVE The house from the beach in 2016. It has two extensions, one for the top floor with a balcony which has railed steps leading down into the yard, and a second extension of the ground floor which is beneath the balcony and this has a back door with access to the yard. Maximum use has been made of the attic floor with several roof lights, and one room has a dormer window with a fine view of the sea. There is a gateway in the protective fence of upright sleepers at the rear of the yard, though it is boarded up to protect the yard in times of bad storms.

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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-ceredigion.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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