

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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PWLL MAWR COTTAGE (gone)

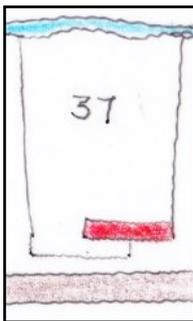
Morfa Borth - the Marsh Harbour

An old cottage with some land and a stable. Home of dairy farmer.

This cottage was in a terrace of four, set back a little from the High Street, and already built in 1829. The 1911 Census listed it with four rooms - but this would not include any scullery on the back. In Censuses it has been called part of a New Gift Place but was also called part of Pwll Mawr. By 1925 it had been replaced by Gwelfor.

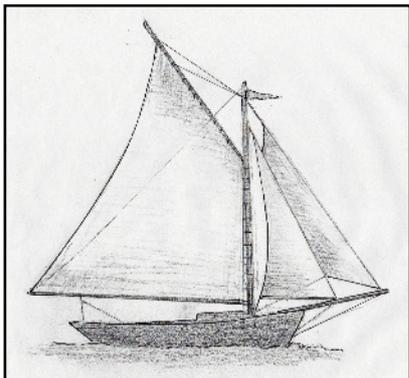
This building stands on a substantial pebble embankment built up by the sea over many centuries, and alongside an ancient highway. Since early medieval times travellers to North Wales came along this highway on their way to cross the River Dovey by boat, later by ferry. By 1770 the highway was important enough to be a turnpike road. So access to a building beside it was easy, and the highway was especially convenient for mariners; for fishermen to reach Aberleri when the River Leri spilled out into the sea where they could moor their vessels, and for mariners to reach the port at Aberdovey to join wooden sailing ships. The River Lerry once flowed along the landward side of the embankment and beyond was the huge Cors Fochno peat bog. By 1790 the river had been re-routed further inland allowing drained pastures to be created. (NLW Gogerddan Estate Map 232). A water supply for the dwellers on the embankment had been made by 1829 called 'The Brook' and it used the old route of the river. (NA LRRO 1/3060) This had fresh water from a leat from the River Lerry first used by the Melyn-y-wern water mill at Glan Lerry (now gone), and added to by streams from above Ty Gwyn at Glanwern, and Bryn Owen. Today the water is directed out to sea by a pipe close to the Lifeboat house, and behind Morfa Borth its old route is still a deep ditch, possibly straightened when the railway was built alongside. The position of the 'Brook' allowed enough space for gardens behind the dwellings. The stone embankment on which the buildings stood was considered to be 'waste' by the manor of Llanfihangel Genau'r Glynas as it could not be used for farming. When a plot was enclosed to build a cottage on it -an encroachment - the Crown which owned the manor charged annual rent for it. In 1829 the plot could be bought for three years rent (National Archives LRRO 1/3060)

A plot, number 37, was enclosed by master mariner John Hughes in 1822, and by 1829 he had built a terrace on it. Gwelfor has replaced one of the cottages in the that terrace.



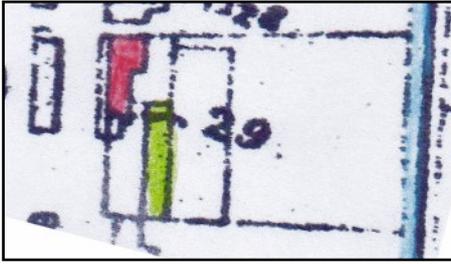
LEFT The terrace in 1829. The road is brown, the 'brook' at the end of John Hughes's ground is blue (Detail copied from an 1829 map, National Archives LRRO 1/3060)

John Hughes owned the plot and all the cottages. He was a master mariner both a master of vessels in the coastal trade, and with shares in some. This would have earned him a good living. John Hughes was not renting it but had enough



money to buy the ground for £20, three years' rent. In 1824 he was the master of the sloop Betsy and had shares in her and the Eleanor and Betsy, and 16 shares in the sloop 'Friendship'. and eventually 52 of her 64 shares but he had to mortgage them. John Hughes was dead by 15 January 1846, and his wife Mary was his executrix. (National Archive LRRO 1/3060, and Ceredigion Archives Shipping Registers)

LEFT A Sloop was one of the smaller vessels and usually worked the coastal trade.

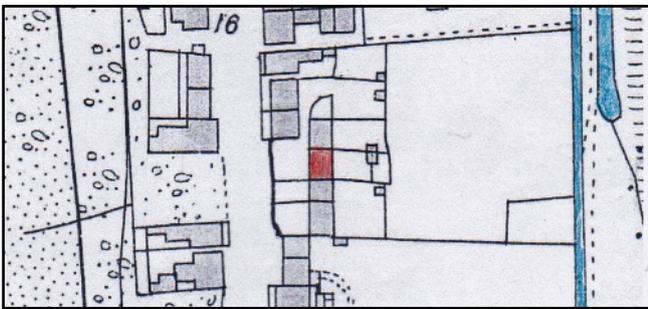


LEFT In 1848 the terrace was still there, marked in green, but other buildings marked in red had been added alongside the street (Detail from the Tithe Map for Llanfihangel Genau'r Glyn, Cyfoeth Township, on-line at CYNEFIN).

Interestingly in 1848 they were described as 'houses' (not cottages), so they were well built. A garden area was fenced off at the front and the back. The land belonging

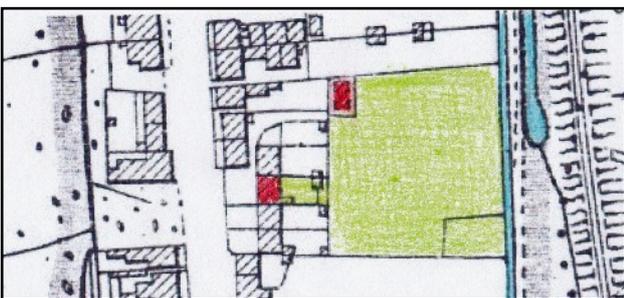
to the houses was 1 rod and 3 perches, about a quarter of an acre. Mary Hughes was the owner, and likely to have been the widow of master mariner John Hughes. There were other families in the other houses or cottages on her ground. It is not possible to identify them in the 1851, 1861 and 1871 Census.

When the Census takers called in 1881 the whole terrace was called 'Green Place', and living at this cottage (which was to become Gwelfor) was a sailor's family. The husband was away, but his wife Elizabeth Richards was there. She was aged 40 and had been born in Aberdovey. With her were children Elizabeth 9, Edward John 6, Mary 4, William 2 and a baby Anne of 7 months.



LEFT On the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map of 1888, surveyed in 1886 this cottage had its own back garden. The Pwllmawr (big pool) name may relate to the pool on the other side of the brook. The tiny building at the back may have been its Ty Bach - outside lavatory (Cardiganshire NW III.10).

In the Census of 1891 the cottage was called Pwllmawr. Living there in 1891 and 1901 was a farmer Isaac Lloyd, born in Talybont in 1831, and his wife Ann born in Borth in 1841. By 1901 he was 70. He was buried on 30 December 1907 aged 76. His wife Ann was buried on May 15 1905 aged 64. Their daughter Anne was buried on 14th August 1880 aged 49. This was a Welsh speaking couple.



LEFT This detail from the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map of 1905 shows the cottage and it had a stable, marked in red, and a field, marked in green. There was a track to access the stable and field from the High Street.

In 1910 for a tax planned but not levied Thomas Owen's house and garden was valued at £108 and rated at £4, gross £5. and his land at 18s. The valuation map at the National Library of Wales showed its field at the back.

At the 1911 Census the cottage was listed with four rooms, not including any back scullery, and there was another family there, Thomas Owen, a 44 year old dairyman working on his own account at home, using the ground at the back and the stable to run his dairy. He was born at Cwmerfin and his wife Ann was from Talybont and aged 46. They had been married for 16 years (since 1895) and had four children - three of them still living Their daughter Winifred Anne aged 16 was at home, and was a dressmaker. The children were born in Talybont, so the family had been in Borth for less than 12 years.

By 1925 Gwelfor had been built on that site.

The three southern most old cottages have survived if rebuilt, the northernmost two have gone.



THE FIRST COTTAGE IN THE TERRACE

Still a home in 1881.
Now gone.

At the Census of 1881 a mariner's wife, Jane Hughes, aged 30 and with daughters Eliza Jane, 4, and Kate, a baby were in the cottage. They are probably some of the Hughes family who had owned the ground and cottages.

LEFT The cottage was a ruin in about 1962. This drawing is from a Frith postcard. In the foreground is Gwelfor with some old lattice windows.

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

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-ceredigion.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.

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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