

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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TRIGFAN Morfa Borth – the marsh harbour.

At the northern end of the village facing the sea. Once alongside the gardens of the Cambrian Hotel and first owned by the Cambrian Railway Company. The southernmost of a terrace of three houses called Cambrian Place, they were built by 1871 and described in 1888 as three brick built cottages with gardens and land.



This is the central house of the three. It has two storeys with a taller two storey extension on the rear. The front section is under a gable roof of a slate colour parallel to the road, and it has rendered chimneys on each end of it shared with the neighbouring houses. These have two chimney pots (two flues). There is a roof light for an attic room under the roof. In front a modern bay windows reach across the house with tongue and groove boards between and below them. Their roof is a raised section of the main roof of the house. A lounge inside the upper bay would have fine views of the sea. The lower bay window is canted and on the north side has a door so a porch is formed, and inside is the central front

door of the house flanked by two very small windows. Interestingly the windows match those of its neighbours which is not surprising, as all three had the same owner into the twentieth century. The walls are rendered. The narrow front garden is enclosed by a rendered wall with an entrance at the centre.

There is a garden at the rear of the house which has an angled end opening into a passage area at the rear of Number 7 Cae Gwylan and its adjacent houses.

The history of the site can be found in the Introduction to Cambrian Place.

Sometime after 1863 when the railway arrived, George Lewis of Oswestry the secretary of the Cambrian Railway Company had bought these cottages together with the Cambrian Hotel, the Cambrian Terrace and other land and cottages. By 1888 this estate was heavily mortgaged and had to be sold. The cottages were Lot 15, put with two roadside pieces of land suitable for building on and were bought for £560 by Thomas Lewis for the Rev. Evan Jones of the Welsh Church in London (Aberystwyth Observer 22 September 1888). Richard Evan Jones owned them in 1910. (Ceredigion Archives C/DV/18) The old water course had

been completely removed when the railway was built, piped water under the railway had to serve the areas of pasture, and a water pipe and public tap on the street near the Cambrian Hotel gave the cottagers a supply of pure spring water, Trigfan was nice and close to this, until the parish provided a water supply by 1883. (Cambrian News 9 November 1883)

Early photographs for postcards shows Trigfan was two storey and double fronted, and in front of it was the road and then the beach. There was still plenty of open ground to the north of the terrace. The chimneys remain today. Because they were brick – unusual for Borth, it is likely that the terrace was built after the railway arrived in 1863, when the railway station and Cambrian Terrace were built of bricks brought on the train.

At the Census of 1871 in the house was an elderly mariner, Richard Jenkins aged 73, a local man born in the parish, with his 69 year old wife Margaret, born in Llanbadarn Fawr, and their two children; ~Richard aged 45, Phebe aged 33, and a grandson John Jenkins aged 6. Terry Davies writes that a David Jenkins began to build a cottage at the back but abandoned it and built the house now Tyrol in the High Street instead.

In 1886 the three houses shared a garden, as they had the same owner. Trigfan was the narrowest of the them and one or more of the tiny buildings in the garden would probably be its Ty Bach (outside W.C.). They all opened on to the street. Detail from the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map surveyed in 1886 and published in 1888. Cardiganshire III.10)

In the house at the 1881 Census was a railway platelayer called William Evans, a Welshman born at Caersws in Montgomeryshire about 1852. His wife Fanny was from Shropshire and they had three sons, all born in Borth, Jonathon 13, William Charles 9 and Edwin Edward 6. If Jonathon was born in Trigfan the family were in Borth in 1868.

In the house in 1901 at the Census, when this house was Number 2 Cambrian Place, was a foreman tanner, and Englishman from Lancashire called Joseph Foulds. He was 28. His wife Leah was Welsh, born in Llanfihangel Creuddyn Cardiganshire and she spoke both Welsh and English. They had a baby daughter Louise. (There was a tanhouse at Penybont).

In a valuation of 1910 for a tax planned but not levied all three houses were owned by Richard Evan Jones. He had tenants in all of them. This house was valued at £148 and the rate to pay would have been £8.10s, £10 gross. Joseph Foulds was still there.

In the Census of 1911 the house was listed with seven main rooms, and the house had its name Trigfan, which means ‘dwelling place’ in Welsh. In the house was a seaman in the merchant service and his family. Abraham Davies, born c. 1861 in Borth, his wife Jane born about 1863 also in Borth, and their children. Maud was an assistant teacher in the Board School in Upper Borth, Jane Elizabeth was a domestic servant, Thomas an apprentice baker, and the youngest was John still at school. The family had previously been living next door at Bodlondeb.

In 1918 Miss Jennie Davies was a V.A.D. nurse at Oswestry. (Cambrian News January 25th.)

Sometime after 1922 the house was advertised with three bedrooms and two sitting rooms to let to visitors. (The Illustrated Borth Guide, Aberystwyth Library)

In the 1920's another seaman, Richard Dic Davies came from Trigfan. The Cambrian News mentioned him home from sea from the steam ship Hazelpark, then at Newcastle on Tyne. Terry Davies writes about him in his ‘Borth, a Marine History’, 2009, pages 43 and 44 and there is a photograph. There was also a T Davies and Richard Rees Davies at

Trigfan Page 3

Trigfan in 1924 (Cambrian News December 19th). In 1925 paying rates for the house was Jane Davies. She paid the rates for it in 1934, but did not own it. G. E. Jones was the owner and owned all three of the terrace houses. Jane Davies was still there in 1949 when she had a vote for Trigfan at the General Election, and her son John was a seaman. He had been part of the crew of the 'Margam Abbey' under Captain John 'China' Davies, and was rescued when the ship was torpedoed in 1916.

In 1949 Miss Davies of Trigfan was the treasurer of the Borth Women's Institute (Borth Review, National Library of Wales)

The concrete sea wall and promenade was completed in May 1956, and in January 1957 the Aberystwyth Rural District Council charged the bungalows and houses behind it because it now offered them protection from the sea. Many owners were angry about the 'unsightly sea wall' as their homes were less valuable as the ground floor could no longer see the sea - very important for seaside homes that could take in holiday makers or be retirement homes. R. P. Llewellyn who lived at Number 4 Cambrian Terrace owned Trigfan and complained because he was charged £50 whereas bigger houses such as Ballarah were only charged £20. The council's opinion was that they considered the three Cambrian Place houses were vulnerable because they were below the level of the road, and very slight flooding of the sea would come directly into the houses (Letter to Mr R. V. Jones, Ceredigion Archives ABR/HI/6/39),

(Letter 11th March 1959 kept by Aberystwyth Rural District Council, Ceredigion Archives ABR/HI/6/40)

In 1963 Maud Davies had a vote for the house and Miss Davies paid the rates for it. (Ceredigion Archives ABR/TR/11/37/1 and ER/1962-3)

Dick Hughes, a builder and his wife lived at Trigfan and their daughter Eileen Harries was a piano teacher (Courtesy of David and Celia Matthews)

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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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