

# 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.*

# THE ACORN

## Morfa Borth - the Marsh Harbour

Began as a cottage, the south end of a terrace of cottages set back from the street built by 1829. Home of a Hughes family of mariners and their Rees descendants. Also called Number 1 Blue Gardens (1881), and then Acorn House. Two old cottages had amalgamated by 1888. After 1910 the northern one was sold and the rest considerably enlarged to the street, and back into the garden for an Acorn garage in business by 1925. Today Acorn is a shop and café with fish and chips and has a home at the back.

'Acorn' was named after a schooner built in Aberdovey in 1864. She could carry 112 tonnes. Her captain was John Rees, the managing owner who set up the cargoes and who lived in Acorn House. He had 10 of her 64 shares. In July 1871 he was able to mortgage them for £590 (Customs Book, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion Archives).



Acorn in 2018

Today Acorn is an extensive building stretching from the street backwards half way to the end of its garden at a ditch, once a brook. The front section is single storey shop and café under a gable roof its lapped timber end faces the street. The roof is a modern corrugated iron. The ridge and the eaves are also metal. The shop front is set back from the street, the overhang protecting customers on rainy days. This overhang on the south is supported by a stone wall faced with timber and by a plain square column three quarters of the way along the front. The



shop front is divided into two with a central door for each half, and shop windows below which in 2015 were panels faced with local stone but have since been altered to have a plain surface. The cafe was on the north side and the shop on the south. On the south of the building is a drive and a modern door mostly of glass with two lights just round the corner from the street. In 2015 the restaurant room had moulded plaster walls and a pine floor. The chairs were hardbacks of the 'Windsor' design. The roof of the restaurant had prominent beams. There were 26 covers.



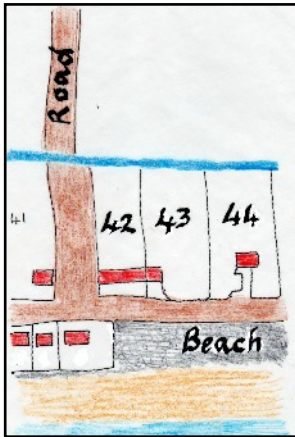
*ABOVE* The rear of Acorn, which is a house separate from the shop. It shares a garden with Mirella next door. The front section is one and a half storeys high and has a sizeable brick chimney and a front door.



*RIGHT and BELOW* The rear section is single storey, with a back door on the south east end.

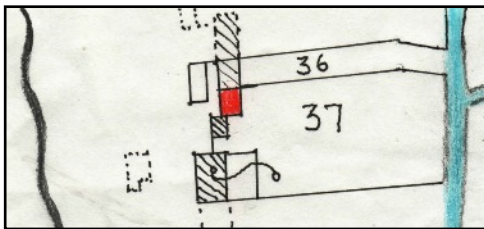
*The shop and café take up what was the old garage.*





The ground on which Acorn stands is the stone embankment thrown up by the sea. It was no use for farming and the Crown Manor owned it and called it 'waste'. Local people enclosed plots to build cottages on. The road was centuries old and was a quick way to North Wales via a ferry to Aberdovey. It was a turnpike road by the 1770s.

*LEFT* In 1820 plot number 43 was enclosed by Evan Lloyd and there was one cottage on it where Acorn stands today. The ground measured 1 rod and 19 perches, that is over a quarter of an acre and extended to a brook with fresh water. A rent of £4 had to be paid every year to the Crown (Detail after a Map of 1829, National Archives LRRO 1/3060)



*LEFT* By 1848 on 37 by then owned by Anne Hughes, was the cottage that would be developed into Acorn. It is marked in red. (Copied from the Tithe Apportionments Map for Llanfihangel Genau'r Glyn, Cyfoeth Township on-line at CYNEFIN)

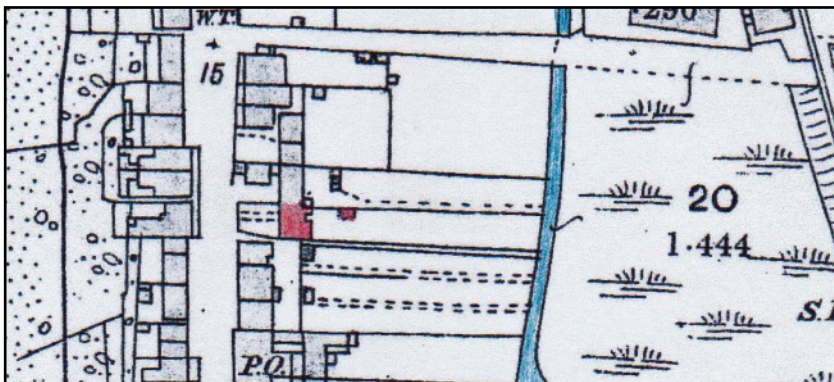
Next door on the north on Number 36 were two cottages of Morgan Hughes, another of the Hughes family on which today Elidir stands. In the 1841 Census he was an agricultural worker.

In 1851 living in the cottage that became Acorn House was Anne Hughes, born at the farm near Upper Borth called Ty Du about 1789. A 'labourer' said the Census! Her daughter Anne, born about 1822 in Borth and still unmarried at 29, made quilts.

In 1861 at the Census Anne Hughes, was still there, by then a 71 year old widow and head of the household. Also there was her daughter Anne Rees aged 39, who had married a mariner Captain John Rees who would be master of the schooner 'Acorn' in 1864. With her were their small children, John Rees, 4, Hugh Rees, 2 and Suzanne Rees a baby of six months.

In 1871 at the Census Anne Rees (1923) was living there, a Welsh speaker, her husband was at sea. With her were her sons Hugh (1859) and Thomas (1865). She had a seventeen year old lodger, Margaret Hughes born about 1854. Anne's mother still alive aged 82, and a widow, was living in the cottage, and being looked after no doubt.

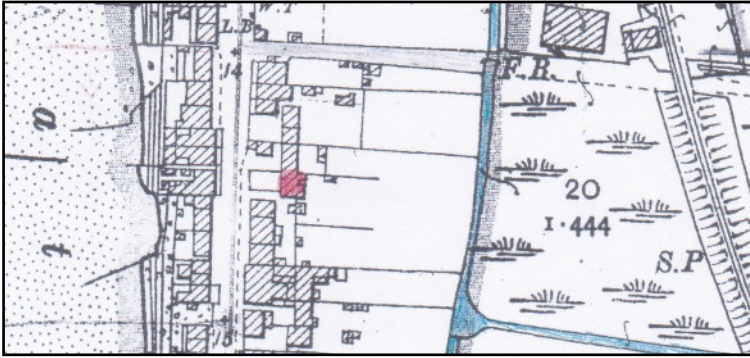
In the 1881 Census Anne Rees was still there, and with her was her son Thomas aged 16. The place had a new address, Number One Blue Gardens.



*LEFT* Marked in red is Anne Rees's home in 1886. It had a front garden and its own back garden extending to the brook. The tiny building may have been its Ty Bach, outside lavatory (Detail from the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map surveyed in 1886 and published in 1888. Cardiganshire NW III.10)



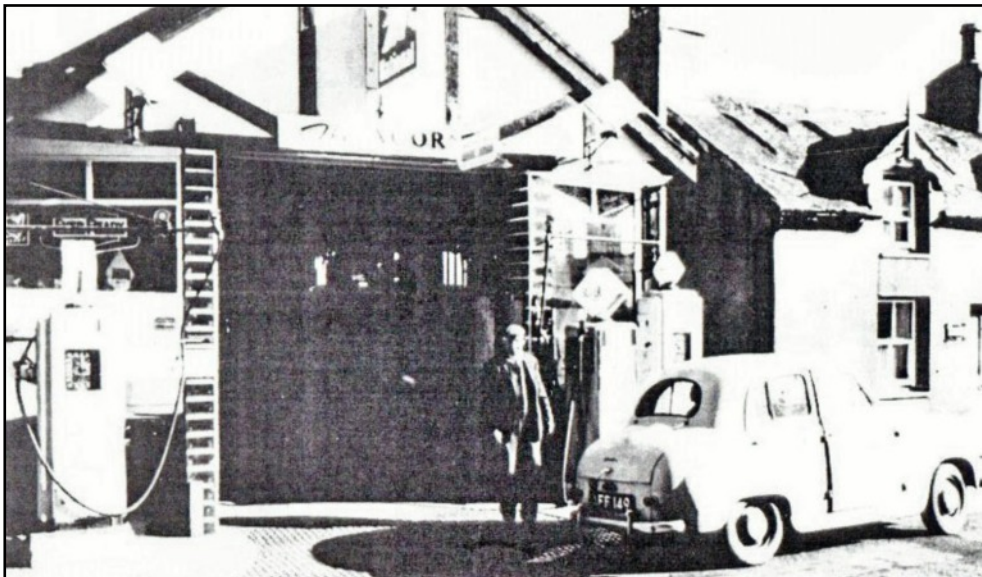
In the 1891 Census Ann Rees was still there, and her home was called 'Acorn House' after her husband's schooner. She was 78 and living on her 'own means'. She was still there aged 88 in 1901 (Census).



*LEFT Little had changed in 1904 except that the whole of the land at the rear as well as the cottage on the north were marked as belonging with Acorn House.*

After Anne Rees's death her son John inherited the house, but lived in Manchester. So there was a tenant there, Mary Jones. In 1910 for a valuation for a tax planned but not levied the Acorn cottage and garden was valued at £42. There was £2.16s to pay, £3.10s gross. This was the valuation of just one cottage in a terrace. (T/DV/18 number 404, Ceredigion Archives, and map at the National Library of Wales).

The 1911 Census listed 3 rooms only for 'Acorn House', though a scullery at the back would not have counted. This suggests just one cottage, with a living room/kitchen with a fire, and a central passage with a bedroom on the ground floor on the other side, and another bedroom in the loft. Children would sleep up there. Mary Jones, aged 55, and born about 1856 in Borth was a widow, a Welsh speaker and a laundress - she had access to the brook at the end of the garden. She had been married 12 years (since 1899) and had two children, both alive in 1911. She had a young builder's labourer as a lodger, John Williams aged 21 from Tonypany in Glamorganshire.



The old cottage was replaced by the ACORN GARAGE AND HOUSE.

*ABOVE This photograph shows three petrol pumps and large roll up shutters, the entry to the workshop The front gable was mock half timbered, fashionable in the 1930s. (Photograph courtesy of Y Tincer, and the photograph overleaf courtesy of the present owners of the Acorn fish and chip shop).*

By 1924 Acorn was already a garage with a 'freehold residence' and W. H. Hollier was trying to sell it. He had kept the name Acorn for his garage and Acorn House for the adjoining house. On Saturday March 15th 1924 the Cambrian News advertised a sale of household furniture and





miscellaneous items there. Five months later there was an auction there on Saturday 30th August of the Acorn House and Garage. The house had three bedrooms, a bathroom with hot and cold, a lavatory, two reception rooms and usual offices. There was electric light throughout. Also a yard and garden. The garage had accommodation for sixteen cars, an office, a lock up, a workshop with a wide main entrance with roll up shutters and also a side entrance, and had a concrete floor, and a 'wash W. C.' There was a 'plant room', petrol, stores and all modern arrangements. On September 5th the property was withdrawn from sale at £1.000. In a 1926 Trades Directory for Cardiganshire, Aberystwyth, Borth, the Holliers at the garage were described as motor engineers, they did repairs and supplied accessories, and had a telephone, Borth 4.

*LEFT The garage in 1925 with a 'Shell' petrol pump, its mechanism exposed to the sea air. The chequered pattern in the window*

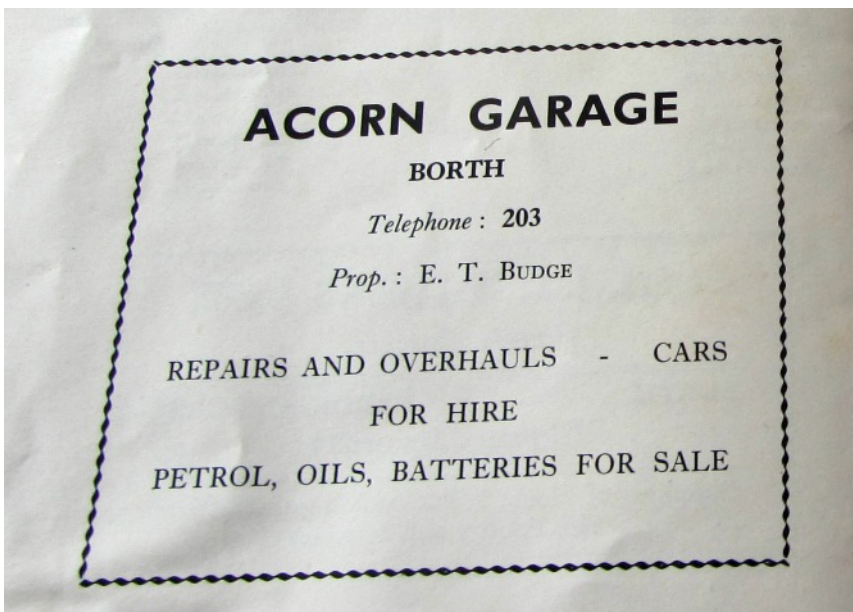
was a reminder of the finish flag of motor racing circuits. Ivor Jenkins the lad in the photograph was born in Dovey Cottage and was the brother of Tommy Jenkins of Gordon Villa (Picture courtesy of Y Tincer)

In 1925 paying the Rates for Acorn was Joseph Musgrave, the owner and occupier. He already had a garage alongside Meirionydd (then called Osprey House) and had a wooden house alongside it called Caban Coed, (see Princess Street).

In May 1934 the place was up for sale. A freehold public garage and dwelling house with three bedrooms, a bathroom, reception room, kitchen, scullery and usual offices (Cambrian News May 25<sup>th</sup>).

By 1934 J. G. Thomas was at the garage. He advertised petrols, oils and repairs, and saloon cars for hire. (Guide Book to Borth, Aberystwyth Public Library.) In August 1934 Miss Thomas gave a recipe for Pineapple Pudding and Maids of Honour for a St Matthew's Church Bazaar (A Cambrian News Recipe Book for St Matthew's, Ceredigion Archives).

Acorn was still a garage in 1949. And the proprietor who paid the Rates was E. J. Budge. (Ceredigion Archives) Mrs Budge was the Superintendent of Borth's Congregational Church Sunday School. (Borth Review, National Library of Wales)



In 1950 Mr Budge's telephone number was Borth 203. (Borth Guide Book, Aberystwyth Public Library.)

In 1962 Mr Budge was still the proprietor and as well as repairs and overhauls he had cars for hire, and was selling ironmongery. (Handbook and Guide to Borth, private collection). Edward T. Budge paid the rates in 1963 and he and Myfanwy Budge had votes for the Acorn petrol filling station and house (Electoral Registers

and Rates, Ceredigion Archives).

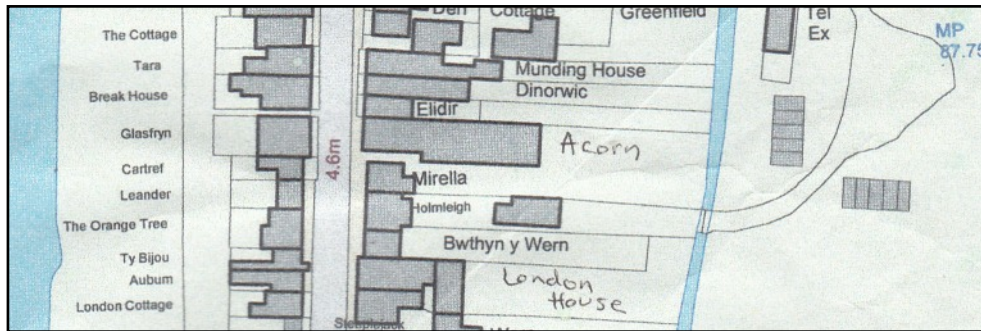
LEFT An advertisement for the garage in a guide to 'Borth, Ceredigion', 1s.6d. of 1962 (Private Collection).

On a 25 inch map of 1975 the garage and house were a sizeable building. It owned the ground behind and apparently the Mirella Cottage alongside (*Historical Maps on-line*).

The garage has since been converted into the present day café and fish and chip shop. The shop floor, walls and chip making area is tiled. There is a kitchen and boiler room and various store cupboards and toilets for the café.



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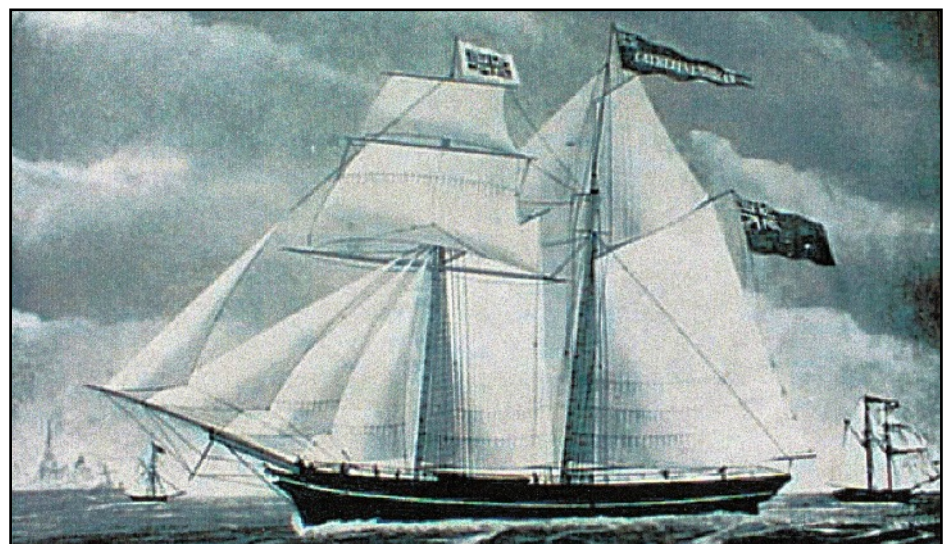
house is  
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side of the shop. From this a side door opens into the kitchen. On the ground floor is also a living room/dining room. From a hall stairs lead up to the first floor which has three bedrooms and a bathroom and there are views across the railway, the pastures and the bog to the hills beyond.



ABOVE This modern 25 inch Crown Map shows the long building fitted against its northern boundary. It still shares a garden with Mirella, but access to the rear is apparently only for Number 2 London Place (formerly Holmleigh) next door (Detail from an Ordnance Survey 25 inch map of the Council, courtesy of Councillor Ray Quant when assisting research for a local event).

LEFT The Acorn Café in 2015.





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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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