

# 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.*

# AREQUIPA

## Morfa Borth - the Marsh Harbour

On the Cors side of the High Street, on the site of an old cottage set back from the street, on ground owned by the Rees family of master mariners. Built after 1910 and before 1915 by Captain Thomas Rees. Named after an inland city and region of Peru with a valley leading down to the coast.



*LEFT Arequipa in 2009.*

This is a tall building set back from the line of other buildings beside the street. It is a generous two storeys high under a gable roof parallel to the street, and it has an attic floor. The roof is slate or synthetic slate with red ridge tiles. The chimney on the south end of the roof is a slab chimney of red brick with six chimney pots, the six flues allowing for plenty of warm rooms. The walls are rendered and the date of building suggests they are probably brick. This building is very handsome in particular with the spacing of the upper windows in pairs, and attractive scrolls link a small extension of the upper gable to a

wider area below. This gives an added dimension to the front. The upper windows would give a good view of the sea. In front of the house is a planted front garden surrounded by a very low rendered brick wall topped by railings, and with a gate. The railings are simple with a spear shape at the top. On the south side the house butts up against Sabrina Cottage and on the north side there could be access to Arequipa's back garden from the track on the other side of the house alongside the Oriel Gallery.



*LEFT The geometrical theme of the windows is echoed in the front door whose important hood balances the bay window on the ground floor. The patterning on the front door and the important geometry of the window frames is a touch of the 'Art Nouveau' style for Morfa Borth and quite rare. This photograph was taken in 2013.*

There are gabled windows at the back as well as in the front.



There is a two storey extension on the northern side at the back of the building with a red brick chimney. It is likely that this served the kitchen for the house. There are further single storey extensions. There is an enclosed garden round the back of the building. This opens on to shared ground with the Oriel Gallery and the terrace of three houses to the south of it along the High Street all which began as Rees family homes.



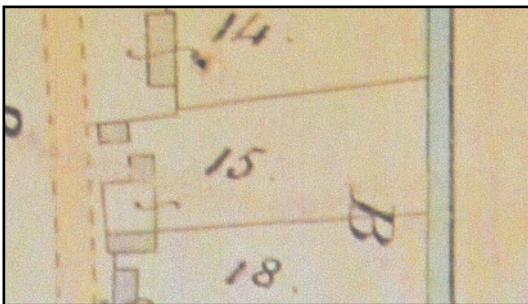
*LEFT* The south side of the main house does not have windows as it overlooks the garden of Sabrina Cottage. However the extension has south facing windows.

*BELOW* Arequipa in 2013 had a productive garden which is the second strip on the left, divided by a grass path from the garden behind the Oriel Gallery. Beyond is farmland reclaimed from the marsh and St Matthew's Church on the Ynys Fergi hillock. (It had to be a composite photograph to get it all in).

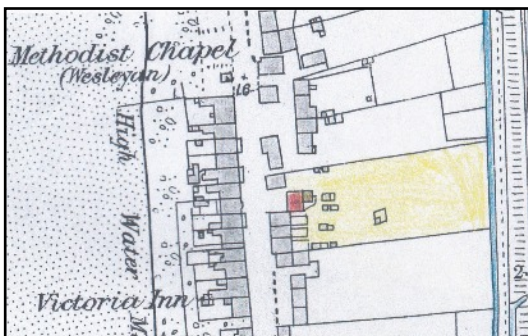


The pebble embankment called 'waste' on which the house was built was enclosed in 1827 by a member of the Rees family who rented it from the Crown, who owned the manor. It measured 2 rods and 27 perches, that is over half an acre, and on it by 1829 was one cottage set back from the street and in the centre of its ground which extended to a brook. (Map 1829 National Archives. LRRO 1/3060) The owner was a

widow, Mary Rees born about 1790 who lived there herself. She was a 'ship owner'. Her late husband and other members of the Rees family owned wooden sailing ships mostly in the coastal trade, and had shares in other vessels. This would have earned a good living for their families. Mary Rees was still there in 1851.

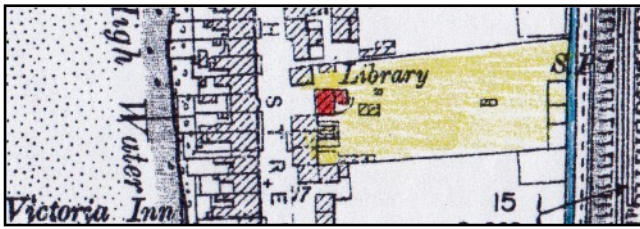


*LEFT* By 1848 there were two cottages on the Rees's ground, Number 15, a new one close to the street and sideways on to it, which was where the Oriel Gallery stands today and the original cottage set back from the street is where Arequipa stands today (Detail from the Tithe Apportionments Map for Llanfihangel Genau'r Glyn, Cyfoeth Township).



*LEFT* The 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map of 1888 surveyed in 1886 shows the old cottage still on the site, with an extension at the back and with small detached out buildings which may have been a Ty Bach and perhaps a pig sty. The ground was still shared by all the buildings suggesting single ownership by the Rees family had continued. The old cottage did not have an enclosed front garden but was open to the street

(Detail from the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map surveyed in 1886 and published in 1888. Cardiganshire NW III.10)



*LEFT In 1904 little had changed - just three enclosures had been made at the brook end of the ground (Detail from the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map revised in 1904 and published in 1905. Cardiganshire NW III.10)*

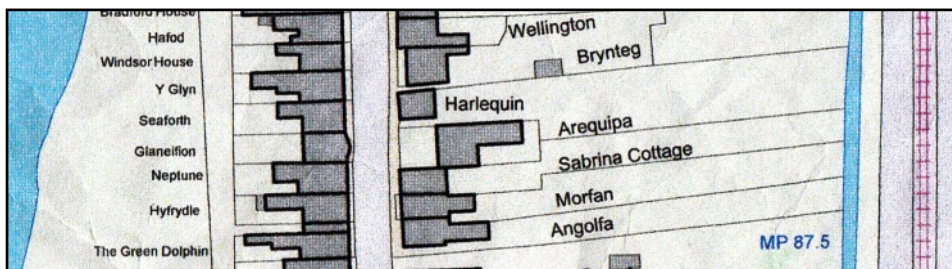
In 1910 a Valuation for a tax planned but not levied lists some ruins by the Library owned by (Captain) Thomas Rees of Morfa Borth, (1845 -1915) and valued at £37. I suggest this was the old cottage which had stood since at least 1829 for 81 years. The ruins were removed and on the site he built Arequipa. Captain Thomas Rees was the son of Captain Dafydd Rees a master mariner born at Sabrina Cottage next door.

There is a photograph of Captain Thomas Rees and all about him in Terry Davies book 'Borth A Maritime History' page 45. Terry Davies found out that when he built Arequipa he had imported timber from North America for the house. Living there in 1918 was his daughter Miss Dilys Rees (Cambrian News, January 25). Miss Rees was his only daughter, she did not marry - and his son had died.

Paying the Rates for the house in 1925 as owner and occupier was Mrs Jane Elizabeth Rees. In 1926 in Kelly's Directory of South Wales the house was listed as her private residence. She was Captain Thomas Rees's widow and a member of Borth's Women's Institute.

Miss Rees had a vote for the house in the General Election of 1945 and she paid the rates for the house in 1949 (Ceredigion Archives). That year she was a teacher at the Libanus Chapel Sunday School and was the Commandant of Borth's Red Cross Detachment. She also stood as a Conservative candidate in a mock election at the Libanus Chapel organised by Borth's Literary and Debating Society (21<sup>st</sup> November Cambrian News and the Borth Review, National Library of Wales).

Miss Dilys M. Rees paid the rates in 1957 and in 1963 and had a vote for the house (Rates and Electoral Registers, Ceredigion Archives)



*LEFT This shows the ground plan of Arequipa which has a small rear garden area. (Detail from a modern Council Map courtesy of Councillor Ray Quant who produced it to help with research for a local project).*

A recent owner says there were brick and stone walls, the house had running water and electricity, two large reception rooms, a breakfast room and a little kitchen at the back. On the second floor were three bedrooms and a bathroom at the back. The top floor was for the servants. Harlequin is now the Oriel Gallery. Deeds stated that no pigs were allowed on the Rees's land behind Harlequin, Arequipa, Sabrina Cottage, Morfan and Angolfa.



ABOVE and BELOW



The south face of the building. The original kitchen would have been in the two storey wing with the chimney. Today, beside it is a sun room opening on to a platform.

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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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