

# THE BUILDINGS OF MORFA 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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# BENFLEET

## Morfa Borth – the Marsh Harbour.

At the northern part of the village with the beach across the road. Built by 1934 on ground formerly of the Cambrian Hotel, and to be owned by the proprietor of the Hotel, George Bennett.



*ABOVE Benfleet in February 2016.*

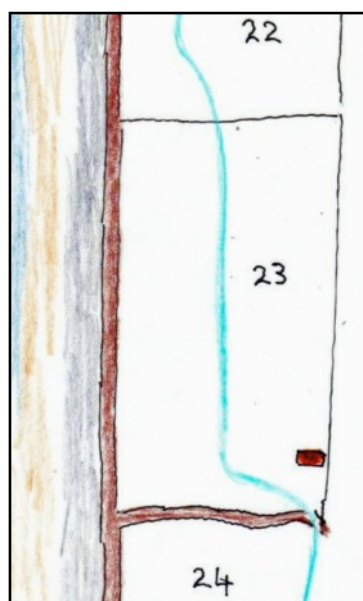
Benfleet is the name of a village in Essex. The house is two storeys under a hipped roof with red ridge tiles. This has an interestingly shaped top suggesting perhaps an alteration to an older roof shape. There is one small chimney on the north face of the roof. The walls are rendered and at that date it is likely they are brick. The front is taken up entirely by windows. The building of the concrete sea defence and promenade completed in 1956 will have limited the lower windows view of the sea. There is a garden area on the south, and the front door with a porch opens on to this. Two buttresses are on either side of this supporting the overhanging eaves. The upper window at the rear is set right on the corner of the building which is characteristic of buildings of the thirties. The narrow front and side garden area is enclosed by a very low rendered wall with a decorative upper section of perforated blocks. Today the house is divided into three flats.

Paying the Rates in 1934 was George Bennett, and for Rates the house was valued at £22. Mr Bennett was the proprietor of the Cambrian Hotel. In Benfleet he had a fine house for himself, conveniently adjacent to the Hotel. By 1949 and still in 1963 the Rates were paid by Jessie A. Bennett. She had a vote for the house in 1963 and so was probably living there (Electoral Registers and Rates, Ceredigion Archives).



*ABOVE The rear of Benfleet in 2016*

The rear of the house today is quite complicated, with several extensions allowing private entrances and rooms for the flats. The walls are pebble dash. A further building under a gable roof at right angles to the Pantyfedwen Close parking area is a garage with a window in its south face, and a garage door. A fence of wooden railings encloses the garden area with a gate for the garage.



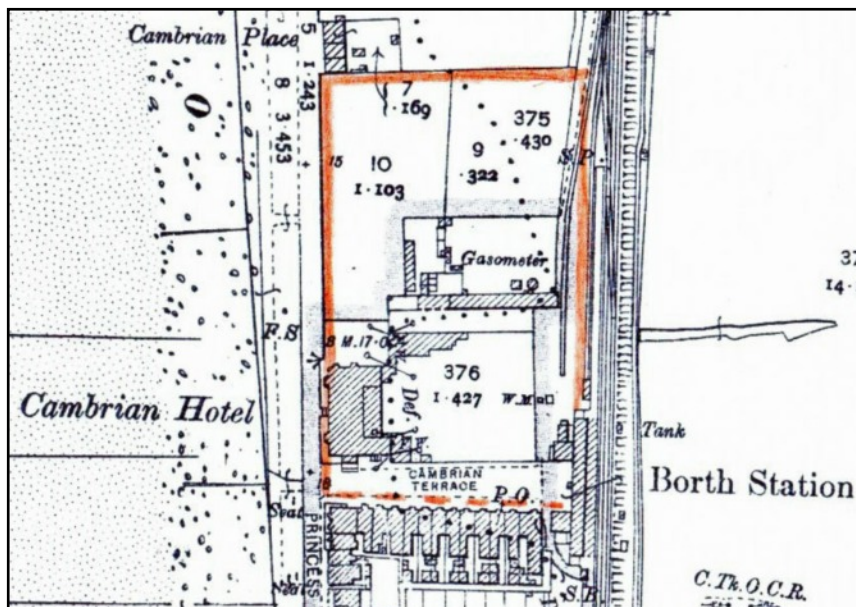
*ABOVE A detail copied from the map of 1829.*

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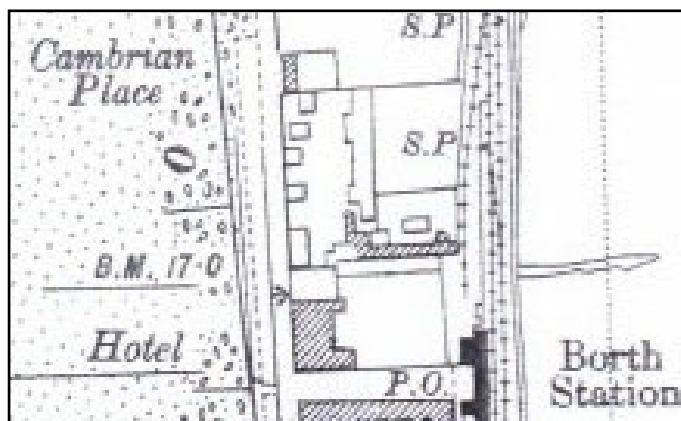
The ground for this house was enclosed in 1809 by a local lawyer called Big John (John Lewis) from the pebble embankment thrown up by the sea, and called 'waste' because it was no use for farming, and the marsh ground beside it, also called 'waste', was reclaimed for pasture with drainage ditches. It was a field of 4 acres, 3 rods and 20 perches - that is almost five acres - and across it ran a brook on the old course of the River Leri. John Lewis had a cottage on it marked in red called Terfynau (boundaries) - where the railway station is today. There were no other cottages. On a map of 1829 the ground was Number 23. A rent of £16 had to be paid every year to the Crown manor who owned the ground, but there was an option to buy it for twice that, and a note with the map said that John Lewis had bought it at a Manor Court Leet in 1809. The main road marked in brown had been there for centuries 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 old cottages and houses came from the brook and for fuel villagers could dig peat on the far side of the River Leri near Ynys Fergi. However, by the time Benfleet was built the homes had piped water and coal came on the train.

John Lewis's land was sold to the developer Thomas Savin who brought the railway and built the Railway Station, the great Cambrian Hotel and Cambrian Terrace. The Hotel had large grounds, nearly two acres, for tennis, croquet, pleasure gardens, a bowling green, and possibly a walled garden. However, the Hotel did not do well, it had a hundred rooms but often many were empty. It is likely that by the 1920s and 1930s it needed to raise money by either selling off its roadside land to build

bungalows and houses, or having them built itself to sell. In the rates of 1930 the then ‘Grand Hotel’ was called a Hotel and Land Development Company Ltd. Maesteg next door to Trysordy was built about 1936/7 replacing an earlier Sandicot bungalow, and Benfleet first appears in the rates in 1934 (Rates, Ceredigion Archives).



*ABOVE A detail from the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map of 1905 showing the Cambrian Hotel and John Lewis's former field marked in red (Cardiganshire III.10)*



*ABOVE New homes were sketched in on some former Cambrian Hotel ground in a map of 1948 - but there are no details. Mr Bennett's Benfleet was there drawn in a block with Maesteg.*

*(Detail from an Ordnance Survey Six Inch Map, Ceredigion Archives)*

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gan/by Beryl Lewis

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Hoffem ddiolch i Beryl am fod mor garedig â chaniatáu i ni rannu ei gwaith â'r gynulleidfa ehangaf bosibl.

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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-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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