

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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BORTH RAILWAY STATION

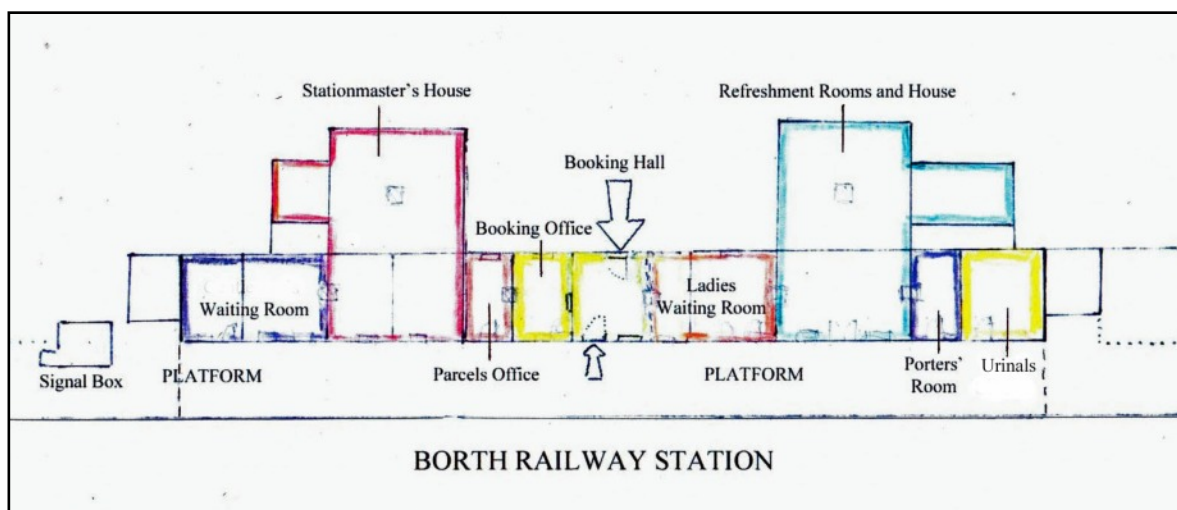
Today there are two homes in Borth Station, the Stationmaster's House and a modern conversion called Platform House in the south end of the building. The old parcels office and booking office have become the Borth Station Museum.

Borth Railway Station was opened to passengers on 1st. July 1863. It was a terminal at first until the line to Aberystwyth was completed in 1864. For twelve months an old wooden farm building was used as the station. The brick station was built in 1864, and a second line and two long sidings (one a 'coal wharf') were added and the station was made a passing place for trains by 7 June 1864. There was also a shed big enough for three steam engines. It was owned and operated by the Cambrian Railways Company founded in 1864. A full history of the Station with photographs and maps can be found in, 'The Coast Lines of the Cambrian Railways, by C. C. Green. Wild Swan, 1993 , Volume 1'.

The ground for the station formerly belonged to John Lewis, a local lawyer and was part of his 3 acres he had enclosed in 1803 from the shingle strip and the marsh alongside which with drainage ditches had become pasture. He bought the ground from the Crown who owned the manor as this ground was part of their 'waste'. His home, called 'Terfynau' (boundaries) was very close to the present site of the station. He was a smallholder, and his house was used as an impromptu railway station when the line first reached Borth. A freshwater stream ran across the ground which was the tailrace from the corn mill at Glanlerry with two small streams added. It had been fed along the rear of the village, but at this place it picked up the old course of the River Lerry which had been used since early medieval times as the boundary between the Cyfoeth (with Morfa Borth) and Henllys Townships. When the station was built this 'leet' as the newspapers called it, which had been the Morfa Borth villagers only source of fresh water was diverted to the east side of the railway track. (Cambrian News 9 Nov. 1883). For the railway a reservoir was built with a supply of fresh spring water piped to the station for the trains, the station itself, the Terrace and its gardens, and the big Cambrian Hotel. The Stationmaster's House, the Refreshment Rooms, and the cloakrooms and lavatories for staff and passengers had piped water.

There is a plan of the Station dated about 1900 in the Borth Station Museum. The diagram below is reconstructed from that.

The building today is Grade Two Listed. The rear, older part of Aberystwyth Station was also brick. Machynlleth Station is grey stone. Borth Station's bricks would be much lighter





ABOVE A detail of the rear side of Aberystwyth Station which, in this less grand section is identical to Borth Station. BELOW The Refreshment Rooms house from the south.

to stand on ground that was reclaimed marsh. The two houses which are part of the building are two storey, and the railway builders did a good job preparing the ground as the station has hardly sunk at all (half an inch at the most suggests George Romery the curator of the Museum), nor has the tall three storey Cambrian Terrace.

The building is symmetrical in design except for a small extra piece on the back of the Refreshment Rooms house (there by 1876).

The black and white stripes painted on the passenger's exit and on the entrance to the toilets were needed in the second world war when lights were forbidden.

THE REFRESHMENT ROOMS.

These were on the ground floor of a two storey house. This had a hipped slate roof with a central chimney. Built of brick with sandstone facings it was part of the station. It had an extension on the north side. In 1869 it had a front kitchen, a back kitchen, a pantry, a cellar, and three bedrooms, and the rent was £25 per annum. The first tenant and manager there said that was not enough and it was raised to £35 per annum. The Refreshment Rooms were licensed. (The Coast Lines of the Cambrian Railways, by C. C. Green. Wild



Swan, 1993 p. 82). They had running water, from a three quarters of an inch iron pipe. We do not know if the house had its own lavatory but a sewage system had been installed for the public lavatories on the station. (The Coast Lines of the Cambrian Railways, by C. C. Green. Wild Swan, 1993 p. 132 and 133).

In 1871 Mr John Finmore was 'keeping the Refreshment Rooms'. He was aged 38, born in Cardington, Bedfordshire. His wife Sarah was English too, born in Lymington Hampshire. They had a three-month old baby, Lawrence, and would have been living in the Refreshment Room house (Census).



The Refreshment Rooms had a seven day license. There was an inquest when a man called Charles Perks, a married man, aged 40, who had been sampling the Refreshment Rooms' beer since mid-day one Tuesday in November, left at 6.30 pm, and was killed by the mail train from Aberystwyth while walking home on the line towards Ynyslas. It



was dark, and a wet and stormy night. His body was found by someone walking to work along the line the following morning. Thomas Powell, a farm bailiff from Moelynys who oversaw work on the drainage of the bog had been drinking with Mr Perks, and he left the Refreshment Rooms just before Mr Perks going in the same direction. But on the way he went off to inspect some drainage and did not see what happened to Mr Perks. Mr Finmore told the Court he did not think that Perks was drunk. The Coroner suggested that the Refreshment Rooms should not be open in the winter. (The Cambrian News, Friday November 24th. 1871)

TOP The Refreshment Room was lit by large windows either side of its entrance doors.

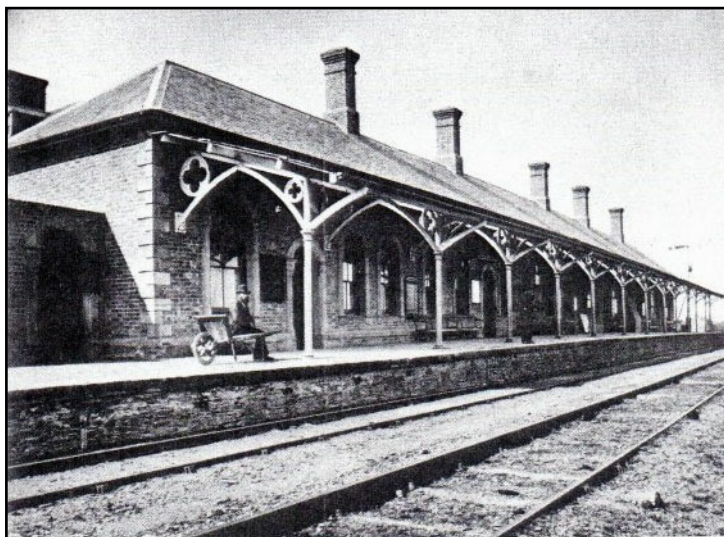
BELOW These double doors gave generous access from the platform to the Refreshments.

In the Refreshment Rooms in 1891 at the Census both the staff were Welsh. There was a young 21 year old manageress, Llynelia Louisa Roberts born in Newtown in 1870 and single, and a domestic servant Ellen Williams aged 39, unmarried and born in Tremadoc.

In the 1901 Census there was just one person at the Refreshment Rooms when the Census takers called. That was the barmaid, Norah Morris, aged 17 and single. In the summer of 1902 the Refreshment Rooms had been closing at 7.30 pm for several years. The Company applied to the magistrates to have the licence reduced, when they would close from October to April. They were licensed premises. (The Coast Lines of the Cambrian Railways, by C. C. Green. Wild Swan, 1993 p.134) In 1911 Ethel Mary Walmsley, aged 24 and single was the bar attendant. She did not live in the station, but at Glan-y-mor Cottage where her mother ran a boarding house.

In 1915 the local police wanted the licence taken away as there were plenty of public houses in Borth, however the General Manager won it back on appeal.

In 1926 Spiers and Pond Ltd had been leasing the Refreshment Rooms but the GWR took them over. (The Coast Lines of the Cambrian Railways, by C. C. Green. Wild Swan, 1993 p.136)



By 1934 Hughes and Sons had taken over the Refreshment Rooms from the GWR. They paid Rates of £4, £7 gross. In 1936 electric light had been installed. The rates were the same in 1938/9. In 1943 when the Refreshment Rooms were still leased to F, W, Hughes and Sons it was for 3% of the gross takings. (The Coast Lines of the Cambrian Railways, by C. C. Green. Wild Swan, 1993 Page 136)

In 1949 the Refreshments Rooms were valued for the rates at £4 – not very valuable despite its two storeys and solid brick structure. Paying the Rates in 1963 was T. Morgan Esq. He paid £10 (Rates and licensing, Ceredigion Archives).



TOP Our earliest view of the station. A canopy protected all of the platform. There were two lines - as trains could pass there.

Borth Railway Museum.

BELOW A new canopy only protected part of the platform. The waiting room in the foreground and the windows of the Stationmaster's house were boarded up.



ABOVE The Signal Box (now gone) was at the south end of the platform. It had decorative carving on its barge boards. The second platform can be seen in this photograph.

Ceredigion Archives.

In the 1960s the rooms at the north end of the station were used by a marzipan factory. (The Coast Lines of the Cambrian Railways, by C. C. Green. Wild Swan, 1993)

Today the station is un-manned and often draughty and cold - the platform looks east over a very large expanse of flat reclaimed pasture and bog, and the entrance from The Terrace faces north. There is no entrance door, or door to the platform, so even the passage between them can be very cold. The only warm indoor shelter for travellers is when the Railway Museum is open - which is not in the winter months. A signboard in the entrance passage has local information and photographs. There is no lavatory.

A railed slipway leads from the road to reach the station floor which is level with the now single platform. Information about the trains is on an electronic signboard hung on the wall near the entrance.

Large and colourful painted panels have been used to fit inside the exterior of the large old windows and a further panel is in the entrance passage. They were produced locally and explain features of Borth's seaside. Volunteers have provided a new 'Borth' sign on the north section of the platform, and they look after several planters and platform rubbish.

The geologist Dr Tim Palmer has discovered that the sandstone for the dressings came from a quarry at Cefn Mawr which was owned by Savin. Today the quarry has gone and is filled in.

Archifdy Ceredigion Archives
yn cyflwyno / presents
Tai'r Borth / Houses of Borth
gan/by Beryl Lewis

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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