

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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BOSTON HOUSE Morfa Borth

On the beach side at the northern end of Borth High Street. Built after 1859 and by 1886, with the name Boston House by the 1901 Census when it was a shop of a Jones and Hughes family.



This was the smart end of the town, not far from the railway station opened to passengers in 1863, the imposing Cambrian Hotel (later Pantyfedwen, now gone), and the Cambrian Terrace completed by 1870. It was also close to the place where the main street runs alongside the beach with no buildings in the way (now with a promenade), and old postcards show that this area had bathing huts and was popular with holiday makers. *LEFT Boston house in 2010. On the left is Bradford House and there is a similarity of placing of the windows. They share a roof height too.*

Boston House is the largest and was the most valuable of a terrace of tall houses. It is a three storey, double fronted house under a gable roof parallel to the street.

The roof was slate and the walls were coursed rubble stone. Today the walls are rendered with pebble dash. The eaves at the front and back have pairs

of dentils - carved wooden brackets supporting the overhang of the roof. It has local building materials, which suggests a date for it perhaps before 1863 when the railway arrived and



could bring other building materials. Today there are no chimneys. The windows are sash windows or modern copies and the front door is not central, the building is wider on the south side of it. There are smaller windows on the top floor. This style looks back to the eighteenth century and could be the front of the house before it became a shop.

Since 1952 the shop window has been removed, and so have all other traces of the shop.



ABOVE Boston House from the beach in 2016.



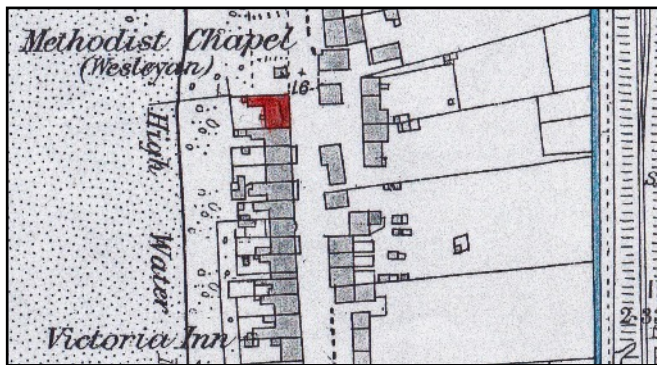
At the back there is a single storey extension on the north which on an old postcard was rubble stone, and a central porch with stairs down into the yard. The two upper sash windows have six lights, and the two on the first floor have twelve lights which may have been the original windows for this house, or copies. Similar windows remain on the rear of Y Glyn and Hyfrydle on the terrace to the south of Boston House.

LEFT The second floor window on the north side. Its frame looks old, and curiously the bottom section is much taller. There are pairs of dentils (brackets) under the eaves.

The ground for the house is the stone bank thrown up by the sea and called ‘waste’ by the Crown Manor who owned it as it was no use for farming. On a map of 1829 it was beach (National Archives LRRO 1/3060). The road had been there for centuries, it was used in the twelfth century 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 cottages and houses came from a brook behind the buildings on the other side of the road. By the time this house was built there was one tap with good spring water in the street outside the Cambrian Hotel (later Pantyfedwen and now gone).

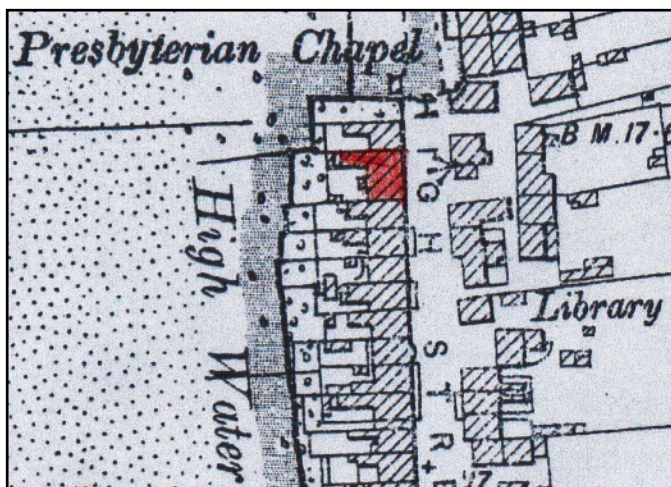
In 1848 the site of Boston House was still not built upon. (Tithe Apportionments Map Llangihangel Genau'r Glyn, Cyfoeth Township - on line at CYNEFIN - National Library of Wales). However on a map of encroachments on the waste belonging to the Crown Manor in 1859, a wide beach side plot (numbered 18k) was drawn and said 'sold' but the surveyor had not drawn any buildings on it (1859 Map National Archives LRRO 1/3060).

The house did not have the name Boston House in 1871 or 1880 when the Cambrian News listed Borth houses with holiday makers staying there. However it may have been called just 'High Street', with Mr Jones as the landlord. In the 1871 Census in the house was Mary Jones, a 39 year old mariner's wife, born locally, with a daughter Jane Ann Jones aged 5 and a baby son Henry James Jones aged three months. In the 1880 Cambrian Newspapers it does not appear to be listed. It is not possible to trace it in the 1881 Census.



LEFT The house in 1886 is marked in red. It was the good sized house we see today. There was a wing on the north side of the rear of the house, and a central doorway or porch. The yard was enclosed. The front opened directly on to the street. This was the final house in the terrace, Glyngarth had not yet been built. (Detail from the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map surveyed in 1886, published in 1888, Cardiganshire III.10)

In the 1891 Census the house is not mentioned, perhaps no one was at home or it was empty. In 1901 the house had its name 'Boston House'. At the Census it was a grocery shop of Mary Jones, a widow, aged 60. She was a Welsh speaker and employed her 22 year old unmarried daughter Mary as her assistant. Mary was born in Borth about 1871 and spoke both Welsh and English. There was a second daughter, Jane Ann Hughes, a young widow of 36 who we saw in the 1871 Census in the house as Jane Ann Jones a little girl of five. Terry Davies writes that her husband David had been a master mariner, the captain of the steamship SS Eira, who probably died in 1898 (See 'Borth A Maritime History' p. 134). With her was her small son, David, aged 3, born about 1898.

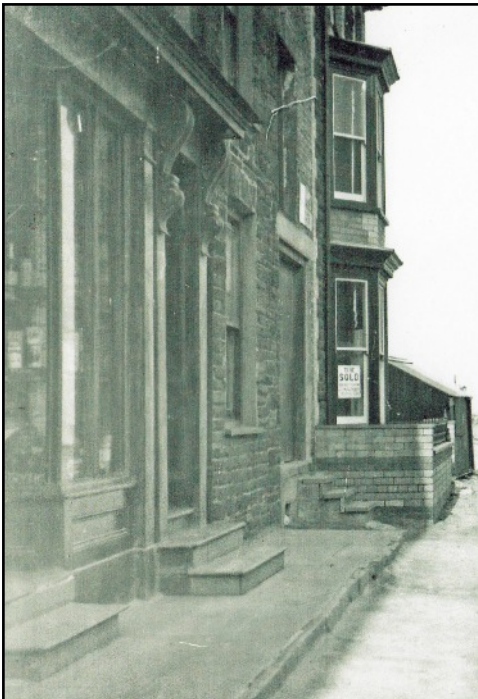


LEFT This was the house in 1904 when it was Mary Jones's grocery shop. Glangarth had been built alongside, but there was a gap in between the houses which was filled by a two storey wooden structure. Peter Matthews whose family were butchers and built Leronian across the street said that there had been a wooden stall there selling their meat. The small building at the end of the rear wing of Boston House was probably its Ty Bach - outside lavatory. Terry Davies writes that the house, like the other

beach side houses, had a cess pit, an inverted cone with a dry stone wall that allowed continual seepage down through the shingle bank. The job of cleaning it out began with the pebbles being cleared away to reveal the wooden baulk cover which was removed to access the pit. The cess pit had to be cleared out at high tide for obvious reasons. There is the tale



of Georgie Dutton (of Chester House - now part of the Victoria Inn) helping David Hughes to clean it out, promising to come back that evening to finish the job, and then being found by David the following morning in a drunken slumber in the bottom of the pit (Terry Davies 'Borth A Seaborn Village' p. 68.)



ABOVE The shop with a cart in front of it. (A photograph sent in to Y Tincer, April 1980).

The shop was on the south side of the front door, and had a central doorway of its own. For the family the house had an imposing front door alongside. This matched the front door of Bradford House.

LEFT In this photograph from an old glass plate the shop is on the left. The brackets at the top of the front door were nicely carved, and the walls of the house at that time were exposed rubble stone. (Photograph courtesy of Peter Fleming)

BELOW This is a glimpse of the north side of the ground floor of the house before 1904 when the walls were exposed stone. It was coursed rubble stone and above the windows were twelve brick shaped stones with some large stones on the outer edges of the walls the same as on Bradford House next door. The advertisement over the door was for Sunlight Soap. On the right Glyngarth was being built. (John Thomas photograph of Borth Sea Captains about. 1890, National Library of Wales)



(John Thomas photograph of Borth Sea Captains about. 1890, National Library of Wales)

In 1910 for a tax planned but not levied, the house was valued at £382, with £15.16s to pay, and £18 gross and it was listed as a 'house', though we know that there was a shop there on the ground floor. The owner and occupiers were Mary Jones and Co.

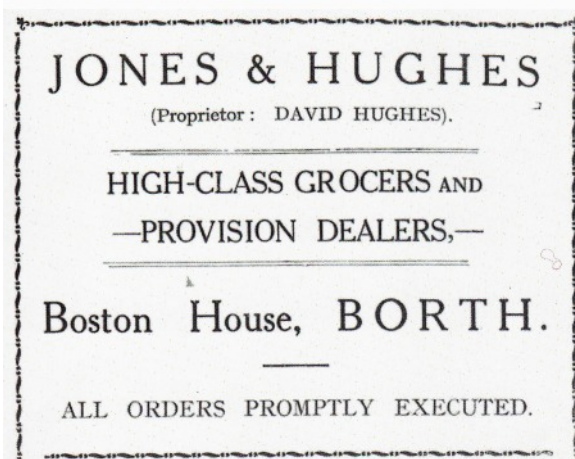
In the house at the 1911 Census was Mary Jones's daughter, Jane Ann Hughes



who was described as a 'Grocer and Provision Dealer, and an Employer, working at home on her own account. and she spoke both Welsh and English. The house had 12 main rooms.

ABOVE Boston is the house nearest the camera. The wing at the back was rubble stone and had a chimney which suggests the kitchen was below. The sloping poles were

sea defences, easily replaced after a bad storm, and steps were needed to get down on to the sand. (Postcard courtesy of the Amgueddfa Ceredigion Museum)



Jane Ann's son, David H. Hughes, fought in the 1914-1918 war as a stretcher bearer, and Terry Davies writes that he was a very generous man, and when he came home 'freely gave credit and almost alone nearly bankrupted the Boston Stores. He had a daughter named Noreen, and a son Hugh David Hughes ('Borth a Seaborn Village, p. 69)

LEFT Boston House in this detail from an advertisement of 1924 (Ceredigion Archives)

In 1925 the Rates were unchanged from 1910, and Jane Ann Hughes and Son, were the owners and occupiers.

In 1926 Kelly's Directory listed 'Jones and Hughes' as shopkeepers at Boston House, and David Hughes paid the rates in 1934 and 1938. The family were connected to the Libanus Chapel (until recently the 'Gerlan'). On 12th. April 1924 David Hughes was at the funeral of the Rev. J. C. Evans of the chapel. In July 1924 he was helping with a Women's Institute sweets stall at the National School and in November he seconded the labour candidate in a Mock Election at the Libanus Chapel's Literary and Debating Society (Cambrian News). In 1949 he was the Secretary and Superintendent of the Sunday School and Miss N. M. Hughes (Noreen) was a teacher in the Libanus Chapel. David Hughes was also a supporter of the Borth Football Club, and was on the Committee. In 1950 the 'Boston Stores 'now' sold toys, buckets and spades, ice creams, minerals and had a snack bar (The Borth Review, National Library of Wales)

David Hughes's son, Hugh David Hughes, 1927 to 2006, nicknamed 'Hugh Boston' earned his living at sea. His story can be found in Terry Davies's book 'Borth a Maritime History' from page 134, under 'Boston House'. When he came home from sea he moved away to Aberystwyth.

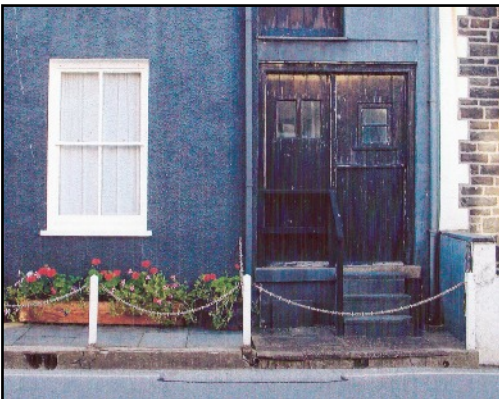
In 1945 with votes for the house were David Hughes, Mary E. Hughes and Catherine E. Roberts. In 1949 paying the rates had been David Hughes, but this was altered to D. B. Davies. However David Hughes paid the rates in 1957.



LEFT This was the shop in about 1952, and is a detail from a postcard of the High Street. The holiday visitors would have enjoyed its ice creams. The front wall was rendered with the pattern of rusticated masonry (Postcard private collection).

In the late 1960's there was a furnished flat to let in Boston House. It slept six persons. Mrs London was in charge of letting it. There was no telephone yet (A Handbook and Guide to Borth, Aberystwyth Public Library). In 1963 Mrs Hughes paid the rates for Boston House. Alan Price Roach and Mollie Roach had votes for the house and may have been living there.

Boston House is an interesting house with its delightfully classical façade. It was a good, spacious building on a site that probably never had a cottage on it to limit its width. Its building materials suggest it was there pre railway, as could have been Bradford House next door.



ABOVE The filled in passageway in 2014 with access through the door on the right.



RIGHT The infill between the houses in Spring 2017.

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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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