

# 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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# BRITANNIA HOUSE

Morfa Borth - the Marsh Harbour

Named after a sloop owned and sailed by Captain Richard and Captain John Jones. The house was built perhaps by 1877 and certainly by 1886 by the Jones family on ground they had enclosed in 1811.



*Britannia House in 2019.*

This is a three storey house built of rubble stone under a gable roof parallel to the road, and at each end of the roof are rendered slab chimneys with four chimney pots. The roof overhangs the eaves giving some protection to the upper wall. The house is double fronted with a central front door which once had a porch. The door is wooden. The upper pair of windows are smaller than the two pairs below. The frames are in the style of sash



windows. The front is rendered, with the ground floor having a large pattern incised into it of rusticated masonry as found on stately homes. In 2008 the north gable end wall was rendered, the south wall was exposed rubble stone.

There is a narrow front garden enclosed by a low wall which leaves a wide entrance. Railings enclose the far end.

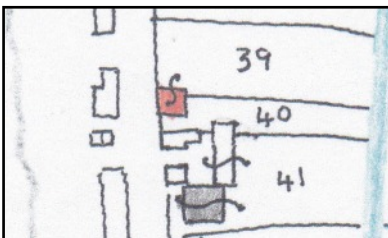
*LEFT There are round stones from the beach in the rubble stone north wall of the house, and the sizeable chimneys with four flues would have made a well heated house.*



*ABOVE* The rear wall is thinly rendered so its stones show through. The topmost floor has three rectangular windows the outer two being wider. The floor below has a taller central window as though to be a door on to the roof of the extension. There is room for one ground floor window before the extension begins, which is in two sections, both one storey with flat roofs. This has windows, and has a garage opening at the rear. Photographed in February 2015.

The ground for this house was enclosed in 1811 from the pebble embankment thrown up by the sea, and called 'waste' because it was no use for farming. The ground measured 1 rod 19 and a half perches, that is nearly a quarter of an acre. It extended to a brook. A rent of £1.2s. had to be paid every year to the Crown manor who owned the ground. The family of master mariners from Borth who could afford to enclose this ground and build a home on it went back to the turn of the century to Captain Richard Jones 1729 to 1804 and his wife Jane who died in 1801. The road was centuries old being a quick way to North Wales via a ferry to Aberdovey. It was a turnpike road by the 1770s.

In 1829 the occupier was Catherine Jones, a widow. (National Archives LRRO 1/3060) She had shares in the 45 ton sloop *Swallow*, and was a managing owner who had a say in what cargoes she carried. (Shipping Register, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion Archives.)



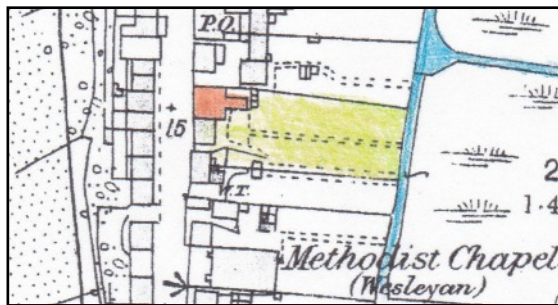
*LEFT* In 1848 Captain Richard Jones's plot of land was Number 39. He had built a cottage for himself at the roadside, mostly on the plot of land next door where *Eltham* stands today, it is marked in red, but there was empty ground on Number 39 where *Pomona* and *Britannia* would be built. Marked in grey was the Chapel (Detail copied from the Tithe Apportionments Map for Llanfihangel Genau'r Glyn, Cyfoeth Township, on-line at CYNEFIN)

Captain Richard Jones had been master of the sloop *Britannia* in February 1826. She was built in Cardigan in 1797. When his three year old son died in 1814 aged three his gravestone said that Captain Richard Jones was of *Britannia* - so he was calling his cottage after his sloop. His son John Jones who became a master mariner was *Britannia's* master in 1840 when she was rebuilt, and in 1844 he was a managing owner with 48 of the 64 shares in the vessel, and dealt

with cargoes and payments to the crew. Britannia was lost in 1859 (not with a Jones captain!) Captain John Jones was part owner and Captain of the schooner Jane Jones - named after his mother Jane or sister Jane. It was built at Aberdovey in 1857 and could carry 71 tons. He had 12 of her shares.

The Jones family then built Pomona on their empty ground by the High Street - perhaps by his father Captain Richard Jones, perhaps by his son Captain John Jones. It is likely this was Captain John's home - he did not marry and living with him was his sister Jane who also did not marry. In 1911 Pomona only had 6 rooms, Britannia House was to have eleven.

In 1871 The Cambrian News listed a home in 'Britannia Place' taking holiday visitors for six weeks whose landlord was Mr Williams, a home already called Britannia but it was not Britannia House which was built for a young Williams couple of the next generation - he was a master mariner too. One of Captain Richard Jones's daughters, Margaret, had married Thomas Williams, a mariner. Sadly for her, by 1861 he was dead, and she was a widow living with her brother Captain John Jones. Britannia House was a bigger more splendid home than Pomona for them. The house was large enough for the family and for holiday visitors to bring them an extra income.



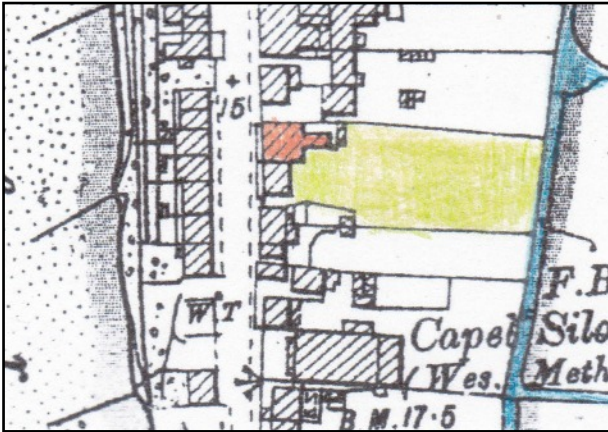
*LEFT In 1886 the house was very much as it is now. Britannia coloured red filled the old Jones ground, coloured green, all the way to its northern boundary and abutted Pomona, and had an extension at the back as it does today. It shared the garden with Pomona, though there was a footpath down to the brook. The ground stretched all the way to the original southern boundary on the old maps and to their old*

*cottage which would become Eltham where John Williams, a mariner and his wife Elizabeth would live - perhaps relations? (A detail from the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map of 1888, surveyed in 1886, Cardiganshire NW III.10.)*

At the Census's of 1881 and 1891 in 'Britannia House' was a Captain Richard Williams and his wife Jane born in Borth about 1853 and their children, Eleanor Jane Williams born in Borth about 1878, and Fanny Williams born in Borth about 1881. Jane was the niece of the widowed Margaret Williams who was to live with them and part of her income was from Captain John Jones's shares in the schooner Jane Jones which she bought in 1866. If Richard and Jane Williams moved in shortly after their wedding, the house would have been built ready for them in about 1877 or 1878. They looked after another elderly aunt Jane Jones who had not married. She was born about 1819 in Borth, and was of 'independent means'. She died on the 4<sup>th</sup> of January 1892 aged 74 and was buried at Llandre.

The Williams family continued to own the house, but moved away to Manchester with Captain Richard's job. but living there at the Census of 1901 in the house was a tenant, a retired cow keeper (dairy farmer), Thomas James aged 72. He was born in Tre'r dol about 1829, Also there was his wife Elizabeth, aged 71 born in Blaenpennal about 1830. They spoke only Welsh.

In 1910 for a valuation for a tax planned but not levied this house was valued at £256. There would have been £10.4s. to pay, £12 gross. The owner was Captain Richard Williams. Living there was the dairy farmer's widow, Elizabeth M. James. (Ceredigion Archives T/DV/18 and map at the National Library of Wales). She was 80, and had retired from a Dairy business.



LEFT In 1904 Britannia and Pomona still shared a garden (Detail from the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map of 1905 revised in 1904, Cardiganshire NW III.10)

At the Census of 1911 Britannia is listed with eleven main rooms. With the elderly Elizabeth James was her 50 year old daughter Margaret James who had not married. She was born in Towyn.

By 1925 Captain Richard Williams was living there when he paid the Rates. I think he had retired there. He had been the first Dock Master of the Manchester Ship Canal, and died on 13 September 1932 aged 83. His wife had died in 1828 aged 76. They are buried at Llandre. A daughter, Miss Williams was there in the house in 1924. (Cambrian News)

Miss E. J. Williams paid the rates in 1934.

With votes for the house in the General Election of 1945 were Eleanor J. Williams who was on the parish council, and Eileen Hannah and Alun Jenkins Thomas (Borth Review, National Library of Wales)

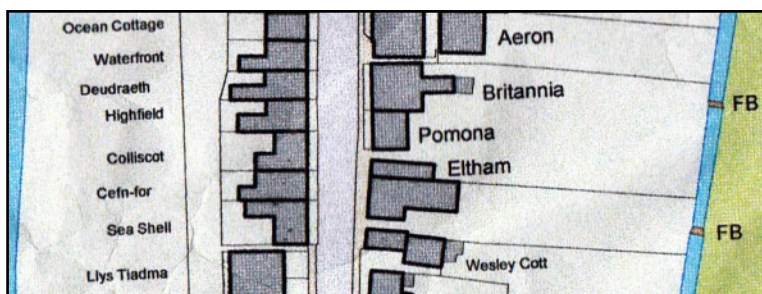
Paying the Rates in 1949 was J. Thomas. It had been Eleanor Williams.

Fanny Thomas paid the rates in 1957.

J. H. Hassall paid the rates in 1963 and in the late 1960s possibly 1868, in a 'Handbook and Guide to Borth' Mrs Hassall was advertising bed and breakfast for six people at Britannia, with parking. (Undated, private collection).

In 1963 Fanny Thomas had a vote for the house (Rates and Electoral Registers Ceredigion Archives).

In 1975 the house had an additional extension at the back. Once again it shared a garden with Pomona. The former bed of the brook had become a ditch (Detail from Historical Maps On-line)



ABOVE This detail from a fairly modern Council Map shows Britannia with ground behind Pomona extending to the ditch (Map courtesy of Councillor Ray Quant who provided it for research for a village event).

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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>

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