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

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BROOKFIELD
Morfa Borth - the Marsh Harbour

Borth's first Railway Inn, then called the 'Railway House'. Later the Inn moved next door and this house became Brookfield. Home of Hughes families.
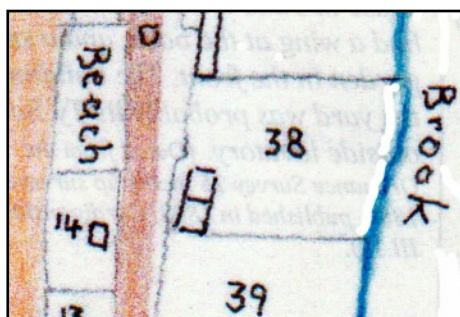

Brookfield is on the east side of the High Street and is a two storey building with roof lights for an attic floor in a terrace between Saxatile and the Railway Hotel. Its doorway is not central, the room to the left was larger and has a chimney, suggesting it was once a living room/kitchen with a fireplace. The main four windows are modern with large plates of glass. Above the front door is a tiny circular window divided into four lights, rare in Borth. The walls are likely to be rubble stone, but are smoothly rendered and there is no hint of stonework as on Saxatile next door. A rubble stone chimney on the northern side of the roof is shared with Saxatile and one on the south is partly shared with the Railway Inn.

LEFT The front door is framed in a classical way with pilasters with a circular motif framed by triangles, and has an entablature with a bold keystone modelled in the rendering. There are two more little motifs either side of the keystone area. The front door is modern.
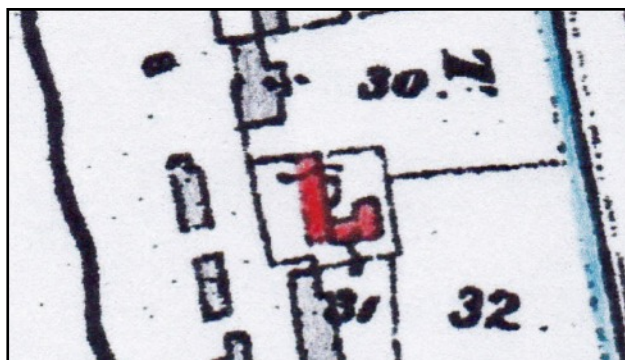
LEFT The back of Brookfield has modern windows, and though the roof of Saxatile is slightly taller as it had been re-roofed, it is likely they once were a pair of houses sharing a gable roof parallel to the road. Brookfield has a substantial single storey extension across the back with a roof light. The Railway Inn next door has some of Brookfield's old roof space, and a chimney that once ended its roof is still there embedded in the Raiway Inn and tidied up with a topping of red bricks.

LEFT Brookfield and Saxatile are in the footsteps of a terrace of two buildings shown on a map of 1829. They were on plot 38 that had been encroached from the 'waste' or common land on the pebble embankment built up by the sea. This was sold to David Daniel, a master mariner, by the manor court of Llanfihangel in 1821(Detail after a copy watercolour map, National Archives LRRO 1/3060).
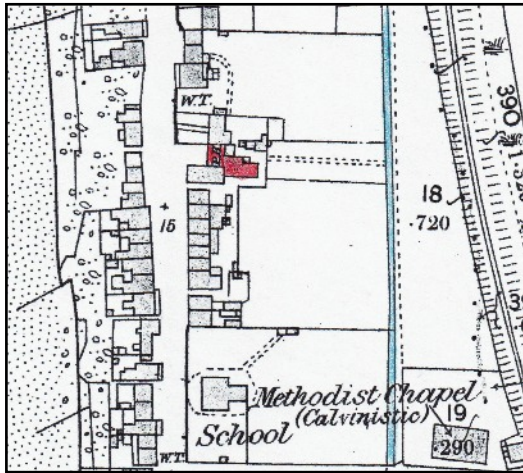
The road had been there for centuries and was a quick way to North Wales crossing the River Dovey with a ferry. It became a turnpike road in the 1770s. David Daniel was the son of David Daniel who had farmed at Penygraig. He had a wife and four children, and owned and commanded a schooner called Rosina after his daughter and had commanded the 'Dove and the Linnet' ((Parish Register, Ceredigion Archives, 1841 Census and the list of ships in Terry Davies 'Borth a Seaborn Village). With the buildings was three quarters of an acre of ground, extending eastwards to a 'brook' of fresh water which ran along its eastern boundary.

LEFT By 1848 David Daniel had built himself a sizeable new house on the street edge of the plot, (Welfare House stands there today) and the 1829 block of buildings, marked in red, had been enclosed and sold to David Hughes (born 1797 or 1798) next door, another master mariner. The northernmost one is Saxatile, the southernmost one today is Brookfield (Tithe Apportionments Map, Llanfihangel Genau'r Glyn, Cyfoeth Township online at CYNEFIN).

David Hughes lived in one his houses or cottages himself, and must have let the rest to family or tenants. He and his wife Catherine, born in Borth had at least five children.

The first Railway Inn was in the house we now call 'Brookfield'. The railway came to Borth in 1863. By 1865 this Railway Inn was up and running. David Hughes had retired from the sea, and the first landlord was his son in law, John Hughes, a young man of 27, called by his grandson the 'founder of the Inn'. He had married David Hughes's daughter Catherine, (born about 1842). It was a residential inn, for example for 11 weeks in the summer of 1871 various families were staying there. Most came from Wales, but there was a solicitor from Birmingham, and a gentleman from Whitehaven in Cumbria. (Cambrian News) The map drawn in 1848 shows buildings on the back, some of which I suggest were probably stables and a carriage house for the family and eventually

for visitors, and there would by a privy and a building or room to brew the beer. The White Lion Public House up the street (now Mayfield) had a similar arrangement of buildings at the back.

LEFT The Railway House in 1886 - marked PH Public House - is marked in red, and the front was open to the street. It had a garden or yard, and a path down to the 'brook'. There was a new building beside it - built since 1848, and called 'Dart House'. That too belonged to the Hughes family - Captain David Hughes was living there in 1871. (The School at the bottom of the map has been replaced by the Meddygfa) (A detail from the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map of 1888 - surveyed in 1886, Cardiganshire NW III.10)
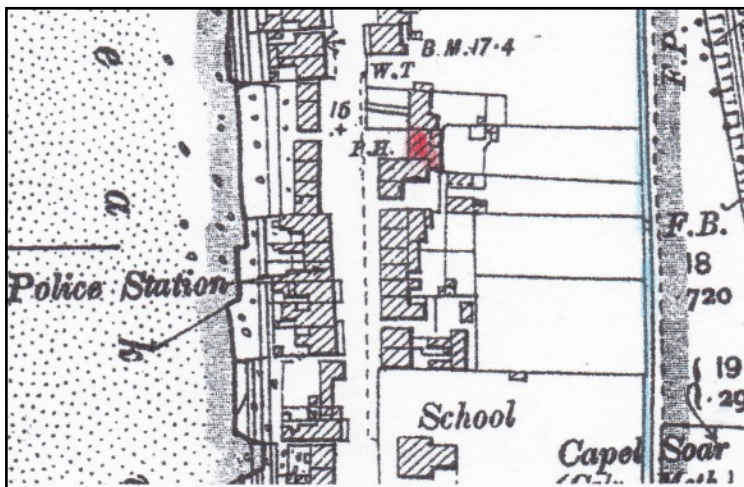
John Hughes was also a 'coal agent', and had six children. They lost two; a son, Richard Alban died aged 12 in 1881, and a daughter, Catherine Jane died in 1907 aged 29. After John's death in 1897 aged 50, his widow Mrs Catherine Hughes took over, and ran the Inn. From the Borth Review, 1950, LGC comes a story from John Hughes, the grandson of the founder concerning the Catherine and her son Hugh (born about 1882) (*Borth Review, National Library of Wales*)

   "They had a fox run down into the cellar, and the Hughes's shut the cellar door. The bar filled up with hounds and in came Sir Edward Pryse of Goggerdan, the master of the foxhounds, who asked Mr Hughes if he had seen the fox. 'Yes, and he's staying where he is so you can call your hounds off" said Mr Hughes. Sir Edward went into the parlour to speak to Mrs Hughes. He told her to give the huntsmen a pint each, not forgetting one for himself.
As Sir Edward stayed rather a long time chatting to Mrs Hughes and her friends, the glasses were replenished many times before he reappeared. Mr Hughes said he'd let the fox out if the hounds were kept back to allow it a fair start. This was agreed. Mr Hughes carried the fox 200 yards before releasing it. The fox immediately headed for the Church pursued by half hearted hounds and jolly laughing huntsmen, who even if they couldn't see the fox, could still sit on their horses. The fox was last seen racing over the Borth bog. The Railway Inn had good quality beer in those days.'

   By 1901 a new larger Railway Inn had been set up next door, in charge of a young licensed victualler called William Richards. Catherine, now 59 stayed on in the old Inn house, now a private house, with her son Hugh who had become a 'rural postman', and her son Charles a painter and decorator. She called her house 'Railway House'.

LEFT This detail from a map of 1904 still shows Brookfield as the Inn. The buildings once behind it had gone, and there was an extension all the way across the rear of the house (A detail from the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map of 1905 - revised in 1904, Cardiganshire NW).

By 1910 the house had the name 'Brookfield' and Catherine Hughes owned it. For a tax planned but not levied, the house was valued at £200 and that was a decent house by Borth standards (Ceredigion 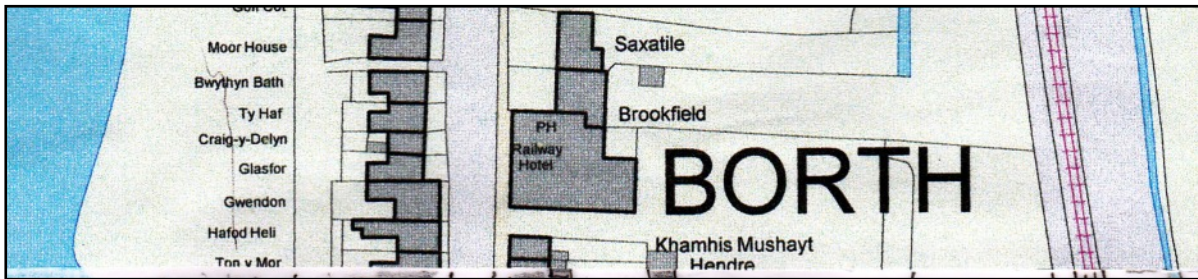Archives T/DV/18 and Map at the National Library of Wales). Sadly, as it is set back from the street the early photographs do not show it so we do not know how it looked then. She also had the land behind the garden of the house which extended

to the 'brook', possibly why the house was called 'Brookfield'. She also owned two cottages in the Railway Terrace.   The 1911 Census listed Brookfield with 8 rooms. (They did not count its cellar). Catherine died in 1916 aged 75. Her eldest son David Thomas Hughes inherited Brookfield, and in 1925 her son Charles was living there.

Hugh Hughes paid the rates in 1949 and David Thomas had a vote for the place in 1945. In 1957 Sarah Hughes paid the rates.

With votes for the house in 1963 were John O. Hughes, Sarah Hughes, Valerie Hughes and Stuart Hughes.

By 1975 there was a detached building in the garden which still extended to the former brook - by then a ditch (Historical Maps On-line)

ABOVE This detail from a modern Council Map shows how the the Railway Hotel is tucked into the rear of Brookfield (Map courtesy of Councillor Ray Quant who provided it for research for a village event).

(To reach the Church the fox had to run eastwards, across the railway line and over a large flat field then over or past the rocky island with the church on it, and across the River Leri at a ford to reach the bog.)

Archifdy Ceredigion Archives

yn cyflwyno / presents

Tai'r Borth / Houses of Borth

gan/by Beryl Lewis

[cyf/ref ADX/1629]

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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