

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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CAMBRIAN VILLA

Morfa Borth - the Marsh Harbour

On the site of a thatched cottage of John Roberts. Home to a distinguished Borth master mariner, Captain John Lewis and his family who were there by 1871. The house had fourteen rooms in 1911. It was still owned by the family in 1949.



This is an impressively tall building for Borth High Street, having three storeys. It is under a gable roof parallel to the street and there are slab chimneys at either end. The walls are rendered, the ground floor having a strong design of ashlar masonry picking out the shaped stones above the lower windows. All the windows have modern frames. The front door has



a moulded wooden overhang at the top. There is a small front garden enclosed by a low rendered wall which could be brick. It has gateposts and a gate. The house is semi-detached, abutting the much smaller Ryelands next door.

LEFT The rear of the house has a two storey wing with a back door into the yard.

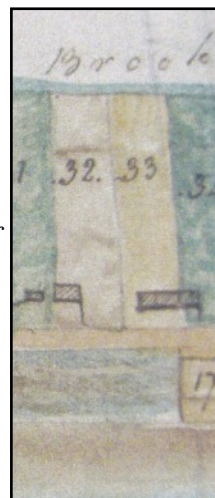
BELOW The front door is not quite in the centre, the north side is half a rusticated masonry block wider. The decoration around the door of panels is similar to that round other Morfa Borth front doors.

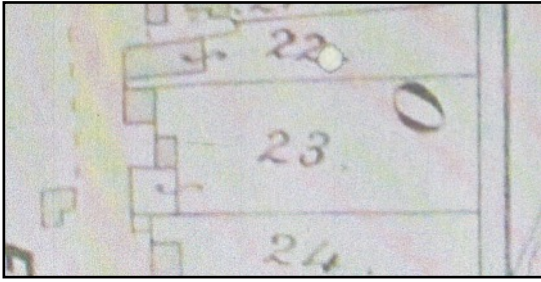


The house stands on the pebble bank thrown up by the sea. The Crown Manor who owned it called it waste because it was no good for farming. A strip measuring a rod and twenty perches (more than a quarter of an acre) was enclosed in 1822 by David Jenkins who built a cottage on it - but his cottage was set back from the street, not where Cambrian House stands today.

RIGHT David Jenkin's strip was Number 32 on this detail from a hand painted map of 1829. It ran down to a brook of fresh water (National Archives LRRO 1/3060)

The road had been there for centuries and went to a ferry across the Dovey which was a quick way to North Wales. It was a turnpike road by the 1770s.



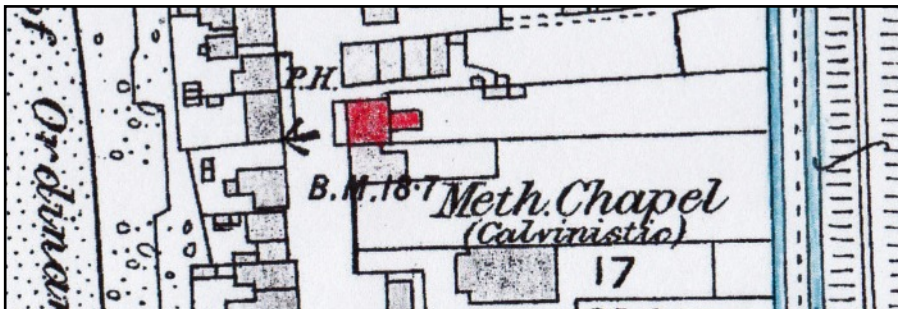


LEFT But by a map of 1848 there was a large piece of ground number 23, over half an acre with two cottages, one alongside the street where Cambrian Villa now stands. The owner of the street side cottage was John Roberts (Detail copied from the Tithe Apportionment Map for Llanfihangel Genau'r Glyn, Cyfoeth Township, on-line at CYNEFIN)

John Ellis writing a history of Borth in 1930 who had a great aunt who had lived in the village since 1819, wrote that next to the Friendship was a thatched cottage (it became Ryelands) and a smaller one attached to it belonging to John Roberts 'where later he built Cambrian Villa'. John Roberts was a mariner, born in Borth about 1790. His wife was Rachel, also a local girl who was born in Borth about 1813 - she was much younger than him. They had a son David aged 3 in the 1851 Census. They were not listed in the 1861 Census.

At the Census of 1861 there are no Lewis's in the list alongside the Friendship Inn.

But by 1871 the Lewis family were there. At the Census Captain Lewis (baptised July 16 1836 and son of mariner John Lewis of Morfa Borth and his wife Mary,) may have been away at sea. He commanded the wooden sailing vessels Margaret Lewis and the Snowdon and the steamship Nant Gwynant. (Terry Davies, Borth, A Maritime History p.30.) In 1871 his wife Margaret was living there with her two year old daughter, Mary Anne. The Captain had married in 1864 and was only about 34 years old. Could he have afforded to build such a grand house then?



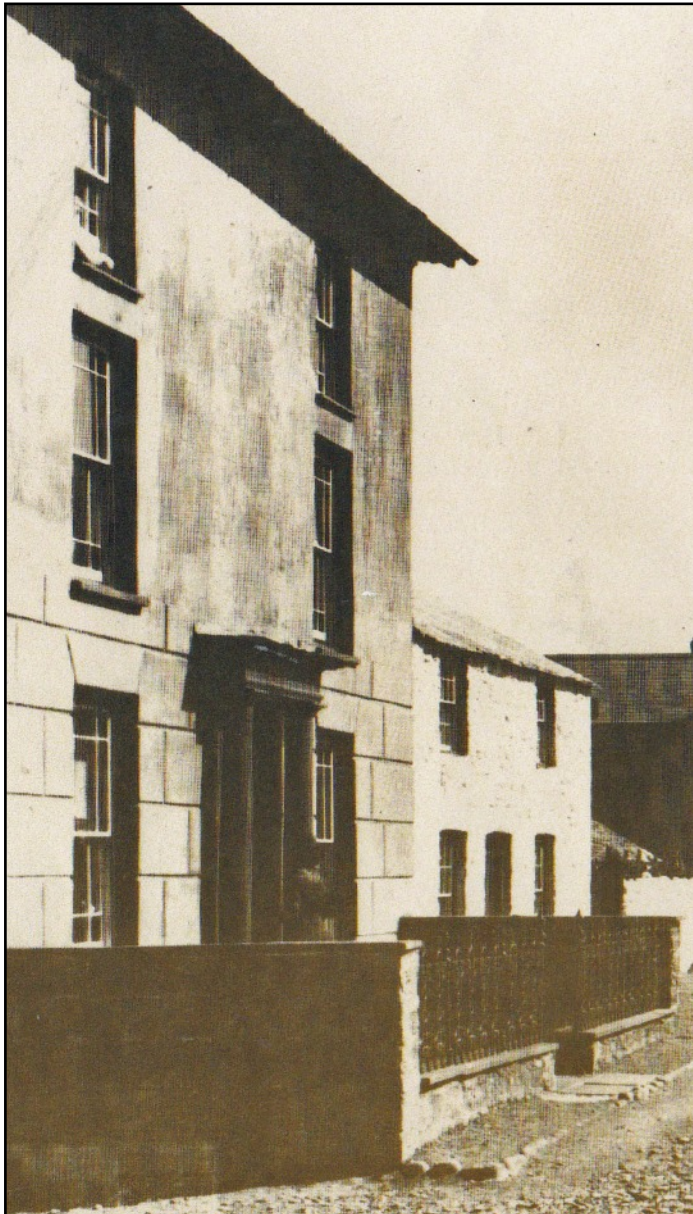
LEFT This was Captain Lewis's house in 1886. It had a front garden and a long extension at the back - possibly with a kitchen. Its ground led down to the

brook (Detail from the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map surveyed in 1886 and published in 1888, Cardiganshire NW III.10)

Behind Captain Lewis's Villa was once the Nag's Head Tavern, landlady Sarah Furston-which was up and running in 1868 and mentioned in Slater's Directory of South Wales. A Sale notice in the Cambrian News of Friday October 15 1880 listed 'two plots of garden ground each measuring about 20 yards by 11 yards and situate at the back of the house of Captain John Lewis and formerly known as the Nag's Head.'. The ground went with two other master mariner's houses, the Ocean Wave of Captain Thomas Lewis and Captain William Arter's house adjoining, these were two beach side houses across the street in Picton Terrace, today Craig Lee and Ton y Mor. The Captains would have been pleased to have some ground for a garden (Poster, Amgueddfa Ceredigion Museum)

In 1880 the Cambrian News listed visitors staying at 'Cambrian Villa' for three weeks in August and September. They were from Newtown and Llanidloes, their landlord being Captain Lewis. The house had its name Cambrian Villa. The Captain was away at sea in the Census of 1881. In the house were his wife Margaret and daughters Mary Ann 12 and Jane 6. They were both born in Borth.

At the Census of 1891 in the house was their ocean going mariner son William David Lewis born in Borth about 1868, and who would become a master mariner and captain of many steamships. (Terry Davies, Borth A Maritime History page 30)

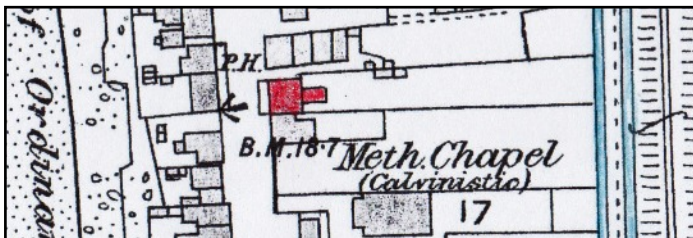


LEFT A detail from a postcard of the High Street dated after 1895 shows that either side of the door were columns supporting an entablature. The roof had an overhang and the windows were sash windows. Interestingly their pattern of lights is in the art nouveau style of about 1900.

At the Census of 1901 in the house was another daughter, Maggie J. Lewis born in Borth in 1876 - and a daughter Marion Rowlands already a widow aged 32.

In 1910 at a Valuation for a tax planned but not levied the house was valued at £315, with £11.1s to pay, £13 gross. Interestingly the description was a 'cottage and garden'. The value was a little more than Auckland at £303 and Pilgrim and Windsor House at £300 and less than the tall Bryntirion and Frondirion at £350.

In the 1911 Census the house had 14 rooms . The Captain had retired and was then 74, his wife was 69 and they had been married for 47 years. They had had four children but lost one of them. In the house too was their widowed daughter Marion Rowlands. She had not had any children and had 'private means'.



LEFT Cambrian Villa in 1904. It had a front garden and the wing on the rear. The garden still extended to the brook. The tiny buildings may have been for pigs or hens.

Sometime after 1922 apartments were let to visitors of six bedrooms and two sitting rooms (The Illustrated Borth Gide, Aberystwyth Public Library)

In 1925 Mrs Rowlands gave six silver teaspoons to the Wesleyan chapel (Cambrian News February 29th.)

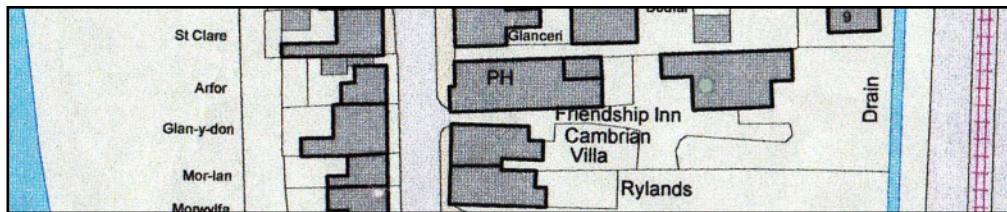
In 1925 Mrs Marian Rowlands had inherited the house as she paid the rates as the owner and occupier and she was still there in 1945 when she had a vote for the house at the election together with Mary A. Rees (Electoral Registers and rates, Ceredigion Archives) Living there also was a marine engineer John Lewis until his death in 1936. He had moved there from Craig-y-don (now Steeplejacks) (Deed courtesy of Mrs Marianne Barron).

In 1957 ownership had changed, Mr Frederick Pugh of the Friendship Inn paid the rates as he did in 1963. With votes for the house in 1963 were Margaret Jenkins, Betty and Elvet Lewis and Nesta Morris suggesting the house was now rented to various people.



Left This was taken in 1972. The columns round the front door had gone and there decoration in the rendering around it. The railings too had gone - melted to support a war perhaps? However the sash windows were still in use.

In 1975 Cambrian Villa shared its ground at the back with The Friendship Inn. Some filling in had happened on the north side of the long back extension since 1905 (Historical Maps on-line). Today the house is flats.



ABOVE This detail from a modern Council Map shows the Villa with an enclosed garden at the back (Map courtesy of Councillor Ray Quant who provided it for research for a village event).

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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