

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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CAPEL-Y-MORFA now two homes.

The building stands on the south side of Chapel Lane close to the railway. Opened in 1869. Formerly called the Independent or Congregational Chapel. The name means Chapel in the marsh. Called the 'Bethel' in 1907.

This was the prettiest of Borth's chapels, built in coursed rubble stone in the Gothic style and with a bell tower on the west end with a cross on top. The steeply pitched roof had slates in two colours used to make a pattern of lozenges.

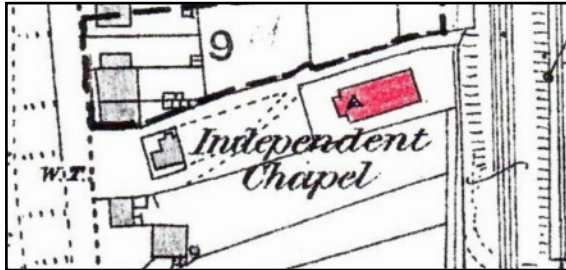


A photograph by John Thomas taken before 1903.

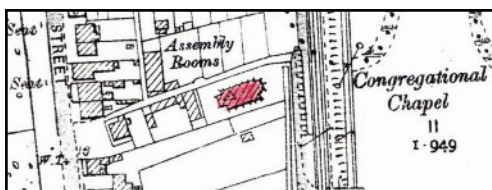
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A Congregational Chapel was founded in Borth in 1864, being a branch of the Bethel Chapel at Talybont where Borth's Congregationalists had previously been to worship. This connection lasted until 1868, and then it was connected to the Congregationalists at the Hepzibah Chapel at Llanbadarn Fawr (at Clarach) (Parish Churches and Nonconformist Chapels in Wales, Vol. 1, Bert. J. Rawlins, 1987, reprinted 1989). The Cambrian News and the Aberystwyth Times and Cardigan Chronicle and Merioneth News reported the opening of the Chapel in their paper dated 9th October 1869, and described it. The architect was George Jones of Aberystwyth, and the builder was Edward Jones of the 'Baths Borth' (Neptune in the High Street) who was very zealous and persevering in following the architect's instructions. The building did not cost more than £800. The walls were hollow and bound with brick giving perfect ventilation and security from draughts. There was another cross on the east end of the roof of a different design to the one on the bell tower. The paper listed a nave and an apse, and the porch on the west end had double doors facing south and north as protection from the seaside weather. Over the porch was a handsome 'painted window of geometrical and

floriated (flowery) patterns designed by the architect and made by Mr Bell of Bristol. Mr Bell also made the central apse's two light windows. The single light windows were of cathedral tinted glass with leading making a diamond pattern. The principals of the roof were pitch pine, with ceilings, boarded and jointed.' (Edward Jones was a capable carpenter). The seats were roomy, all open, and could seat 300 people. The style of the building was Early English, and it was thought to be a handsome building and 'gave much satisfaction'.



On a 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map surveyed in 1886 and dated 1888 the building was drawn as a simple rectangle with a porch on the west end of the building. It was comfortably sited on its plot of ground. Access from Borth's main street was on either side of the house now Meirion, then called Osprey.



On the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map updated in 1904 and published in 1905 an apse had been added to the east end of the Chapel supported by buttresses. A garage and wooden house had been built, so access was then from Chapel Lane.

(Both maps - Cardiganshire III.10)

Borth's main street would not have had room for a Chapel. This site was closest to the most modern area of the village, with the station, the large and imposing Cambrian Hotel and Cambrian Terrace. The Chapel had no graveyard as Borth's former marshland was not suitable for one. The building is tall, and quite heavy for its marshy ground. Six buttresses were used each side. Pale sandstone was used on tracery for the windows and quoins for the edges of the building, for buttresses, and for the bell tower. It also makes bold lines of string course dividing the west gable end above its porch into two sections. The base of the windows and porch are linked by another string course. A gallery and a spire were planned, but not built. The building was said to be a memorial to the aspirations of the early devotees. In 1950 the foundations of a sister church at Ynyslas could still be seen near the mouth of the Leri. (Borth Review 1949, National Library of Wales).



This photograph taken in 2016 shows the apse as it is today and the bold use of the pale stone for quoins and string courses.

In 1895 the Rev. Joseph Llewellyn was the minister. He then lived at 4 Picton Terrace,

Today the house called Can-y-wawr is this end.

now called Ton-y-mor. (Kelly's Directory – a 'private' resident).

In 1949 the minister was the Rev. Ted Lewis Evans, the secretary was Mr Griffith Evans and the treasurer was Mr T. J. Davies of Erwau Glas. The Sunday School superintendent was Mrs E. Budge. (Borth Review, National Library of Wales).



ABOVE The west end, and the entrance to the second home in 2016. The windows and door are modern.

BELOW A detail of the north, Chapel Lane, face of the building.





LEFT The south face of the building in 2009 showing the velux windows in the roof, the six buttresses and the row of windows under the eaves. The centre three windows were single lights.

BELOW the stone dressing of this window on the north front shows there was a carved pattern - now defaced in the arch at the top. The wall's rubble stone is coursed, but not finished smoothly as in the most expensive mason's work. The frame and window are modern. However the diamond 'leading' pattern copies that on the original windows.



The name 'Bethel Congregational Chapel' is what the chapel was called in a guide book, 'Breezy Borth' of 1907. It had a Welsh service at 10 am and 6 pm. (Aberystwyth Public Library)

The conversion has been taking place for several years, with the eastern house finished in 2015 and put up for sale.

The Rev. E. Stephens of Tan-y-marian, and the Rev. W. Edwards of Aberdare took the opening service, (on a Tuesday) and there was a special service at Clarach too. On Wednesday there were services in the morning and afternoon with guest ministers, followed by a 'public tea meeting' to raise funds towards building costs The Cambrian Railway offered a return ticket for the price of a single fare for people coming from a distance

(Cambrian News October 9th. 1869)



ABOVE The outer ground floor windows had a different shape and stone frame, and stone brackets, still there, supported the overhang of the roof before it was rebuilt. The pale stones in the buttresses which once made a bold pattern are still there but have darkened. This photograph was taken in 2018.

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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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