

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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DOVEY BELLE

Morfa Borth - the Marsh Harbour

Possibly No. 3 Princess Street in 1880. The house is named after a schooner. A home of the James family of master mariners.



LEFT Dovey Belle in 2008.

Dovey Belle is part of a pair of cottages with Rhyd Cerrig. They have their back to the former gardens of Cambrian Terrace. This is at the northern end of Borth - Princess Street began at the end of the High Street.

The house has the appearance of a cottage, as it is a low two storey building.



LEFT There are rounded stones from the beach in the front wall. Photograph 2004.

It is possible that the walls were not designed originally to have exposed stonework. Using a lime plaster would have prevented damp getting inside the walls.

On the northern end of the roof is a square stone chimney, and the house appears to share a central chimney with Rhyd Cerrig next door. The gable roof is parallel to the road and has grey tiles of a stone appearance. Although the 1911 Census left out Dovey Belle, it probably had at least six main rooms, as Rhyd Cerrig did next door, and Rhyd Cerrig was smaller.



LEFT Smooth plaster shapes edge the windows, with a fleur de lis decoration on a keystone at the top of the lower windows.

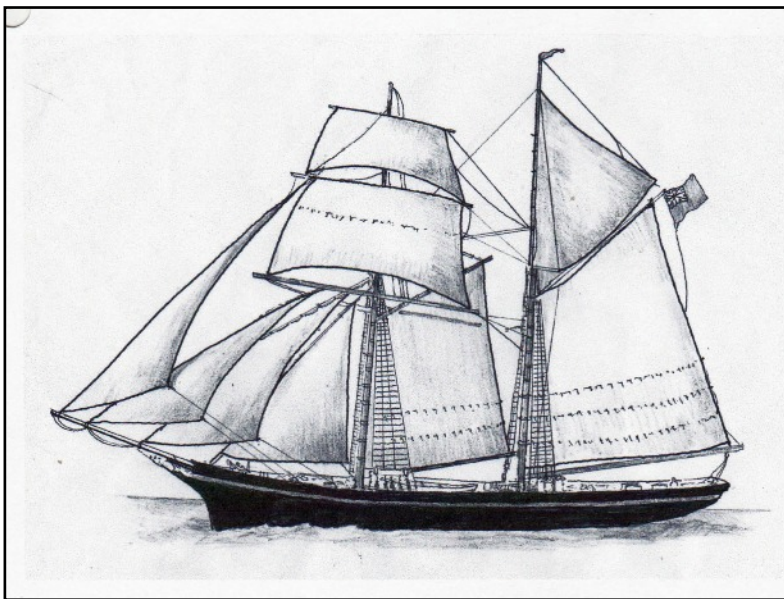
The windows are modern. Some care has been paid to the appearance of the front of this house which has a schooner on its house name. Its narrow garden with plants in large pots is edged by a low rendered wall with no gate.



LEFT Dovey Belle is on the right in this photograph taken in 2014. The rear is a full two storeys high and is rendered and the windows are modern. There is also an extensive Conservatory.

The ground the house stands on is the pebble bank owned by the Crown Manor and called 'waste' because it was no use for farming. Someone called Jones enclosed nearly an acre and a quarter of it in 1823. (National Archives LRRO 1/3060 1829 Map and list of owners). By 1848 it was a garden owned by John Thomas and there were no buildings on it. (Tithe Apportionments Map, Llanfihangel Genau'r Glyn, Cyfoeth Township - on line at CYNEFIN).

However by 1853 it is likely that this house was built. This was a James family home. We can trace them at Borth through the Census's. There in 1851 was a mariner's wife, Ann James aged 27 and born c. 1823 in Penpombren with her son John aged 7, (born about 1844) and nephew James Owens aged 11. Penpombren was not far away and in the then parish, Llanfihangel Genau'r Glyn. (Census). In 1861 at the Census in the house was the sister of the owner, a Margaret James (born about 1810) who was a widow, and with her were her brother's children, John and Mary James who was born about 1853 in Morfa Borth -

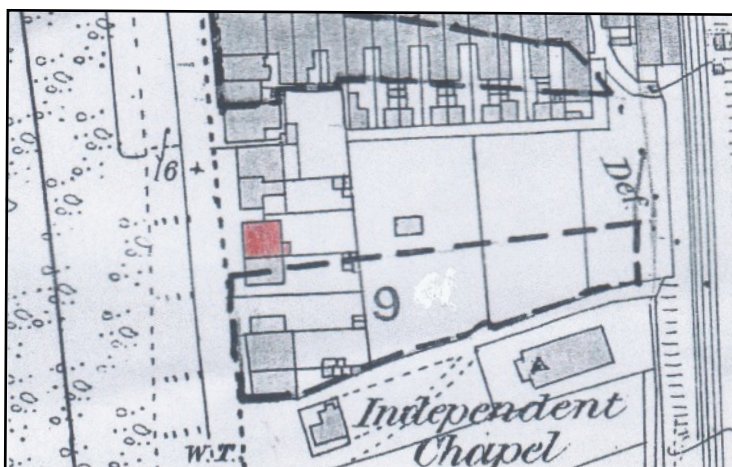


possibly in Dovey Belle. The children's father was Captain John James, born about 1813 and commander of the schooner Dovey Belle in the 1860's. Dovey Belle, of 84 tons was built at Aberdyfi in 1867 for Captain James and it is likely that the house was named after this ship.

LEFT The schooner Dovey Belle.

When holiday visitors came to the house in the summers of 1871 and 1880, the Cambrian News listed Captain J. James as their landlord, also

Mrs James, and in 1871 a Captain Jones. The house was then called No. 1 Princess Street. The visitors came for five weeks in 1871 coming from Burton on Trent Staffordshire, Newtown and Machynlleth. In 1880 they came for two weeks, from Welshpool, London, Bromsgrove, Shrewsbury and Oswestry, almost certainly coming by train. Usually there was room for just one family - parents and children, except once when there were two gentlemen from London and one lady from Welshpool. Interestingly in 1880 Captain James also looked after visitors in No. 2 Princess Street. (Possibly in fellow mariner John Hughes's house - see Ellis and Rhydd Cerrig.)



LEFT Dovey Belle in 1886, coloured red. It had no front garden, and behind it were the gardens belonging to The Terrace. There was no small track behind it then. The small extension on the rear may have been its Ty Bach - outside lavatory It was bigger than Rhyd Cerrig next door (Detail from the Ordnance Survey Map surveyed in 1886 and published in 1888, Cardiganshire III.10)

Terry Davies writes that Captain James gave the schooner Dovey Belle to his son John and had to pay his Aunt Margaret an annuity of £15. The vessel was to go to his grandchildren at his son's death (Borth A Maritime History page 106). When Captain John James (born in 1845) was commanding the Dovey Belle his small son aged 5 fell overboard and drowned while the schooner was lying off Gravesend.

In the 1891 Census after new houses had been added, the house was listed as 3 Princess Street and this Census did not give it a name. At home was master mariner's wife Sarah James born about 1852 in Aberystwyth, with daughters Ann, 12, Elizabeth 7, and sons Richard, 9, David, 5, Evan Davies 3, and Hugh 1. Captain James worked for the Coast Lines Shipping Company. (Terry Davies 96, p. 46.) The Dovey Belle foundered at Grassholm on 17th July 1907 (BBC Mid-Wales internet site, 'Borth.')

On a 25 inch map of 1905 the house was unchanged since the earlier map.

In 1910 for a tax planned but not levied the house had the name Dovey Belle and was listed as a house and garden valued at £144 with £5 4s. 6d to pay, £6.15s gross. The owner was Sarah James who had moved to Mayfield, and there was a tenant in the house, Mary E. Daw. Miss Daw was the Hon. Secretary of the Borth Public Reading Room and Library.



LEFT These were the fronts of the cottages in the 1920s.

Sometime after 1922 the house was advertised in 'The Illustrated Borth Guide' under furnished apartments, with three bedrooms and two sitting rooms (Aberystwyth Public Library).

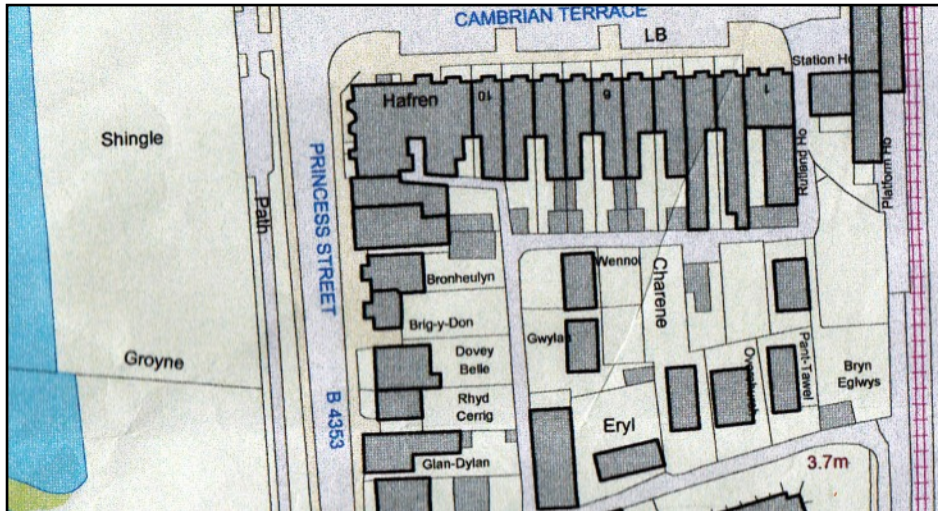
In 1925 William James was the owner, and Elizabeth Williams was living there. Miss Williams in August

1934 gave a recipe for a booklet in aid of St Matthew's Church at a Church Bazaar (Cambrian News Publication, Ceredigion Archives)

In 1945 on the voters list for the house were Phyllis and Rhys D. Goring-Thomas and in 1949 Phyllis Goring-Thomas paid the rates (Rates and Electoral Registers, Ceredigion Archives). Phyllis Goring Thomas was the owner of the house in 1963 and with a vote for the house was probably living there.

The owner of the house had applied to the Ceredigion Council to make improvements to the house in 1972, and these were approved (Ceredigion Council Planning Committee Minutes, Ceredigion Archives).

On a map of 1975 the rear of Dovey Belle had been extended, but it still did not have a front garden (Historical Maps online)



LEFT Dovey Belle has a front garden in this modern Council Map. There is a lane at the end of the garden and beyond the former gardens of the Cambrian Terrace houses are replaced by modern bungalows and houses

(Detail from a Map courtesy of Councillor Ray Quant who provided it for research for a village event).

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Tai'r Borth / Houses of Borth
gan/by Beryl Lewis
[cyf/ref ADX/1629]

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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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