

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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EPWORTH HOUSE Morfa Borth

This house is on the beach side at the southern part of Borth High Street. Also called Epworth Villa. Home of a National School teacher and head-teacher, Miss Annie Bathurst who rented it, and before that of master mariner John Williams and his wife. The ground was enclosed for a cottage, now gone, in 1829.



Epworth House in 2015.

Epworth is a single fronted house beneath a gable roof parallel to the street, and it shares the roof height of its southern neighbours, Celtic and Ynys View. On the north it butts against the small Epworth Cottage. The north end of the roof has a slab chimney with four chimney pots, and it is rendered. Its shape suggests it is brick. The walls of the house are rendered with rough cast, and the two front windows are modern. The front door has glass panels to light the hall and that too is modern and has been replaced since 2009. This house unlike Celtic and Ynys View has an enclosed front garden edged by a rendered wall, taller on the boundary with Epworth Cottage. It already had this enclosed garden in 1886. There is no gate.



At the back in the roof is a wide dormer window allowing good views of the sea for an attic floor. There is a single storey wing on the south side of its yard and that, like the front garden area was already there in 1886. Unusually for houses wishing to have a view of the beach from their yard, this house has a tall wall, rubble stone below and tidied up at the top and south side with red bricks. There is a gate shape inset into the wall, but it is filled. The rear wall almost reaches the Council's low defensive wall of vertical sleepers. This makes a very private yard, very well defended against the sea during storms.

The house in 2009 had a different front door, and different coloured walls. Tucked in beside it on the right is Epworth Cottage which fills the space between Epworth and Y Nyth cottage.



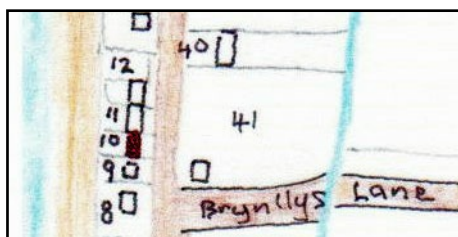
TOP The north side of Epworth House's yard from the beach in 2015. The dormer windows enjoy a fine view of the sea. Part of the rear wall is lower, which would allow a view of the sea from top storey as well.

BELOW The rest of the rear of Epworth. The yard is shared with Epworth Cottage, so both use the steps down to the beach.



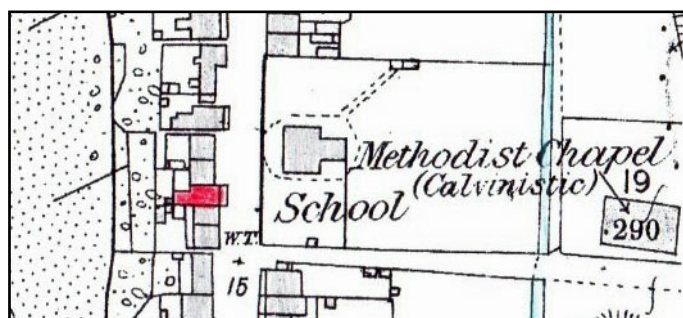
The ground for this house is the stone embankment thrown up by the sea and called 'waste' by the Crown Manor who owned it as it was no use for farming. A plot was enclosed in 1828 by Morgan Jones for a cottage, the ground measured only 8 perches (a rod, a quarter of an acre, was 40 perches). A rent of £1 4s had to be paid every year, or by paying £6 Morgan Jones could buy the plot (National Archive, map and details, 1829, LRRO 1/3060). The road had been there for centuries and was a turnpike road by the 1770s. It led to a ferry from Ynyslas to Aberdovey, a quick way to North Wales. Fresh water for the old cottages came from a 'brook' behind the cottages on the other

side of the road, and for fuel the villagers could dig peat on the far side of the River Leri just north of Ynys Fergi.



A detail copied from the Crown Manor Map of 1829. Epworth and Epworth Cottage were built where cottage Number 10 is on the map. Number 41 across the road with a small cottage belonged to the Vicar and would have the National School built on it in 1842, and today the Meddga.

Morgan Jones was a master mariner who commanded the schooner 'Mary Jones' in 1842 named after his wife (Aberystwyth Register of Shipping, Ceredigion Archives).

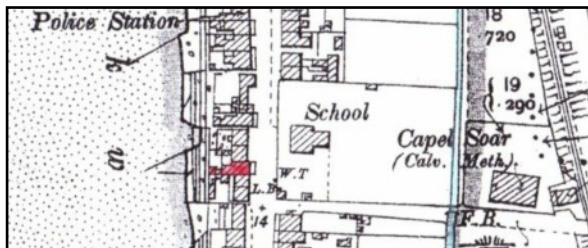


Epworth House in 1886, home of the Williams family is marked in red. The small building in the yard was probably its Ty Bach, outside lavatory. The house had a front garden. Detail from the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map, surveyed in 1886 and published in 1888. Cardiganshire III.10.

It is not possible to trace the people living in the old cottage in the early Census's. In the 1871 Census in Morfa Borth was a mariner's wife Susannah Williams, but it is not possible to say where she lived.

No 'footprint' of the old cottage was left when the present building was built. It was certainly there by the 1881 Census when the house had the name 'Epworth House'. In the house was Susannah Williams, then aged 42. Her husband was John Williams and Terry Davies writes that he was the first mate on the schooner *Dovey Belle* and became a captain in 1862 and commanded her and the *Dorothy* and a small barque the '*Glendovey*' (*Borth, a Maritime History*, page 126). Captain Williams retired in 1900 but he had moved away from Epworth House' by the 1891 Census.

Epworth House was to become the home for many years of Miss Annie Bathurst, born in Birmingham about 1886, who was a teacher and eventually head teacher of the National School over the road. In 1920 Miss Bathurst said in a questionnaire for the Cardiganshire Education Committee that she began work at the school in 1882 with twenty pupils. By 1919/1920 there were fifty. In 1891 at the Census she was living in Epworth House as a young 28 year old 'elementary teacher'. She was of course an English speaker. With her was her mother, a 58 year old widow, Julia Bathurst, of no occupation, also born in Birmingham. Miss Bathurst could play the organ, and played for example at the Harvest Festival Service at St Matthew's Church Borth on October 4th 1898 (Cambrian News, Ceredigion Archives). That year her mother Julia Elizabeth Mary Bathurst died (Parish Register). At the 1901 Census Miss Bathurst could afford to employ a 'general domestic servant' 14 year old Elizabeth Davies, born in Borth.



Miss Bathurst's Epworth House in 1904 is marked in red. Several lines of sea defences are at the back, they were usually rows of stakes driven into the stone bank. (Detail from the 25 inch Ordnance survey Map revised in 1904 and published in 1905. Cardiganshire III.10)

In 1910 for a tax planned but not levied, Epworth House was valued at £161. There would have been £6.16s to pay, £8 gross. The owner was Samuel Hodgson and Miss Bathurst was his tenant. He also owned Epworth Cottage next door (Ceredigion Archives, T/DV/18 and map at the National Library of Wales). By the 1911 Census Miss Bathurst was aged 45. In November 1924 she gave a speech at the Armistice Day Celebrations (Cambrian News). In 1925 Mr Hodgson paid the rates, and Miss Bathurst was still there. Her death was registered in 1936 (January 10th. Parish Register). She died aged 70.

In 1934 the owner of Epworth House was Lizzie Hodgson, and Miss Bathurst's name was crossed out and replaced by A. B. Holdings as the tenant. In 1938 R. B. Hutchings paid the rates. With a vote for the house in the General Election of 1945 was Brinley Llewellyn Jones, and Mr Hutchings paid the rates in 1949. He was Reginald Bathurst Hutchings and was at Epworth House at his death aged 77 in 1959.

In 1963 with a vote for the house was Daisy Hutchings, and Mrs Hutchings paid the rates that year.

Epworth is the name of a small town in North Lincolnshire.

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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-eredigion.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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