

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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FELINWERN Marsh Mill, near Glanlerry Farm, Borth

Today this is a bungalow and garden, with a generous sized yard with outbuildings, set on the former mill's ground bounded on the north partly by caravans, partly by the former mill's pasture ground, and on the south by the road from Llandre to Borth. A drive leads down to it from the road. The former Mill which was a stone building has gone.



ABOVE The west side of Felinwern in 2015. This has its garden with a loggia. On the right is sloping hillside up to the road.

Felinwern is a single storey bungalow under a gable roof at right angles to the road. The roof is a slate colour and has a brick chimney at its northern end. There is one small roof light for an upper floor under the roof. The walls are rendered. On the north side is an extension with a gable roof at right angles to the main roof. All the windows are modern, one facing west in the extension and the other larger windows look out over the garden. There are small windows too.



LEFT The east side of the bungalow in 2015.

There are four small roof lights in the roof on the east side for a floor under the roof. The windows this side of the bungalow reach up to the eaves, each with three lights, and there is a glazed front door with a small window beside it.

On the north end of the bungalow is a Conservatory. Opposite the door and round the north side of the bungalow is an area of hard standing. The rising ground up to the road can be seen on the left.



LEFT The south gable end of the bungalow and behind the building is the tailrace from the mill, and beyond are Glanlerry caravans. Near the camera is a bank up to the road from Llandre to Borth. There is some exposed stonework at the foot of the wall.

This replace the former Mill which was a stone building.

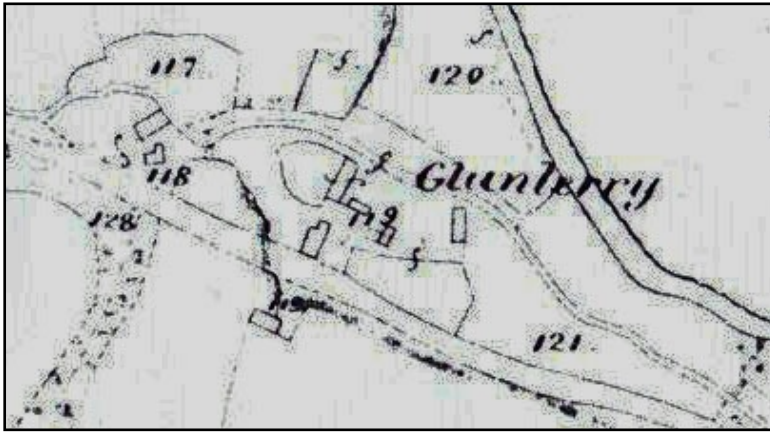
BELOW The garden and yard looking down from the road. Beyond is part of the former miller's pasture on the marsh over the stream. There is room in the yard for two quite long farm buildings and a smaller one, and there is a generous amount of hard standing.



THE MILL

This mill, a water corn mill, could be very old indeed as it was owned by the Glanlerry Estate whose records go back to the 1500s and it was probably in existence before that. It was on the west side and close to the Glanlerry Farm, the capital messuage (chief farm) of the Glanlerry Estate in the Cyfoeth-y-brenin township, in the parish of Llanfihangel Genau'r Glyn.

Tenants worked the mill. Buried on March 1st 1802 was John Edward of Melinwern. We do not know if he was the miller (Parish Register Llanfihangel Genau'r Glyn church).



LEFT We have a first glimpse of the Mill in 1848. It was Number 118 on the left, and its pasture was Number 117 on this detail from the Tithe Apportionments Map for Llanfihangel Genau'r Glyn, Cyfoeth-y-brenin township. (the original in colour is online, National Library of Wales CYNEFIN))

The mill was a sizeable rectangular building alongside the leat lying south-west to north-east. There was also a building on the site with a small extension on its north side – which could have been a cottage for the miller or a farm building. It was not at the same alignment as the Mill, being much more north-south. There were no other buildings. The Map's schedule just says 'Mill buildings and premises'. It had two pieces of land, a pasture lying north of the leat and tailrace called Cae Fach (Little Field) which was one rod and 33 perches – that is nearly a quarter of an acre. The other piece of ground was taken up by the Mill buildings and premises, and measured 2 rods and 24 perches – well over half an acre. The total was 1 acre and 17 perches. Lewis Jones was the miller in 1848. His landlord, the owner of the Glanlerry Estate was Henry Edward Lewis Gwynne. The miller would probably have had a 'house cow' for milk, and a horse for a cart but he would earn good money grinding the flour with which to buy food and goods for his family. Ten farms and some small-holdings of the estate were probably obliged by the estate owner to bring their flour to his mill; Glanlerry Farm, Ty'n-y-Simdde, Rhiwlas, Ty'n'r Helig, Ty Du, Brynrodyn, Pen-y-graig, Bryn Bala, Blaen-y-waun, Pen-y-goitan and small farms at Gwastad, and the Cwm Cethin (Ty Gwyn) smallholding at Glanwern. The mill's water came from the River Lerry opposite Ty'n-y-simdde just to the west of Dol-y-bont. It flowed westwards, moving across to be close to the road which ran above it on a shelf of higher ground, until it reached Glanlerry Farm also on a shelf of higher land by the road. The leat kept to the lower ground close to the farm yard, bringing water to the farm before continuing westward. Before it reached the mill it grew wider, perhaps acting as a mill pond to create the pressure needed to operate the mill wheel. It was used by the mill on the north side of its building. Because of the height of the ground the water wheel was probably fed by water at ground level and not overshot. This was a corn mill and unlike today, corn crops were grown by the local farmers who despite damp West Wales weather used kilns in their fields to dry the grain if necessary and more recently a brick extension at the mill had a fire to dry grain. An unfenced track led from the road to the mill. The miller had a footbridge across the leat to three small plots of land to the north, and with some land around the mill there were four paddocks in all. Enough for the miller to have pasture for a house cow, and a riding horse or pony for his cart (Tithe Apportionments Map detail see CYNEFIN National Library of Wales, Cyfoeth y brenin township, Llanfihangel Genau'r Glyn Parish, No.s 117 and 118 page 275, Tithe Map on-line)

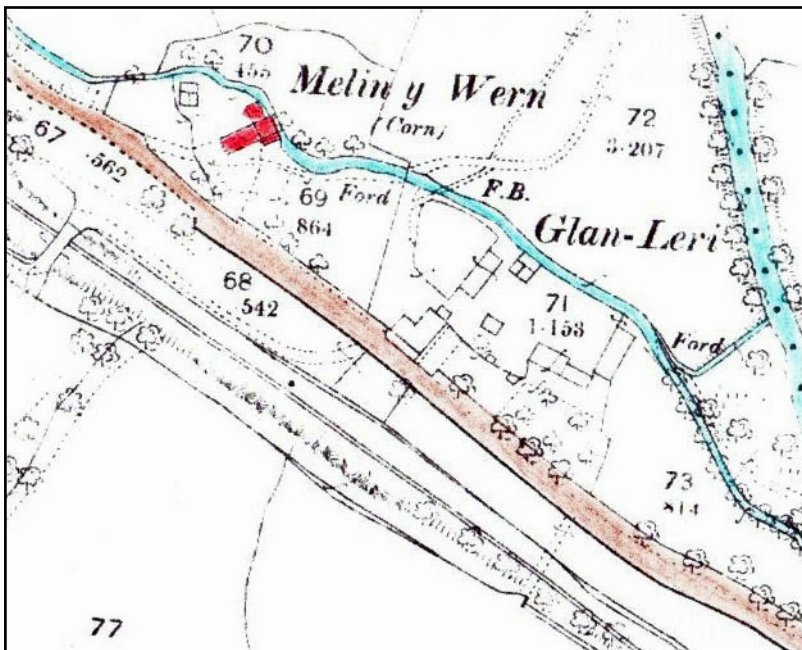
David Jones was the miller in Sept 20 1806, when his son John was christened. His wife was Ann, and their other children were a son Thomas christened at Llandre on the 10th October 1813, David on the 20th August 1815. Anne on the 23rd May 1818 and Mary on the 26th August 1821. On 25th July 1834 their son Richard Jones who had become a mariner wed Margaret James of Morfa Borth. She was the daughter of Enoch James of the White Lion Inn (now rebuilt as Mayfield). On 21rd of April 1833 another son Thomas Jones was born and he would become a miller with his father. Thomas and his wife Elizabeth had a daughter Anne christened on January 3rd 1837.

On August 2nd 1848 David Jones the miller died and his estate was valued at a sum under £300. He had made a profit each year of £13 from his lease of the Mill. He had debts of £100. His son Richard (the mariner) had died, leaving a grandson David Evan Jones. His daughters had all married; Mrs Mary Edwards, Mrs Margaret Williams and Mrs Catherine Jenkins, and he was able to leave £9 to be shared between them in his Will (National Library of Wales online).

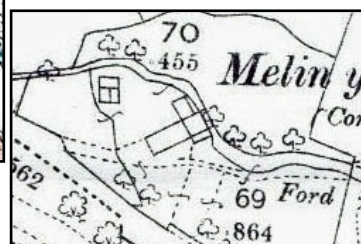
At the 1851 Census (under Borth) Thomas Jones was the miller. He was not local, he had been born in Carnarvonshire in 1807, and was 44. His wife Elizabeth was 47, she was local born in the parish. Their children there were; Elizabeth, 17 (born about 1834) Jane, 15, Anne 13, Mary 6, and William 1. The mill had a 'servant', John Pierce aged 15, born in Llanfihangel Genau'r Glyn and lodging there was a labourer David James born about 1793.

In 1853 John Evans was a miller at the Wern Mill, his wife was Elinor and their son David was christened that year. John was 48 in 1861 born in Vainor Uchaf, and he was a printer as well as a Miller. His wife Elinor was 47, his daughter Margaret was 21, his son John was 19 and was helping work the mill, his daughter Jane was 17 and was earning money for the family as a dressmaker, his son William was 14, his daughter Mary was 12, and his son Hugh was 10, these six were all born in Vainor Uchaf which is in Llanbadarn Fawr. Born at the mill were Eleanor 6, David 3, and Morris, 1. Also there was John's grandson John Rees Morgan aged 10 months. The mill's servant was John Jones 24, born about 1837, he was a carter and was at the Mill by 1855 (1861 Census) There was room in the mill for all these, and for a place to do the printing which may explain the size of the building on the 1888 map.

In 1871 John Evans was just the printer, his son John was working the mill and there was a 14 year old lad to help (Census). In 1881 his son John continued to work the mill. He was married with three small children all born at the mill and a local sixteen year old lad from Pant-y-dderwen John Thomas was there to help, and his wife Sarah had a lass to help her, thirteen year old Elizabeth Davies.



LEFT In 1886 there is a sizeable mill building and a small building near the tailrace on the west of the yard. The ground belonging to the mill on the 1848 Tithe Map is the same, a piece to the north and a piece with a track up to the road on the south. The mill is coloured red. The leat is blue.



Some trees were marked too. There was no separate house for the miller but the mill building is divided into several sections. The south end of the mill seems longer and had sections marked on it. possibly the former miller John Evan's printing business was there, and possibly there was a home for the miller

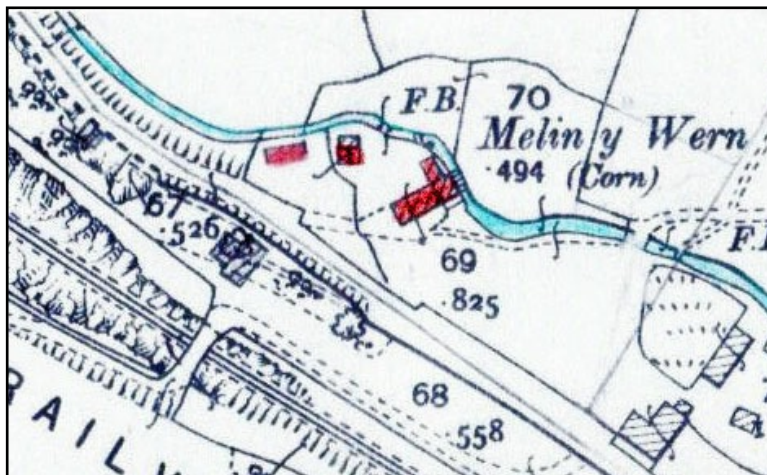
and his family. There was also one small building, with the shape of a farm building such as a pig sty on the west of the ground. The building of 1848 had gone. Dotted lines suggest an area of garden running north-north east from the road hedge. Some large trees were drawn in inside the road hedge, and on the other side of the leat and tailrace. The Mill ground was fenced or hedge off from the yard of Glanlerry Farm. A track led from the mill to the place where there was a good bridge across the leat used by Glanlerry Farm. Once across the stream the miller's northern field abutted on this track. This field ended with a curvy boundary and beyond were large enclosures from the marsh, then meadowland of the Glanlerry Farm (A detail from the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map of 1888, surveyed in 1886 Cardiganshire NW)

The miller at the time of the map was John Evans. In 1881 he was 38 and born at Waunfawr, Cardiganshire. With him in the mill was his wife Sarah, 35, born in Llanidloes, and children; John D. Evans 8, (1873) Sarah 6, Ellen 2, and Elizabeth 9 months. They were all born at the mill. They had a farm servant William James, aged 19, born at Pantydderwen, Cardiganshire about 1862, and Elizabeth Davies, aged 13, a servant born in Borth (1881 Census). This family was at the mill by 1873 – and it was still a working corn mill.

However, there were new people there 1891. In 'Felinwern Mill' was Anne Williams a lead miner's wife, aged 30, and born in Llandeinol. With her were five children, Mary 9, William 6, John 5 and Jane 3 who were all born at Penryncoch. Only the eighteen month old Eleanor had been born in Borth - so this family had not been at Felinwern very long.

In 1895 the miller was Owen Owens. (Kelly's Directory). Was he the last miller?

In Felin-y-wern at the 1901 Census was John Owens, 29, a lead miner and employee, born at Aberdyfi. He could speak English and Welsh. His wife Mary was 28 and born in Talybont, and they had small children, Richard Jenkin Owens 5, and Maggie Owens 4. They were both born in Talybont and Welsh speaking. There was no mention of a miller. Milling had ended.



LEFT In 1904 John Owens had his own foot-bridge close to the mill to reach his land on the north of the leat and tailrace stream (Detail from the 25 inch Ordnance survey Map revised in 1904 and published in 1905, Cardiganshire NW)

The mill building was much longer and had an extension on its north west end. John Owen was still there in 1910 when for Valuation for a tax not levied it was described as the Mill House only, valued at one hundred and seventy-one pounds and ninety pence – but this included Cwm Cethin (now Ty Gwyn). There was £3. 4s. to pay, £4 gross. The owner was Miss Lewis who owned the Glanlerry Estate. The occupier was John Owens (sic). Once again there was no mention of a corn mill. In 1911 it had five main rooms and John described himself as a farmer. By then there were four children in the family; Richard Jenkin Owen, John Hayden Owen, Margaret Owen and Gwladys Owen. The house had a

garden for which in 1925 he paid rates of three pounds six shillings and threepence, gross four pounds two shillings and four pence. The rates he paid for the mill's land, then five and a half acres, more than in 1848, were eight pounds one shilling and six pence and gross eight pounds ten shillings. He was still there to pay the rates in 1938. Mary Owen (his widow) paid the rates in 1949.

About 1924 the Glanleri Estate was being broken up. Paying the rates in 1925 and in 1938/9 was John Owen. (£4) The Owen family eventually bought Felinwern and set up and ran a dairy there.



LEFT John Owen taking milk in a churn on his cart round Morfa Borth in 1927. In the background is Pantyfedwen (Photograph courtesy of John Owen of the Railway Inn Morfa Borth)

The Felinwern Owen family were farming more land than the mill had previously had. A recent Sale listed some extra pasture land measuring 5.2 acres, which was two small fields of pasture together 4.8 acres, and a small area, 0.4 acres of woodland. It is on the other side of the railway from the Ty'n Simne house and belonged in 1848 to its former farm. (Tithe Map). These fields were created out of larger fields when the railway was built, and are edged on the south by steeply rising hillside with woodland. Perhaps this land was bought at the break up of the Glanlerry Estate?

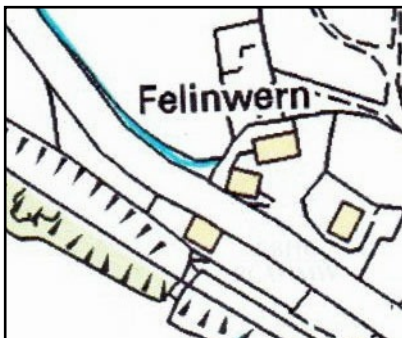
John Owen died in 1941.

With votes for Felinwern in 1945 were Ceinwen Owen, Eurian E. Owen, Gwladys Owen, Margaret Owen and Mrs Mary Owen and Mrs Owen paid the Rates in 1949. £4. She died in 1952. Her daughter Margaret died in 1978 and Gwladys in 1988. They were buried at Llandre.

We have some memories of the mill building from John Owen's great grandson who was a child there, brought up by his two aunts, Margaret and Gwladys and they were a Welsh speaking family. 'A great big building' he said. At that time the mill house had a home in the centre of it. Melinwern's walls were rubble stone with some large blocks of stone and many rounded stones from the beach, and they were whitewashed. The roof was Welsh slates. Water to work the wheel which was on the east side of the mill building came under the road via a wooden channel to the wheel. It had come downhill and was fast flowing. The axle was quite high up so the mill stones were on the upper floor, the wheel however

had gone. This north end of the building had a wing on the west side with a brick oven in the centre over which grain was dried and it had a tunnel all round it. This mill end of the building was partitioned off from the parlour with a clom (mud) wall and there was a chimney so both the mill side and the parlour side could be warmed by a fire. The centre of the building was a home – a ground floor and loft. The parlour ceiling was supported by an old ship's mast of the very good quality yellow pine found after a shipwreck. The loft was open to a roof of hand cut timber fastened with wooden pegs. On the south end of the building was a cowshed and dairy and room for the cows or calves to be brought in during the winter. On the ground floor between that and the parlour was a small room where Gwladys and Margaret Owen made butter and cheese. After John Owen had died they were farming their four paddocks, looking after cows and delivering milk around Borth in a churn from a horse and cart. The photograph of this was taken in 1927. In the paddock to the west of the mill building was a pig sty with pigs. Beyond it on the far east boundary and alongside the stream was their barn. There were also chickens. The mill had cottager's rights to graze cattle on two sections of common, each of forty acres half a mile along the road towards Dol-y-bont. When the ladies were elderly their brother John and Richard's son helped with the farming. Sometime in the 1930s the windows were given metal frames.

John Owen's great grandson inherited a share of the mill with his father and uncle and bought the uncle's share, and eventually had the whole mill. He found it easier to graze sheep on the common land though this was then not allowed. He never lived in the house, putting tenants in it for a while, and then about 1990 he pulled it down and built the present bungalow in its place.



LEFT A ground plan of the site in 2105. The bungalow and its garden are on the right, the yard with outbuildings on the left. It appears that the tailrace stream had been put underground - possibly so as not to interfere with the caravans (Detail from a six inch map, Ceredigion Archives).

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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