

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

This work is for research and educational purposes only.

FROLIC formerly New Gift.

Morfa Borth - the Marsh Harbour

This cottage was the home of or was owned by a Hughes family of master mariners until the beginning of the twentieth century.



LEFT Frolic in 2017

The cottage is built on the east side of the High Street and was formerly part of 'New Gift Place' named after a sloop built in Aberystwyth in 1808. Its master in 1826 was John Hughes. It sailed in the coastal trade until 1842 when it was broken up (Aberystwyth Register of shipping Ceredigion Archives). The cottage was one of several John Hughes built after 1832 and

before 1846.

Frolic is a rubble stone cottage one and a half storeys high, with an upper floor under the roof. It is semi-detached and shares a roof height with Dovey Cottage next door on the north, and it is double fronted and the walls are rendered. There is a brick chimney on the south of the roof. Many years ago the main living room/ kitchen is likely to have been on that side of the cottage - the other side may have been the bedroom of the owner, and upstairs a loft for children and/or visitors. The dormer windows are in the casement style with thin glazing bars. The ground floor windows are large square bay windows considerably larger than the windows of Borth's old cottages. The front door is lapped timber, studded, and with antique

style hinges. The front garden is narrow, enclosed by a very low wall with two wooden bars above it with gate posts at the corners.

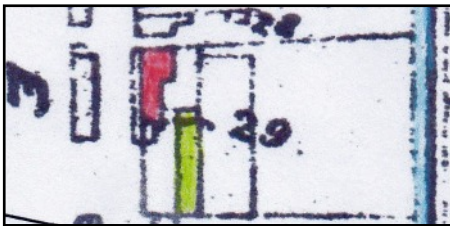


LEFT Frolic is one of a pair with Bwthyn Dyfi next door.

The cottage stands on a substantial pebble embankment built up by the sea over many centuries, and alongside an ancient highway. Since early medieval times travellers to North Wales came along this highway on their way to cross the River Dovey by boat, later by ferry. By 1770 the highway was important enough to be a turnpike road. So access to a building beside it was easy,

and the highway was especially convenient for mariners; for fishermen to reach Aberleri when the River Leri spilled out into the sea where they could moor their vessels, and for mariners to reach the port at Aberdovey to join wooden sailing ships. The River Lerry once flowed along the landward side of the embankment and beyond was the huge Cors Fochno peat bog. By 1790 the river had been re-routed further inland allowing drained pastures to be created. (National Library of Wales, Gogerddan Estate Map 232). A water supply for the dwellers on the embankment had been made by 1829 called 'The Brook' and it used the old route of the river. (National Archives LRRO 1/3060) This had fresh water from the River Lerry first used by the Melin-y-wern water mill at Glan Lerry (now gone), and added to by small streams. Today the water is directed out to sea by a pipe close to the Lifeboat house, and behind Morfa Borth its old route is still a deep ditch, possibly straightened when the railway was built alongside. The position of the 'Brook' allowed enough space for gardens behind the dwellings.

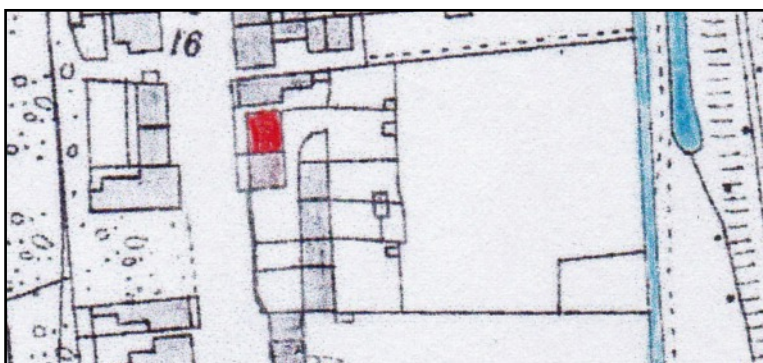
The stone embankment on which the buildings stood was considered to be 'waste' by the manor of Llanfihangel Genau'r Glyn as it could not be used for farming. When a plot was enclosed to build a cottage on it - an encroachment - the Crown which owned the manor charged annual rent for it. In 1829 the plot could be bought for three years rent. (Map National Archives LRRO 1/3060) Master mariner Captain John Hughes with shares in ships was able to afford to buy the ground in 1822, and by 1829 he had built a terrace of homes on it set back from the street. He paid £20 for the ground. By 1832 there were plans to build more dwellings alongside the street. These would be where Gleaner, Frolic and Bwthyn Dyfi stand today.



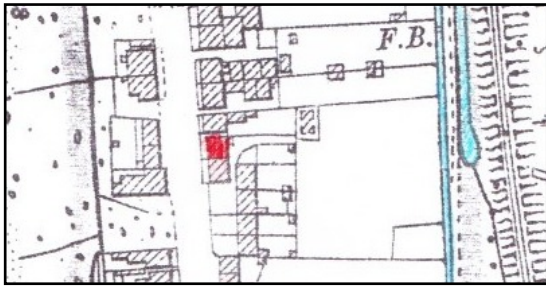
LEFT In 1848 marked in red is a block of cottages and gardens alongside the street owned by Mary Hughes the widow of Captain John Hughes. Coloured green are the cottages previously built (Detail from the Tithe Apportionments Map for Llanfihangel Genau'r Glyn, Cyfoeth Township, on-line at CYNEFIN)

Possibly living in one of these in 1841 was Evan Hughes a mariner aged 30, born about 1811, with a wife Jane the same age. They had three daughters, Margaret 15, Jane 8 and Mary 5. Evan became a master mariner and owned shares in ships between 1827 and 1845, and he owned the sloop Mary and the sloop Thomas, but he had to mortgage her in 1845. It is likely that in today's Frolic in 1851 was Jane Hughes, possibly Evan's widow, and as the 'proprietor of houses' she was a descendant of John Hughes who built them. She was still there in 1861 and 1871. (Census's and Aberystwyth Register of Shipping, Ceredigion Archives).

At the 1881 Census the New Gift name was important enough to be remembered, and given to several adjacent homes as 'New Gift Place'. It is likely 'Frolic' was then the home of another member of the Hughes family, Jane Hughes, a 48 year old widow of 'Independent Means' and born about 1833. She had had a husband who had provided well for his family, usually in Borth this was a master mariner and ship owner.



LEFT Marked in red is the cottage in 1886. It had a front garden as it does today and a back garden with what is now Bwthyn Dyfi. The small building might have been its Ty Bach - outside lavatory. The row of the old cottages were still out the back (Detail from the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map surveyed in 1886 and published in 1888. Cardiganshire NW III.10)



LEFT This detail from the 1905 Map shows that the rear of the cottage has altered. There is a passageway to the building in the corner of the field which was a stable of the dairy farmer living at Pwllmawr Cottage in the terrace behind. There was a garden area for New Gift but it is not clear on this map (Detail from the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map revised in 1904 and published in 1905. Cardiganshire NW III.10)

At the 1891 Census the cottage was called 'New Gift House'. Living there was a young mariner's wife, Anne Williams aged 28 and born in Borth about 1863. She spoke both English and Welsh.

At the 1901 Census in New Gift Cottage and running a dressmaking business there was Jane Hughes, a wife aged 55, born in Portmadoc about 1846 and so too was her daughter Jane aged 14 and at school. They were Welsh speakers.

In 1910 for a tax planned but not levied the cottage was valued at £53, the owner was Thomas Hughes who lived there. The tax to pay would have been £3.4s and £4 gross. This was a respectable amount for a Borth cottage and garden - suggesting it was the rubble stone cottage we see today.

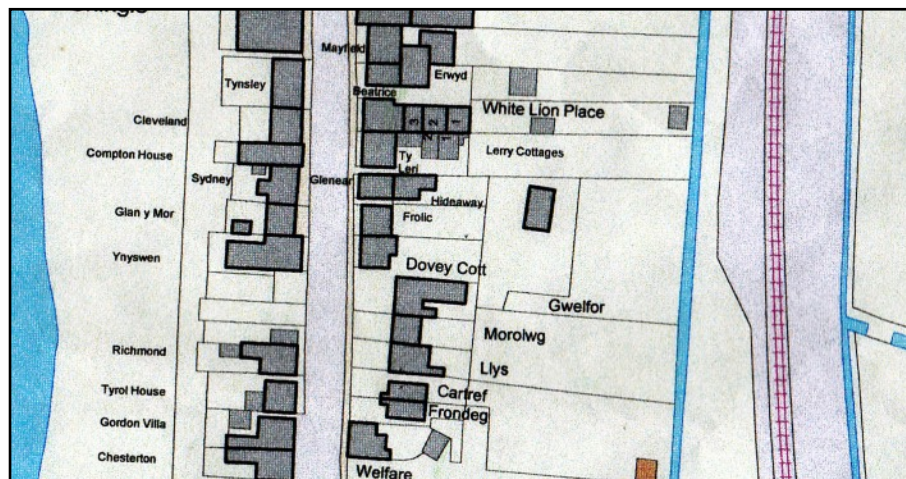
At the Census of 1911 the cottage had just four rooms not including any scullery at the back if it had one. Thomas Hughes was a merchant seaman, aged 73 and a widower. He was born in Borth the son of master mariner John Hughes and his wife Jane and baptised on September 9 1837. He was a Welsh speaker. His daughter Jane aged 23 was his housekeeper. She had not married and was born in Portmadoc. His son Charles Henry aged 28 and unmarried was a moulder in an iron foundry works. He too was born in Portmadoc.

In 1925 for the Rates the cottage was owned by Jane Williams and a tenant called Williams was living there. The cottage was still called New Gift in 1949 for the Rates and was owned by Harker. The council did not know his first name.

In 1934 and 1938 there was also a shop with the house. Thomas Jones paid the rates.

In 1949 ,,.,.,, Harker paid the rates for New Gift it was still a humble cottage. In 1957 the cottage had its name Frolic, and Kenneth H. Walters paid the rates. It had increased in value, so possibly some improvements had been made.

BELOW A detail from a modern Council Map shows Frolic with a building beyond (Detail from a map courtesy of Councillor Ray Quant who provided it for research for a village event).



I could not find it in the electoral register and list of rate payers in 1963 (Electoral Registers and Rates, Ceredigion Archives)

By 1975 the old cottage behind it had gone (Historical Maps On-line)

Today the cottage has a rectangular garden at the back and modern maps show a building on the field area behind all the cottages.

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-eredigion.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-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.

Beryl Lewis retains the copyright in her work and the histories are made available for private use and research only.



Cyngor Sir
CEREDIGION
County Council



Archifdy
Ceredigion
Archives