

# 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.*

## GLANWERN HOUSE Glanwern Village, Borth.

Home of master mariner Captain John Francis and his family – the most valuable house in the village - and on ground that members of the Francis family had cottages on before 1848.



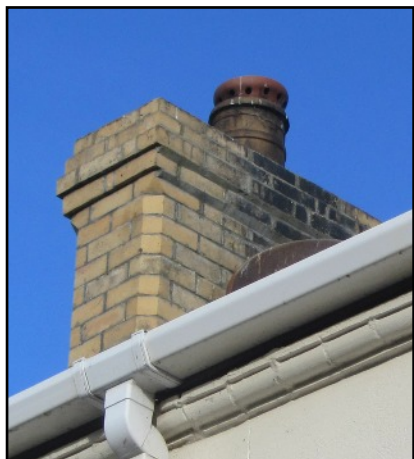
Glanwern House is a one and a half storey house with rendered walls in two sections, its eastern part is set back further from the road and is built over a passageway to the garden. The property has a wide frontage with room for a garage joining the eastern end of the house. The main section of the house is under a gable roof parallel with the road, with a yellow brick chimney with one chimney pot on the western end of it. The upper windows are dormer windows, partly in the roof. They have plain barge boards. The windows are modern and they have a pattern of small diamond panes. The two lower windows are oriel windows beneath a lean to roof of slate colour with hipped ends. Two handsomely carved brackets support this roof either side of the front door. It is topped by a string course. The roof does not fill the entire front, and bold rusticated masonry lines have been drawn on the plaster below it. A low





rendered wall surrounds the narrow front garden. It is topped along the front by metal posts from which hang two chains. There is a wrought iron gate. It is possible that the main section of the house is rubble stone beneath the rendering.

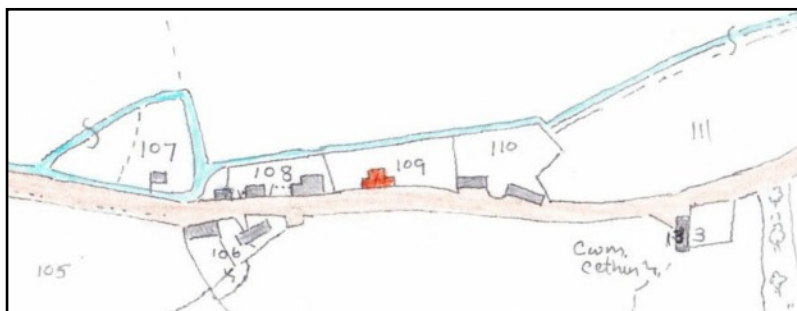
At the rear the tailrace is now piped below ground. The garden extends to the foot of the railway embankment.



*LEFT The chimney is yellow brick. This photograph and all the photographs on page 1 were taken in 2015.*

The reason the small Glanwern Village could grow was the presence of the tailrace from the Felinwern Mill close to Glanlerry Farm, which brought fresh water from the River Lerry. It was joined by a small stream down the valley behind Ty Gwyn too. The watercourse also helped drain the marsh on the north of it. The old name for the marsh was Wern Leri and it was later used as common land (1859 Crown Manor map National Archives LRRO 1/3060).

After passing Glanwern the tailrace ran seawards then turned along behind Borth High Street, providing a brook with fresh water for the houses and cottages there. This 'brook' is marked on a map of 1829. Today the water flows out to sea from a pipe near the Lifeboat House. Though the western section of Glanwern Village was built on land considered 'waste' by the Crown Manor, maps of its 'waste' clearly shows that the site of Glanwern House was not considered 'waste' (National Archives LRRO 1/3060). The ground to the east could be good enough to be farmed, and this began on its western boundary. However such a small strip of land between the road and the tailrace was a suitable place to build cottages on. There was already a settlement at Glanwern by 1806 when Elizabeth Davies said at the Census of 1861 that she was born there. The road was there too, it was shown on a map of 1829 and led down to three lime kilns beginning where the road opened on to the beach, later there would be four. Lime would be carried to farms inland and the road connected to an important road, as today, at Rhyd-y-pennau. The High Street road at Borth was very ancient as in Norman times it was a quick way to north Wales along the shingle bank and sand dune area at Ynyslas and then by ferry across the River Dovey to Aberdovey.



*LEFT In 1848 the ground on which Glanwern House stands was part of plot 109 of one rod and one perch, which on the map had the cottage and gardens of John Morgan and William Francis born about 1806. John Morgan was a carpenter and*

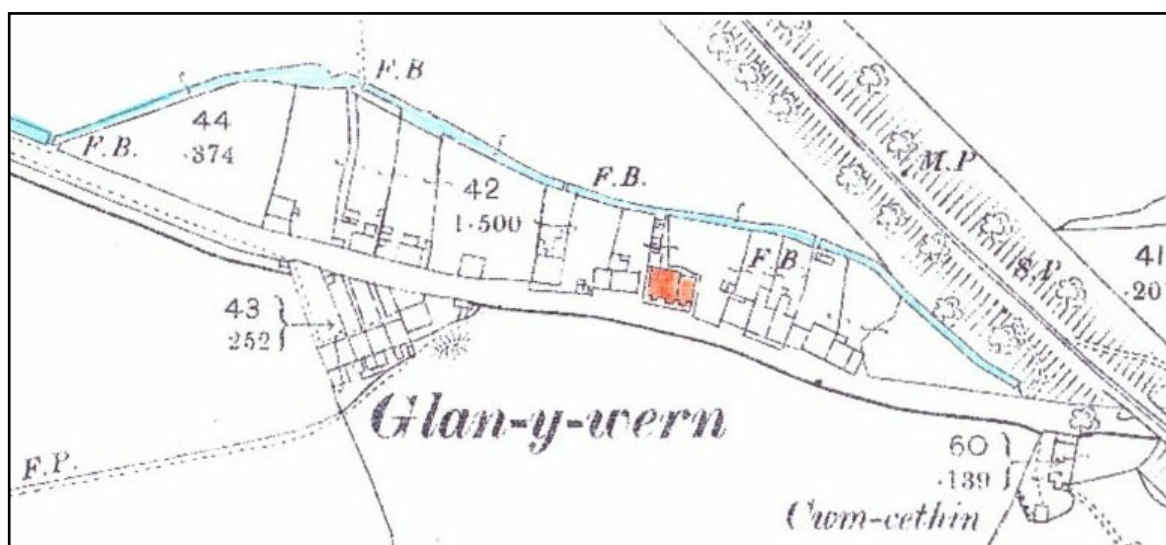
*William Francis was a mariner. Two thirds of 109 was 'waste', with cottages in a cluster in the centre marked in red. On the non-waste site on the east (right hand) side was where Glanwern House would eventually be built (Detail copied from the Tithe Apportionments Map of Llanfihangel Genau'r Glyn, Cyfoeth-y-brenin township, on-line at CYNEFIN).*

At the 1841 Census William the mariner's wife was Anne, born about 1811. Their son John was 8, so born about 1811 and another son William was 5. In another cottage was John Francis a farm worker was 70 and his wife was also 70. Their children, if they had them were not there. Also at Glanwern and still there in 1881 was Richard Francis, another farm worker.

At the 1851 Census in a cottage was the wife of a sailor, Anne Francis aged 44 and born about 1807 in Taicanol. She when widowed would be living in Glanwern House with her son John and his family. With her was her daughter Margaret aged 22 and unmarried. She had been born in Brynerfen, Cardiganshire. Her son John Francis born about 1830 at Glanwern went to sea and became a master mariner, and his home would be Glanwern House - he possibly built it.

At In the house at the 1861 Census was John Francis and his wife Eleanor, aged 33, born about 1828. With them were two young daughters, Mary Anne aged 2 and Margretta a baby. Also there was his mother Anne Francis, by then a widow of 55. John Francis became a Captain and was ship owner, he had shares in the barque Glendovey of 588 tons a few years before 1879, which he had bought from William James of Aberdovey ('A Real Little Seaport, The Port of Aberdyfi' by Lewis Lloyd, p. 152).

At the 1871 Census Captain Francis was away, probably at sea. In the house were his wife Eleanor, and with her was their daughters Margretta, 10, and Elenor 5, and her mother in law, Anne Francis. By the 1881 Census John Francis's wife Eleanor had died. She was buried at Llandre on 23 January 1877, aged only 49. She has a very fine grave stone, written in Welsh with an englyn (a Welsh poem). Though this was an Anglican Church, Borth Chapel people were buried in its graveyard as the ground by Borth's chapels was not suitable. In 1881 John Francis was in the house with his three daughters, Mary Ann 21, Margretta 20, and Ellen 15. Also there was his mother Anne Francis then 75. She was to be buried on the 1st. November 1883 at Llandre aged 78. Captain Francis's daughter Mary Anne was buried at Llandre, aged only 24 that year. In Glanwern at that time there was still another Francis family, Richard a farm worker and his wife Jane.



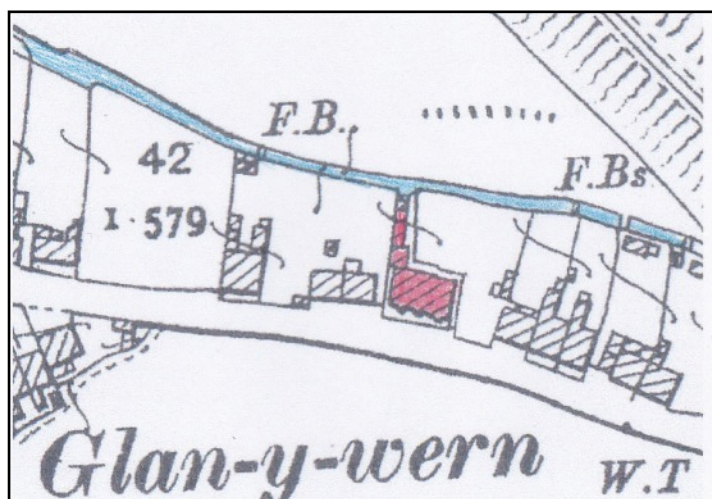
ABOVE In 1886 the home of the Francis family was a sizeable house in two parts, with a narrow house joined to it on the east. Three bay windows seem to be drawn along the front. The larger house has two bay windows. There was a narrow front garden they shared, and a narrow passageway at both sides that continued along the rear of the building led off to the tailrace. At the back of the house was a yard and a detached building possibly with a Ty Bach -outside lavatory. The 'S' shaped braces suggest that Glanwern House owned the terrace of three houses on its western side, now Tree Cottage, Bushbury and Haulfryn. The Francis family still owned Tree Cottage in 1910 (Detail from the Ordnance Survey Map surveyed in 1886 and published in 1888)

At the 1891 Census Captain John Francis had already retired from the sea, he was 60 and a widower. His daughter Margretta aged 30 and unmarried was acting as housekeeper. Also in the house was his daughter Ellen aged 25 and a domestic servant, Sarah Morris aged 15. It was a Welsh speaking household.

Captain Francis was also there at the 1901 Census, aged 71, He was still being looked after by his daughter Ellen who was 35 and had not married. She was born in Glanwern, about 1866.



*ABOVE This is from a photograph taken by John Thomas sometime after 1885 but before 1905. Glanwern House is in the centre, and we are looking at the house of Captain John Francis. It had one height of roof with three chimneys, and was a full two storey's high. The three chimneys suggest that a section had been added on the east of the house – on the right in the photograph. For another of the Francis brothers perhaps? How ever there was only one front door in the double fronted section on the west. The windows were sash windows with small panes of glass. The tiny high window at the side was for a loft. The house looks in good repair (National Library of Wales On-line)*



*LEFT In 1904 the building is marked as one house. By the narrow passageway leading to the tailrace was a long narrow building. On this map the 'S' shaped braces suggest that the same owner for all the Glanwern homes on that side of the road (Detail from the Ordnance Survey Map of 1905 for Cardiganshire revised in 1904)*

In 1910 for a tax planned but not levied, the house did not have a name, it was just 'House and Garden', and was valued at £240.

There would have been £10 4s to pay, £12 gross. This was the most valuable house in Glanwern village. Captain John Francis owned it, and living there was his daughter Ellen.

This story is from the Cambrian News of 20<sup>th</sup> May 1910, with the title, "Serious Damage by Fire". Captain J. Francis's Glanwern, one of two houses abutting the main road to Aberystwyth, was totally destroyed by fire early Sunday morning. On Friday evening Captain Francis was in the house by himself. He was reaching a book from the bookcase when the



lamp in his hand fell and ignited some clothes on a chair. He then extinguished the flame, but during the night heard a creaking and groaning and going downstairs found the house full of smoke. With the assistance of Captain Davies his neighbour (at Bushbury) the fire was again extinguished. Miss Francis and her sister Mrs T. C. Evans had gone to Birmingham for the weekend. Captain Francis slept on Saturday night at Tremydon with his son in law. At 7 am on Saturday smoke was seen escaping from the chimneys of Glanywern and the fire was discovered in time to enable the residents of the neighbouring houses to escape in their night attire. Although the water supply was scarce, the efforts to prevent the fire spreading were successful. A number of willing helpers worked strenuously but were unable to extinguish the fire before the contents of Glanywern were completely destroyed. The damage which is estimated at £1,000 is covered by Insurance.”

Captain Francis was 81 years old, he died the following year and was buried at St Michael’s Llandre on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1911 aged 82. He had been a valuable member of the parish. For example in 1877 to 1895 he served on a Parish Sanitary Committee whose job was to get Borth a much needed good and adequate water supply (Cambrian News, Friday June 23<sup>rd</sup>)



*LEFT This was Captain Francis’s house before the fire.*



*ABOVE RIGHT This is a detail from a Judges postcard of a much later in date. You may be surprised how different the house looks. It still did not have the extension on the east (the side nearest to us) but it is otherwise the house we see today.*

The house was not listed in the 1911 Census – possibly no one was there to fill in the form or the house may still have been damaged from the fire.

Glanywern was not listed in the Rates of 1925, but paying the Rates in 1938/9 was Eleanor (Ellen) Francis £6 and it had its name, ‘Glanwern House’. The house must have been re-built. Miss Francis was the owner of the house and her nephew the Rev. J. C. Evans of the Libanus Chapel came to live at the house with his family. (Article reprinted, of J. E. Lloyd in Y Tincer, called ‘Glanwern 1906’ with photograph.)

Paying the Rates in 1949 was Miss Evans, and paying the Rates in 1963 was John Elwned Evans.

A map of 1975 shows the long narrow building at the rear was still there and there was no extension on the eastern end (Historic Maps On-line) A modern Council Map shows this narrow building had gone.

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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.

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