

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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GLEANER

Built, or adapted in 1881 from a cottage by a James family of master mariners. It was named after a schooner called 'Gleaner' rebuilt at Lerry Bridge in 1848, of 59 tonnage, and captained by David James in 1849. She was wrecked off the Irish coast in December 1869 but all the crew were saved. (Shipping Register, Ceredigion Archives)



LEFT Gleaner when repairs were happening to the slate hung side.

Gleaner is a single fronted house a full two storeys high, and with attic rooms and a cellar. The front door is on the northern side of the front, which is rendered with a pebble dash finish and smooth borders around the windows and door. The windows and door are beneath a low arch unusual for Borth High Street houses. The front door sits deep inside its arch, and is modern. The eaves have a decorative moulding built of pinky yellow bricks. The house has a gable roof of fairly deep pitch, with a slab brick chimney of 18 courses on its southern end, with a decorative band near the top. Two chimney pots were there in 2009. There are roof



lights on the front for the attics. The south side gable wall is of red brick with a lower section of rubble stone and is slate hung. There is a small window near the gable of sash pattern with two lights. The front garden is edged by a low stone wall with railings. There is a side entrance on the south side with a decorative wrought iron gate.

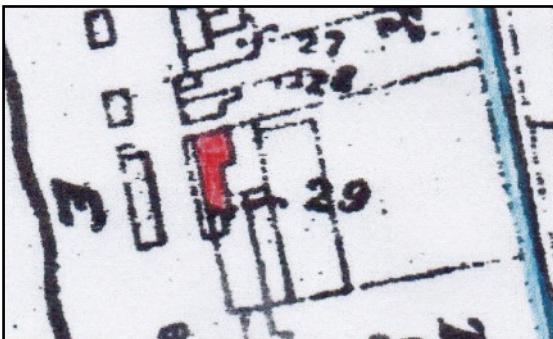
LEFT Gleaner in 2009.

The brick pattern of the eaves suggest the front of this house is rubble stone with yellow bricks edging the door and windows in a style popular in Borth in the second half of the nineteenth century - see for example Chesterton and Gordon Villa. The old windows would have had smaller panes and given a very different front to the house.

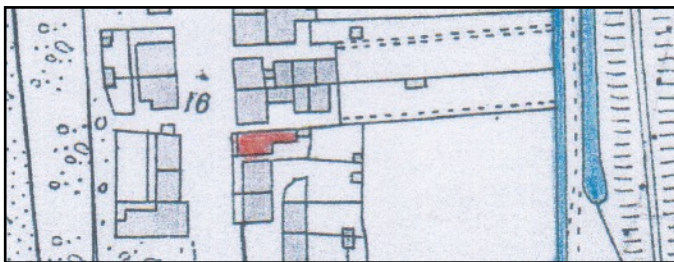


ABOVE In 2013 before repairs were made this small exposed detail of the wall showed there had been yellow bricks around the window and some rubble stone walling.

This building 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 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 Leri 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 fresh water supply for the cottages and houses built on the embankment had been made by 1829 called 'The Brook' using the old route of the River Leri and with water from the corn mill at Glanlerry (now gone) and two other small streams (National Archives Map 1829, LRRO 1/3060). Its old route is still a deep ditch. 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 a plot could be bought for three years rent. On a map of 1829 there were no buildings where Gleaner stands today it was the northern part of a big plot enclosed in 1822 of three quarters of an acre of master mariner John Hughes who had shares in ships. He could afford to buy the ground for £10. On it were built a row of cottages set back from the street. (National Archives Map 1829, LRRO 1/3060)



LEFT In 1848 the Tithe Map on 29 shows the row of old cottages, and marked in red a block of buildings, the northernmost one was larger and on the site where Gleaner is today. The owner was Mary Hughes, the widow of master mariner Captain John Hughes (Tithe Apportionments Map for Llanfihangel Genau'r Glyn, Cyfoeth Township, No. 29 on-line at CYNEFIN).



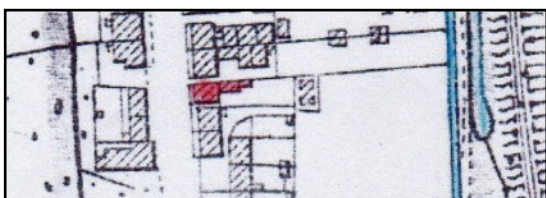
LEFT In 1886 a map showed three buildings in the block - two cottages and marked in red Gleaner had been built probably replacing a former cottage on the site. The house had a tiny front garden, a back yard and a garden beyond, and one of the tiny buildings would have been the Ty Bach - the outside

lavatory of the house. There was quite a big wing on the back of the house which may have had its kitchen. (Detail from the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map, surveyed in 1886 and published in 1888, Cardiganshire NW III.10)

Gleaner was built by the James family who date back to master mariner Enoch James and his father, also a master mariner who ran the White Lion Inn (now Mayfield) just up the road. Enoch junior's son James wed a Hughes girl, Martha Hughes in 1842, one of the daughters of master mariner John Hughes. This I suspect is how the site of Gleaner came into the James family. David and Martha's son Captain Hugh James, born in 1844, and his family moved from 2 Picton Terrace (now Ty Canol) on the beach side of the High Street into a newly built or re-built 'Gleaner'. Hugh had wed a girl born in Merthry Tydfil, known as Maggie. They had five sons and one daughter Martha. Their eldest son John Watkin James was born abroad, son Hugh was born at sea, and there were sons David, Evan and Charles.

In 1891 the family employed a 30 year old woman servant. In 1894 Captain James was a useful member of the community and chosen to be one of the Jurors on Tuesday September 25th and Thursday October 4th at the Inquest on the death of Mary Davies who was murdered.

At Gleaner when the Census takers called in 1901 was a Williams family likely to be related to the Hughes by marriage. The husband was away from home, but Jane Williams was 42 and and in the house were a daughter Maggie, and sons David, John, Abraham, Richard and Edward, aged from 20 to 6, and a twelve year old Hughes niece. They were all born in Borth.



LEFT On the 1905 Map the yard has gone, and over the fence or wall at the back of the garden was another building.

In 1910 at a valuation for a tax planned but never levied this was a valuable 'house and garden' of £405, with £15.16s to pay and £18 gross - valued as much as the three storey Numbers 11 and 12 Cambrian Terrace. The owner was Hugh James and there was a tenant, Thomas Richards, a Borth man. He was a stone mason, in particular a 'monumental mason'. His wife Catherine was born in Taliesin. Married in 1903 they had a baby daughter.

Sometime after 1922 the house was advertised for holiday visitors with 6 bedrooms and 2 sitting rooms. In November 1924 Hugh Stanley Jones was living there when he stood as a labour candidate in a Mock Election at the Libanus Literary and Debating Society. In 1925 Maggie James owned the house, and Hugh Stanley Jones was her tenant.

In 1944 on January 7th. there was a Sale of Modern Furniture by auction at Gleaner. It gives us an idea of how the house had been furnished. Included were from upstairs; oak, brass and iron bedsteads complete, a satin walnut bedroom suite, dressing chests, wash stands, a cot, feather beds, pillows, bolsters, chests of drawers, towel rails, toilet ware, and bedroom chairs. From downstairs; a a walnut sideboard, arm chairs, a couch, an overmantel, a stair carpet, curtains, rush matting, a settee, dining chairs, an oak dining table, a cupboard, mirrors, an oak kneeler

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desk, an oak five drawer dresser, 23 old jugs, willow pattern plates and dishes, an oak round table, electrolux (tea service?), a tea trolley, a kitchen armchair, umbrella stand, and kitchen utensils etc.

On Tuesday April 11th. 1944 the house was up for sale, again by auction. The dwelling house had four bedrooms, three attic rooms, a bathroom and lavatory, two reception rooms, a kitchen and scullery and a large cellar, There was outdoor sanitation, and a garden with an entrance at the side (Collection of Newspaper Cuttings, Ceredigion Archives ABY/B/16)

In 1945 with a vote for the house at the election were Edith Brisband and Winifred E. Hall.

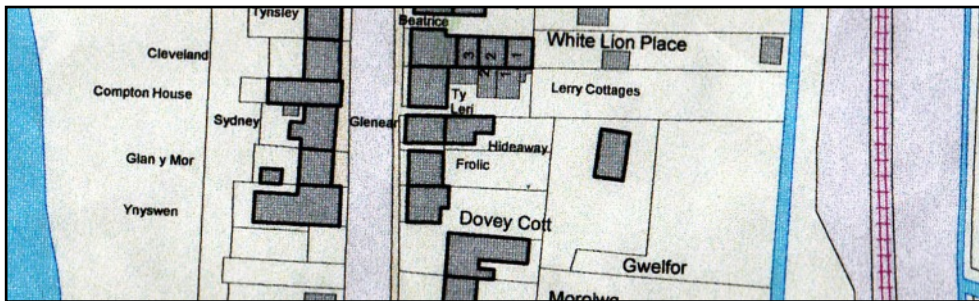
In 1949 the owner paying the Rates was Mr Thomas Rowley Morris. He was on the Borth Improvements Committee, and the Committee of the Borth Football Club.

In 1950 Mrs Morris was letting 5 bedrooms and 2 sitting rooms to visitors. She was on the Committee of the British Legion Women (Borth Review, National Library of Wales). The Morris children thought it was a wonderful big house with a 'cave' (cellar?) underneath. Arran Morris the distinguished son of Mr Thomas Rowley Morris was born there in 1919.

Mr T. Rowley Morris paid the rates in 1957.

Thomas and Jane Rowley Morris had votes for the house in 1963 (Electoral Registers and Rates, Ceredigion Archives)

By 1975 there had been some extensions at the back, and the building shown on the 1905 map had gone. Apparently the surveyor did not spell Gleaner correctly and he thought Ty Leri etc. belonged to White Lion Place (Historical Maps On-line)



ABOVE A detail from a modern Council Map shows that the building with Gleaner at the roadside is divided into two homes, the rear called 'Hideaway'. At the back is another building on a large plot of land.

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

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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