

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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THE GRAND HOTEL - TALIESIN HOUSE

Morfa Borth - the Marsh Harbour

Once a boarding house, a 'Private Hotel', a 'Grand Hotel', and a 'Seahorse Inn'. With 12 main rooms in 1911. This house with plenty of accommodation for visitors was part of the attempt to make Borth a seaside destination with 'status' once the railway made it easily accessible. Borth Station was opened as a terminal on 1st. July 1863, and the line to Aberystwyth on 23rd June 1864.



LEFT The Grand Hotel in 2016 includes the former Uppingham House - Number 13 the Terrace which is on the right with one bay. The original Taliesin House has two bays.

BELOW The side of the building in 2014.

This building called the 'Grand Hotel' is a corner house, the original square in plan, an extension of the Cambrian Terrace houses, and it turns the corner out on to the part of Borth's main street then called Princess Street. Across the road is the sea.



It is a large four storey brick building, taller than the houses alongside in the Terrace, and has both a basement - possible because it stands on the shingle bank - and attics in the roof lit by dormer windows. A low wall and railings keeps the public on the pavement from falling into the well created by the basement. The building has a hipped roof which overhangs a little, with two dormer windows on the north side and two on the west. They are in the casement style. The sea front has three bays with canted bay windows for the basement and the ground and the first floors. The bays have neat slate coloured hipped roofs. The front ground

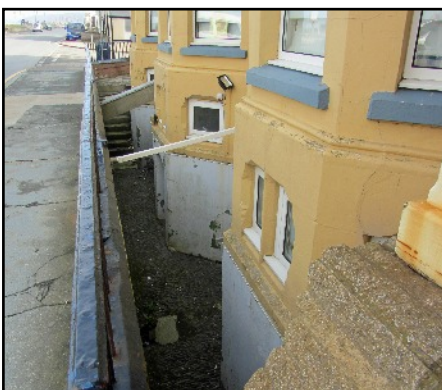
floor rooms have sea views, which perhaps is why the main entrance to this house was originally on its north, the Terrace side, and not from the main road as a detail from a postcard of 1906 on page 4 shows.

The windows do not match the rest of the Terrace, they have no iron columns, and no sandstone dressings - these walls were built to be rendered as our earliest photograph suggests they were. The windows have two lights in the pattern of sash windows and would therefore match the Cambrian Hotel's windows on the other side of the street. On the top floor were two windows with two lights. The sea front is very plain with no added decoration.

The north side of the buildings which fronts the Cambrian Terrace has no bay windows. All the windows have two lights in the pattern of sash windows. The top floor has a pair, the second floor as one larger window on the east with a pair of smaller ones, the ground floor has a similar window on the east that is taller and has four lights. Below the pair of small windows is a door into the building. Today this has an elaborate porch. Its roof overhangs and protects double glass doors, and is supported by slender columns.



The tall windows allow plenty of light into the porch. Steps up are needed into the building because of the basement below. Outside the porch beside the pavement is a shaped block wall with a low one on the other side of the steps. These are rendered. The wall ends with an opening to access the basement ground area. This has a square gatepost which ends the railings along the sea front of the building. The basement continues the canted bays, but its windows are small and in pairs in the front of the bay.



FAR LEFT A view along all three of the basement bays, Uppingham House's bay is in the foreground. LEFT The door in the central bay.



LEFT The wall with railings enclosing the basement was brick, and whitewashed. The basement would have been the working part of the boarding house or hotel, with kitchen and servants quarters, and the door probably provided an entrance for the servants and tradesmen so they would not rub shoulders with the owners and guests.

The history of the ground on which this is built is in the 'Introduction to the Terrace'. The 'The Buildings of Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion' suggest that the architect for the Terrace was probably W. H. Spaul of Oswestry, and it was built about 1865 to 1870.



This detail from a photograph of the north side of Taliesin House was taken in 1876/7 when the Terrace was fairly new. There is a sandstone facing around the entrance door, and some railings. This door would have been the entrance for the owners and their holiday visitors. The slab chimney would have been shared with Number 12 next door. The drain pipe with a flattened cover is still there. The roof would have been slate and there were no dormer windows then.

(Detail from a photograph courtesy of the Uppingham School Archives)

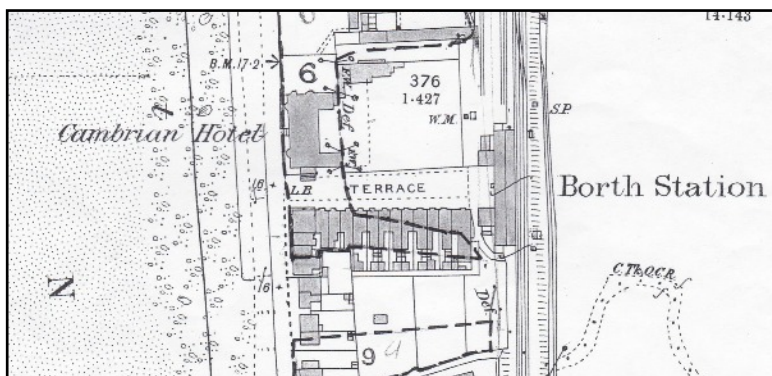
This was never Number 13 but had a name Taliesin House and was up and running in 1871 when the Cambrian News listed holiday visitors staying there for fourteen weeks during the summer. They had people from as far afield as Dublin and York and many from parts of Wales.

Several clergymen and an archdeacon and their families were in the list of visitors.

In 1880 there were visitors from as far afield as Stafford and Worcestershire, and again some clergymen. Only five weeks had visitors that year.

In the 1881 Census the house was unoccupied.

LEFT In 1886 Taliesin House was noticeably bigger than Numbers 1 to 12 and Uppingham House (Detail from the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map



surveyed in 1886 and published in 1888, Cardiganshire NW III.10).



This detail from a postcard of 1895 shows the Cambrian Hotel in the foreground, and beyond it is Taliesin House with a sign saying Taliesin Private and Commercial Hotel. There is a suggestion of a shop next to the entrance door, and on the front roof it had a slab chimney. Occupants had a right to use the seafront grass and seats.

The Terrace and the Cambrian Hotel had been owned by the Cambrian Hotel Company and rented out, but by 1888 it was heavily mortgaged, and the mortgagees sold it. Thereafter a private person could own Taliesin House. At the 1891 Census in the house was a Margaret Walter, a 74 year old English widow born in Holdgate, Shropshire, and she was running a boarding house there. Her son William aged 41, born at Bridgnorth was a carpenter, her daughter Jane aged 32 and born at Orleton, Herefordshire was housekeeping - helping her mother. Two granddaughters, Augusta Woodall 16 and Crissy Woodall 15 a 'telegraph clerk' were also in the house, with a grandson, 15 year old John Walters a carpenter's apprentice. Mrs Walter died in July 1895. (Parish Records)

By 1895 it had become the 'Taliesin Hotel' and a master mariner Captain Llewellyn Rees advertised furnished apartments in the house. (Kelly's Directory of South Wales.) Apartments or boarding was run there (Guide to Borth, 1934, Aberystwyth Library).



ABOVE This detail from a postcard shows the front of the hotel about 1906. There were sash windows, and a dormer window was added to the roof. There were two slab chimneys, Uppingham House next door had one as well. That houses were still separate and rendered a different colour. (Postcard Private Collection)

In 1910 Taliesin House was a much more valuable than its neighbours in Cambrian Terrace, it was valued at £720 with rates of £25. 10s, gross £300. Captain Llewellyn Rees, a retired master mariner, was the owner and occupier.

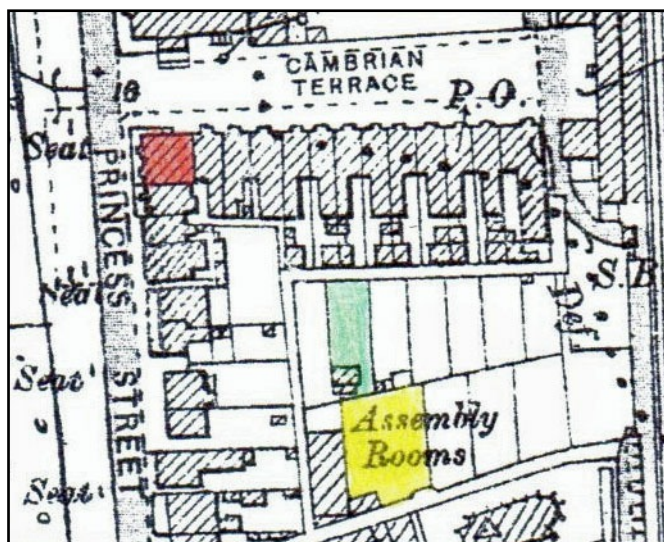


Taliesin at the 1911 Census had 12 rooms, not including any shop, cellars, bathrooms or back scullery. His neighbours in The Terrace had 10 rooms

A postcard of 'Cambrian Terrace' shows the shop at Taliesin House. Postcards and model yachts can be seen in the window, and small walls guided people into the shop. (Private Collection)

In 1898 the Cambrian News reported that as the result of a storm Captain Llewellyn had the iron railings in front smashed and washed into the cellar and stones weighing 14 to 15 lbs were forced into the rooms by the sea. Cambrian Terrace was flooded to a depth of three feet. (October 9th)

At the 1901 Census the Captain was aged 41, and he was born in Borth. His wife Jane 40 was born in Orleton Herefordshire. They had a five year old daughter Doris. Also in the house was an 81 year old English widow, Frances Maria Sproston, born in Lincolnshire and with her 'own means'.



ABOVE On this detail from the Ordnance Survey 25 inch map of 1905 Taliesin is coloured red, and its garden is coloured yellow. It was later to have the garden coloured green when Captain Rees also owned Number 8. This had a greenhouse on it (Sale details Cambrian News 1924) The Assembly rooms beside its garden are replaced today by a garage.

(1911 census) and were valued at between £405 - £486, paying rates of £17 or £19. (Rates Valuations, Cyfoeth and Henllys, Ceredigion Archive, T/DV/18) Rees's wife Jane was English and born in Orleton Herefordshire about 1857. Rees was a Borth man, born about 1861. His wife purchased Number 8 The Terrace in 1900.

The Rees's were still there in 1911, as 'boarding house keepers'. In the house were also two young men boarders; a University student and a private tutor and examiner. Jane's brother in law from Orleton was also there. The household had one English servant, Emily Aston, aged 20 from Coseley in Staffordshire. (Census)

In the 1920s the house was still listed under 'Furnished Houses and Apartments. In May 1924 Mrs Rees put Taliesin House up for sale by Auction at the Lion Royal Hotel Aberystwyth on Wednesday August 20th unless sold privately beforehand.

"For Sale; Unique position on the sea front. Easy distance of Golf Links and two minutes walk from the railway station. The house has been successfully conducted for many years as a first class boarding establishment by Mrs Rees who is now retiring.

Accommodation: Entrance hall. 4 reception rooms, breakfast room, 13 bedrooms, bath, ample domestic offices. Fair size shop premises, the business generally miscellaneous, particularly seaside requisites. Garden with greenhouse and potting house. If desired the Furniture and Stock in Trade can be taken to at a Valuation.

Valuable accommodation land situated at the rear of number 7 and number 8 (Cambrian Terrace) and adjacent. This garden land will be sold with Taliesin House, having a frontage to Church Road, with access thereto, and by measurement 17 perches. The situation of the accommodation land is admirable for a garage extension or warehouse.' (Cambrian News, May 30th. 1924).

Looking at these details, one bath for 13 bedrooms could cause queues before breakfast perhaps! However, water was probably piped to washbasins in the bedrooms, as Savin, when he built the railway, also provided a reservoir and good supply of water for his trains and station - including the Refreshment Rooms House, the Stationmaster's House, and for his Cambrian Hotel and his Cambrian Terrace and their gardens. (The Coast Lines of the Cambrian Railways, 1893-1911, C. C. Green, Saga).

The new owner of Taliesin House was Jane Rees, (a daughter?) and the 1925 Rates listed her as both the owner and the occupier. A servant was employed to help in the house.

In 1926 she advertised it having a "Fancy Repository" so the shop was still in business. (Trades Directory Wales, Aberystwyth Public Library). In 1934 it was still called the 'Taliesin Hotel', Board Residence or Apartments' and 'established for 50 years' which dates it back to 1884. It is possible it was the Taliesin Hotel then, and that explains the absence of a landlady's name in the 1871 and 1880 lists of visitors - Borth boarding houses usually had the landlord or landlady's name at the head of their list. Rates and the list of Electors from this time suggest that Uppingham House had become part of the hotel. During the Second World War evacuees arriving (by train) with infections were quarantined in the house. On the voters list in 1945 was Gwen James and Violet M. Daniel, and Taliesin House was listed as a 'Skin Hospital'.

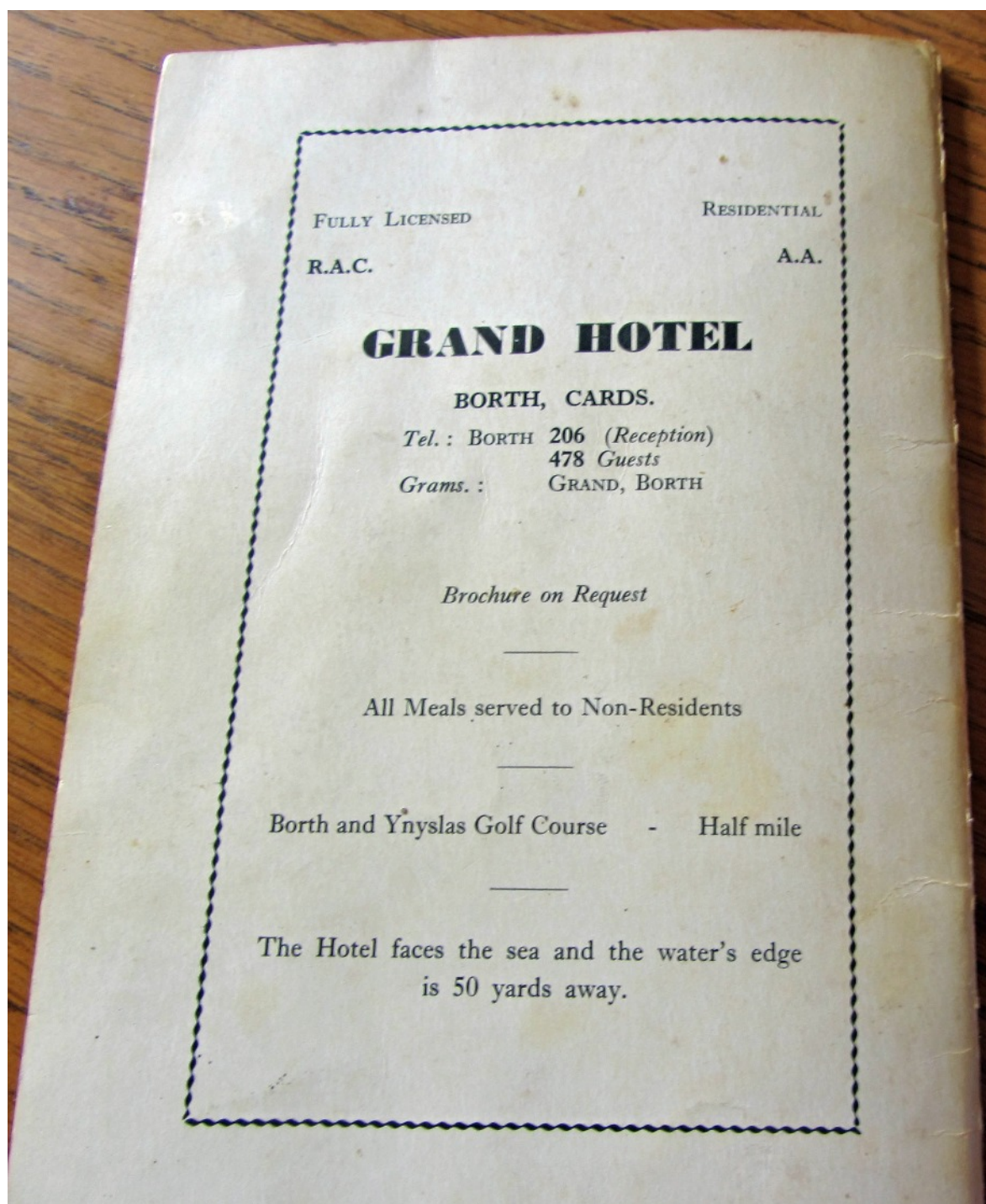


LEFT In this detail from a postcard Taliesin House is the Bennett's 'Grand Hotel', which was written on its north side, and Uppingham House was part of it. The building in the foreground was the back of a public convenience. (Postcard Ceredigion County Council, Aberystwyth Library on line.)

In 1947 the Cambrian Hotel was sold and became Pantyfedwen - a Conference Centre for the Welsh Urdd. By August 1948 the Taliesin Hotel was renamed as the GRAND HOTEL. The Rates gave the owner and occupier as Bennett. It was a Mrs Bennett. She also bought Number 12 the Terrace next door which had a garage from G. E. F. Goring Thomas. (Rates Volume ABR/TR.10/9/1 Ceredigion Archives).

In about 1968 the proprietor was G. Newton and the hotel was listed with nine double rooms, three single rooms and three family rooms (Borth, The Unique Village, Handbook and Guide', Private Collection).

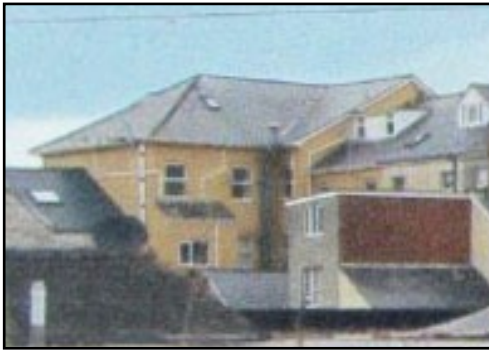
BELOW An advertisement from a guide book of 1962. 'Borth Ceredigion' 1s.6d. (Private Collection)





LEFT The hotel in 1976. A porch had been built for the entrance door on the north side, and the bay windows had large panes of glass. (Detail from a postcard, private collection))

There have since been other businesses in the combined Taliesin House and Uppingham House, for example a Seahorse Inn in 2008, but by 2016 the combined buildings were once again called The Grand Hotel, with a café and bar with Wi Fi. in two units on the ground floor and with a large basement. There was also a one bedroom second floor apartment.



LEFT The rear of the building in 2012 when Uppingham House was part of the hotel which had an extension of two floors at the back, and the Cambrian Terrace side of Taliesin House had been extended too. The yard was small, and reached from a narrow passage from the little lane at the rear of the terrace.

There is one additional point to make about the building. We know it was rendered white to match the Cambrian Hotel - but together with Uppingham House next door it was built taller than Numbers 1 to 12 Cambrian Terrace to match the height of the great Cambrian Hotel and the two houses of the Grand Hotel make an imposing group on the seafront corner of The Terrace.

Archifdy Ceredigion Archives
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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.

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