

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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LONDON COTTAGE Morfa Borth

In the southern area of the High Street on the beach side. Built after 1848 but by 1881. Home of a farm worker John Thomas and his descendants, and by 1949 of Captain David Thomas.



London Cottage is barely two storeys high, semi-detached, and under a gable roof parallel to the street. Its front section is rubble stone including some rounded stones from the beach. The windows and front door are modern. LEFT TOP This photograph was taken in March 2009 when there was no porch on the front. London Cottage was the end building in a terrace and was single fronted, the front door being on the north side. The front garden area was enclosed with neatly rendered walls, the front one being very low. There was no gate and there was a small step down to the pavement. A roof light lit an attic floor under the roof. The main living room/kitchen of the house would have been on the south side, and when first built would have had a hearth and chimney



LEFT BELOW In 2015 the rubble stone walls had been exposed and a glazed porch built for the front door. Its roof was extended forwards and sideways supported on slender metal posts. This would protect the front of the building and callers at the front door from the rain. Enclosing the front garden

area the side wall on the south has gone, and the front wall made taller and given a square gatepost. On the south wall of the house a single storey extension with an almost flat roof has been built. It is rendered and the wall above it rendered to match. A back door leads out on to a generous area of drive for parking a car. There is a shed at the end of the drive. The back of the rubble stone house continues with two storeys and this was already there in 1886.



LEFT The rear of the house from the beach in 2015. The single storey extension on the south wall of the house extends into the yard. The two storey extension has a nearly flat roof, and seems wider than the one on the old maps. On its upper floor is a large glass window beside a french window leading out on to a railed balcony which will have

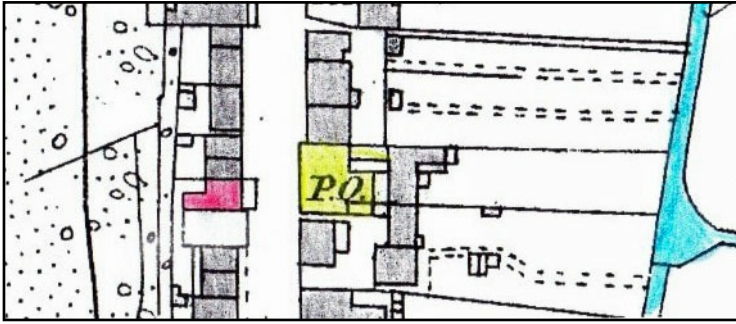


good views out to sea. The front section of the house ends with an upper window looking out towards the beach. The coursed and dressed stone wall in the foreground may help to protect the cottage from the sea in storms. Further back is a second wall with a gateway closed by planks which if open would give access to the beach possibly for a small boat. In front of it beach stones cover the ground.

The ground for this house, a bank of stones thrown up by the sea, was still open ground in 1848 (Tithe Apportionments Map, Llanfihangel Genau'r Glyn, Cyfoeth Township, on-line at CYNEFIN National Library of Wales) The Crown Manor would have called it 'waste' as it was not suitable for farming, and when a villager enclosed this plot to build on he would have either paid a rent for it, or bought it. The road was centuries old and was a turnpike road by the 1770s. It led to a

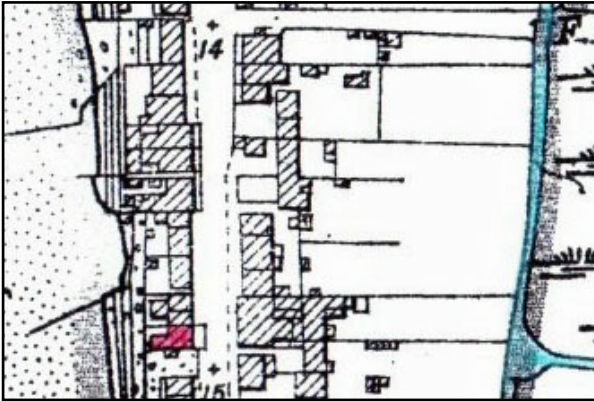
ferry from Ynyslas to Aberdovey and was a quick way to North Wales. Fresh water for the cottages and houses came from a brook on the other side of the road, the tailrace from the Glanlerry Corn Mill (Felinwern) plus two small streams. Villagers had their own area to dig peat on the other side of the River Leri just north of Ynys Fergi.

It is not possible to find this cottage before the Census of 1881. Then its address was 'opposite the Post Office'- the London House shop of Abraham Lloyd Lewis who was a draper and linen dealer, and sold groceries and had a post office there. In the cottage was John Thomas, an agricultural labourer, aged 46 and born in Rhayader about 1835. He was older than his wife Elizabeth, a Borth woman aged 33. With them was their son John Daniel Thomas aged 7. In the 1891 Census the house had the name 'London Cottage' and John Thomas was not at home, but Elizabeth was there with two more sons, William aged 8 and Thomas aged 6. They had been born in Borth, and the family were monoglot Welsh speakers. By the 1901 Census Elizabeth was a widow of 55 and she was deaf. Her son Thomas was 17 and an



This was the Thomas's cottage in 1884, marked in red. It already had a wing at the back with a small enclosed yard which extended behind Water's Edge and Ocean Cottage, suggesting they had the same owner. There was a narrow enclosed garden in front, the only one of its neighbours to have this. 'P O' marks the Post Office, marked in green. On the south of the cottage was an empty plot. (Detail from the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map surveyed in 1886, published in 1888. Cardiganshire III.10)

apprentice carpenter who spoke both Welsh and English. Also in the cottage was her old widowed mother, Elizabeth Daniel in her nineties, and also deaf and a Welsh speaker. This is very interesting because David Daniel, a master mariner and his family had the Waterfront cottage by 1841 - and was still there, retired from the sea in 1881 with his wife Elizabeth. Their daughter Elizabeth had wed John Thomas. It is likely that David Daniel had owned not only Waterfront, but Ocean



ABOVE the cottage in 1904. The Post Office had moved from London House though it was still an important shop. (Detail from the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map revised in 1904, published in 1905, Cardiganshire III.10)

Cottage too, and eventually London Cottage which by 1910 was owned (inherited) by his daughter Elizabeth.

In 1910 for a tax planned but not levied, the cottage was valued at £102. There would have been £2 to pay, £3 gross. Mrs Elizabeth Thomas owned it and was still living there. The 1911 Census tells us that she was earning a living as a charwoman. The cottage had four main rooms. Mrs Thomas paid the rates in 1925.

BELOW London Cottage is on the left of this old postcard. It had smaller windows, and railings on its low wall in front. (Amgueddfa Cerdigion Museum)



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In 1934 John Edwards paid the rates, but living there was David Thomas. He had gone to sea, became Captain David Thomas, and was on the parish council in 1949. (Borth Review, National Library of Wales) Terry Davies writes he was a ship's captain in Shanghai for a time. (Borth, A Maritime History page 39). Captain Thomas paid the rates in 1938, 1949 and 1963. He had a vote for the cottage in 1949 as did Hannah Thomas and Hannah M. Ramsey. In 1963 he and Hannah had votes for the house in the election which suggests they still lived there. (Rates and Electoral Registers, Ceredigion Archives).

Today the house has its own back yard, and also has the plot to the south owned with the old Waterfront and Ocean Cottages on the 1905 map and marked with stones as rough ground by the surveyor.

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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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