

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 HOUSE

Morfa Borth - the Marsh Harbour

Draper, Grocer, Ironmonger and Post Office by 1871. Later the Welsh Kitchen and in 2014 a Tandoori restaurant.



LEFT This picture was taken in November 2008.

This is one of the largest buildings in the southern area of the High Street on the east side. It is three full storeys high. The northern half has the shop front and a door into the house, the other side is a house with a front door. At the 1911 Census London House was listed with twelve rooms, and this would not include the shop or any scullery. The walls are rubble stone. As the ground floor is now rendered the pattern of yellow bricks is hidden but an old photograph shows it continued. The southern side wall is plain. Use of the yellow bricks indicated that the stonework on the façade was designed to be seen and not plastered over, a style popular in the latter half of the nineteenth century. However the north side of the building is random rubble

stone of various sizes and the yellow lines of the string courses do not continue round the side.

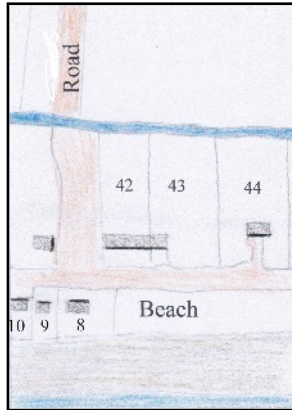


LEFT The front wall rubble stone has some large blocks and nicely squared and smoothed stones. This was more expensive. Shaped yellow bricks line the eaves like brackets supporting the overhang of the roof and yellow bricks are used to draw string courses linking all the front windows together. This photograph was taken in 2014. The windows are modern.

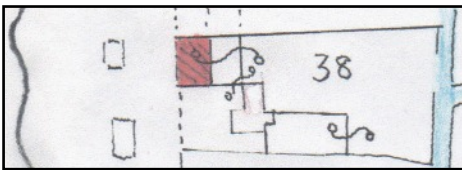


LEFT The random rubble stone of the north wall of London House.

The ground for this house was enclosed in 1820 by Hugh Hughes from the pebble embankment thrown up by the sea, and called 'waste' because it was no use for farming. The ground measured one rod and 19 perches, and extended to a brook.



LEFT It was Number 44 on this map of 1829 and is shown with one cottage built on it - now Y Wern. However the site for London House had not been built on (Detail after the Crown Map in watercolour, National Archives LRRO 1/3060 - a coloured copy can be seen at the Ceredigion Archives)



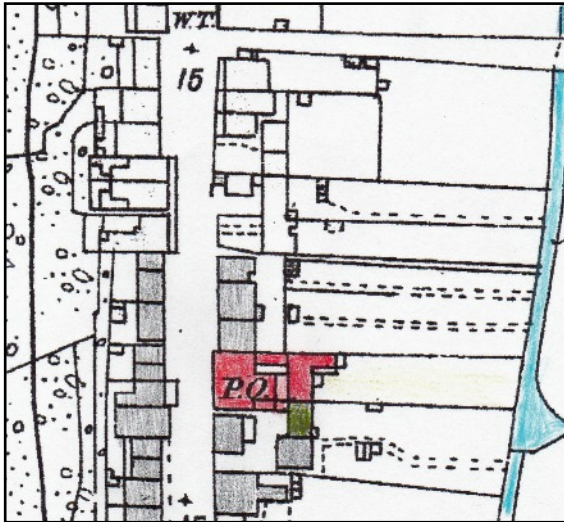
LEFT However by 1848 a building which would develop into London House had been built and is marked in red. The cottages and gardens on 38 were occupied by Ebenezer Lewis and others and William Jones and others (Detail copied from the Tithe Apportionments Map of 1848 for Llanfihangel Genau'r Glyn, Cyfoeth Township, On-line at CYNEFIN)

The shop is mentioned in 1869 in Slater's Directory of South Wales. Abraham Lewis of Borth was listed as a 'grocer and tea dealer' and as a 'linen and woollen draper'. Woollen cloth was being manufactured locally at Talybont. He was also the Borth Postmaster. The Royal Mail service began in July 1863 when the railway reached Borth (The Coast lines of the Cambrian Railways Volume 1 by C. C. Green).

In the 1871 Census Abraham Lloyd Lewis called his shop 'London House'. He was aged 58 born about 1813 in Penybont Cardiganshire, His wife Elizabeth was 50 and born in Builth about 1831. She was helping in the shop, as was their 18 year old daughter Sarah Anne who was born at Pennal, and that may be where the family had moved from. There was also a small son William Thomas Lewis who was born in the parish. He was four - suggesting they had moved to Borth by 1867. There was also a baby Clara Louise and a twenty six year old nurse, Eliza Morgans, a general maid servant Elizabeth Evans, 15, and visiting them was a retired grocer from Builth, Mary Harries, 45. She was a widow. Mr Lewis had time to be a very useful member of the community. In February 1877 he was the convenor of the parish council committee concerned with sea damage and on Friday June 22nd 1877 he was on the sanitary parochial committee concerned about the water supply (Cambrian News)

Abraham Lloyd Lewis was the draper, ironmonger and postmaster in 1881 and also in the house was his wife Elizabeth and an apprentice draper and telegraph assistant, Robert Lewis Roberts, 17, born in Bow Street about 1854, a seventeen year old domestic servant, Margaret Evans from Taliesin, and a child of 8, boarding there born in Commercial Road London about 1863 (Census) In January 1898 he wrote to the Cambrian News as chairman of the Borth Parish Council about

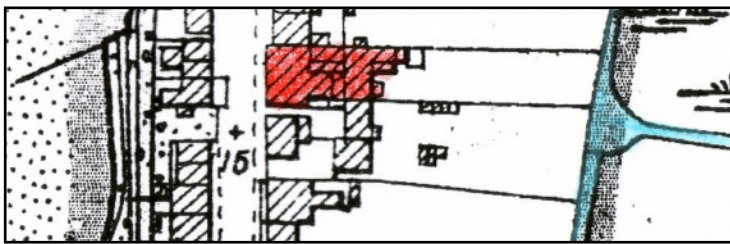
getting spring water from the Penywern supply where they had found two good springs. In May 1898 he wrote again to the Cambrian News saying that holiday visitors had complained about the scarcity of the water - this was because holiday makers increased the population of Borth considerably each summer.



LEFT In 1886 London house marked in red was an impressive building. The original house by the road had buildings behind it - one large enough to be a home, and some smaller sections of outbuilding. Somewhere within one of these would have been a Ty Bach. There might have been pigs and chickens too. The garden extended down to a brook and touched a large pool. Coloured green is the old cottage still close by (Details from the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map surveyed in 1886 and published in 1888. Cardiganshire NW III.10)

Abraham Lloyd Lewis had been prosperous enough to afford to build such a large spread of buildings and this looks like the tall building we see today. The exposed stone and yellow bricks were fashionable in Aberystwyth at this time (Aberystwyth; Understanding Urban Character, RCHMW 20013 p.31)

By the 1891 Census their son William Thomas Lewis then 24 years old, and unmarried, was the draper's assistant. David I Hughes was serving the groceries, he was 15 and local. There was a domestic servant too, 18 year old Jane Jones, born at Salem. Abraham Lloyd Lewis was 68 by this time. By 1895 he had died, and his widow Elizabeth was the shopkeeper (Kelly's Directory) By then the post office had moved to Cambrian Terrace - a railway sub-office and Mrs Ellen Watkins was the postmistress.



William Thomas Lewis was head of the household and shopkeeper in 1901. In the house was his aunt Sarah Evans, a widow aged 67, born at Builth and of Independent means, and a cousin Annie Mary Evans, unmarried, aged 29 and born in Dolygaer, Breconshire (Census).

LEFT London House in 1904 marked in red (Detail from the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map revised in 1904 and published in 1905)

In 1905 William Thomas Lewis married. He wed his cousin Annie Mary. They had three children, one of whom died. In the house at the Census in 1911 was their son was Alfred Abraham Lewis, 5, and there was a daughter Sarah Gwynora Vivienne Lewis 2. His mother in law Sarah Evans now 78 lived with them. There was also an unmarried brother in law Robert Farquahar Evans aged 47 and born in Borth. There was a general domestic servant, Catherine Ann Evans aged 19 and born in Llanilar.

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In 1910 for a tax that was planned but not levied, London House was valued at £787, and a rate to pay would have been £20. 8s. gross £24. The site was valued at £73 10s. This valuation certainly applied to the three storey building we see today. It was the most valuable property in Borth, the shop Garibaldi (now the Premier Stores) coming closest at £760 (Ceredigion Archives T/DV/18 and Map at the National Library of Wales).

In 1925 William Thomas Lewis rented Barclays Bank an office in London House. The Rates had increased from the 1910 valuation to £25.10s and £30 gross. (Ceredigion Archives) William Thomas was also a useful member of the community. He was a member of the jury at the Inquest



on the murder of Mary Davies of London Place in 1894 (Cambrian News) In 1905 he was the Honorary Secretary of the Borth Library. In April 1924 he was a deacon at the Libanus Chapel (later the Gerlan) and he was on the Borth parish Council. Miss G. Lewis helped at at Womens Institute Sale at the National School in July 1924 and provided a recipe for Devonshire Splits for a Bazaar at St Matthew's Church in August 1934. (Published by the Cambrian News, Ceredigion Archives)



LEFT This is the earliest photograph found so far of London House and the shop front. The stone and yellow bricks did continue all across the front. The workmen may have been laying a water pipe (Postcard courtesy of the Amgueddfa Ceredigion Museum).

Sometime after 1922 five furnished bedrooms and a sitting room were offered for rent to holiday makers. In 1926 William Thomas Lewis still ran the grocery shop there.

London House was bought by Jack and Ted Richards (1904 - 1980) when all the contents were sold, and it was turned into the 'Welsh Kitchen'. The proprietor was A. Edward (Ted) Richards. There

was a telephone, Borth 100. An advertisement for it listed morning coffee, luncheon, afternoon tea, dinner and a 'welsh parlour' with antique oak, china, glass, metal ware and welsh handicrafts. (Borth Review, 1949 and 1950, National Library of Wales) There is a photograph of Ted Richards in Terry Davies Borth 'A Maritime History' and a story about him in the second world war. (p.49) Terry also writes about a distinguished mariner Captain David Hughes Richards born in 1879 from this family at London House. In 1901 he had a narrow escape when he was second mate on the steam ship Hershel when she was run down in a thick fog by the SS Ardeola. He became a captain in 1905, and commanded the Wellpark, Mountpark, Dawnpark, Holmpark and

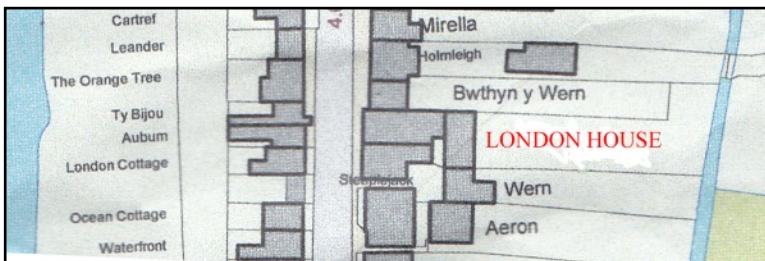
Rowanpark during world war one. He was a first mate on the Granton in the second world war (p. 47).

In 1945 and with votes for the house living there, probably in flats, were Alexander J. T. Grant, Violet M. Grant and Ida M. White and Marguerite White.

In 1949 for the Rates, A.E. and J. T. Richards, paid the rates. They had set up three flats in London House, and J. Richards lived at the Maelgwyn Villa the Richards had built on Cliff Road, Upper Borth.

In the late 1960s Mrs J. Richards advertised two furnished flats there, suitable for 10 persons. (Handbook and Guide to Borth, Private Collection) After 1968 H. Bromley had a restaurant there with a 'table license' (Guide to Borth, private collection)

In 1975 on a 25 inch Ordnance survey Map the surveyor drew Bwthyn y-wern belonging to London House (Old Maps.co.uk).



LEFT On a modern map the 'house' on the street front of the shop is marked as separate from the shop - and so may have another owner. The garden still extends to the brook - now a ditch, and it has an extra section on the north alongside the ditch which

would allow access to the rear of London House from the lane to Brynlllys.

It is now a 'Tandoori Restaurant' which closes in the winter.



BELOW LEFT London House at the rear has rendered walls and modern windows.

BELOW It has a two storey extension, and at the foot of it a single storey lean-to. Both are rendered. These views are from the hard standing yard in front of Y Wern.



There is a further building right across the back of London House the same width as the old block of cottages with Y Wern and Aeron to the south. Behind this London House should have a garden extending to the ditch once the old brook and partly behind the garden of Bwyth y wern.

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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