

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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MERMAID'S REST, FORMERLY COLLISCOT

Built by 1848, formerly a cottage in Britannia Place that was the home of a seaman - but not a master mariner. Also called Ermine Cottage when it was a grocery shop, and then Littleun. Later heightened and modernised.



Colliscot in 2009

Colliscot is a house one and a half storeys high under a shallow gable roof parallel to the High Street, and it is part of a terrace. It shares the brick chimney on the south side of its roof with Cefn-for. It is single fronted, its front door is on the north side. The walls incorporate the rubble stone walls of the old cottage and are rendered. The three front windows are modern and large and have decorative shutters. There is a glazed porch protecting the front door. The front door opens into a hall, and there are stairs

to the upper floor. Bedrooms are downstairs. The narrow front garden is enclosed by a low wall, probably brick and there is a front gate. On the north side is a lean-to container with rendered walls and a shallow roof which may once have been used for coal, and today conceals a waste bin. In 2009 the letterbox stood on the top of this container.



Colliscot from the beach in 2015

side of the yard. At the rear of the yard the sea defensive wall of vertical planks is topped by posts with rope strung between.

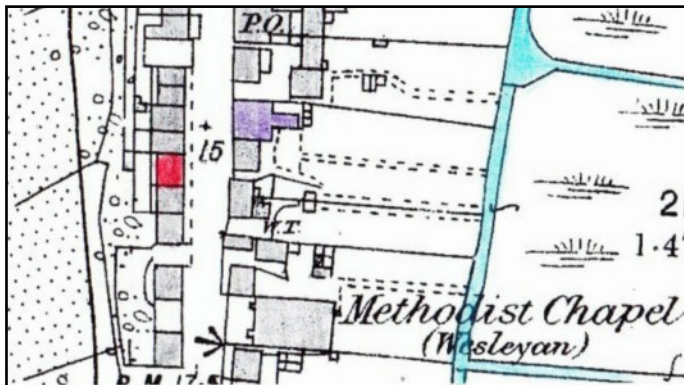
The ground for this house is the bank of stones thrown up by the sea and called 'waste' by the Crown Manor who owned it as it was no use for farming. The road had been there for centuries and was a turnpike road by the 1770s. It led to a ferry from Ynyslas to Aberdovey which was a quick way to North Wales. Fresh water for the cottages came from a brook on the other side of the street behind the cottages and houses, and for fuel the cottagers had their own area to dig peat on the other side of the River Leri just north of Ynys Fergi. On a map of 1829 the site of Colliscot was beach, a cottage was not there yet. By a map dated 1832 cottages were planned but not yet built (National Archives LRRO 1/3060).



By 1848 there was a cottage on the site with an extension on the north side of it. It is marked in red and the chapel, then much smaller, is coloured purple. Because the buildings on the beach side of the road had no gardens they paid no tithe, so we do not know who lived there (Tithe Apportionments Map, Llanfihangel Genau'r Glyn, Cyfoeth Township, on-line at CYNEFIN - NLW).

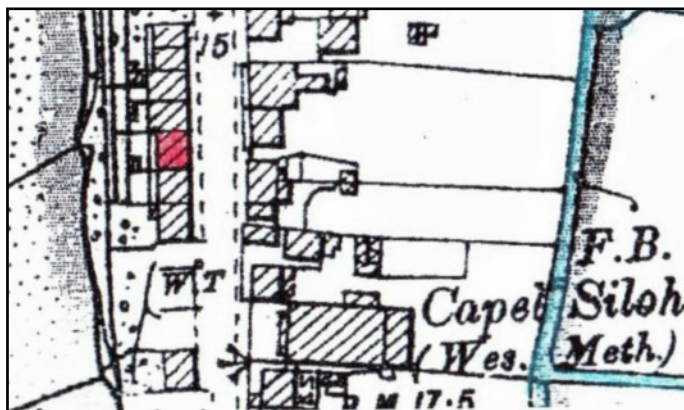
It is not possible to find the families in the earlier Census's as a house had to be very important to have a name. In 1953 Evan Williams of 10 Cambrian Terrace Borth remembered that Henry Williams, a seaman and his wife Mary Anne lived there and that they owned the cottage. Henry he said, died about 1889. He was right. In the 1891 Census the cottage was called Number 3 Britannia Place - Britannia house was nearby. Mary Anne Williams was then 49, a Borth woman, born about 1842 and a monoglot Welsh speaker. Also there was her daughter Jane Ann Williams, aged 10 and born in Borth. That year Henry died and was buried at Phillipeville aged 53 (gravestone St Michael's Llandre). In 1899 their son John Whitlock Williams died on a voyage on the Ocean Belle, aged just 31. They had one other son, Levi

Williams who also went to sea.



This was their cottage in 1886, marked in red. It shared a yard with the cottage next door (now Cefn-for) which suggests the William's owned both cottages. It also had a narrow terrace at the back but opened directly on the street in front. Britannia House is marked in purple.

(25 inch Ordnance Survey Map surveyed in 1886, published in 1888. Cardiganshire III.10 - also the map below dated 1905)



By the 1901 Census when Mary Ann was a widow aged 59, she was earning her living as a shopkeeper and grocer - in those days cottages could become shops. She could then

In 1904 the cottage had its own back yard, a Ty Bach (outside lavatory) and some sea defences.

speak English as well as Welsh. With her was her unmarried daughter Lizzie, aged 25. In 1910 for a tax planned but not levied this cottage still had the address 'Britannia Place' and Mary Ann Williams still owned it and lived there. This was a very humble cottage, valued at £31 and rated at £2, £2.10s gross. It was not one of the poorest cottages as it was rubble stone, not clom, but compare its £31 with Highfield next door at £122 (Ceredigion Archives T/DV/18 and map at NLW). In August 1910 Mary Ann was buried and her daughter Lizzie (Elizabeth) inherited the cottage. The Census of 1911 listed it with four main rooms, and it had a name, 'Ermyrn (Ermine) House. Lizzie Williams aged then 37 was acting as housekeeper for her brother Henry Levi Williams. He was a mariner in the merchant service.



This old postcard shows the William's cottage, marked by the red arrow. There is a sign in the window so perhaps this was when it was a grocery shop. There were sash windows, and traces of whitewash on the front.

(Postcard by courtesy of Mrs Pat Havers)

In 1925 Lizzie Williams paid the rates, and was letting two furnished bedrooms and one sitting room (Illustrated Borth Guide, Aberystwyth Public Library). She was still there paying the rates in 1949 (Ceredigion Archives). After Lizzie's death on August 14th 1953 her sole executor Thomas Elwyn Williams sold the cottage for £500. Paying the rates in 1963 was Mrs D. Havers and the cottage had a new name 'Littleun'. Mrs Pat Havers remembered the cottage was built entirely of stone with no foundations, just larger stones at the base. Inside there was an open fireplace, and spiral wooden stairs led up to an un-plastered attic which had skylights. Beneath the cottage ran a storm drain. In the back yard was a privy (Ty Bach) with a one-hole seat, which needed a man to come and clean it out from time to time. Sometime after 1970 the roof was raised to make the house we see today.



This postcard dated 1961 or 1962 shows the cottage as 'Littleun' with neatly rendered walls. Beside it the cottage had been rebuilt as Cefn-for.

(Postcard by courtesy of Mrs Pat Havers).

In 1970 when Aberystwyth Rural Council were repairing the sea defences behind the houses the cottage was still 'Littleun'.

Once turned into a house, the Havers family called it Colliscot as 'Littleun' no longer applied.



ABOVE The colourful front of Colliscot.

In 2014 the house had new owners who undertook a major renovation of the property, including new decoration, a new section to the rear and a beach garden. In front even the flower pots added to the colour.

In 2016 Colliscot was re-named as Mermaid's Rest and is a family home with space for a studio.

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gan/by Beryl Lewis
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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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