

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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ORIEL GALLERY and COFFEE SHOP

Morfa Borth - the Marsh Harbour

Formerly the Harlequin Café, before that a Tailor's Shop and before that Borth's Library and Reading Room. Built on land owned by a Rees family of master mariners and on the site of and developed from an old Rees family cottage built by 1848.



LEFT The Gallery, Coffee Shop and Picture Framing in 2015 with the wooden extension of the roof built by Peter Fleming which added to the space available for the rear section upper floor café area.

This building is on the east side at the northern end of the High Street. It is detached, its access being on the south side, and its gable roof is at right

angles to the street. The front of the gable is of decorative lapped timbers. Inside is a café and gallery with items to buy including pictures, and there is a kitchen section and also tables and chairs for customers buying food. On the northern wall near the entrance is a fireplace.



LEFT Side windows along the southern wall light this area. This photograph taken in 2012 shows the roof before it was heightened.

There is a covered area under the roof on the north side of the front which has room for a table and chairs and has the entrance to the building. The southern side has a glazed opening window to sell ice cream.



LEFT The rear of the building showing the extension to the roof with roof lights. There are two floors at the back, the upper floor ending with a picture window for the cafe area. This section too had previously been heightened allowing for a spacious workshop below down some steps from the lower floor cafe.

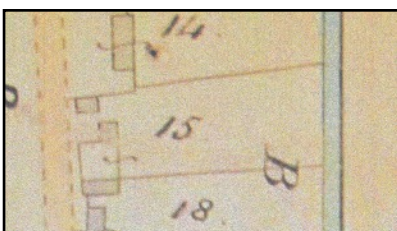
The recent extension to the roof allows for a Ty Bach and a small gallery overlooking the cafe below.



LEFT On the left is Oriel's long narrow garden and it extends down to the ditch - formerly a brook. A grassy path separates its garden from Arequipa's garden the large neighbour on the south. Beyond the narrow strips of garden continue. The photograph is a composite as it was

not possible to include all of it in one photograph. Reclaimed farmland and the hill of YnysFergi with St Matthew's Church are in the background.

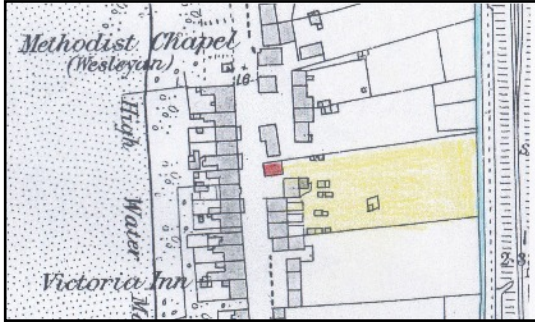
The pebble embankment called 'waste' on which the house was built was enclosed in 1827 by a member of the Rees family who rented it from the Crown, who owned the manor. It measured 2 rods and 27 perches, that is over half an acre, and on it then was one cottage set back from the street and in the centre of its ground



which extended to a brook (Map 1829 National Archives LRRO 1/3060). *LEFT By 1848 there were two cottages on the site, Number 15, a new one close to the street and sideways on to it, which was where the Oriel Gallery stands today (Detail from the Tithe Apportionments Map for Llanfihangel Genau'r Glyn, Cyfoeth Township).*

The owner of both the cottages and ground was a widow, Mary Rees born about 1790 who lived there herself. She was a 'ship owner'. Her late husband and other members of the Rees family owned wooden sailing ships mostly in the coastal trade, and had shares in other vessels. This would have earned a good living for their families. Mary Rees was still there in 1851, but it is not possible to know which cottage was hers and who lived in the other one.

It is not possible to find its occupiers in the 1871, and 1881 Census.



LEFT In 1886 the cottage shown on the 1848 map was still there and interestingly not quite at right angles to the street. It did not have an enclosed front garden but was open to the street. At the back the small detached outbuildings may have been a Ty Bach and perhaps a pig sty. The ground marked in yellow was still shared by all the buildings explaining continuing ownership by the Rees family (Detail from the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map surveyed in 1886 and published in 1888,

Cardiganshire NW III.10)

Again it was not possible to trace the occupants of the cottage in the 1891 and 1901 Census.

Terry Davies has found that the name of the old cottage on the site is said to have been Noddfa and Miss Dilys Rees of Arequipa said that Captain Dafydd Rees, 1836 - 1920 a very experienced master mariner ran a 'nautical school' there. He owned several vessels. (Borth, a Seaborn Village, page 37). The name Noddfa means in English a refuge or shelter. In 1901 aged 65 he was living in one of the terrace of three Rees cottages on the High Street now Sabrina, Morfan and Angolfa, his was called Number 1 New Street. His wife Margaret was also in the house (Census).



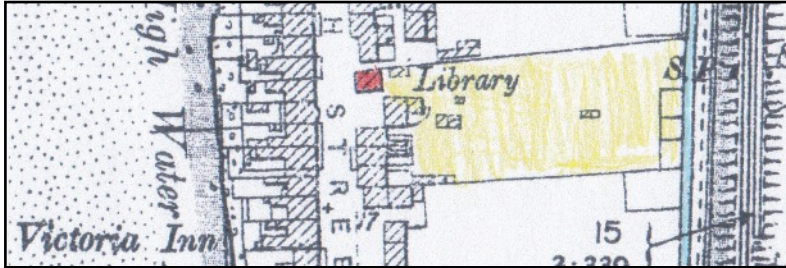
In 1910 for a valuation for a tax planned but not levied, the cottage, by then at least 62 years old, had become a Library and it was valued at £151 with £3.4s to pay and £4 gross. The owner was William Thomas Lewis of London House who was a prosperous Borth ironmonger with a shop at London House, and it was occupied by the 'Library Room Company.' (Ceredigion Archives T/DV/18 and map at the National Library of Wales)

ABOVE A photograph of the Library. Nine villagers were choosing books. The rear wall looks wooden, and a large rear bookshelf six shelves tall masks a further space beyond. (Courtesy of the Aberystwyth Public Library, Ceredigion Council Number 5213.)

The Library was planned by a public meeting in 1900, and a committee was formed. The chairman was the Rev. J. Llewellyn living then at Bronheulyn, the vice-chairman was Mr W. J. Lewis of London House, and Miss Daw of Dovey Belle was the honorary secretary.

The Oriel Gallery and Cafe Page 4

The money was raised by house to house collections. As well as books, there were daily papers and weekly and monthly magazines. A section of the building was set aside for the benefit of youth who were allowed to stay and play such games as chess, draughts, ludo, halma and quoits. (Aberystwyth Public Library information from cuttings). A 'Breezy Borth Guide Book' wrote in 1907 that the book most carefully read in the Library was the 'Shipping Gazette'. and that membership of the Library was by voluntary subscription (Aberystwyth Public Library). Captain Thomas Rees, a retired mariner aged 75 and living close by in Angorfa was the 'caretaker of the Public Library' (1911 Census).



LEFT The building in 1904 as the Library and it had a small building on the ground behind it. The ground coloured yellow was still in Rees ownership. Arequipa had been built alongside it (Detail from the 25

inch Ordnance Survey Map revised in 1904 and published in 1905, Cardiganshire NW III.10)

By 1925 the Library at Oriel had gone. The place had a new name Tailor's Hall. Paying the rates for it that year was Elizabeth J. Rees the owner, and living there was Stanley Wilson Williams. He was a tailor and he had a shop there (Kelly's Directory of South Wales 1926).



Miss Jones paid the rates in 1934 and 1938 - the owner was still Elizabeth Rees.

Paying the Rates in 1949 for the Taylor's (the Tailor's Shop) was E. Jones.

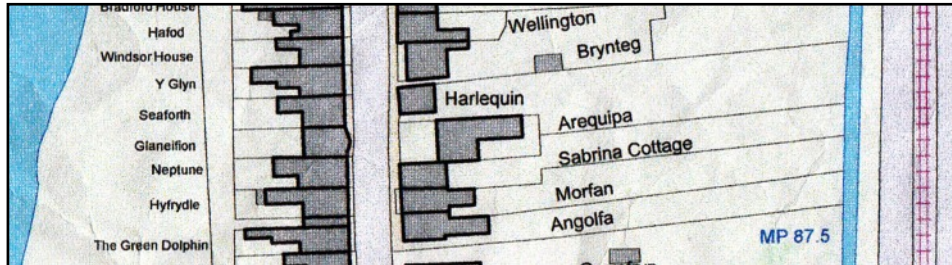
LEFT A postcard of 1952 shows the front of the place when it was a tailor's shop. There is an advertisement for Perth Dye. Factories at Perth in Scotland could clean and re-dye existing items such as shawls, scarves and straw hats, and they also sold dyed and dressed crepes, silks, velvets, poplins and bombazeens (Postcard private collection)

In 1957 and 1963 the rates were paid by the Misses L and C Jones and it was listed as a 'shop and premises'.

With a vote for the Tailor's Shop in 1963 was Idwal Wyn Edwards (Rates and Electoral Registers Ceredigion Archives).

The building then became the Harlequin Café which by 1965 was serving Ices and Minerals. (Handbook and Guide to Borth. Ceredigion Archives ADX/726/13)

In 1975 the track on the south of the café gave access to a large area of land behind the ‘New Street’ terrace of three cottages (Historical Maps on-line)



ABOVE This modern map shows the Harlequin Café with a large back garden area and the three cottages by then had gardens of their own (Detail from a Council Map courtesy of Councillor Ray Quant who provided it to help with some research for a local event).

Today the building is a coffee house and café with a stock of fancy goods for sale.

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yn cyflwyno / presents
Tai'r Borth / Houses of Borth
gan/by Beryl Lewis
[cyf/ref ADX/1629]

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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-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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