

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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PREMIER STORES

Princess Street, Morfa Borth - the Marsh Harbour

In two sections, a house and a shop with a flat above. Formerly Garibaldi House with a draper's shop run by the Roberts family - important villagers. Later called Roberts Stores and the Orange Tree Café.



Today there is a house on the left and a flat over the shop. They are two storeys high with dormer windows and roof lights for an additional floor under the roof which is a gable roof parallel with the road. Above the shop the upper floor wall is rendered with a pattern of ashlar stonework. Below the walls are exposed stone. The doors and windows are modern. The shop front extends into the road allowing for a balcony above it with interesting curved railings. There is access to this from the first floor, and it has been used for public events such as the Borth Carnival. The lower floor of the house on the left extends only a short way, like a frame, and the front door is set back a little. It too has rendering on its upper floor. The front door for the flat above the shop is also set back, and faces the road, and on the right hand side is the doorway into the shop.

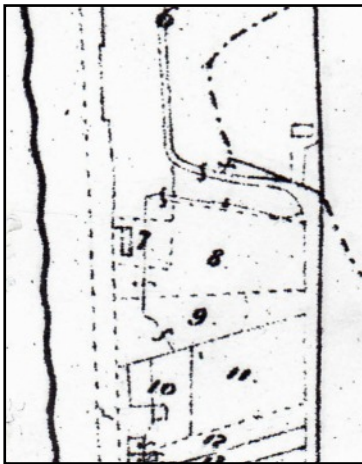


ABOVE The front of the building in 2016.
LEFT The rear has a two storey wing under a gable roof. The walls are all rendered. There is another less deep extension, and the yard contains a brick building leaving only a narrow space. Behind runs a small track leading from Chapel Lane. A stone wall encloses a longer, narrower yard for the house. Uppingham House from Savin's Terrace development shares a rear wall with the house.



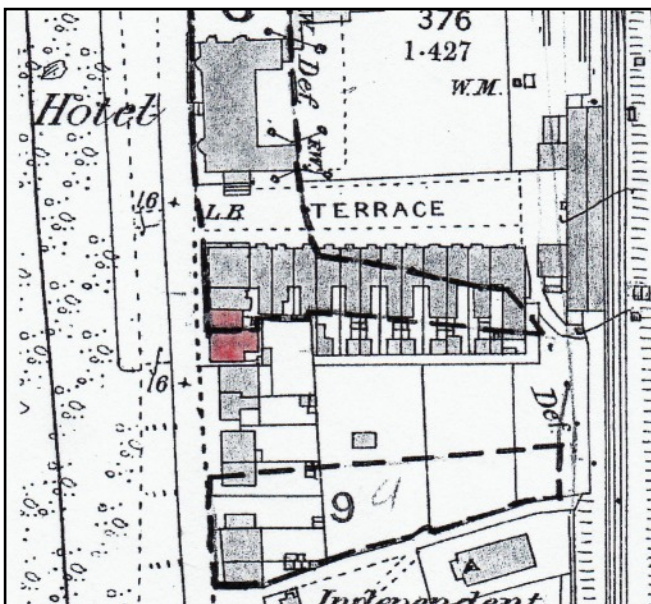
LEFT Beneath the rendering at the back of the building are traces of a stone wall beneath. Under the eaves is a pattern usually caused by protruding wooden beams ends or bricks.

The building stands on the pebble bank belonging to a manor of the Crown, and as this was no use for farming it was called waste. The earliest enclosure was made by someone called Jones in 1803, who had an acre and 24 perches and a cottage on it for which he had to pay the manor 12 shillings a year. (Number 24, Map 1829 LRRO 1/30/60)



LEFT In 1848 Number 6 to the north and Number 9 to the south were owned by John Lewis, a lawyer and small holder - his house is near the thick black line on the right hand side. This is where the railway station would be built. Number 7 was two cottages of Evan Jenkins and John Harter. Behind them Number 8 was a garden of John Thomas. There was nothing yet on the site of the Premier Stores (Detail from the Tithe Apportionments Map for Llanfihangel Genau'r Glyn, Cyfoeth-y-brenin Township - online at CYNEFIN, National Library of Wales).

Savin bought John Lewis's Number 6 and John Thomas's Number 8 to build his Cambrian Hotel, Cambrian Terrace and Borth Station and the railway opened to passengers in 1863. However I think he did not buy the existing cottages on Number 7. The site of the Premier Stores appears to be a northern extension of these. The map below shows two adjacent buildings tucked into the corner of the Terrace, one just inside John Lewis's Number 6.



LEFT This is a detail from a map of 1886 and the Premier Stores - then called Garibaldi House is coloured red. This map comes from the former Aberystwyth Rural District Council's Office and someone has put in the Tithe Map's divisions with black dashed lines. (25 inch Ordnance Survey Map surveyed in 1886 and published in 1888, Cardiganshire III.10, this copy Ceredigion Archives)

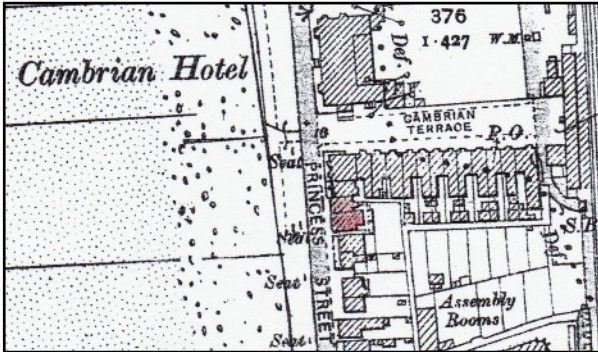
All the Savin buildings were finished and up and running by 1870. In 1871 Garibaldi House was the name of the building now the Premier Stores and house alongside when Mr R. P. Roberts (Robert Pritchard Roberts) had holiday visitors staying there for twelve weeks in the summer - from the week of June 9th to the week of September 1st. (Cambrian

News). Giuseppe Garibaldi had conquered Sicily and Naples in 1860.

Mr Roberts was a Welshman, and an incomer, having been born in Bethesda. His wife was a Borth girl, probably the daughter of shoemaker John Lloyd. If he named the building, what connection he had with Italy is not known. The building then probably was in two sections as now, as Robert Pritchard Roberts

was a draper, and he is likely to have had a house with a shop next door. The shop was nicely placed to catch visitors to Borth who arrived by train.

Map evidence for 1888 and 1905 clearly shows the building, with a division between the two halves, the southern (shop) section being wider and deeper. There was a very narrow yard behind, possibly edged by small buildings in 1905. Access to the back of the shop ran along its southern wall. The Roberts family were proud of this building, in its quiet way it had some interesting decorative details.



LEFT Garibaldi in 1906. All the right hand side of the building was taken up by the shop which had a central doorway. It was very decorative - sadly we cannot see the colours or the details. There were bay windows above and no balcony. The two sections shared a chimney. The (pretend) ashlar masonry pattern was in the rendering across both halves of the building. The overhang on the left side protected the entrance to the house and a small wall enclosed some of it from the pavement. There was some decorative details round the dormer windows above the shop, and the barge board of the nearest dormer window looks as though it was patterned and this dormer had a finial.

By 1924 the bay windows above the shop had gone because the shop front had been built out with a balcony with railings round above, as there is today. At the 1924 Carnival, some Bards and Druids crowned the King of the Cors Fochno on the balcony. He was the winner of the competition for the person who survived longest sitting on a chair at the water's edge before the tide came and tipped him off (Cambrian News). Possibly the façade had been simplified, as it is today with more room allowed for the shop beneath the balcony. Today the front of the next door house has also been simplified and built out.

In 1880 Mr Roberts had holiday visitors staying there for 6 weeks, from the end of July to September (Cambrian News). In the 1891 Census Mr Roberts and his wife Martha are recorded as speaking Welsh, but their 14 year old son Llewellyn spoke both English and Welsh. The family went to the Welsh speaking Libanus Chapel (later called the Gerlan), and Mr Roberts gave sermons there before it had a regular minister. Mr Roberts was elected a member of Borth Improvements Committee.

By 1901 Robert had died, and Martha kept the shop with the help of her son Howard Lloyd Roberts. Martha spoke both English and Welsh by then.

In 1910 Garibaldi had to pay Rates of £21.5s, and £25 gross, and the property, called a house and shop was valued at £750. Martha Roberts owned other property in Borth too, having cottages to let. The 1911 Census listed 18 rooms - and that would not include a scullery, bathroom(s) or the shop.

Howard Lloyd Roberts became an important man in Borth. He began as a draper's assistant at Garibaldi House now the Premier Stores, where his family lived, but eventually owned other property in Borth. Before the war he worked in London producing drawings and political and social cartoons that were published in various periodicals. He enlisted in the 129th Field Ambulance Corps aged 35 in 1915 and rose to become a 'corporal'. Some drawings he did when Corporal Roberts were used in a souvenir book of the Welsh Division, published in 1919 by the Western Mail, and according to one writer, brought credit on himself and on Borth'. (Lewis Jenkins, "A Real Little Seaport. The Port of Aberdyfi and its People 1565 to 1920.") He continued to run a 'Robert's Stores' and to be involved in Borth activities. By 1907 he was the Hon. Treasurer of Borth's Library (now the Oriel Gallery) he founded some hard tennis courts on land behind the Cambrian Hotel, later Pantyfedwen, and helped with the Carnival. He was also a journalist and photographer and in 1934 he was living in Ty Ola.

Sometime after 1922 furnished apartments with 5 bedrooms and 2 sitting rooms to let were advertised. In 1925 the payment of Rates was the same, as was the name 'Garibaldi'. Martha still owned the property. The National Provincial Bank had a room there to do business on certain mornings only.

In August 1934 the shop was advertised in a booklet called 'My Favourite Recipe' (printed by the Cambrian News) compiled by members of the Vicarage Stall in aid of St Matthew's Church. It was a clever advertisement with words fitted round a half page empty square. 'This half page has been reserved for Robert's Stores and café of this village but as this firm needs no advertisement the proprietor presents this open space to the Borth Public' (Ceredigion Archives)

Howard Lloyd Roberts died in 1935.

During the second world war Robert's Café was called the Orange Tree, Peter Fleming remembers as a lad that there was a doorway from the Grand Hotel (Uppingham House together with Taliesin in The Terrace was next door) which led into the café which was upstairs. The café was also used for talks for adult education.

In 1949 Howard's daughter Mary Lloyd Roberts owned the house and shop, and had a vote for it.



In 1950 the Robert's Stores was a grocer's shop run by J. P. Jones, and it had a telephone, number 460. (Borth Guide Book c. 1950). An advertisement for it read 'Rhabdomania is Greek to me but Robert's Stores means a Good Deal' (Borth Review, National Library of Wales),

LEFT In 1962 it advertised frozen foods and cooked meat fresh daily and had a different phone number. Mr Jones had a vote for the place in 1963 (Electoral Register and Rates, Ceredigion Archives, and Borth Ceredigion 1s. 6d. Guide book of 1962, private collection).

Today the shop is called the Premier Stores, with groceries, newspapers and ice creams, and serves the northern end of the village and visitors on the beach.

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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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