

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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SEAFORTH Morfa Borth

On the beach side at the north end of Borth High Street. Formerly Number 6 High Street. Home of Captain Richard Williams of the snow 'Ocean Belle'.

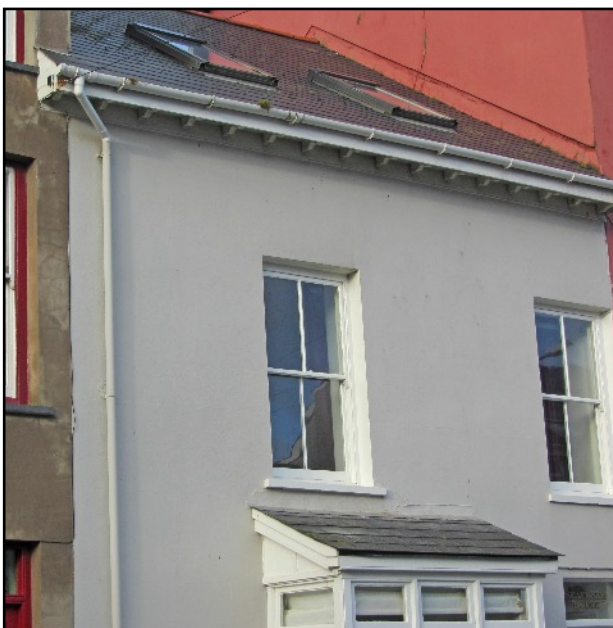


This was the smart end of Morfa Borth, not far from the railway station opened to passengers in 1863, the Cambrian Terrace completed by 1870, and the imposing Cambrian Hotel (later Pantyfedwen, now gone). It was also close to the place where the main street runs alongside the beach with no buildings in the way (now with a promenade), and old postcards show that this area had bathing huts and was popular with holiday makers.

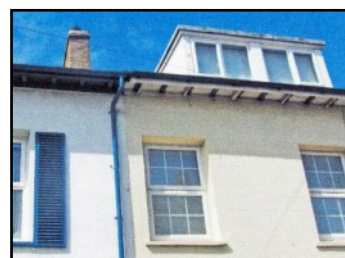
LEFT Seaforth om 2009.

Seaforth is a two storey, single fronted terrace house, under a gable roof parallel to the street. Roof lights at the front and a dormer window and roof light at the back light an attic floor. There are no chimneys. It is the only house of this height in the whole of the terrace. The house opens directly on to the street, and has a bay window on the ground floor. The front and rear walls are rendered. It is likely from the date of building that the walls are rubble stone. In the front the upper windows are sash windows, and the square bay window has modern plastic framing.

BELOW Dentils (brackets) support the overhang of this roof. BELOW RIGHT They are singly spaced like Highfield and Deudraeth.



The front door is modern. It is interesting that the frames of the door and the window above it are exactly where it joins Y Glyn next door to give enough space for a hall and front room. Was fitted in after the others were built? If it had an empty plot on the north side it could have been wider that side. The front of the house opens directly on to the street



BELOW *The back of Seaforth in 2016 from the beach.*

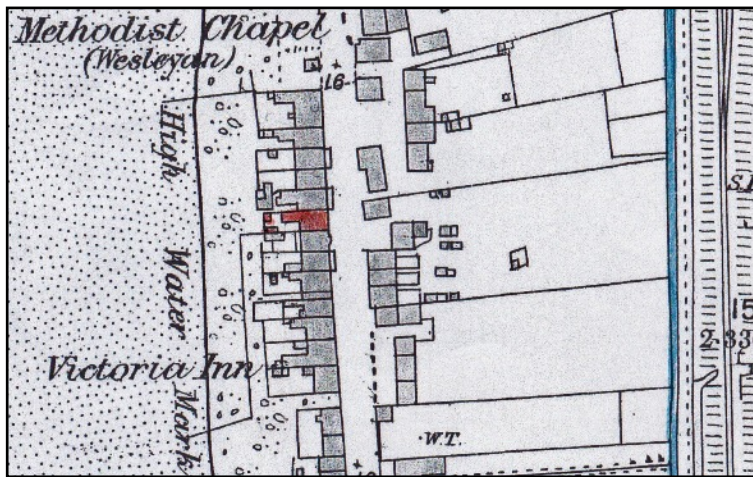


The rear of the house has a pretty gabled window in the roof decorated with a finial. The windows are modern. The rear extension is along the northern boundary of the plot and close to the house is a full two storeys high, with a large window on the upper floor with a fine sea view. The ground floor which extends forward under a flat roof, also has a large window. There was already an extension this side of the yard in 1886. The yard has an inner wall of beach stones, with a gateway into an outer yard protected by the sea defensive wall of vertical sleepers. That too has a gateway to the beach.

The ground for the house is the stone bank thrown up by the sea and called 'waste' by the Crown Manor who owned it as it was no use for farming. On a map of 1829 it was beach (National Archives LRRO 1/3060). The road had been there for centuries, it was used in the twelfth century 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 behind the buildings on the other side of the road. By the time this house was built there was one tap with good spring water in the street outside the Cambrian Hotel. In 1848 the site was still not built upon. (Tithe Apportionments Map Llangihangel Genau'r Glyn, Cyfoeth Township - on line at CYNEFIN - National Library of Wales).

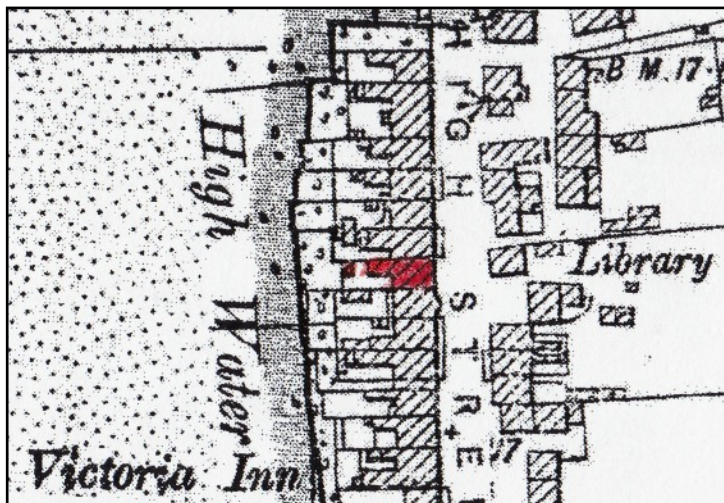
However on a map of encroachments belonging to the Crown Manor in 1859 a wide beach side plot (18k) was marked but no buildings were drawn on it, but it said 'sold' with 18h. This plot did have a building on it, which became eventually Chester House now part of the Victoria Inn. In 1848 we do not know who owned it - because buildings that side of the road with no gardens paid no tithe and so were not listed (1859 Map National Archives LRRO 1/3060).

Who was there in the 1871 Census is not clear as there were empty houses nearby in the list. It is not possible to find the people there in the 1881 Census either.



LEFT Marked in red is the house in 1886. There were two buildings in the yard - the larger one could be big enough for a fuel store as before modern heating, peat or coal would have had to come into the yard from the beach. The other one may have been the Ty Bach - the house's lavatory. There was only its fence or wall at the end of its yard to protect it from the sea.

In 1889 the house was called St Heliers. Living there was Captain Richard Williams. He and Captain Jones of St Clare bought a plot of land at Upper Borth and were expecting to build some villas there, today the three St Alban's Villas; Number One, Trafalgar and Ocean Belle (Cambrian News, 17th March 1899) In the 1891 Census the Captain was away at sea, but in the house was his wife Mary, aged 45 and born in Borth, and a daughter Maggie who was 16, and a son Evan James Williams 10, both born in Borth. Their first son called Evan James had died aged 7 in 1879 (Buried at the church at Llandre) With them was their nephew Whitlock Williams 7. Captain Williams for many years owned the Ocean Belle, a 'snow' of 170 tons. This was square rigged, two masted wooden sailing ship, the largest of all the two masted vessels, and handy and fast to sail. In 1899/1900, the Captain and his family were still living at St Heliers when he was lost at sea off Jutland aged 56 when commanding the Ocean Belle leaving a daughter and two sons. Whitlock was on board and was also lost. (Welsh Gazette, 11 January 1900). The name was spelt St Helliers in the 1901 Census - but the house was then unoccupied.



LEFT The house in 1904. It had lost one of the small buildings in its yard, and the high water mark is closer. (Detail from the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map revised in 1886 and published in 1905. Cardiganshire III.10)



ABOVE RIGHT A detail from a William's post-card called 'Borth Woods' of the early 1900s. Seaforth is on the right with its extension. This had a tall chimney on it with two chimney pots, suggesting a kitchen below and a warm upper room above it. It also had a prominent window at the end for a sea view. The rows of stakes called 'woods' are sea defences, cheap to replace after a storm. Apparently grass and other plants could grow on the slopes between them (Postcard Private Collection).

By 1910 the house was called 'Seaforth' was valued for Rates at £228, with £7 13s to pay and £9 gross. There was an absentee owner, a single lady, Frances Marie Wemyss born

about 1858 in Welshpool, who lived on her 'own means', spoke English, and was described in a 1901 Census as a 'gentlewoman'. She lived, or was staying with her uncle, John Thomas, a Pembrokeshire carpenter aged 56 and his wife Fanny aged 54 in Tenby.

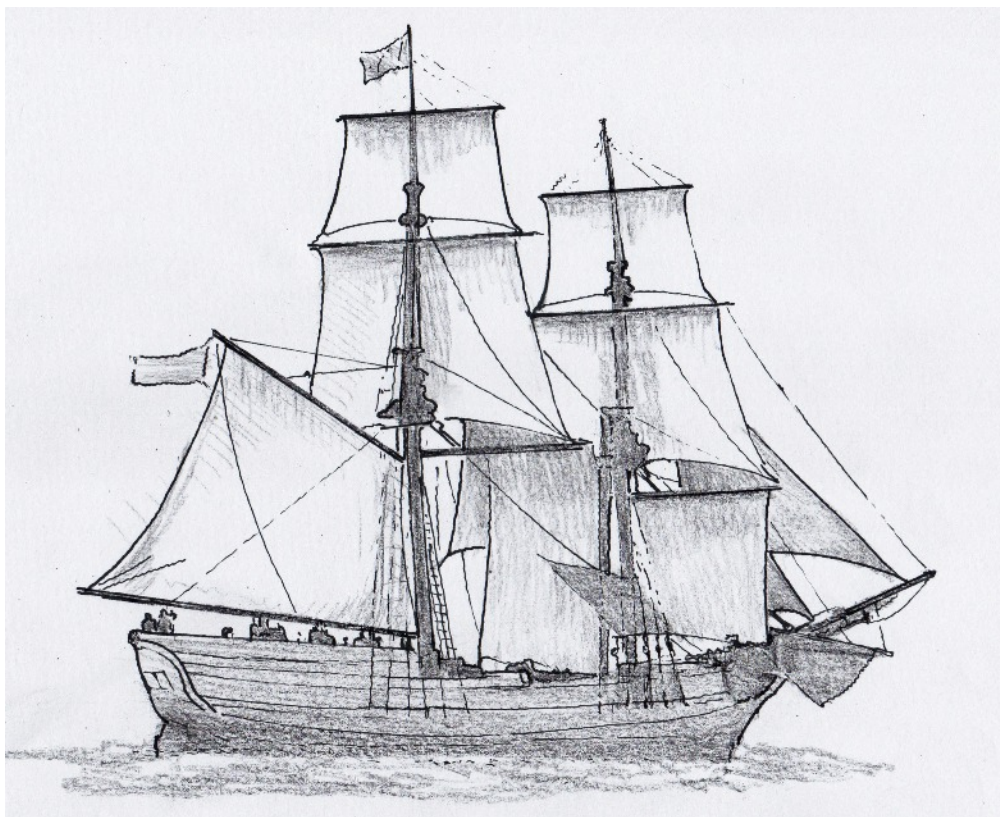
Living in Seaforth was James Thomas. The 1911 Census takers left it out - so it probably was empty or the family were away.

We have some idea of its rooms from an advertisement in the 'Illustrated Borth Guide' sometime after 1922, when it had accommodation to let of five bedrooms, and two sitting rooms (Aberystwyth Public Library). It was big enough for a family and some holiday visitors in the summer which would earn the family extra income.

Sometime afterwards in November 1924 the Cambrian News reported that a son of Mr Thomas and Mrs Elizabeth Thomas of Seaforth House, was drowned at Cardiff. He was an able seaman, John David Thomas, (born about 1871) aged 53, of the steam ship SS Remelstone of Swansea, and he left a widow and five children. He had gone to sea aged 12. In the first world war and in the merchant service he was torpedoed twice and survived.

Paying the rates in 1925 as the owner and occupier of the house was Lilian Thomas. In 1934 Mabel Thomas, living at Seaforth had a good recipe for a Bazaar at St Matthew's Church. On the voters list for the house in 1945 were Lilian Thomas, Arthur Llewellyn Thomas and Elizabeth Karn. In 1949 Mrs Thomas was on the Committee of the Women's Institute (Borth Review, National Library of Wales)

Lilian Thomas was still paying the rates in 1963 and had a vote for the house that year (Electoral Registers and Rates, Ceredigion Archives)



'Snow' rigging on a two masted sailing ship.

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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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