

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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THE SOAR CHAPEL

Morfa Borth – the marsh harbour.

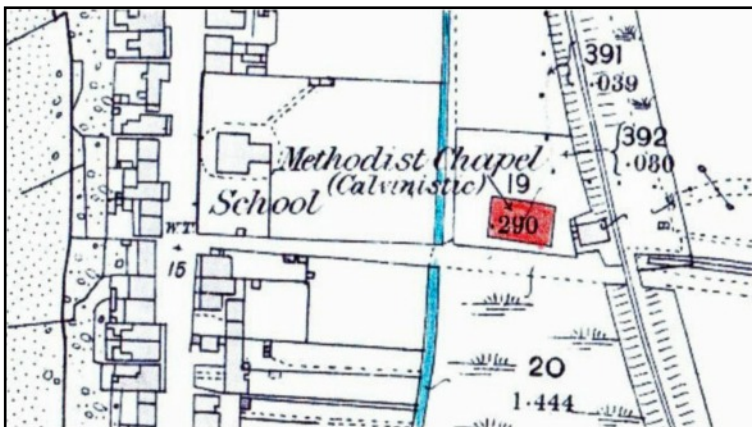


The Chapel in November 2008.

North side of the lane to Ynysfergi and the Animalarium.

The Chapel was built after the railway had arrived in Borth and a level crossing cottage had been built for the level crossing for the (then) lane to Brynlllys. The chapel was built very close to it. A group of Calvinistic Methodists began this chapel in (Upper) Borth in 1800, moved to the site by the railway in 1864, and there was a Concert in the Soar Chapel in January 1873. (Handbook and Guide to Borth, private collection, Welsh Newspapers online Y Tyst a'r Dydd). When the railway was built this ground was cut off from the rest of Pryse Pryse's Cae Gwyn meadow – so perhaps it was a suitable lane-side site to build on.

David Davies MP of Llandinam laid the foundation stone. He was brought up as a Calvinistic

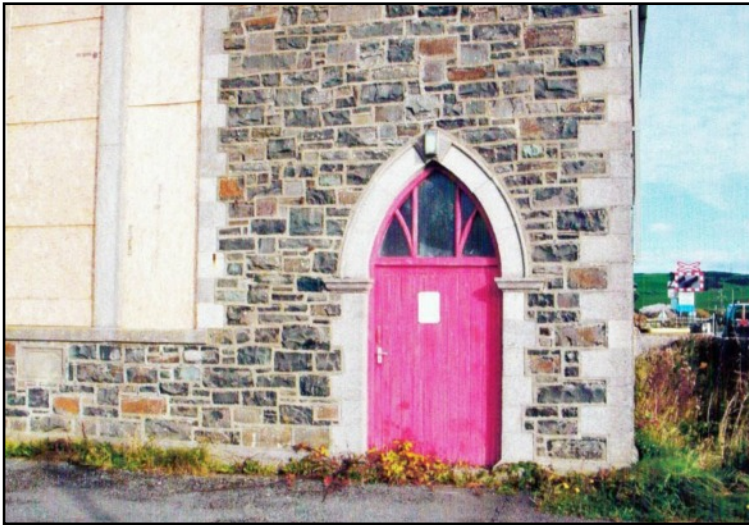


Methodist. He was a contractor who had been Savin's partner in building railways, and was to own coal mines and at this time he was 58 years old and had recently been elected the Liberal MP for Cardigan. He was involved locally at Aberystwyth where he was a governor of the University. The brook that ran behind the village would have been a useful source of water for baptisms and the Soar land

extended to it, with a generous amount of ground to the north. A graveyard was not likely because the ground had been marsh.

The Soar Chapel Page 2

LEFT The Chapel in 1886 marked in red (Detail from the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map surveyed in 1886 and published in 1888, Cardiganshire NW III.10)



Part of the facade in October 2009.



The oldest photograph of it by John Thomas shows the façade is mostly unchanged today in 2016. The walls were exposed rubble stone and not rendered. (National Library of Wales). There were two entrances, and the large window in three sections represented the Holy Trinity as in other chapels. The walls are dressed rubble stone, coursed but in varying sizes and of varying colours. The stones are not dressed smoothly as in the most expensive masonry. There are no rounded beach pebbles. Grey stone was chosen for the ashlar dressings around the door and windows, and for the prominent quoins that edge the walls. A simple capital shape is at the base of the pointed gothic arches above doors and windows and there is a keystone. The grey stone also makes a string course

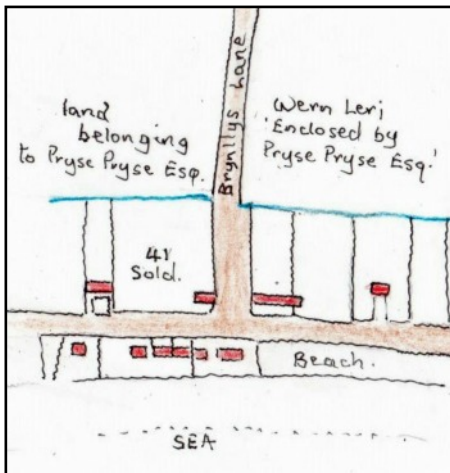
A detail to show the stonework. The stones had been squared but were still rough.



This stone was inset in the wall beneath the stone windowsill of the three large windows on the facade. It has become weathered and 'Laid by David Davies MP' is clear, and 'October' - but the rest of the date has gone.

low down between the doors though partly hidden by vegetation it used to be clean and prominent. The glass panel above the doors is not original though it tries to copy

the pointed arch shape. The window frames of the large window was the same in 2008 as in the old photograph. By 2009 this large window was boarded up.



Five tall windows open on to Church Lane, and a rubble stone wall enclosed the ground. The old photograph shows square posts with curved tops marking the entrance from the lane.

LEFT In 1829 the ground on which the chapel was built belonged to Pryse Pryse of Gogerddan. A detail copied from a Crown map of 1829. North was on the left, south on the right. The village had cottages with land as far as the brook. 41 was the vicar's and had a cottage (National Archives LRRO 1/3060)



LEFT In 1848 number 34 was his field called Cae Gwyn and it was meadow. Farming it was Richard James of Brynlllys. There was a ford on the lane where it crossed the Brook. A school had been built on the vicar's ground. The dotted line was the Cyfoeth/Henlllys township boundary. On the other side of the lane was ground called Wern Leri that had been waste, but had been enclosed by Pryse Pryse. The railway was not there yet (Detail from the Tithe Apportionments Map

for Llanfihangel Genau'r Glyn, Cyfoeth Township, on-line at CYNEFIN).

The railway opened to passengers in 1863 and in 1875 the Chapel was ready to have the slates put on the roof. In March 1876 the interior was being furnished and on June 20th 1876 the Chapel was opened. The many colours in its stonework is similar to the stonework of St Matthew's Church opened in June 1876.

In October 1883 after a storm at sea the leet (brook) behind the village flooded, and the chapel was unusable surrounded by water 18 inches deep (Cambrian News, 26th October).

In 1903 the attendance was 178, and with the Sunday School 185. (Walks and Wanderings in the County of Cardiganshire, E. G. Horsfall Turner). In 1910 for a tax planned but not levied the Chapel was valued at £1,265 the site was valued at £1,500, and the Capel Soar was owned by Trustees (Ceredigion Archives). In the 1920s the Rev. Caron Jones was the minister. He was also the minister of the Babell Chapel at Dolybont before 1935 (Cambrian News article 13/10/1905). In 1924 he was president at a 'Social Friday' in aid of the Foreign Missionary society. Youngsters took the collections and were treated to refreshments supplied by some of the chapel ladies. (Cambrian News April 4th) As in Borth's other chapels musical and literary competitive events were held in the Soar for example; one on Good Friday 1924. (Cambrian News April 25th). In 1950 it was without a pastor when the Rev. Caron Jones had retired.

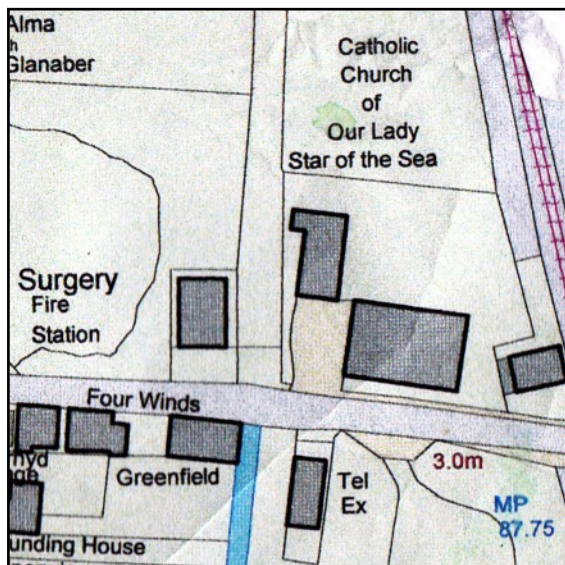
The wooden pews had a special hole for the communion wine. (Terry Davies, Borth: A Maritime History page 137)



ABOVE The Chapel photographed before 1905 by John Thomas (National Library of Wales)

A Borth Guide Book of the 1960s said the services were exclusively Welsh – and the minister the Rev. J. Tudno Williams also held services at the Gerlan Chapel. This Guide Book labelled the chapels as ‘Presbyterian’ and the Soar was called the ‘Welsh Presbyterian Church’ in the 1950s too.

According to the The Royal Commission of Historic Monument Wales the Soar Chapel was offered for sale in 1964 as a place of worship and purchased by the Menevia Diocese to use as a Roman Catholic Church ‘Our Lady of the Sea’. In 1969 a Roman Catholic Church of Our Lady, Star of the Sea was built to the northwest of the Soar.



LEFT The site of the Soar today by the lane (A detail from a Council Map courtesy of Councillor Ray Quant who provided it for research for a village event).

In 2016 the Chapel and the Roman Catholic Church were put up for sale by auction for a possible price of £70,000.

A gale recently damaged the roof of the Chapel but it was repaired. The Chapel now has a future as a hall for concerts and lectures.

BELOW The Chapel in March 2019 when it was open to the public.



ABOVE There is a seaman's compass on the east wall as many of the congregation were mariners.

RIGHT The moulding is classical including these fine brackets.





ABOVE The gable end west wall window has the trio of panes suggesting the 'Trinity' and is enhanced by some coloured glass.

BELOW LEFT The structure of the roof and ceiling.

RIGHT The windows have intersecting Y-glazing. There are five each side. This is the window on the south side at the west end.





ABOVE This is the most recent pattern of glazing above the doors, but the original window in the John Thomas photograph had one Y shape.



ABOVE The metal tie is a recent safety measure to stabilize the building.

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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