

# 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 WAREHOUSE

formerly the WESLEYAN METHODIST SHILOH CHAPEL

Morfa Borth - the Marsh Harbour



Today the former Chapel is a warehouse at the southern end of the High Street. The porch has been taken down, and a large entrance carved out of the front.

*LEFT The front section is rendered red at the sides of the building, the rendering ending at the first side window. The two doorways remain from the 1871 Chapel front which had two entrances. A third central window had to be blocked up and hidden when the large opening was made for the warehouse.*



The name 'Shiloh' in Hebrew means 'place of peace'.

The side walls of this building are rubble stone which the original Chapel is likely to have been. Enlargements were later made at the rear.



*LEFT The front top beneath the rendering is stone coloured bricks in Flemish bond. This was a glimpse of the bricks in April 2013.*



*ABOVE This is the north wall of the building seen from the garden of Pomona. The walling of this main section of the building is dressed rubble stone. The windows are edged with yellow sandstone.*



*LEFT There is some brick walling at the rear of the building and some single storey extensions.*

*RIGHT A window on the north wall from the inside of the building, it had eighteen narrow glazing bars.*

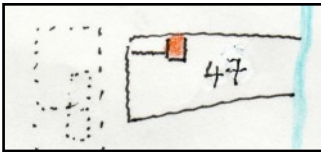


*LEFT This window would have been the east window of the chapel, but it is blocked.*



*ABOVE and BELOW The interior in 2013. This had been a handsome tall interior. There was no balcony but the south side was walled off.*

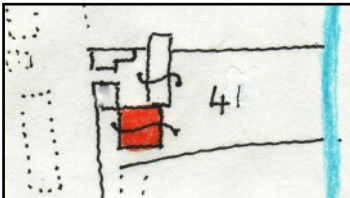
The ground for the Warehouse/Chapel was enclosed in 1809 from the pebble embankment thrown up by the sea and called 'waste' because it was no use for farming. The ground measured one rod, one and a half perches and extended to a brook. A rent of £1. 2s had to be paid every year to the Crown manor of Llanfihangel who owned the ground.



*LEFT On a map of 1829, the ground enclosed from the waste, Number 47, had a cottage with an enclosed front garden and set back from the street. It belonged to Mary Lewis. Over the road were two cottages and the beach. No Chapel was shown. (NA LRRO 1/3060)*

We know that the Wesleyan Methodist Jones Bathafarn preached at Borth in 1805, and by 1806 a Society of Wesleyan Methodists was formed there. The Shiloh was to be on the Aberystwyth Circuit of Chapels. (Bert J. Rawlins, *Parish Churches and Nonconformist Chapels*, volume 1, Cardiganshire and Carmarthenshire, 1987 and 1989) The RCHMW suggests a Shiloh Chapel was first built in 1808.

John Ellis writing in 1930 gave the date of building as 1830. The RCHMW wrote that the Chapel was rebuilt in 1832 and enlarged in 1842. That is the building we see on the Tithe Apportionments map of 1848 on the site of the present building.



*LEFT In 1848 the Chapel marked in red had a square shape. On the surrounding land some cottages had been built. The Chapel was not listed, except that a curlicue was drawn to indicate it was owned with the ground and the cottages and gardens. Edward Thomas's name was given, he lived in one of the cottages, and there were other families in the other cottages - their names were*

*not given. (Detail from a photocopy of the Tithe Apportionments Map for Llanfihangel Genau'r Glyn, Cyfoeth Township on-line at CYNEFIN)*

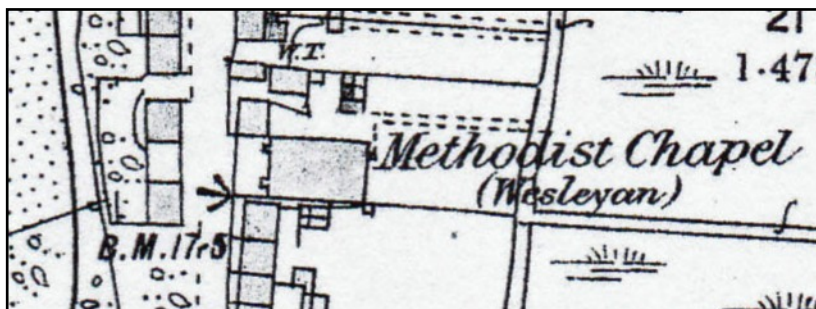
A clue to Edward Thomas is in the 1841 Census, he was a carrier, and in their home was Margaret Thomas, aged 35 with sons Edward aged 10 and Richard aged 4, and daughters Jane, 7, and Elizabeth 2. This entry is next to that of John Morris who in 1845 owned the ground to the north of the Chapel (now Eltham's garden) so this is a likely placing for Edward Thomas.

The Chapel had 127 members in 1841 - mostly families of mariners and fishermen. (Bert J. Rawlins, *Parish Churches and Nonconformist Chapels*, volume 1, Cardiganshire and Carmarthenshire, 1987 and 1989)

John Ellis wrote that the Chapel had a gallery and could seat 300. The prominent men there were William Arter of pleasant mien, Lewis Evans of Ty Canol, enlightener of the bible, Richard Jones of Britannia, God-stricken, Richard Rowlands, of Factory Forge, creative, David Griffiths (father of the late Rev. John Griffiths) faithful follower, and Richard James, leader in songs of praise and leader in all other things. It was soon felt that this building was ageing badly so in 1870 they demolished it." Ellis went on to write that they rebuilt it as today's (1930) Libanus. We know this name belonging to a Chapel further north along the High Street, later the Gerlan. (John Ellis History of Borth, see Terry Davies's web site. Ellis had a great aunt living in Morfa Borth since her marriage in 1819, and other members of the Ellis family were to live there too.)

When the Chapel was rebuilt in 1871 the foundation stone was laid by Mrs Williams of Picton House, Aberystwyth. The Circuit Ministers and members had it built using the local builders Messrs. T. Jones and E. Williams. The architect was Mr D. Williams of Aberystwyth. (Borth Review, National Library of Wales) In the 1871 Census its young Wesleyan Minister, William Evans, a bachelor, born at Mold, Flintshire was a boarder at Britannia House.

On January 2nd 1880 on Christmas Day at 6.30pm an entertainment was given in the Chapel by Welsh Wesleyans, Richard Lewis presided and Mr John Ellis conducted the singing. There were recitations too. (Cambrian News)



LEFT In 1886 we can see the considerably bigger chapel which was wider, extending to the southern boundary of the ground. The front was in the same place but it had two porches - so two entrances, and the building extended back on

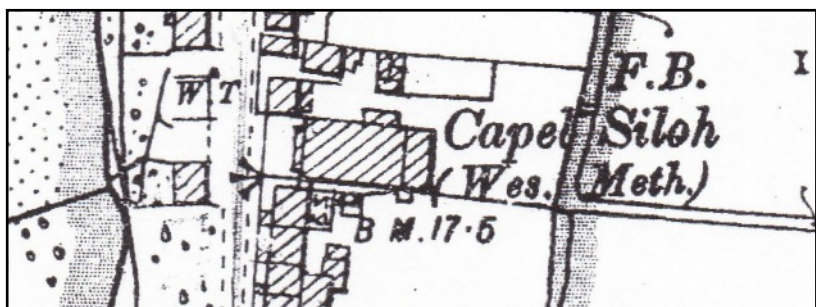
the ground almost doubling the size of the 1848 Chapel. The 1848 terrace of cottages that had butted against the 1830 Chapel had gone (Detail from the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map surveyed in 1886 and published in 1888, Cardiganshire NW III.10).

In 1895 the Chapel was one of five in Borth, and was the only Wesleyan Methodist. (Kelly's Directory of S. Wales)

On October 9th. 1896 in the great storm, the sea swept clean over the road to the Chapel and the road was broken up.

In 1901 the Minister at the Chapel was a young R. Eurog Jones, aged 25, born in Anglesey, and a bachelor was boarding at 2 Adelaide Place ( one of some small cottages in a terrace) (Census)

The RCHMW lists the Chapel as rebuilt and modified in 1900 - 1901 as a "simple round headed and sub- classical gable entry type.



LEFT The considerably enlarged Chapel in 1904. It had a new porch, a new section at the rear and a small extension on the north side. On the ground at the rear was a footbridge across the brook. This is the Chapel we see in the John Thomas

photograph (Detail from the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map revised in 1904 and published in 1905, Cardiganshire NW III.10)

In 1907 Isaac Lloyd, a deacon of the Chapel died aged 76. His wife Ann had died in 1905.

In 1910 for a valuation for a tax planned but not levied the Chapel was valued at £1,500, the site at £1,424. It was the most valuable of all the Borth Chapels, (the Soar £1265 and £1,200, the Libanus at £1,200 and £1105, the English Congregational at £1,200. There was no Rate for the Trustees to pay. (Ceredigion Archives) The Shiloh was renovated in 1912. (Bert J. Rawlins, Parish Churches and Nonconformist Chapels, volume 1, Cardiganshire and Carmarthenshire, 1987 and 1989)

In February 1924 the Chapel was given the following gifts, a Tea Service from Mrs James Williams of Penybont, Mrs Williams of Elton and Captain David Jones of St Albans, silver teaspoons from Mrs Mary Jenkins of Gwastad, Mrs Rowlands of Cambrian Villa, and Mrs Hughes of Ardwyn, and silver water jugs from Mrs Maggie James of Scranton and Mrs James of Hazelmere. (Cambrian News, February 15th)



*ABOVE* A photograph of the Chapel taken by John Thomas between 1901 and 1905. This was the building enlarged and modified in 1900/1901 with in particular a new porch with a pediment in the classical style. The three windows along this west front represent the Trinity. The lettering has the words *Capel* and *Wesleyaid* but the first word of the three is not clear (National Library of Wales and on-line)

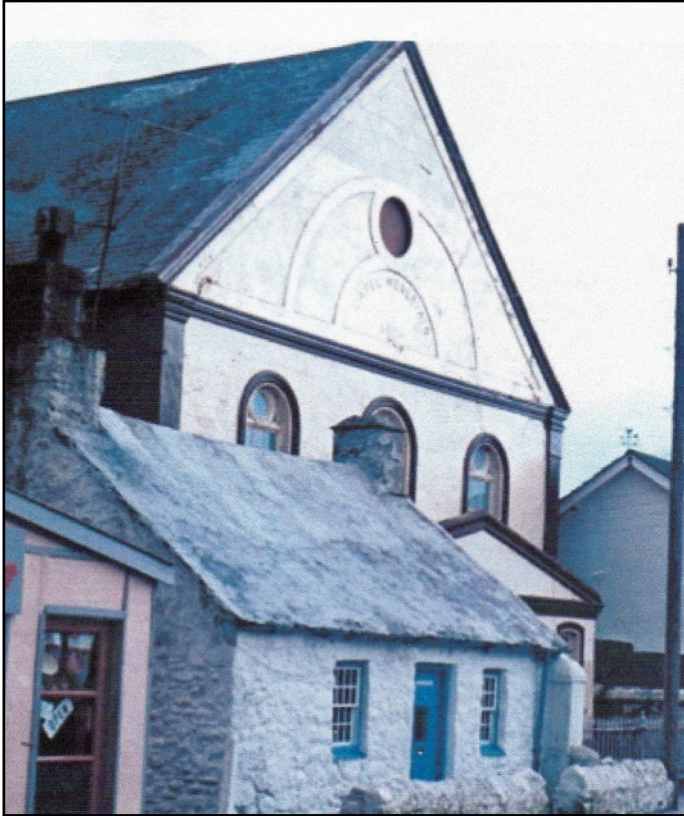
In April 1924 Mr Morgan Owen of Gwastad was the Superintendent of the Sunday School (Cambrian News April 10<sup>th</sup> 1924).

In 1926 the Rev. William Christmas Humphreys was the Minister. He lived at Carron House. (1926 Kelly's Directory of South Wales) He was still there in 1950. (Borth Review, National Library of Wales)

Gifts to the Chapel from Mrs Maggie James were Electric Light in 1932, a handmade carved oak chair and she gave a substantial donation towards renovations in 1940. (John Ellis - unpublished research).

In 1945 the Chapel was one of four Borth Chapels. (Borth Review, National Library of Wales)

The Chapel was still operating in the 1960s. A Borth Guide Book of 1965 said that the Chapel occasionally had services in English during the summer - that would have suited English speaking Methodist holiday makers. In August 1965 the Children's Special Service Mission ran open air services on the foreshore, and in the Chapel if it was raining. There was also a Nursery School in the Vestry, with tuition in Welsh. (Ceredigion Archives)

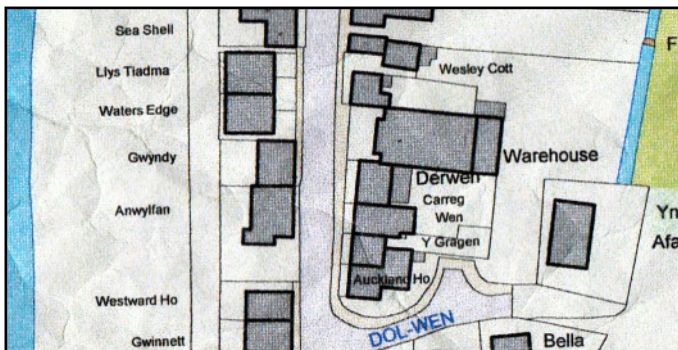


*LEFT A bold dark colour was used to emphasize the shapes on the pediments and round the windows. The north side of the building was then exposed rubble stone (Photograph Aberystwyth Public Library possibly 1979 from the Western Mail 9 June).*

From the surviving evidence I suggest that the stone building with the decorative windows was built in 1871, with two entrance doors with small porches.

The brick gable and front of the building with the large handsome brick porch with one entrance at the front was probably the 1900/1 addition. The present Vestry on the east was probably also built at the beginning of the twentieth century. It blocked the lower part of the former tall eastern window, and this had to be boarded over, but with the window shape carved into it. Today the handsome pilasters at each end of

the front have survived, rendered red. In 1975 access to the rear of the building and the ground behind was the passageway beside Wesley Cottage (Historic Maps On-line).



*LEFT The building today has access to land behind it, and fills its site, and this detail from a modern Council Map shows how large it is compared with the surrounding homes (Detail from a map courtesy of Councillor Ray Quant who provided it for research for a local event).*

*BELOW The south face of the building in 2018 - part of this wall may have once been rendered.*



*Photographs of the interior by kind permission of the present owners.*



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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-eredigion.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.

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**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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