

# 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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# WESLEY COTTAGE

Morfa Borth - the Marsh Harbour

A cottage at the southern end of the High Street on the east side and named after the former Wesleyan Siloh Chapel alongside it. The cottage was built between 1829 and 1848.



The cottage is one storey and double fronted under a tiled gable roof. The walls are bold exposed rubble stone including rounded stones from the beach. The south gable wall has no windows, but there is a small high window in the northern gable wall which must light a loft under the roof. There are chimneys at both ends of the roof, the southern chimney of rubble stone, the northern one has been rebuilt with dark bricks. Brick shaped stones make an arch above the door and above the left hand window there is a repair. Unlike some of Borth's most primitive cottages the tops of the windows and the door do not reach the roof. The windows are modern sash windows with sixteen lights replacing similar older sash windows. The front door is modern

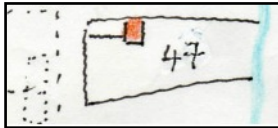
with tongue and groove wood with a stained glass window in a plain doorframe. In front of the cottage is a narrow paved garden area enclosed by a white rendered rubble stone wall. Butted against the southern front of the cottage is a pillar with a rounded top which reaches almost to the roof.



*LEFT The front door is not central, there is a wider area from the door to the edge of the cottage on the north suggesting this was once the side of the main living room/kitchen.*

Today the building is deeper than the oldest cottages as the back has a rendered extension on the south that reaches to the Warehouse/Chapel, and another smaller extension on the north with a tiled roof and a window on the north wall. The back garden is enclosed and ends at the extension on the north wall of the Warehouse/Chapel.

The ground for the cottage was enclosed in 1809 from the pebble embankment thrown up by the sea and called 'waste' because it was no use for farming. The road was centuries old being a quick way to North Wales via a ferry to Aberdovey and was a turnpike road in the 1770s.



LEFT In 1829 The ground, number 47, 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. Mary Lewis owned the ground and the building on it described as a 'cottage and land'. (Copied from the Map and Schedule National Archives LRRO 1/3060)

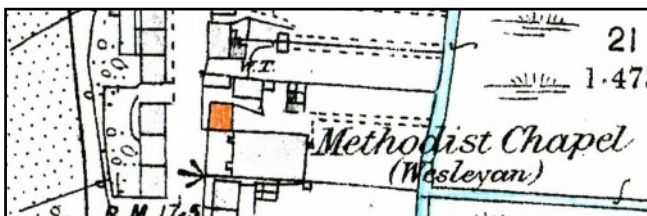
We know that the Wesleyan Methodist Jones Bathafarn preached at Borth in 1805, and by 1806 a Society of Wesleyan Methodists was formed in Borth. The Siloh was to be on the Aberswyth Circuit of Chapels. (Bert J. Rawlins, Parish Churches and Nonconformist Chapels, volume 1, Cardiganshire and Carmarthenshire, 1987 and 1989) The RCHMW suggests a Siloh Chapel was first built in 1808. Was it the 1829 'cottage' on this site? John Ellis writing in 1930 gave the date of building as 1830. The RCHMW wrote that this Chapel was rebuilt in 1832 and enlarged in 1842.



LEFT In 1848 it was the large square building coloured purple we see on the Tithe Apportionments Map on number 41, and Wesleyan Cottage marked in red was there too. Like the rest of the buildings, including the Chapel - it was listed as belonging to Edward Thomas. He lived in one of the cottages, and there were other families in the other cottages and gardens - their names were not given (Detail from a photocopy of the Map for Llanfihangel Genau'r Glyn, Cyfoeth Township, On-line at CYNEFIN).

In the 1841 Census, Edward Thomas was a carrier, and in their home was his wife Margaret 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 was probably the Tithe Map's Edward Thomas but we do not know which of the cottages he lived in. He was not in the 1851 or 1861 Census - and it is not possible to find the occupants of the cottage then as addresses were not given. This is also because 'Wesleyan Place' had homes over the street too - in all a whole cluster of them.

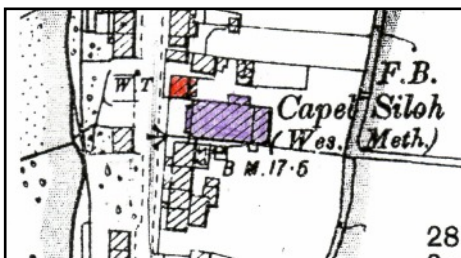
In the 1871 Census at 'Wesleyan Cottage' was a railway platelayer, Robert Owen from Montgomeryshire. His wife Eliza 30 was local, and they had children Edward 5, Elizabeth 3 and Edward 1. Also there was a platelayer lodger, Richard Thomas aged 60. That is a houseful for a cottage listed in 1911 as only two rooms! Robert Owen was also at the Cottage in the 1881 Census. He was 42 by then. Did he thereafter organise a better home for himself by restoring/or rebuilding a cottage now The Elms next door? Chester House (now the lowest part of the Victoria Inn) was built by another platelayer, George Dutton, replacing an old cottage. His pay was sufficient to do this.



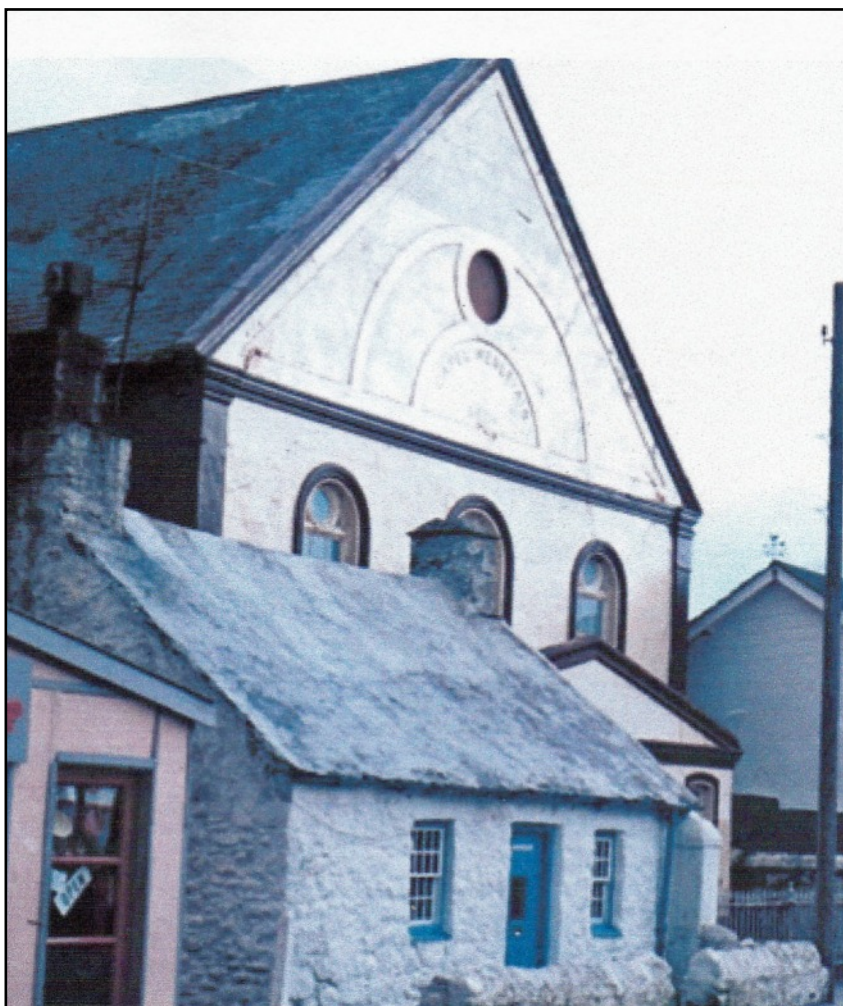
LEFT Owen's cottage in 1886. It had a large area of ground at the back extending to the brook, and behind the Chapel. At the front it shared a yard with a cottage (now The Elms) and the narrow building at right

angles to the street. This was enclosed from the street. There was a small detached building at the back, perhaps with pens, which may have been pig sties. Access to the back of the cottage was on the northern side as it is today (Detail from the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map surveyed in 1886 and published in 1888, Cardiganshire NW III.10)

In Wesleyan Cottage in 1891 was Margaret Lewis, born about 1852, and not in the Parish Register so probably baptised in a Chapel, and then with her 'own means'. She had not married and spoke only Welsh. In 1901 at the Census, and aged 49 Margaret Lewis was the caretaker of the Chapel.



LEFT In 1904 the cottage still had land at the back as in 1888 and there was an extension drawn all along its back. At the front the cottage still shared a yard with the Elms and the narrow building at right angles to the street which became a shop. (Detail from the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map revised in 1904 and published in 1905, Cardiganshire NW III.10)

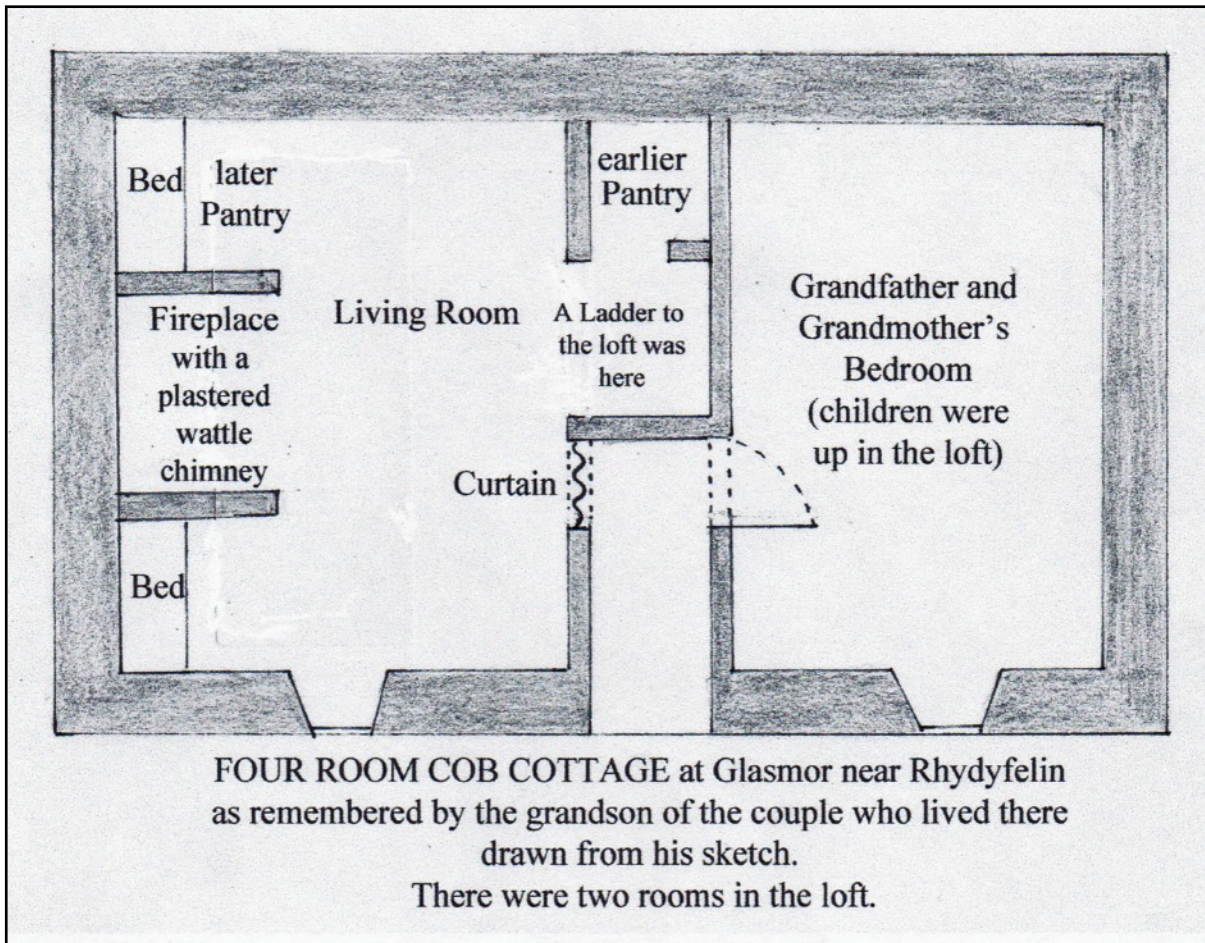


LEFT This is a detail from a slide in the Aberystwyth Public Library called 'Wesleyan Chapel'. The cottage was whitewashed and possibly always had been as the stonework is very rough. The old chimney on the north side of the roof had a double section with one chimney pot. That had been for the main kitchen/living room, but by this time there was a stone chimney to warm another room on the other end of the roof. The deep pitch of the roof would have suited reed thatch.

In 1910 for a valuation for a tax planned but not levied the cottage was valued at £66. There would have been £2 to pay, £2.10s gross. £66 was the value of a good quality stone cottage - Borth's poorest cottages

were valued at about £30. Margaret Lewis owned the cottage. (Ceredigion Archives T/DV/18 and map at the National Library of Wales).

In the 1911 Census the cottage was listed with just two rooms - that would be her main living rooms - her kitchen/living room and her bedroom - both on the ground floor. Margaret Lewis, by then was earning her living as a self employed laundress.



ABOVE The plan of an old cottage. Wesley Cottage has a small window for a room or rooms in the roof - commonly used for children.



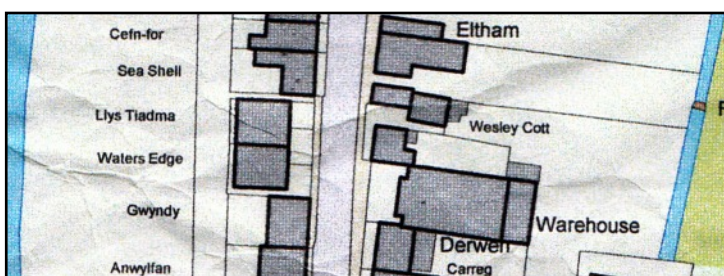
LEFT This is a detail from a postcard of about 1921. The cottage was whitewashed and there was a small window for an attic room on the south gable end.

In 1925 Wesley Cottage was owned by Miss Owen and the tenant was E. H. Slaecombe.

In 1934 the owners were the Trustees of the Siloh Wesleyan Chapel and the tenant had been Williams but was then Clifford Jones.

Paying the Rates in 1949 and still in 1957 and 1963 and with votes for the house in 1963 were James Jenkins and Gwendoline Irene Regan and Thomas James Edwards (Electoral Registers and Rates Ceredigion Archives).

In 1975 the cottage had an extension on the south side of the back and also another small extension. It had its own back garden (Historical Maps On-line)



LEFT This detail from a modern Council Map shows the cottage and its garden sharing a boundary line with the warehouse - its name is printed above it (Map courtesy of Councillor Ray Quant who provided it for research for a village event).

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In July 1979 the Western Mail had a story about the cottage, “Former fisherman’s cottage could become County Museum“. The cottage was for Sale, and the Borth Community Council had asked the Ceredigion District Council to consider buying and preserving it. The building and surrounding land had been priced at £8.000 and Dr John Owen the curator of the District Council’s Museum had looked it over and reckoned it would need another £6.000 to be restored. However the County was at that time spending money restoring and fitting out the Colosseum Theatre in Aberystwyth to become a museum so Wesleyan Cottage was not bought by the Council. In the photograph was Mr Glan John, a retired police sergeant and on Borth’s Community Council who had suggested the idea, and Mrs Irene Regan aged 59 one of a family of five children who were brought up there. She would have been born there about 1920.

*The cottage in 1979 with its slate roof, old sash windows and old northern chimney (Picture courtesy of the Western Mail and South Wales Echo).*



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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-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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