

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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WEST WINDS

Wernfach, Morfa Borth - the Marsh Harbour

The house is on the east side of the Lôn Glan-y-mor at the southernmost end of Morfa Borth. A later addition to the cottage next door it was built after 1848 but before 1886.



ABOVE West Winds in 2018.



Beneath the rendering the ground floor walling is brick with modern walling of 1979/1980 above it. The windows are all modern, the dormer windows front and back providing good views and light for a living room on the entire top floor. The ground floor has bedrooms, and a kitchen in an extension on the rear. The entrance is into the back of the house sheltered from the prevailing west winds.

ABOVE Similarities with Journey's End next door are because it too was rebuilt in 1979/1980.



ABOVE The rear in 2018. A balcony above the kitchen accessed from the upstairs living room has fine views across the pastures to the hills.



ABOVE The view from the balcony.

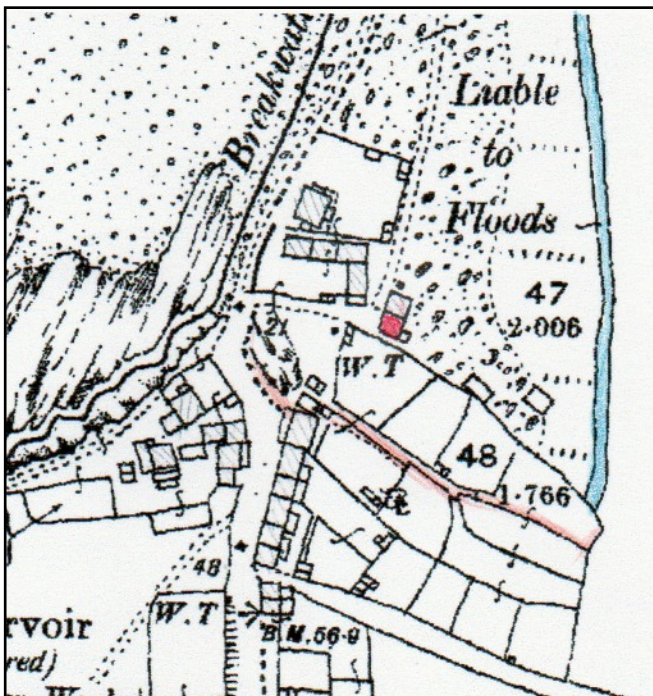


ABOVE The 1979 garage.

West Wind shares a yard with Journey's End, the garden is small edged by a track for access to the bungalows around it. These were built since 1979 on ground reclaimed as pasture from the Wern Fach marsh. Bryn Owen's hill (bryn) rises up in the background on the right.

The ground on which West Wind and Journey's End was built was a piece of manor 'waste' ground adjoining the beach as it was mostly marsh and not useful farmland. On a map of 1829 two men had been interested in it, and written on it was 'Piece that Mr Williams and John Lewis presented in the last Court at Llanfihangel.' No cottages were drawn there (Map National Archive LRRO 1/3060 Number 51). John Lewis was a lawyer who wrote letters for illiterate villagers and he had some land at the north end of what is now Borth Village and a farmhouse where the station now stands.

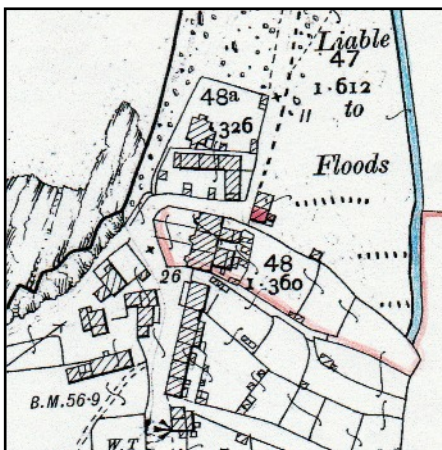
By 1848 there was a building on the site of Journey's End. There was a second building further north and the whole piece was numbered 49. A 'hook' through both buildings indicated they belonged to the owner of that piece of ground. The owner was 'John Lewis and others' and it was called 'waste and buildings' - not 'waste and cottages'. The piece measured two acres, and 26 perches which just under a quarter of an acre - 30 perches. This was not like the Gull Cottage group of cottages across the lane. These were called 'cottages and premises' owned by 'John Davies and others'.



LEFT The pink line shows where the 'waste' ended. This was 1886 and by then there were already the two homes sharing a party wall, as today. West Wind is coloured red. Rough pasture and marsh edged by a drainage ditch was at the back and the homes had no enclosed front or back gardens unlike the cottages across the lane. The Lôn Glan-y-mor was unfenced. There was a small building on the rear of West Wind - possibly an outside lavatory. (Detail from the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map surveyed in 1886 and published in 1888, Cardiganshire NW III.10)

It is not possible to find the people living in the cottage in the early Census's.

In 1891 Census in the cottage was an elderly widow Anne Evans aged 72 and born in Cwm Rheidol. She was there on her own and had her 'own means'.



In 1901 in the Census, at the cottage was Miss Catherine Davies, aged 60, and she was born in Borth about 1841 and was a Welsh speaker. She was listed as a 'shopkeeper, grocer'. She was on her own there.

LEFT In 1904 little had changed except the ground behind was all pasture, and the great St Alban Villas had been built. It is clear from this map that West Winds was a little smaller than Journey's End and there is a small extension on the back.

Mrs Dorothy Adams, who would restore the cottage in 1937 spoke to a villager called Willy Morgan, then aged 45 so born about 1882, he would have been a young man about 1911. He told her about the woman who had sold sweets from the cottage called Kit Shorse by the Welsh speaking children. She bought the sweets in Aberystwyth walking back with them in a sack on her shoulder. The sweets were kept in a cupboard in the front room which had a small counter so it 'had the air of a shop'. The cupboard in 1937, kept by Mrs Adams was damp with beads of perspiration on the walls so she wondered how Kit managed. When elderly and with rheumatism she sat all day in the back parlour, trusting the children to pay for their toffee apples, liquorice sticks or humbugs with a penny or half penny which they were to put in a box. She knew which children cheated and put a button in instead. This was Miss Catherine Davies, there in 1911 who had filled in the Census form in Welsh, with 'Gwertha Melusion' sweets for sale, and she said she had three main rooms, which were seen in 1937 by Mrs Adams, a front room, back room and a single bedroom under the roof.



LEFT This photograph taken in 1937 shows the front of her house. The tall brick chimney was for a fireplace with a range for her 'parlour' downstairs at the back. The front door began at the party stone wall.

From the front door was a passage six foot long, floored with slate. This ended at a cupboard under a ladder staircase with wide rungs. The two downstairs rooms were walled off from the passage, which skirted the staircase and



led into a lean-to wooden scullery at the back. The front room had a floor of large red quarry tiles and a small counter and cupboard for her 'shop'. The one casement window had narrow glazing bars, but with broken glass and the wood frame was rotten.

The 'parlour' had loose wooden floorboards laid directly on to the earth.

LEFT The two cottages in 1937.

RIGHT The parlour fireplace with its 'range'. It had a 'stick' oven then hidden under plaster - but in the 1979 rebuild this was found and preserved and is now in a wall in the upstairs living room.





ABOVE and RIGHT The old bread oven.



LEFT The rear of the cottages in 1937 though some demolition seems to have taken place already. When first seen a dormer window in the West Wind end was not there. The single room upstairs only had a small window either side of a massive chimney breast. This had to be on the gable end, a

continuation of the parlour fireplace chimney. Apart from those 'there was no other light or ventilation upstairs'. The side brick walls were two foot six high, with decent headroom in the middle. The sloping ceiling had exposed lath beams with rough plastering. In the photograph is a small ruinous lean-to on the left, perhaps the remains of an outside lavatory, but marks around and above a doorway against the party wall (as at the front) suggest this where the wooden scullery of Miss Davies had been with a back door. The marks suggest its roof was at right angles to the main cottage, and inside was a stove with a rusty stove-pipe, a brown sink and a cold water tap. If Miss Davies cooked on her range in the parlour, in the scullery she heated water and washed up, and it had the back door and two windows.

In 1910 for a tax planned but not levied, the address was just Wernfach. Evan Richards of Mannwch was the owner and Catherine Davies was his tenant.

In 1925 Mrs Richards paid the rates and A. A. Morgan was living there. This was still the least valuable of all the Wernfach cottages at £2 net with £1.12s to pay. James Lakin was the owner of Hollyhock (Gull Cottage) across the lane.

In 1934 James Lakin owned West Winds and Journey's End as well. He was elderly and lived in Wolverhampton and had been a dealer. He put tenants in his cottages. In 1937 Hubert Adams and his wife Dorothy bought both cottages from him for £120. In November Mrs Adams paid the rates for Troed. No rates were listed for West Winds which was considered uninhabitable.

The Adams family came from Shrewsbury and planned to repair West Winds, and some friends were to have Journey's End, and later bought it from her. They were to be holiday cottages. Dorothy Adams wrote an account of her coming and employing a builder Tom Wilkins to work on West Winds. She describes what she found. The ground floor measured 15 feet by 17 feet and downstairs had a front and a back room. A six foot narrow passage from the front door with thick slate slabs on the floor led to a cupboard under the stairs and then skirted the foot of the stairs going past with a doorway into the parlour and on to the scullery which was in a wooden lean to on the back of the cottage. The stairs were little more than a kind of ladder with rungs fairly wide and flat which went to a single room upstairs. An outside lavatory was three yards from the back door by the garden gate.

The front room had a tiled floor, the back 'parlour' had loose floorboards laid directly the earth. The upstairs room had a sloping ceiling and below that an upright brick wall about two feet six inches high. There were straight walls each end and plenty of headroom in the middle. The ceiling had exposed beams not of oak, but of laths with rough plastering. There was a very wide fireplace for the tall chimney in the south gable end of the cottage, and it had two very small windows either side of it. There was no other light or ventilation. The floor boards were rough, thick and uneven. The low back wall had a section of tree trunk pushed into it to strengthen it.

Mrs Adams planned these changes to make cottage habitable. On the ground floor she scrapped the two smaller rooms and passage to make one ground floor room. Upstairs she wanted two small rooms with a dormer window for each both front and back. It was necessary to duck under a roof beam to enter the second room.

A 'stick' (bread) oven was found behind the plaster. The slate passage floor was to come up and the floor of the back room - the parlour - was to have its floor boards removed and to have large red quarry tiles laid to match those in the front room. She planned quarry tile skirting boards for easy cleaning. There were to be quarry tiles for the window sills too although her builder did not approve of it.

A new kitchen was built at the rear eight foot by six foot, with a small white sink and a draining board and a good sized window to look out over the fields, and a new window at the side too. There was to be a new front door, and electric light for both bedrooms, the living room and the kitchen. The ground floor rotten window frames were to be replaced. The family distempered the walls themselves.

A new proper staircase was necessary.

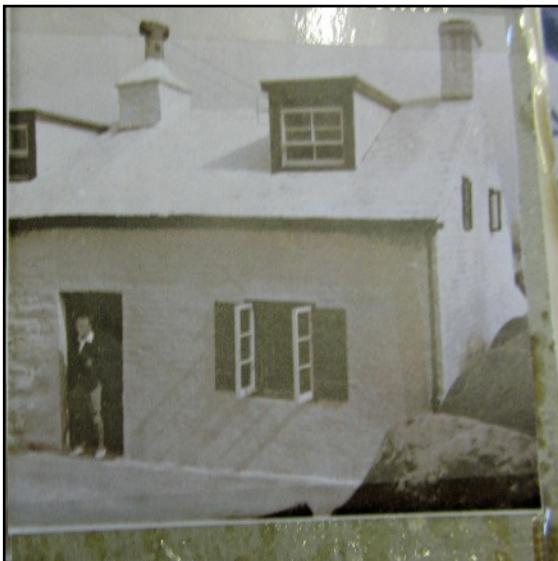
She noted about the garden that it was dark soil with no clay and a fine texture. She had a post and wire fence to enclose the garden and a concrete yard area was needed. Mr Lakin did not sell her the field at the back, which became very soggy at Spring tides and heavy rain.

Mrs Adams employed a builder, Tom Wilkins and she printed a list of costs to restore the cottage.

£55 did not seem too colossal if that was the main cost of the most necessary work. Included in that were these items:-

Two Dormer Windows	£24. 0. 0d
New Staircase	1.12. 6d
Electric wiring and four lights	5.10. 0d
Bedroom partition (Beaver board)	2.12. 0d
New sink	2. 1. 6d
New front door	2. 3. 0d
Rain water pipes and gutters	2. 0. 0d
Roof repairs and cement washed	2.17. 0d
Outside painting	1.10. 0d
New window with shutters	4. 0. 0d
New small bedroom window	9. 6d
Concreting yard at back and channel in front	6. 0. 0d
Removing old range and making brick fireplace	2.12. 6d
Make good the W.C. wall and connect water with cistern	17. 0d
Repair windows and make all of them to open	10. 0d
Clean walls etc. ready for colouring and painting	<u>15. 0d</u>

She was not wealthy and used repainted second hand furnishings in West Winds.



LEFT A photograph by the Adams family of their newly restored cottage. The new downstairs casement window had shutters. It opened directly on to the lane. Mr Hubert Adams who worked in a pharmacy is in the doorway. The Adams family chose the name 'West Wind' spelt with no 's' on the end.

Mrs Adams paid the rates in 1938, Thomas E. Williams and Mrs M. J. Owen paid for 'Wernfach' next door - with no 'Journey's End' name yet.

H. Lloyd Adams paid rates for West Winds in 1939, but by 1949 E. R Fisher paid the rates followed by H. C. Gilligan. They may have been absentee landlords, as in 1945 with a

vote for the house at the General Election was Mary Mcneil.

In 1957 W. A. Smith paid the rates, and in 1963 Edith Watkins. She had no vote for the house and may have been using it as a holiday home or was an absentee landlady.

In 1979 and 1980 the house was rebuilt in its present form.



LEFT This is a 1979 photograph when the old roof was taken off. There were two rear downstairs windows at that time, and on the gable end at the top can be seen the shapes of the small windows either side of the old fireplace in the upper room.

RIGHT The owners did the rebuilding themselves, and this is the owner's wife. The wall shows the courses of the bricks, which were a solid wall. As the modern block wall above was wider than the brick wall a concrete sheet had to be made between them. These bricks are very interesting in that this squarish building was there by 1886 and possibly earlier and at that time bricks were rarely used for cottages in the rest of Morfa Borth.



LEFT The new kitchen extension on the back allowed for a balcony, and the upper floor became a single room with a doorway out on to it. This had a fine view of the hills and two front dormer windows looked down the Lôn Glan-y-mor to the sea. A new window in the gable end added to

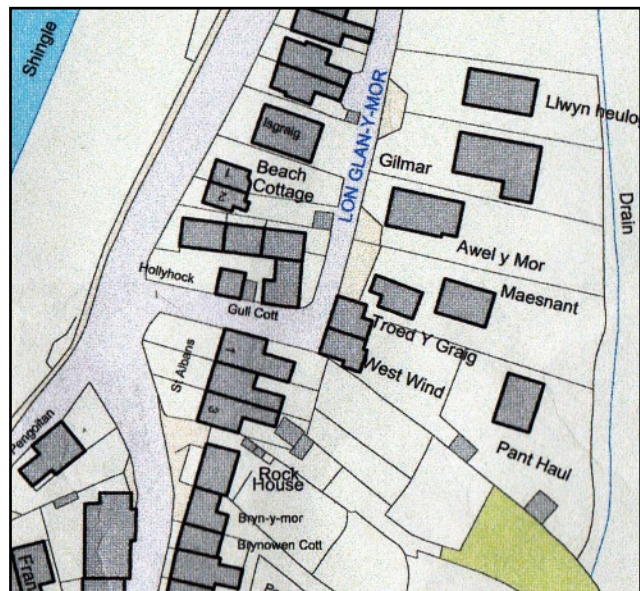
the light in this living room. Bedrooms were on the ground floor, as was the bathroom and necessary sanitary provision. The front door was removed, two ground floor windows each for a bedroom were put in, and the main entrance was put into the extension at the rear. A brick wall is much easier to alter than a rubble stone wall with rounded beach stones.

In 1979 behind West Winds was still a pasture field with farm building at the edge of it.

However since then two bungalows have been built around the concrete patio and back garden which West Winds shares with Journey's End.



RIGHT This detail from a modern Council Map shows the new Bungalows built since 1979.



BELOW The Pant Haul bungalow at the east end of the garden.



The author would like to thank the present family owning West Winds for kindly giving me access to their 1937 photographs and Mrs Dorothy Adams's 'History of West Wind', and their own photographs of the re-building in 1979.

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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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