

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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WINDSOR HOUSE Morfa Borth

On the beach side at the north of Borth High Street. Home of a coal merchant William James and his daughters, one was a milliner with a shop there, the other ran a boarding house.



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

LEFT Windsor House in 2009 then with grey rendering. BELOW The door in 2017

Windsor House is a three storey, single fronted, terrace house, with roof lights at both the front and back for an attic floor. The house is under a gable roof parallel to the street shared with Hafod on the north and Y Glyn on the south. The roof has an overhang supported by dentils (brackets) in pairs. On the north end of the roof at the back is a red brick chimney with two chimney pots. The positions of the windows and front door of Windsor House suggest it is a pair with Hafod next door. The rendered walls at the date when it was built are likely to be rubble stone. Below the first floor windows and continued around the bay window is a string course (moulded strip). Below it there is a pattern incised into the rendering of ashlar stonework - though this does not continue round the bay window. They are square bay windows on the ground and first floors. All the windows are modern with the pattern of a sash window. Over the front door is a plain hood supported by brackets, and this is the same as Hafod's. There is a narrow front garden enclosed by a low rendered wall, probably brick, topped with railings, and with a gate.





LEFT The rear of the house from the beach in 2016 - it was rendered cream then.

The rear of the house is exactly the same as Hafod's, and has a two storey extension on the north with a railed balcony on the first floor. Beside it the main house has a canted oriel window with moulding around the top, which would have a good view of the sea. Below the balcony is walled in which is a sensible protection against the sea during bad storms.



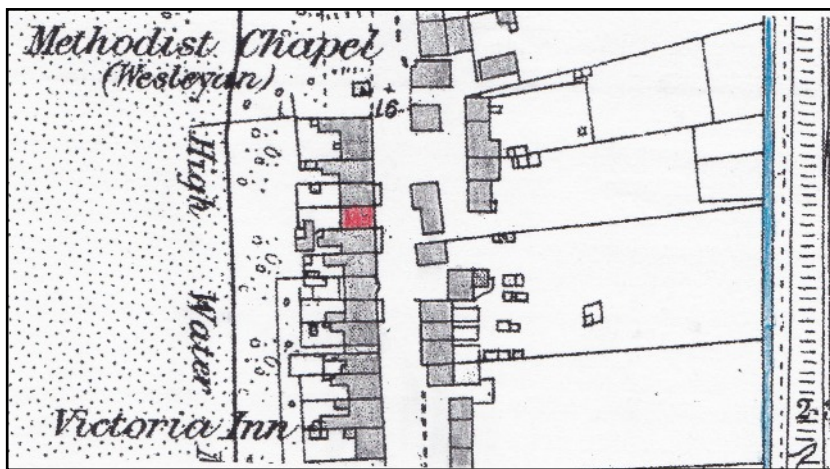
LEFT The rear of Windsor House has the same roof height and placing of windows as Hafod (formerly Ragland) next door on the north, suggesting these two houses may have been built at the same time. The rear roof like the front has an overhang and pairs of dentils. The oriel bay window matches the

one on the front of the house. This photograph was taken in 2013.

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 of Windsor House 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 on the waste belonging to the Crown Manor in 1859, a wide beach side plot (18k) was drawn and said 'sold' but the surveyor had not drawn any buildings on it (1859 Map National Archives LRRO 1/3060).

The house was built after 1859 and before 1880. It is not possible to find the house in the 1871 Census - there were several empty in the list and none of the occupied ones had names.

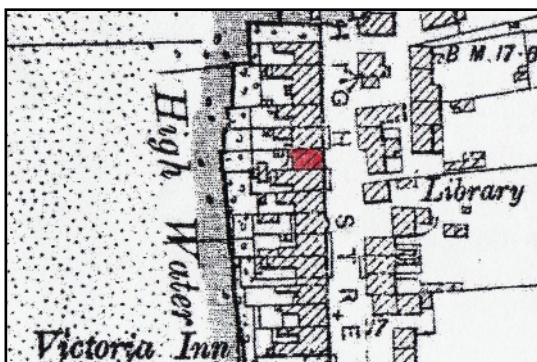
The house had its name 'Windsor House' in 1880. The Cambrian News listed seven weeks of visitors looked after by Mrs Jane Jenkins. She was the wife of master mariner, Captain David Jenkins, (born about 1847). David would have been away at sea quite a bit, and she and her small daughters Sophia and Anne were living in her father's house, Windsor House, no doubt looking after him as well as the visitors. These visitors, families, some with children and a nurse, came from Birmingham, Newtown, Montgomery, and Leamington Spa. They probably came on the train. There was room available for two families to stay at the same time. At the 1881 Census Jane's father was an elderly coal merchant, William James, born about 1813 in Penywern, Aberdovey where the Census noted that his daughters Jane and Margaret were also born in 1859 and 1863, so the family probably did not come to Borth until after the railway station had arrived - opened to passengers in 1863. It had a special siding for trucks to unload coal. Did Mr James come to a newly built house? There was also a young man 'boarding' there in 1881 who was a grocer.



LEFT The house in 1886 is marked in red. It was a simple shape with no extension on the back, and opened directly on to the street. Beyond the fence or wall at the back of its yard was the stone bank. The sand is represented by tiny dots. (A detail from the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map surveyed in 1886 and published in 1888. Cardiganshire III.10)

In July 1887 Borth held an Eisteddford to celebrate Queen Victoria's Jubilee, and Evan Evans from Windsor House was on the Committee (Cambrian News 8th. July).

At the 1891 Census the coal merchant's wife Jane had become a widow, she was 66, Her daughter Jane was 32, and Margaret was 28. Mrs James was a Rees before she married, and her sister Margaret Rees was in the house at the Census. All the ladies spoke Welsh. By 1895 Margaret was earning a living as a milliner (Kelly's Directory of South Wales) and by the 1901 Census Margaret and Jane spoke English as well as Welsh.



LEFT In 1904 the house had a small building in the yard which was probably its Ty Bach, outside lavatory. The house itself also had a tiny extension on the north side (A detail from the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map revised in 1904 and published in 1905 Cardiganshire III.10)

After their father's death Jane and Margaret owned Windsor House, and Margaret had set up a shop there. Nearby were other shops, Bradford House and Boston House were also shops. In

1910 the value of the house for Rates was £300, with £11.1s to pay, £13 gross. This was the same as the neighbouring houses. The site was not considered valuable at only £9.10s. Holiday visitors were still staying there and Jane was the 'Boarding House Keeper' in the 1911 Census. Windsor House had 9 main rooms and holiday visitors regularly stayed there.



LEFT We can see what the house looked like about 1910 in a photograph of a horse drawn 'break' with people from Trefeurig parish who were on a day trip to Borth. Behind the people sitting in the 'break' is Windsor House.



LEFT The upper windows were sash windows, and below is a dainty bay window which was the shop window. A sign there says M JAMES MILLINER. On the top section there is a blind with bobbles partly pulled down (From 'Bro Dafydd ap Gwilym' by David Jenkins, Aberystwyth Public Library)

In 1924 the 'Misses James' were still there, helping at a Women's Institute stall at a Sale of Work at the National School where our Meddygfa is now (Cambrian News Wednesday August 20th.)

After 1922 in 'The Illustrated Borth Guide' the house was advertised as having four bedrooms and two sitting rooms for holiday visitors (Aberystwyth Public Library).

In 1925 Jane and Margaret were still the owners of Windsor House and paying the rates.

Margaret James paid the rates in 1934.

LEFT A postcard of about that time shows a building on the north side of the yard and the sea defensive fencing - stakes at an angle were driven into the stone bank. The yards sloped



down to the beach but were banked up so that ladders were needed to climb down on to the sand. Each house in the row of three with Windsor in the middle had a substantial slab chimney (Detail from a postcard courtesy of the Amgueddfa Ceredigion Museum).

With a vote for the house in the General Election of 1945 was Edith Meylor. In 1949 she paid the rates.

In 1963 paying the rates had been N. M. Davies, but this was altered to Mrs E. Wilkes. Mima May Davies had a vote for the house that year (Electoral Registers and Rates, Ceredigion Archives).

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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-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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