

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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NUMBER 3 CAMBRIAN TERRACE

This house was a boarding house with Borth's Post Office by 1891 and until 1924, and is now flats.



This is the front of Number 3 in 2016. The carved sandstone heads and bases for the iron columns supporting the bay windows, the string courses and the pattern of bricks at the eaves have been emphasized by their dark colour.

west. The windows are modern but have two lights in the pattern of sash windows. The ground floor window on the east has four lights in a delicate frame. Today there is a small garden area in front of the house, but originally it did not have one of these but was open to the street. The house shares a brick, white rendered, slab chimney with Bibury next door. Six chimney pots (flues) belonged to this house. Today Number 3 is divided into two flats. The lower flat uses the ground and first floors, and has a large living room, a hall, a kitchen and breakfast room, a utility room, a bathroom and four bedrooms. The upper flat uses the upper floors and has a large living room, a hall, a kitchen and breakfast room, a utility room, a bathroom and five bedrooms.

Number 3 is part of the terrace built when the railway had arrived in Borth. It opened to passengers in 1863. The Terrace was a private venture by Mr Thomas Savin who with David Davies built the Railway. He wanted to make Borth a good seaside resort to encourage visitors to travel there on their Cambrian Railway trains. A water supply was put in for the Terrace from a reservoir especially built for the station, the trains and his large Cambrian Hotel. Beside the railway Savin built hotels in Aberystwyth and Aberdovey and developed a market garden with houses at Ynyslas.

The Cambrian Terrace houses were built about 1865 to 1870. The architect was possibly W. H. Spaul of Oswestry. (Pevsner Architectural Guides, the Buildings of Wales, Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion, 2006) The houses were originally red brick with yellow sandstone dressings and matched the railway station. A good example is the side of Rutland House (Number 1) now having been cleaned. The columns framing and supporting the bay windows are iron, and in the Gothic style.

The house is three storeys tall and single fronted, with its front door on the west. It is under a gable roof parallel to the street. The house is brick with yellow sandstone dressings now hidden under rendering. In the centre and three storeys high are canted bay windows, the largest on the ground floor. The roof of the bay is in three sections, and all along the front under the eaves is a pattern made by protruding bricks within a moulded frame. Bold string courses (mouldings casting a shadow) divide the windows and link the front to neighbouring houses. It has a ground floor window on the east, and a small window on the top floor on the



This is the front of the house in 2016 with its enclosed front garden. The ground floor window on the left has the same sized light above it as the front door - suggesting this might have been a door once - possibly the entrance to its Post Office -(by 1891 and until 1924). The other door would be used by Postmaster Mr Watkins's family.

At the back in the roof a rectangular dormer window with two lights lights the attic. Below the upper windows are modern in a group of three with a small rectangular one in the middle. They are modern, and match those in the front. Like the other houses, there is an extension two storeys high, in two sections, the one nearest the house being taller and with a southern wall of brick, the further one being rendered. This is shared with Number 4 next door, but in Number 3 the extension continues to the back wall, where it has become a garage with a wooden door which opens on to the little lane behind the Terrace. Also at the back is a shed, and a narrow courtyard, its wall with Bibury is whitewashed. The courtyard passage leads out into the back lane, now

through a gap in the old wall. The other houses had a door.

In 1871 the Cambrian News listed holiday visitors staying in the house for sixteen weeks during the Summer. Their addresses suggest they had come to Borth on the train. Their landlord was Mr Thomas Downes. In the 1871 Census, he was 61, and born in Westfelten, Shropshire, and he worked as a farm bailiff. His wife Fanny was also English, from Cheshire. There were two small sons aged 7 and 8 and a small daughter. They were not born in Borth, so the family moved into the house when it was newly built.

In 1880 the Cambrian News listed holiday visitors staying in the house for eight weeks. The Downes family had gone. The landlady was Mrs Ellen Margaret Watkins, an Englishwoman born in Devon. Her husband Thomas Watkins, a young man of 31 was a railway porter, from Llanfriog in Montgomeryshire. She was also from Montgomeryshire. The couple spoke both Welsh and English. Their son Thomas was 15, and he had been born locally.

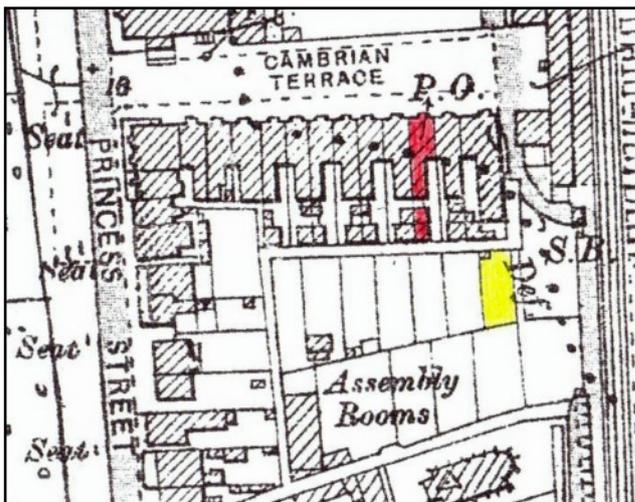
Until 1888 they rented the house from the owners, the Cambrian Railway Company's 'Cambrian Hotel Estate', but the estate had been mortgaged and the mortgagees put it up for sale by Auction. Number 3 was Lot 3 which included its garden area at the back and it was possible for the houses to be individually owned. A map for the Sale is hanging in Borth's Railway Museum.

The house had become a Post Office by the 1891 Census, and in the house was Thomas Watkins who had become the Postmaster. He did a morning and evening delivery and the house was a 'Railway Sub-Office'. Letters arrived by mail train at 7 am in the morning and 6.20 pm. Mention of a stable at the back in 1924 suggests that Mr Watkins took the post on horseback round Borth. Also in the house in 1891 was their small daughter aged one, and Mr Watkins could afford to have a maid servant. She was born at Devils Bridge, was not married and was aged 26.



This view dates from after 1911 but before 1924. In the foreground is part of Number 1, Rutland House, the next bay window is Number 2 - Bibury, and the third is Mr Watkins's Post Office in Number 3 - there are notices in the window and one on the house, and we can see a doorway into it on this side of the bay window. At that time the walls had their original bricks and sandstone dressings. (Picture from a postcard by courtesy of Amgueddfa Ceredigion Museum.)

In 1901 Thomas was the village postman, and his wife the sub-postmistress. They had an assistant in the Post Office living with them called Helen MacIndoe. She was only 19 years old, and was another Englishwoman, born in Durham. Once again there was a servant, Elizabeth Ann James, aged 16 and from Newtown, Montgomeryshire.



LEFT The 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map of 1905 marks the post office with 'P.O.' The house is coloured red and its garden is green. The 'Seats' beside the beach were on a hard-standing promenade edged on the roadside by a strip of grass. All people living in The Terrace had a right to use them. (Deeds to Number 8)

At the 1911 Census Thomas Watkins was 62. His wife was still the sub-postmistress, and their daughter had married. Their sister in law Mary Elizabeth Daw also born in Devon was living with them, and there was a boarder in the house, Ida Ruth Cooke, aged 22, unmarried and born in Clun Shropshire. She was the 'postal clerk' Once again there was a servant in the house, Gwen Harris from Borth y Gest Porthmadoc.

In 1910 for the Rates the house was valued at £465, the site at £25, and there was a £19.11s Rate to pay, gross £23. Thomas Watkins owned the house.

The house was up for sale in May 1924. It was described with an entrance hall, three reception rooms, 8 bedrooms, a bathroom with hot and cold, well arranged domestic offices with a convenient yard and back entrance and the usual out offices, wash house, coal house, lavatory and stable. The postmaster must have delivered the post on horseback, and the outbuilding at the end of the yard, now a garage, is likely to be where he kept his horse. There was a small garden with a green house but no stable building was marked there. The whole was in good repair. (Cambrian News May 2nd.)

In 1925 it was no longer a Post Office. Paying the Rates was a new owner, Emlyn Griffiths. He was listed as a 'private resident' in Kelly's Director of South Wales, and August in 1927 the Rates were increased, from £19.11 to £23.11, £25 to £28 gross. He was still paying the rates in 1934.

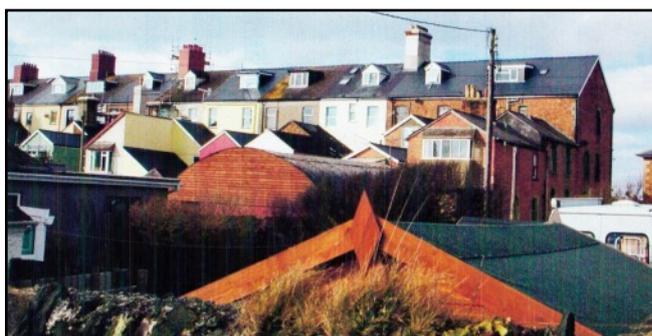
In September 1937 the house was sold by auction at Borth's large Grand Hotel. It was a

freehold property, and was listed with five bedrooms, an attic, a bathroom with hot and cold running water, a separate lavatory, and three reception rooms, a kitchen, scullery and two pantries. The outbuildings had a wash house, lavatory, and a large shed. There was a back entrance. The house then had electric light. Edward R. Evans paid the rates in 193 of £22 (Ceredigion Archives, ABY/B/16)



LEFT The yard of Number 3 in 2014. The rear of this house was rendered white. In the foreground was the brick out-building against the wall that all the houses had. It had a gable roof at right angles to the main house and was shared with Number 4..

RIGHT Another view of the yard.



LEFT The rear in 2016. Its dormer window is a good size and there are roof lights for the attic. The chimney was shared with Bibury. There are two extensions at the back, the taller one has a brick wall under its gabled roof.

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H. M. Walcot and Gladys M. Coupland had a vote for the house in the 1945 General Election, and H. M. Walcot was the owner and paid the Rates in 1949.

By the late 1960s the house had become two flats, and Mrs J. P. Jones was looking after them ('Handbook and Guide to Borth', Private Collection). Paying the Rates for it in 1963 were John and W. D. Walters.

In the late 60s G. Bryan, the caretaker of the Memorial Hall (now gone) lived at Number 3. (Handbook and Guide to Borth, Private Collection. Details of Rates and the Electoral Register are from the Ceredigion Archives).

For the history of the ground on which the Terrace was built and architectural details please see the 'Cambrian Terrace Introduction'.

Archifdy Ceredigion Archives
yn cyflwyno / presents
Tai'r Borth / Houses of Borth
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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