

# 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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# LLYS

Morfa Borth - the Marsh Harbour

Formerly Rona House and Gazette House. From a terrace built by a master mariner John Hughes between 1822 and 1829. Renovated in the twentieth century.



*Llys in 2009*



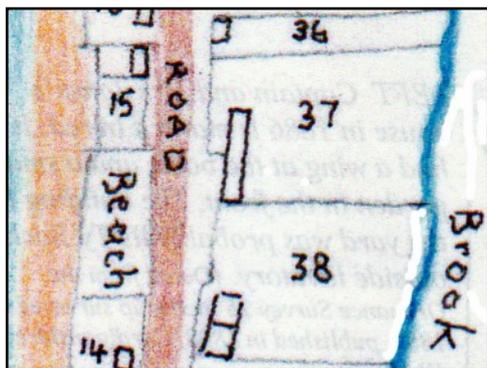
*LEFT The cottage is under a gable roof parallel with the road and shares that roof height with Morolwg.*

It is a double fronted cottage one and a half storeys high with rendered walls. There is a chimney with one chimney pot on the south end of the roof. There are dormers at the front for the upper floor windows and all the windows have modern frames. The front door is within a porch with a gabled roof, and all the barge boards on the cottage are wooden and have a decorative keystone. This cottage is set back from the street

and has a front garden edged by a low rubble stone wall. There is a central front path and gate to the High Street.

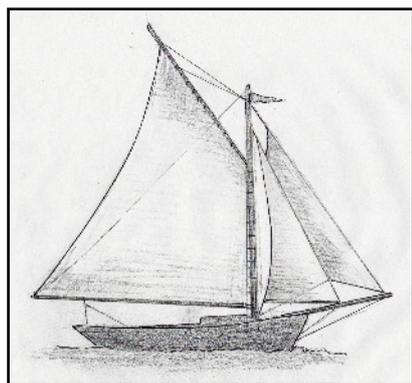
This building stands on a substantial pebble embankment built up by the sea over many centuries, and alongside an ancient highway. Since early medieval times travellers to North Wales came along the highway on their way to cross the River Dovey by boat, later by ferry. By 1770 the highway was important enough to be a turnpike road. So access to a building beside it was easy, and the highway was especially convenient for mariners; for fishermen to reach Aberleri when the River Leri spilled out into the sea where they could moor their vessels, and for mariners to reach the port at Aberdovey to join wooden sailing ships. The River Lerry once flowed along the landward side of the embankment and beyond was the huge Cors Fochno peat bog. By 1790 the river had been re-routed further inland allowing drained pastures to be created. (National Library of Wales Gogerddan Estate Map 232). A water supply for the dwellers on the embankment had been made by 1829 called 'The Brook' and it used the old route of the river. (National Archives LRRO 1/3060) This had fresh water from the River Lerry first used by the Melin-y-wern water mill at Glan Lerry (now gone), plus two small streams.

The pebble embankment was considered to be 'waste' by the manor of Llanfihangel Genau'r Glyn as it could not be used for farming. When a plot was enclosed to build a cottage on it - an encroachment - the Crown which owned the manor charged annual rent for it or would sell it for three years rent.



*LEFT A Crown Map of 1829 showed a plot of ground, Number 37 with a terrace of cottages set back from the road which is coloured light brown. One of these was Llys. The ground was bought in 1822 and the terrace built by 1829. It belonged to John Hughes. He was a master mariner being a captain of wooden sailing vessels in the coastal trade, and with shares in some. This would have earned him a good living. He had enough money to buy this ground, three quarters of an acre, costing £20, quite a large sum in those days. On the right is the*

*'brook'. (Detail after the watercolour map, National Archives LRRO 1/3060)*



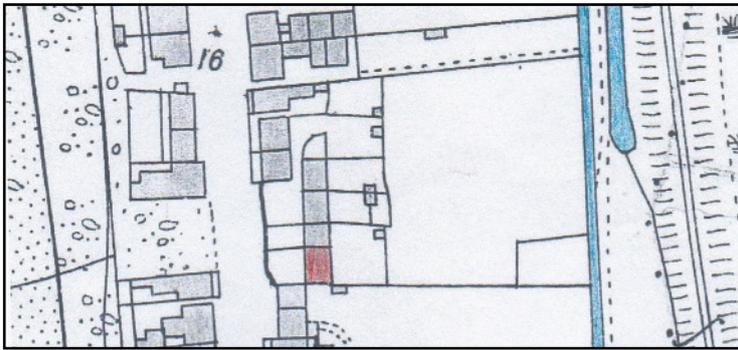
In 1824 John Hughes was the captain of the sloop Betsey and had shares in her and also shares in the Eleanor and Betsey, and 16 shares in the sloop 'Friendship'. and eventually 52 of her 64 shares. He mortgaged those. John Hughes was dead by 15 January 1846, and his wife Mary was his executrix. (Ceredigion Archives Shipping Registers Volumes 1 and 2)

*LEFT A Sloop*



*LEFT By 1848 other cottages had been added, marked in red. The old row is marked in green. A garden area was fenced off at the front and the back. Mary Hughes owned all of them. She and other family members lived in the cottages or she rented them out. (This detail from the Tithe Apportionments Map for Llanfihangel Genau'r Glyn, Cyfoeth Township on-line at CYNEFIN)*

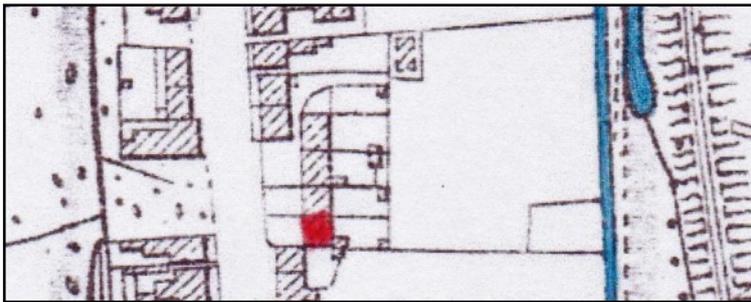
The terrace was set back from the road, and some of it - at the end that is now Llys - opened on to the street. In the Census's before 1891 it is not possible to find the occupiers of these cottages.



*LEFT In 1886 we can see the terrace of cottages and Llys was noticeably bigger than the cottage next door (now Morolwg), and was sharing a garden and probably an owner with it. There was a small building at the back, probably their Ty Bach - outside lavatory. To the south were two old Rhiwlas Cottages now gone. (Detail from the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map surveyed in 1886 and published in*

*1888, Cardiganshire NW III.10)*

In the Census of 1891 the cottage was called Gazette House, and living there was Ann Davies, a single woman of 66 born in Borth about 1825. She only spoke Welsh and was of 'independent means'. She had a lodger who was a retired farmer called John James aged 68, born in Elgar. In the 1901 Census the cottage, still called Gazette House was unoccupied.



*LEFT In 1904 the cottage had its own garden. Behind was a pasture with cows because the cottage where Gwelfor now stands was occupied by a dairy farmer who owned that ground. Its stable was shown on this map (Detail from the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map revised in 1904 and published in 1905, Cardiganshire NW III.10)*

In 1910 for a tax planned but not levied, this cottage was listed as Rona House owned and occupied by John Williams. The cottage and garden were rated at £5 with £4 to pay. This was not the poorest kind of cottage in Borth at this time so some improvements had happened. However one 'clom' mud wall was found (the mud topped a wall usually about knee high and often built of beach stones) and the wooden floor was suspended over sand and stones when it was renovated in the twentieth century.

In 1911 neither Llys nor Morolwg were mentioned in the Census, either the family living there were away or they were unoccupied.

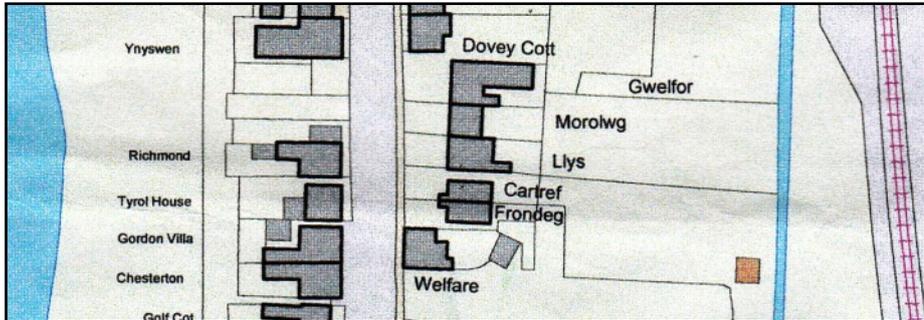
In 1925 Robert Frederick paid the rates and the cottage was still called Rona. He owned the cottage.

By 1934 the name of the cottage had been changed to Llys which is 'Court' in Welsh. Martha Roberts owned it - and it is likely she was one of the successful family of drapers from 'Garibaldi' (now the Premier Stores and next door) who had several properties in Morfa Borth. Her tenant had been C. A. Downes, and was then George W. J. Faulkner. George and Mary Faulkner had votes for the cottage in 1945.

George Faulkner paid the rates in 1949 and still in 1957. The cottage was valued the same as Welfare, so it had been made into a presentable home.

With votes for the cottage in 1963 were David G. Faulkner, George W. J. Faulkner and Mary and David James.

The cottage originally had a passage inside the front door, with rooms either side. Today one wall of this passage has been removed.



*ABOVE This detail from a modern Council Map shows Llys with a narrow wing at the rear which it did not have in 1904 (Map courtesy of Councillor Ray Quant who provided it for research into a village event).*

The author would like to thank the owner of Llys for help with this article.

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**Tai'r Borth / Houses of Borth**  
gan/by Beryl Lewis  
[cyf/ref ADX/1629]

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-ceredigion.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.

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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