

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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YNYSWEN Morfa Borth

In the middle of Borth High Street on the beach side. Formerly called Beach Grove House. Home of Captain Hugh Rees and later of a retired English librarian. Possibly built between 1871 and 1880 on the site of an old cottage that was taken down.



Ynyswen (white island in Welsh) is a generously tall two storey house, single fronted and semi-detached and under a gable roof parallel to the High Street. Roof lights and small windows light an attic floor. Each end of the roof is a brick slab chimney with room for at least three chimney pots. The single storey wooden 'boat house' alongside is part of the present house and has the main entrance, the old front door is no longer used. It is likely that the walls are rubble stone but today they are rendered. The front is divided by a string course (line of moulding). Above it the rendering is smooth, below is a pattern of rusticated masonry nine blocks high. The front door was given importance with pilaster strips either side and a cornice with a bold keystone in the centre. The tops of the windows are not arched but straight and the windows are modern the lower one being shorter. An old photograph shows all the windows were the same size and it is probably they were sash windows. There is a narrow front garden of hard standing enclosed from the street.



TOP and LEFT The house in 2016. BELOW The south side of the house IN 2015.



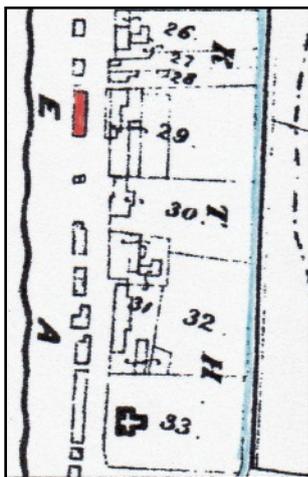


BELOW *At the back there is a wide extension to the main house and the house already had a sizeable extension in 1886 reaching to the back of its yard. Today there is a sun room on the upper floor for fine views out to sea, and a single storey, timber clad section, extends further into the yard. There is a narrow passageway on the north side of the extension. On the other side is*

into the yard. There are timber shutters and a blind ready to protect the windows of this back area from the sea during storms. A fence of vertical sleepers encloses the rear of the yard.



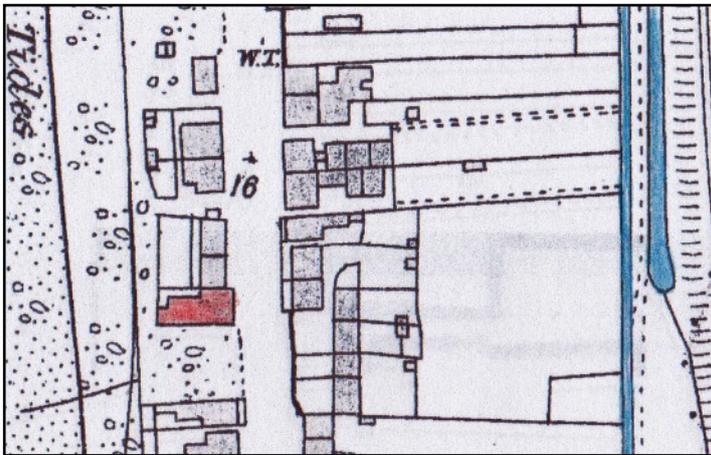
The ground for this house is the stone bank thrown up by the sea and called 'waste' by the Crown Manor Court who owned it as it was no use for farming. In 1829 it was still 'beach'. J (Map National Archives LRRO 1/3060) The road had been there for centuries, it was used in the twelfth century and was 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 houses on the other side of the road.



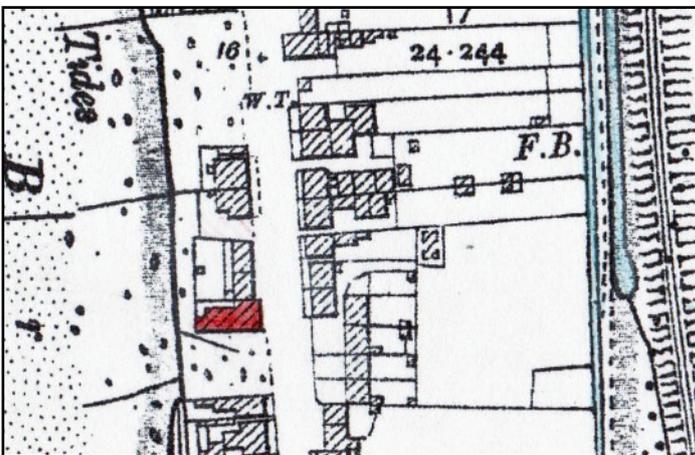
By 1848 there was a terrace later three cottages on the former 'beach' built a little further back from the road, one survives today next door 'Glan'y'mor', and Ynyswen is on the site of the southernmost cottage. (Tithe Apportionments Map Llangihangel Genau'r Glyn, Cyfoeth Township - on line at CYNEFIN - National Library of Wales).

It is not possible to find details of the cottage or house in the 1871 Census. There was no 'Beach Grove' house name, and Captain Hugh Rees and his family were not listed. Nor was it in the list of houses with holiday makers in the 1871 Cambrian News. However it was there in the 1880 list, when Mrs Hugh Rees, also called Mrs Captain Rees had holiday visitors in 'Beach Grove House' for eight weeks

that summer. There was room for two families at the same time. The visitors were Welsh - the furthest away came from Aberdare and Talgarth but many came from Newtown and Welshpool, and of course they could come by train. Captain Hugh Rees was born in 1825 in Borth, his father was shopkeeper John Rees also listed in the 1841 Census as a mariner. (Parish Records, baptised 23rd September 1825 at Llandre). Captain Hugh's wife Margaret was also local, born in Borth about 1827. Also in the house in the 1881 Census was their son Hugh, born in Borth about 1862 and by 1891 aged 29 he was a master mariner himself. The family spoke Welsh suggesting the Captain was a fisherman in local waters rather than an ocean going mariner who would have needed to speak English. However he was perhaps successful enough or married well enough to be able to afford to build or buy Beach Grove House which has replaced the 1848 cottage. There was plenty of room in the house to earn extra income taking in holiday visitors. There was a small great grand daughter in the house in the house in the 1891 Census, Catherine E. Roberts aged 2 and born at Tre r' ddôl, and the Captain aged 65 had retired from the sea.



LEFT In 1886 we can see Captain Rees's house and it was quite substantial, wider than an old cottage, closer to the street and almost filling its ground. There was one fence beyond to protect it from the sea (Detail from the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map surveyed in 1886, published in 1888, Cardiganshire III.10)



In 1904 the house was the same, but the surveyor has marked the High Tide line much nearer the back of the yard and the area of sand was marked with little dots. The ground to the south of the house was open to the road and still marked as rough ground or beach. Today it is shared between Ynyswen and Richmond. Ynyswen has the largest area. (Detail from the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map revised in 1904, published in 1905, Cardiganshire III.10)

In the 1904 Census the house had a new owner, an Englishman, Arthur Charles Phillips, a retired librarian with private means. He was born in Shrewsbury about 1859. His wife Deborah was born in Little Stretton, Shropshire about 1854. They had wed in 1879 and had two children. Their daughter Margaret Muriel Phillips was in Beach Grove House with them in 1901 age 16. She was born in Shrewsbury.

In 1910 for a tax planned but not levied, the house was valued at £262. There would have been £7 4s 6d to pay, £8.10s gross. Mr Phillips was both the owner and occupier At the 1911 Census the house had nine main rooms. In the house were Mr Phillips and his wife, and their daughter Margaret who was there had wed two years earlier and was Mrs Margaret Lloyd.

Owning the strip of rough ground where now the 'boat house' stands was John Hugh James, a mariner who lived at Hazelmere.

Mr Phillips died in 1919 aged 58, Mrs Phillips in 1924 aged 71. In 1925 the owners were her executors, and living in the house was Thomas Lloyd (Margaret's husband). He was a marine engineer who died in 1940 aged 62 in the second world war (Parish Register, St Matthew's Church Borth) The rates to pay had stayed the same so no improvements.

Margaret M. Lloyd paid the rates in 1934, perhaps her husband was away, and that year she provided a recipe for a Marmalade Cake for a recipe book for Borth's St Matthew's Church Bazaar published by the Cambrian News, Ceredigion Archives) and in 1949 she was still paying the rates for the house.

In 1963 Clifford Morris paid the rates, and he and Norah Evelyn Morris had a vote for the house that year (Electoral lists and rates, Ceredigion Archives)



The house still had its 'Beach Grove' name in 1970 when the Aberystwyth Rural District Council was improving the sea defences behind the houses.

Ynyswen is the fourth house from the left on this photograph taken from an old glass plate. Its front is very plain and opened directly on to the street. The front and side appear to be rendered. There was a low wall this side with an outpouring of gravel alongside from the open ground in between the houses.

(Photograph courtesy of Peter Fleming)





This postcard is dated 1936, and on the far right is the front of Ynyswen. Above the front door we can see one of the old sash windows. The ground alongside is enclosed by a wall and does not look as though it was owned by Ynyswen at that time. The old cottages over the road were the Rhiwlas Cottages and today they are gone.

The yard on the south side of the Boat House in 2016. Ynyswen has all of the spare ground, Richmond's boundary fence remains near the house.



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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-eredigion.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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