

Mullockbridge Cottage, Marloes: Home to Mary Ormond, First Latter Day Saint convert in Pembrokeshire



Now used as storage, this single storey, former stone cottage was home to the John and Elizabeth Ormond family in the 1840s when missionaries from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints¹ first came into the area. Their

daughter Mary was the first to be baptised in that faith in 1843.

The cottage lies to the east of the village of Marloes and just along the B4327 from Mullock – or Mallock - bridge. The tin roof would originally have been thatched. The interior of the cottage was described by Diantha O.K. Schaub, a great-great-granddaughter of John and Elizabeth, who visited Marloes in 1959:

'A lower grade red slate slab forms the doorstep and flagstones of the same are laid close together, without cement, to form the floor of the rooms. These were kept scrubbed and clean by grandmother. The door is still the same, in two parts so that the top can be opened for light and air and the lower section can be kept closed to keep the baby in and the chickens out. A huge old fireplace covering most of the wall on the right as we entered the main room, served as central heating plant and cook stove, water heater, etc. Near the outer corner on the left was the door to the master bedroom. This bedroom measured about 8 x 10 feet and had one window. The boys slept in the attic reached by a ladder thru a little square opening in the ceiling of the main room, and where no light but a candle ever entered.'

A newer, much larger stone farmhouse was subsequently built next door, and the cottage where the Ormonds lived should not be mistaken for the current Mullockbridge Cottages, a holiday home rental and more modern property next door.

¹ Often referred to as 'Mormons' or 'Latter Day Saints'

Mullock Bridge can still be crossed on foot, although the road has been diverted for some 100 metres as the bridge is narrow. It spans a small stream which drains into the marsh and thence to Dale Bay.



Mullock Bridge marks the highest point reached by the tide coming up the inlet from Dale. The stream which flows under the bridge could well reach a depth suitable for baptism – by immersion, as is the practice in the LDS Church - at high tide, and may well have been the site of Mary’s baptism.



The view from Mullock Bridge looking across the marsh towards Dale to the south

The closest LDS congregation currently is housed in a purpose-built chapel in Johnston, some 12 miles away.



Mary Ormond [1821-1903] was the first of her family to embrace the new religion preached by the ‘Mormon’ missionaries, and was baptized 31st May 1843, followed by her sister Dorothy on the 6th of May 1845. Their brother John joined in July and their father, also called John, was baptized 1st September 1845.

According to a history of her sister Elizabeth:

Mary, was the first of the family to gain a testimony of the Gospel, "being baptized 31 May 1843 in the sea when the tide

came in." However, Elizabeth's mother (also named Elizabeth, but known as "Betsey"), and the older boys did not join the Church.

Mary married John Morris, a 'Mormon' missionary who was a widower with a small daughter, in March 1847. They emigrated on the *Joseph Badger* in 1850 with their oldest son Joseph Smith Morris; their second son Hyrum Smith Morris had died at just a few weeks old. John Morris died on arrival in St Louis, Missouri, and Mary re-married the following year in Salt Lake City.



Mary's personal history reads:

North Ogden [Utah], Aug. the 27 1856

I, Mary George, Daughter of John and Elizabeth Ormond was born on Friday night and half past 10 o'clock on the 2 Feb 1821 in the Parish of Dale, County of Pembroke, South Wales, Old England, was baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints on Wednesday night of the last day of May 1843, was married to Elder John Morris, native of England on the 31st day of October 1847.



John Ormond [1797-1883] and his wife Elizabeth or **Betsy** [nee Codd, 1801-1885] can be seen in the 1841 census living at *Bridge End* with five children. Presumably *Bridge End* refers to the family living at the bridge end of Marloes village. John was born in Haverfordwest, and was a tailor by trade, although he also ran a mail service between the local area and Haverfordwest.

He evidently wanted to emigrate to join the growing church in the American West, but Betsy had not converted to this new religion, and was understandably less enthusiastic and refused to leave home. The family story is that she was also fearful of crossing the ocean. Diantha Schaub tells this version of the story:

In the desperate hope of persuading her thru the appeal to her mother love to follow her children, John Ormond arranged to virtually kidnap the

younger children, including the three year old baby girl, and take them with him. The relatives in Wales claim that on the morning the father had decided to leave his wife had gone to the market and taken her six year old son Charles with her. Dorothy, who was a member of the Church, was at home with her three younger sisters. It has been reported that Dorothy said the hardest thing she ever did was to take the children and desert her mother like that. When the mother returned home her little ones were gone. It seems that John Ormond had apparently gone to work as usual that morning. His son, John, was working away from home at the time and joined according to plan.

John and the children sailed on the *Hartley* in 1849 as part of a large group of Welsh emigrants led by Captain Dan Jones as he returned from his first mission to Wales. Diantha Schaub's story continues:

She [Betsy] did intend to follow her loved ones and set about to arrange her affairs and secure transportation. But, before she could arrange ship reservations, word came back thru friends that her baby, Elliner, and Letitia, then fifteen years old, had died of cholera, she gave up the idea.

John Ormond Jnr [1832-1913] wrote in his diary that his father John and his sister Dorothy became seriously ill with cholera when they reached Missouri, so only he was able to see to his young sisters' burials. Dorothy soon recovered after a blessing of healing was pronounced on her head.

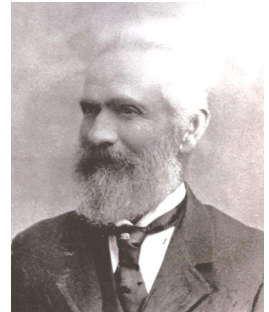
John jnr had bought, among other things, a gallon of buttermilk as a treat for the family on the next stage of their journey upriver and stored it under the bunk on board the boat. When he returned the buttermilk was gone, jug and all. His father soon began to recover, but it was only later that he confessed he had discovered the buttermilk and drunk the whole gallon. Buttermilk was apparently a useful treatment for typhoid fever and was evidently just what he needed to start him on the way to recovery. Dorothy unfortunately contracted cholera again and died before reaching Utah Territory.



John Morris, Mary Ormond's husband, recorded in his journal:

On the 27th [Dec 1847] we met again [in conference in Merthyr Tydfil] where ... it was motioned and carried that Marloes, Pembrokeshire be organized into a branch [congregation] and Brother Ormond be ordained the office of an Elder and preside over that branch under the direction of Elder Morris.

Daniel E. Williams was a native of Pembrokeshire who joined the LDS church in Monmouthshire where he had moved for work. He was sent back to Pembrokeshire as a missionary. In his journal in December 1851 he refers to *the branch at Marloes* and preaching at the house of member Elder J. Hughes – who would later be given charge over the Marloes congregation.



These were small congregations. Between May 1853 and August 1854 the branch had between 11 and 13 members. But it was common in this era for branches to consist of just one or two families, who typically met in one of their homes – particularly in rural areas.



The lease held by John Ormond on Mullock-bridge Cottage was turned over to his eldest son Richard, who built a new house next to the cottage, as seen here in the photograph. In

1959 when Diantha Schaub visited, the house was still owned by descendants of Richard Ormond.



After her family had left, Betsy Ormond moved to town and operated a sweet shop to support herself and her son Charles. In 1853, age 49 and listed as a widow on her marriage certificate, she married Thomas Phillips, a bachelor, aged 37. She died in 1885, a little over two years after her first husband John, who had arrived in Salt Lake City in 1852 after a long

hard struggle.

Thomas D. Evans was also a native of Pembrokeshire who returned there as a missionary. He and his wife Priscilla had emigrated in 1856 and he returned in the mid-1870s. His journal entry for July 22 1875 reads:

I preached at Marloes in the open air to about three hundred people. The Baptist choir came out and sang for me, the leader played his clarinet and the people listened with the greatest of pleasure, although it rained during the meeting. After the meeting, the people came forward to shake hands with me and gave me money, some two pence, some three pence, and one person gave me a shilling. It seemed to me like the widow's mite. I thanked and asked God to bless them. They invited me to come again. They were God's poor, and my heart was so filled with love for them that I could not keep from shedding tears. I felt as if the disciples of Jesus were there.



Photograph: Moriah Baptist chapel, Marloes

This estimate of the size of the group may be overly optimistic given that the population of Marloes was only just over 400 at the time. Nevertheless it does suggest that the 'Mormon' gospel continued to attract interest in the area even later in the century. And Diantha Schaub reported in 1959 that '

To this day relatives point out the "Mormon Rock" on the top of one of the hills near Haverfordwest where the people used to go to hear the missionaries speak and teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ.'



Sources for this historical information:

British Mission Manuscript History. Online at: <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/>

www.familysearch.org for information on the various individuals associated with this place

<http://welshmormon.byu.edu> for the various missionary journals and information on the individuals associated with this place

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