

when the great shoals of herring and pilchard arrived off the Cornish coast. Farming communities would then have turned their attention to taking a harvest from the sea. In medieval times smoked pilchards were exported to Spain and Italy, but by the end of the Tudor period were apparently no longer being made, pilchards for export then being simply cured and pressed in hogsheads, such as was practiced in the cellar immediately beside the lime kiln.

Here a stone wall has a line of six sockets built to take the ends of beams which were weighted at their other ends and pivoted on the lids of loosely coopered barrels or hogsheads into which pilchards had been packed; the pressure of the weighted beam squeezed out oil from the fish.

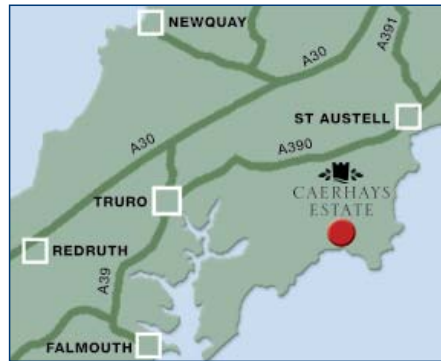
## LIME, SAND & SEAWEED

The two coves also served as small harbours for the importing of the limestone that was burnt in great stone kilns built in the early nineteenth century in each hamlet. The western of the two kilns in East Portholland has been removed (partly as a result of the encroachment of the sea, but not before it housed a public convenience) while the eastern survives behind the cottages. Most easily seen now is the three-part kiln at West Portholland. The earliest kiln, that nearest the road, with an 'eye' on each end, was built in 1805 and the two extensions towards the sea, each with a further eye, were not only put up but had also been abandoned by around 1875. The alcove-like eyes were used for firing and emptying the large round stone or brick-lined 'pots' which widened as they rose to the top of the kilns and in which the lime stone was placed in layers alternated with slow-burning fuel. The lime from the kilns would have been used in the local building trade (in mortar, plaster, etc) and also to sweeten the acid soils of local fields.

Sea sand and seaweed collected from the beaches would also have been carted away and applied to the fields. The resources of the sea, beaches and foreshore were used in common, and unconstrained, by a range of local people, in the same way that those who make the fullest use of Portholland now, the visitors who come to relax, play and fish on the beaches and rocks are not constrained.

West Portholland lime kiln

# DIRECTIONS TO CAERHAYS ESTATE



**From Truro:** first turning right off the A390 after Grampond (signposted to Tregony and St Mawes) then follow signposts to Caerhays.

**From St Mawes & King Harry Ferry:** take right turning from A3078 (signposted to Veryan) and next turning left signposted to Caerhays.

**From St Austell:** first turning after the end of Sticker by-pass (signposted to Tregony - B3287) turn right at first junction and then follow signposts to Caerhays.

**From Mevagissey:** head for Gorran Churchtown and look for signpost to Caerhays at Gorran High Lanes.

## ADMISSION

### Gardens

Adults £5.50  
Children under 16 £2.50  
Children under 5 free

### House (conducted tour only)

Adults £5.50  
Children under 16 £2.50  
Children under 5 free

### Gardens & House

Adults £9.50  
Children under 16 £3.50  
Children under 5 free

## OPENING DATES

### Gardens Open

18th February to 1st June  
10.00am - 5.00pm  
7 days a week  
(Last entry 4.00pm)

### House Open

10th March to 30th May  
12.00am - 4.00pm  
Monday to Friday  
(inc bank holidays)

Reservations recommended

# CAERHAYS CASTLE & GARDENS

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CAERHAYS CASTLE  
ST AUSTELL CORNWALL

# EAST & WEST PORTHOLLAND



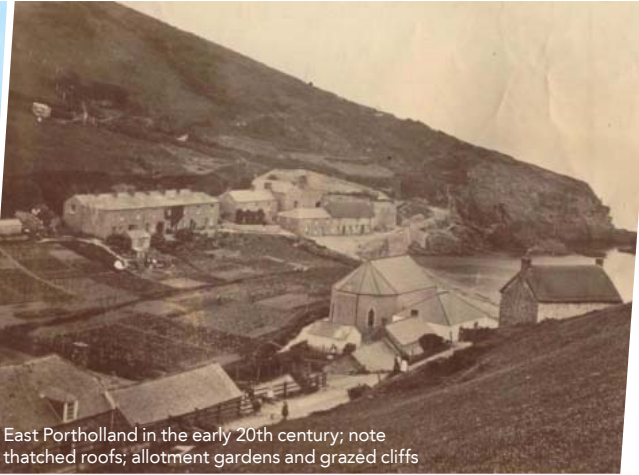
CAERHAYS  
ESTATE



Supported by the Cornwall Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – Sustainable Development Fund'




Shingle, seaweed, sand and surf at West Portholland



East Portholland in the early 20th century; note thatched roofs, allotment gardens and grazed cliffs

Few coastal villages are as unspoilt as the two Porthollands, arranged at the heads of adjacent sandy coves, at the feet of deep twisting valleys, and separated by a crumbling slatey headland.

Lying mercifully beyond the reach of coaches, and under the conservative management of a thoughtful landowner, they have not developed the standard paraphernalia of most Cornish beaches. It is easy to imagine historic communities sheltering here close to the occasionally raging sea as comfortably as do the present inhabitants.

 Pengelly Farm, just yards from West Portholland beach, has been there since at least 1465. The name, from the Cornish pen and kelly, means head of the wood, suggesting that trees rather than furze and bracken once covered the steep slopes of the valley running inland. With its fine stone barn and its Charolais sheep, Pengelly is a now rare



Pengelly Farmhouse, West Portholland, early 20th century

example of the farmsteads that were once often found close to Cornish beaches. It contributes greatly to the picturesquely functional character of West Portholland, as do the massive limekiln and adjacent fishing cellars and boathouse.

Christian, East Portholland Wesleyan Methodist. In recent times, before they were given up and converted, these chapels were largely under the control of certain local families: the Guys and Trounces at West Portholland, and the Kerkins at East Portholland.

Pengelly is a now rare example of the farmsteads that were once often found close to Cornish beaches

East Portholland, the larger of the two hamlets, is mainly residential now, but in Victorian times it had a corn mill, a lime kiln and a public house, The Cutter Inn. The early nineteenth century terrace housed many of the Caerhays estate's farm workers. Each Portholland has a non-conformist chapel, both now converted to dwellings, but both still dominating their settlements. Each was of a different denomination, serving rival strands of non-conformism; that at West Portholland was Bible

#### CLIFFS, CREEKS & MILLS

Both Porthollands are protected from the erosive power of the sea by strong concrete walls. The defences also extend westwards from East Portholland onto the more exposed headland with its sloping slippery slatestones, along the midslope of which runs the minor road that links the two villages. The boulder and concrete walls here regularly require repair, reminding us that little in this world is permanent. For example, it

is likely that both valleys have become silted and sanded up in the last few thousand years. Prehistoric people may have had to negotiate tidal creeks running some way inland, probably further at East Portholland.

Steep-sided valleys with fast-running streams such as those running down to the two Porthollands are ideal for establishing corn mills and former mills survive in both. The oldest is that which lies about half a mile up the West Portholland valley, Tretheake Mill, to which tenants of ancient Tretheake manor would have been obliged to take their grain for grinding into flour and meal. Its dried up mill pond lies immediately upstream of the Penvose turning and the substantial leat that brought water to the mill's overshot wheel can still be seen as a ditch and bank below the Portholland road.

The tall three-storeyed building furthest upstream on the western side of the valley in East Portholland was recorded as Portholland Corn mill, with its mill race running along the uphill side

West Portholland Bible Christian chapel



of the lair from Polgrain, on the Ordnance Survey map surveyed in 1879. Little is documented about this building, but it may be significant that its construction followed the removal from within the park of Caerhays Mill; perhaps the grain from the estate was brought down here for milling when the park was improved after the Williams family took over the estate.



Enjoying the peace at East Portholland with anti-tank defences still in place.

#### DEFENDED BEACHES

During the Second World War the beaches were provided with defences against any landing by Germans. An anti-tank wall across the width of the beach at West Portholland survives. At East Portholland iron scaffolding poles were used to create massive and complex structures across the sands, again intended to stop landing craft and tanks.

#### FISHING

Although there is limited evidence for recent use of the Porthollands for commercial fishing, there is no doubt that both would once have served as bases for coastal fishing, either as permanent settlements or as places used seasonally,