

Limestone from the rock, and sand and seaweed from the beach were so important for improving the quality of farmland that in 1822 they were offered as a benefit that those who took the lease of Caerhays Barton would enjoy. More recently, the gardens at Heligan have benefited from seaweed collected from Porthluney.

it was built in the Civil War (when some stretches of the Cornish coast were defended) or when the French were swarming is as yet uncertain. To its west stands a now roofless Georgian Watch House with pointed arched openings giving those within views east and west along the coast and south to the sea was linked to other Napoleonic War stations at Nare Head, the Dodman, and nearer to hand on Greeb Point, to the east of Porthluney. The Watch House may at least hint that the battery was built around the turn of the nineteenth century.

Early in the Second World War most of Cornwall's beaches were considered vulnerable to German landings and considerable efforts were expended in defending them. The western of concrete pill boxes built at each end of Porthluney beach survives. Storms borne on southern winds can rip away much of the beach's sand and expose the surviving traces of tubular scaffolding poles that were used to create ranks of beach defences running across Porthluney, preventing landing craft and tanks from making easy headway. Mines were also planted in the area now used as a car park. It is said that during the war, local children would scramble through the rolls of barbed wire to get down to the beach to play.

The beach has been used occasionally in more recent years for mock landings.

TIMES OF WAR

Peaceful Porthluney may have seen little military action, but over the last two hundred years or so it has often been prepared to receive and repel threats. Dense blackthorn prevents us checking whether there are remains of an artillery battery on the western point of the cove. This is known locally as Battery Point and the nicely engineered nineteenth century pleasure walk out to it was called Battery Walk. Whether



Overgrown folly above Porthluney

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 off the A390 after Grampond (signposted to Tregony and St Mawes) 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

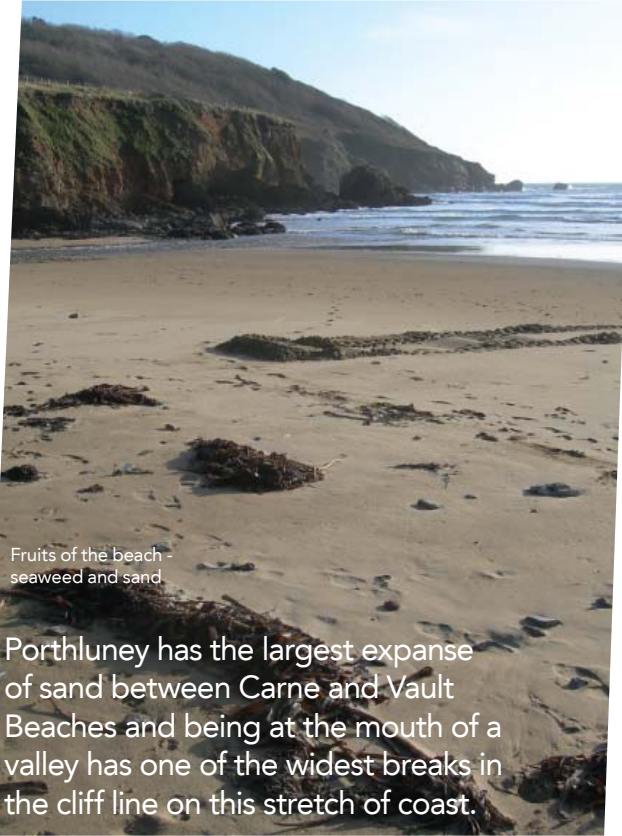
PORThLUNEY



CAERHAYS
ESTATE



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



Fruits of the beach - seaweed and sand

Porthluney has the largest expanse of sand between Carne and Vault Beaches and being at the mouth of a valley has one of the widest breaks in the cliff line on this stretch of coast.

This break opens up views from the beach inland, and in return from the valley to the sea. Beach and views together have made Porthluney a place of pleasure. Throughout the year the beach draws people escaping a more mundane world. They come on foot, by wheel, and on horseback (to canter and gallop when the sands are clear). They come for relaxation and excitement; they laze and they rush, get wet and get warm, and leave Porthluney filled with fresh air and thoroughly beached. Porthluney and the two Porthollands are old-world

family beaches. A small beach-shop at Porthluney is discreetly located and the bans on the use of speed boats and jet-skis are intended to ensure that beach-lovers are not unnecessarily disturbed.



Porthluney beach and Caerhays castle



Porthluney pillbox

CAERHAYS CASTLE

In the mid-Victorian period the Williams family, newly installed in Caerhays Castle, enhanced their view to the sea by slicing a broad notch through the low rounded hillock backing onto the beach. Their predecessors, The Bettesworth Trevanions, had already drawn the sea and beach into the designed landscape of Caerhays by

Few fail to be moved by the view from the coast road as it approaches Porthluney from the east. There stands turreted and crenellated Caerhays Castle, a pale pile set against the glossy darkneses of the Victorian rhododendrons, camellias and laurels. Pink and purple fireworks of colour, magnolias joining the rhododendrons, camellias and azaleas,

Few fail to be moved by the view from the coast road as it approaches Porthluney from the east

running an ornamental walk, Battery Walk, along the top of the cliffs on the west side of the beach. This walk, now largely lost to scrubby growth, was also reached by a bridge over the coast road that led to a folly, an arch supporting some ragged masonry, meant to look like the remnant of a larger, grander building. There may also have been a monument to a member of the Bettesworth family on one of Porthluney's Points.

illuminate the woods in the early spring. John Nash, the architect of Regent Street, no less, was commissioned in 1807 to draw up the designs for the ostentatious show of wealth and taste that set the Bettesworths on their road to bankruptcy. Half a century later the Williams family arrived to pick up the place's pieces and establish Caerhays as one of Cornwall and Britain's greatest gardens.

TIME AND TIDE

Beaches are characterised by change. At Porthluney the waves and tides roll in and out, scouring, shaping and depositing, working alongside if not in harmony with the doings of the river that rises seven miles inland. Over the millennia this has cut itself a deep and twisting steep-sided valley and now scribes braided shallow channels into the gravels and sands as it empties itself into the sea. The river is likely to have once been a tidal creek over its last one and a half miles, perhaps as recently as the Roman period. A hoard of 2500 third century Roman coins, carefully placed within a pot wedged between three stones set in sandy soil, was found in November 1865 by workmen clearing a drain beneath the Old Park Wood, a mile upstream from the beach.


We should probably imagine this part of Cornwall then being more difficult to move around than now, with travellers either making a lengthy detour or taking a short ferry at high tide and being confronted by the familiar banks of mud at low tide. The old stories that

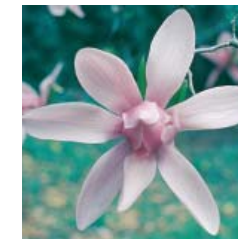
people could take a boat up to Tubb's Mill give an indication of the length of the detour!

Winds whip sands a little way inland, forming tiny towans, smothering and smoothening the contours of the world here.

Vastly deeper time depth is revealed by exploration of the caves at the eastern end of Porthluney beach. Here in the sedimentary rocks may be found tiny fossils of the Lower Devonian Age, reminding us first that there has been life hereabouts for around 400 million years, and then that the geological framework into which sea and river eat is itself much less timeless or unchanging than it might at first seem.

LIME, SAND AND WEED

 The geology includes a small patch of limestone east of the beach that may have been quarried to feed the lime kiln that once stood towards the western end. This existed by 1822 and was shown on the parish Tithe Map of 1840 but was demolished by 1879. Fragments were re-discovered during excavations to extend the beach's car park in 1969.



Cut to beach from Caerhays castle

