

TREGONHAWKE CLIFF CHALETs.



Until the 18th and 19th century, Whitsand Bay was, despite its geographical proximity to Plymouth, a wild and deserted place

Before the Forts of Polhawn, Whitsands and Tregantle were built it was a place to be avoided. For ships it was the last obstacle before rounding Rame Head and Penlee for the relative safety of Plymouth. Woe betides the sailing vessel which found itself embayed here under the press of a south westerly gale. Cliff top farmers made a living and here and there fishermen built their pilchard cellars to harvest the annual coming of the sea harvest. Remains of these can still be seen at Polhawn, Freathy and Portwrinkle. Apart from fisherman's store sheds, the cliff would have been largely deserted. Of course, smuggling and wrecking stories abound!!



(A Tuck postcard of the Tregonhawke Chalets)

Robin Bounsall, who has owned a chalet on the cliffs since XXXX has compiled the following short history of one of the Whitsands communities—the Tregonhawke Cliff Chalets

Tregonhawke Cliff Chalets

The first chalets on Tregonhawke cliff appeared in the early 1930's. The original chalets were small and belonged to fishermen who stayed on the cliffs at weekends and stored their fishing tackle during the week.

At the time the cliff was part of Tregonhawke farm and was owned by the Mount Edgumbe estate and leased by John Parsons, the managing director of the Millbrook Steamboat Company. Following the purchase in 1932 of Tregonhawke farm by John Parsons a new road was constructed, parallel to the old Donkey lane, to allow buses that met the steamboat ferries which ran from North corner, Devonport, to the landing Piers on Millbrook Lake. During the summer months, particularly during the war years, these were heavily laden with visitors to the Whitsand beaches. During the blitz of Plymouth several Plymouthians purchased chalets on the cliff to escape the dangers of the bombing although a few bombs did drop onto the surrounding fields as the German bombers off loaded their bombs before returning to their continental bases. During the early period the chalet owners obtained their water supply from a spring in the second field down on the eastern side of the lane, but this was soon replaced by the landowner who provided several stand pipes at intervals along the paths on the cliff. During the 1930s approximately 40 chalets purchased their freeholds and the 63 remaining chalets remained leaseholders.

For a long period it was the long held view of the local authorities that because the cliffs were in the area of Great Landscape Value the 350 chalets dotted along and down the cliffs dating from the period before planning controls were introduced were considered by the council to be obtrusive and that the improvement and, extension or replacement of the chalets could result eventually in an inappropriate estate like development. The council does not wish to see any additional chalets and considers that existing chalets should not be improved, extended in any way that would make them more prominent in the landscape. In 1979 a policy was formulated so the chalet owners would know what works would be permitted. Many of the policy restrictions were incorporated into the terms and conditions of the leases of Tregonhawke chalet sites which has resulted in the chalets blending more reasonably with the landscape.

During 2003 following the death of a descendant of John Parsons the cliff was put up for sale. The lease holders decided to form a Management Company to bid to buy the land. Following the completion of a successful bid the lease holders obtained their free holds and the company seeks to keep the features of the landscape as natural as possible.

To see pictures, [click here for slide show](#) to view Tregonhawke scenes (or go back to webpage)