

WATERSIDE

MAJESTIC
Constantine Bay, main; Brynmawr Farm, below, £2m with Jonathan Cunliffe and Strutt & Parker



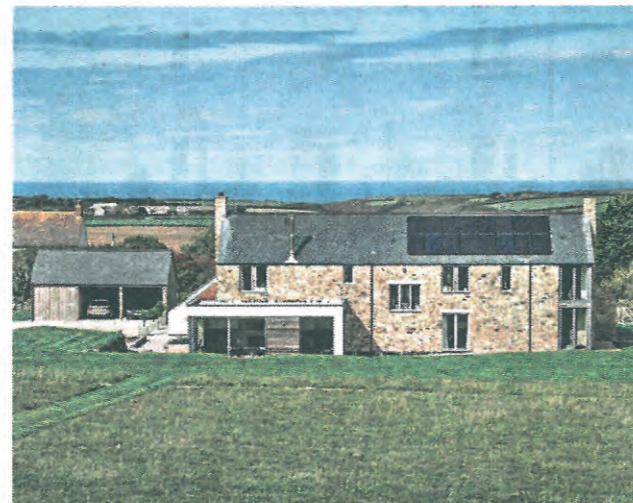
The enduring allure of north Cornwall

Graham Norwood
visits the golden sands of Constantine Bay, where properties for sale are hugely sought after

When it comes to beautiful beaches, Cornwall is unusually blessed. Yet even in this competitive field, Constantine Bay is particularly special.

Many say it's the county's best surfing spot, three miles from crowd-pleasing Padstow with an adjacent links golf course enjoying dramatic views over the Atlantic coast. The beach leads to Trevoze Head, designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and a favourite walking spot for both Margaret Thatcher and David Cameron.

Around here, properties get snapped up very quickly. And when a large detached family house like Langarth comes to the market for the first time in 67 years, it is big news. In this



SURF'S UP
The three sisters on the beach with a surfboard, left



case the house, now approaching 100 years old, and the family that own it have unique histories too.

The owners' father, Bertram Barthold, bought Langarth in 1952 for his growing family of three daughters. He was an RAF pilot who flew Spitfires in the Second World War, and provided air cover for British troops on D-Day.

"After the war Dad worked at the Air Ministry in London but even so, in his 40s, he still had to keep up his flying hours. So on Fridays he would go to RAF Northolt in west London, get into a Chipmunk and fly to Cornwall," recalls Rachel Barnes, one of Barthold's daughters.

"When he came close to Langarth he'd fly directly overhead and waggle the wings," she adds. "We three daughters would wave to him and then our mother would get in the car, see him land at RAF Eval just up the road, and bring him home for supper. It was lovely." That is not the end of the family's links to the war effort: in the late Seventies, during a sunny lunch at the

house, the sisters heard that their mother, Diana, had actually worked at Bletchley Park cipher centre during the Second World War – a complete secret to everyone at the time.

Another family member also has a surprising past. One of Rachel's sisters, Merryn, who was named after a village close by, became one of the UK's first female surfing champions in the Sixties, winning the Women's North Cornwall Surfing Championship. "At the time those 11ft surf boards were heavy, and surfing was very much a man's activity," says Rachel. "But Merryn succeeded thanks to living close to Constantine beach."

The property, with a guide price of offers over £1.75million, is one of the largest in the area and has just been sold by Jonathan Cunliffe estate agents. It also had the added bonus of being big enough for another house to be built in its grounds, subject to planning permission, says Jonathan Cunliffe.

Even without the history and land that this house came with, there is huge competition for prime properties with amazing views in this area. "Constantine Bay is one of the best locations on the north Cornwall coast," adds

ON A WING AND A PRAYER
Bertram Barthold in his plane, right



Cunliffe. "It has a lower profile and is quieter than Rock and Polzeath, but has similar prices." Properties rarely come up for sale around this exclusive spot, he adds.

This increasingly fashionable patch of north Cornwall in 2019 is about as far from Spitfires and code-breaking as one can imagine. Surfing is now the primary tourist business in the area, and there are surf schools and shops galore nearby.

Constantine Bay itself has rock pools and sand dunes, with headland walks either side. At low tide it connects with its sister beach, Booby's Bay, giving a crescent stretch with over half a mile of golden sand which gets frantically busy in the summer, but can be charmingly quiet for much of the rest of the year.

Near this sought-after spot, you can snap up a new-build home just 200yds

from the beach at Treyarnon Bay, with price on application through Jackie Stanley estate agents.

But there's little on offer around here; for more choice of properties for sale, look further south along the rugged Atlantic coast. You can snap up a house with sea views over Porthcothan Bay for £1.25million with Jackson-Stops. Or near St Agnes, Cunliffe has just launched to market a modern-style farmhouse (also with Strutt & Parker). The light-filled Brynmawr Farm, built in 2015, is for sale at £2million.

Local agents insist that sales of these high-end houses in north Cornwall have been stronger in 2019 than in recent years. This is despite the fact that holiday homes incur a three per cent stamp duty surcharge. The new daily flights to Heathrow from Newquay Airport have helped generate interest in the area, as has the continued growth of the county as a foodie destination.

Estate agents say both of these factors, along with a five per cent drop in Cornish house prices over the past 12 months, help make the location appealing for buyers put off from looking abroad due to the exchange rate. And with golden sand beaches like that, who needs the Mediterranean?

Sales of high-end houses here have been stronger in 2019 than before