



Humble beginnings of 'Sunny Selsey' holiday park

It all started in 1958 when the late Douglas Bunn bought 30 acres of land from his father.

Rationing was over and there was a rush to the coast as people sought a seaside holiday.

Douglas did something that was quite revolutionary in its day – he applied for, and won, planning permission to use the land for Holiday Caravans.

During this time, caravan sites were generally little more than a field with a toilet block in one corner and a shower block in another and many local authorities were anti-caravans.

Nevertheless Douglas had an entrepreneurial streak that saw great potential in this unspoilt stretch of coastline – so unspoilt, in fact, that Hitler himself had planned to land his troops at Selsey because it was so undeveloped.

Douglas came to the caravan trade in a roundabout way. He grew up in Selsey and won a scholarship to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he studied History and Law, to later become a barrister.

At the age of 30, whilst practising as a barrister, he put his money into both the caravan business, and an Equestrian business.

And so, 58 years ago, The White Horse Caravan Company was born.

With the completion of a shop, office and club house in 1959, The White Horse Caravan Park was ready to capture the post-war boom in holidays.

Around the same time, Douglas approached the owners of a local farm – Mill Farm – and in 1960 added the land, the iconic Medmerry Windmill and a mile of beachfront to his holdings. This was to become West Sands.

Green Lawns, an already established Park, was added in 1968 and the purpose-built touring and camping facility known as Warner Farm Touring Park was developed in 1990.

Together, these parks formed the basis of the 300 acres of holiday village which exist today – one of the biggest holiday parks in Europe, in fact.

In the past half century, generations of families, many of them from the Portsmouth area, have made the trip to this sunny peninsular on the south coast to enjoy a memorable seaside break.

A flick through Bunn Leisure's brochures from yesteryear shows how caravanning holidays have changed – and how some things never go out of fashion!

The brochure for 1964 includes a picture of a family enjoying a cup of tea from PG Tips and an advert for LyonsMaid Ice Cream.

The general park information includes a note about the toilets and showers: “These are, without doubt, the finest you will find anywhere”.

Pony and donkey rides are advertised close to the amusement fair at West Sands and the brochure reads: “The animals are well cared for by a benevolent gentleman named Mr John Lockwood who devotes the proceeds to the Animals Home of Rest”.

The ‘Teenage Jivery’ is open daily from 10am to 11.30pm and there’s an afternoon sing-song with Uncle Mick and Uncle Keith in the ballroom every Sunday afternoon.

On a Sunday morning, holidaymakers are invited to ‘Howzat!’ – a grand cricket match for all ages.

Fast forward to 1970 and the guide features a blonde-haired mermaid on the front cover.

The opening pages feature a letter from the late John Bunn – Douglas’ older brother and the then managing director, welcoming holidaymakers to ‘Sunny Selsey’.

His letter states: “Visitors are always surprised at the astonishingly low cost of a holiday with us, compared with regimented holiday camps.

“A holiday with us is basically self-catering which gives you the tremendous advantage of being absolutely free to do what you wish during your precious days of leisure.”

The brochure advertises the ‘Harness Room Discotheque’ – which has been “re-equipped to keep pace with growing demand and modern popularity”.

Bicycles, radios, deck chairs and push chairs can all be hired from the hire shop. You can even hire a complete set of bed linen for the family – but “21 days’ notice is required for this”.

John Bunn, the current managing director and the second generation of the family-run business, reflected: “ It is wonderful to look back on what was offered all those years ago, the core of which remains unchanged! A Luxury Caravan Holiday Park offers far more freedom to its visitors and guests than its competitors. ”



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