

# Pentowan Gardens

October 2007



## inside

- Living the dream
- Top architects
- "Musical homes" breakthrough
- Huge price cuts
- Waiting – for nearly 20 years
- Successful "pilot"
- Great builders
- Top team
- Challenges overcome
- Site boss's better lifestyle
- Clare takes over
- Safe hands
- Bespoke solution
- Ancestral link
- Making it happen
- Experts excel

## Thumbs-up for new scheme from happy Hayle buyers

**"It's a huge relief to us. It's probably the only way we could have got onto the property ladder in Cornwall; we knew of no other properties of this quality available at this price."**

That's Fraser Glennie talking (full story – page 2), but it could just as easily be almost any one of all the lucky local purchasers who have benefited from a pioneering project in Hayle. Fraser and his partner Sarah Milne, both consumer advisers, are typical of the residents at Pentowan Gardens.

The debut development by Truro-based THF Ltd has provided 47 much needed affordable homes with an innovative scheme funded entirely by the private sector. There is no public subsidy involved – direct or "hidden" – rather, it is a hugely welcome new way of reducing the desperate shortage of affordable housing.

Indisputably, the current under-supply in the sector is way beyond the means of local authorities and housing associations to solve on their own. Statistics show that the problem is actually getting worse, not better – underlining the great need for more variety in the methods of delivery for affordable housing.

Further, recent statements from central Government have emphasized the need for local authorities to work closely with the private sector to deliver innovative solutions. THF is thus calling for greater flexibility

regarding the application of local authorities' adopted development plan policies – pointing out that when these were drawn up no-one imagined that affordable homes could be supplied through the private sector.

With the THF formula, properties are sold at prices of up to 40 per cent below open market value, being offered first to local people via a 999-year shared equity lease and a £20 weekly rental. It is a formula that is emphatically working – as Fraser and Sarah, and the other success stories featured in this newsletter, amply testify!



*Pic: Fraser Glennie*

## Moving in... *the 'dream achievers'*



Pic: Fraser Glennie and Sarah Milne, first occupants of Pentowan Gardens at Hayle, receive a framed print of a Stanhope Forbes painting from THF sales co-ordinator Naomi Soper (left).

**First in a long line of "dream achievers" moving into THF's Pentowan Gardens at Hayle were Fraser Glennie and Sarah Milne, both consumer advisers at Consumer Direct, a partner of Trading Standards. They had been living with Sarah's parents in the town for five years.**

Their two-bedroom semi-detached house was purchased for just £95,000 along with a £20 weekly rental.

"It's a huge relief to us," said Fraser. "It's probably the only way we could have got onto the property ladder in Cornwall; we knew of no other properties of this quality available at this price. Now we can start to think about raising a family and we are very much looking forward to getting to know all the other young couples who are moving into Pentowan Gardens."

To celebrate Fraser and Sarah's big breakthrough, THF sales co-ordinator Naomi Soper presented them with a bottle of champagne and a framed print of a painting entitled Blue River near Hayle, by the Newlyn School painter Stanhope Forbes.

Forbes and Frank Bramley led the artists' movement known as the Newlyn School. Following the extension of the Great Western Railway to West Cornwall in 1877, a growing number of artists were attracted to St Ives and Newlyn, drawn by the beauty of the scenery, quality of light, simplicity of life and drama of the sea.

## Award Winning Architects



**Pentowan Gardens has been designed by award-winning architects Trewin Design Partnership, based in Holsworthy, North Devon. The firm performed outstandingly in the 2007 Government-backed Housing Design Awards. It won the Richard Feilden Award as one of seven finalists in the completed projects category and in recognition of its innovative Broadclose housing project in Bude. The project has taken a pioneering approach to traffic calming.**

Just a few months earlier in 2007, Trewin Design was named Professional Firm of the Year in the Michelmores and Western Morning News Commercial Property Awards.

Broadclose was also commended in the 2007 Mail on Sunday British Homes Awards.

The firm has been established for over 30 years and is now one of the largest rurally based architectural practices in the South West. Although Devon-based, its partners, David Savage, Alf and James Trewin, are all Cornishmen and the firm has been involved in numerous projects in the Duchy.

They have built up a solid reputation for being able to provide practical design solutions sympathetic to the immediate environment, whether urban or rural.

## Big Breakthrough for 'Musical Homes' couple



HOME ALONE at last - Phil Smith and Zoe James celebrate their move into Pentowan Gardens.

**A remarkable four-year sequence of "musical homes" – alternating between one pair of parents and another – has ended with a move into a "dream house" for a young Cornish couple who feared they would never get onto the property ladder.**

Phil Smith, 26, and his fiancée Zoe James, 23, had all but given up hope of ever moving into a home of their own when they discovered Pentowan Gardens – thus ending four years of home-sharing with parents.

Phil, an architectural technician, recalls: "First, we lived with my mum and dad, then we moved to Zoe's parents, then it was back to my parents again and then back to Zoe's for a second time! We love our parents dearly, but we are just so happy to be on our own now!"

"I guess our experience is a measure of the homes crisis for young people starting out in their working lives in Cornwall today."

Phil and Zoe have now moved into a two-bedroom terrace house at Pentowan Gardens which they have purchased for just £95,000, together with a £20 weekly rental.

Zoe enthuses: "The Pentowan Gardens homes are just so much bigger and better than the average conception of an affordable home and we also have a lovely big garden."

She adds: "As an architectural technician, Phil has been able to cast a very professional eye over it and satisfied himself that it is a very high quality build and design. To have a home of our own now in Penwith, where we both grew up, is just tremendous!"

## The long, long wait

Directors of THF Ltd were shocked – but not altogether surprised – to discover at a meeting in Caradon that two families had been on the Housing Waiting List for 17 and 18 years respectively and had never been offered any accommodation in that time.

"The reason," recalls THF's Paul Stephens, "was that they were fit, healthy and in work and had enough income to take private rented accommodation, but they had no priority whatsoever for being allocated a housing association or local authority house. "So they were

## Spectacular cut in sale prices

**Sale prices at Pentowan Gardens ranged from £65,000 for a one-bedroom bungalow to £120,000 for a three-bedroom house, compared with respective open market values of £120,000 and £185,000.**

The huge difference was achieved by the removal of what is regarded as the normal developer's profit, but with a weekly rental payment of £20 (RPI Index-linked) in respect of the proportion of the value of the property which had not been purchased on the sale of the property by THF.

Until a construction contract is let, a final price cannot be fixed. So the greater the delay in securing planning permission, the greater the build cost is likely to be. It is important to remember that inflation does not stand still and that THF is a private business which has to cover all its costs.

**The other sale prices at Pentowan Gardens included £95,000 (open market - £150,000) for a two-bedroom bungalow, and £95,000 (£160,000), for a two-bedroom house.**

The simple but hard-to-achieve objective is to provide local people with good quality modern housing with 21st Century standards in their own town at prices they can afford, with no public subsidy. The THF objective is ideally shared by the community as a whole and its elected representatives, all of whom are consulted in advance.

on their own, and they simply could not afford any house on the open market in their village. These are precisely the kind of people we are trying to help. Indeed, they are people who ten years ago would have expected to have been able to buy their own home."

# 'A very successful pilot'

**Pentowan Gardens has been hailed "a very successful pilot" by Gila Trevena, Penwith District Council's affordable housing officer. It was the first major project in a new approach to providing affordable homes for local buyers.**

The development was praised as an outstanding example of how the private and public sectors can work together in the housing market – concluding a process that began in December, 2002.

That was when THF told Gila that they had identified the Hayle site and wanted to develop it as an exclusively affordable homes project, entirely financed by the private sector. The two parties worked closely together from thereon, with the launch of Penwith's Affordable Housing Task Force following in 2004.

For Pentowan Gardens, the task force – Gila Trevena, Rachel McCorry, allocations and advice co-ordinator, and Anthony Ball, housing manager, initially concentrated on doing all they could to help THF secure planning permission. Then the task force,

funded by second homes Council Tax revenue, continued to work closely with THF in identifying eligible potential purchasers from Penwith's Homeseekers Register.

**"The upshot," says Gila, "is a very successful 'pilot' which we hope can be repeated increasingly frequently – and it is just so delightful to see the buyers realising their dreams and getting the keys to their new homes at Pentowan Gardens, which is a really lovely site."**



**MISSION ACCOMPLISHED!** The near-complete Pentowan Gardens affordable housing scheme in Hayle is visited by Gila Trevena (right), Penwith District Council's affordable housing officer, Naomi Soper of THF Ltd, and Andy Parsons, of The New Homes Company.



Just a few of the new homes completed at Pentowan Gardens - Hayle.

## Challenges overcome

### Great Builders

The success of Pentowan Gardens is due in no small measure to the quality and reliability of the building contractors, J J Jones and Sons (St Austell) Ltd, one of Cornwall's oldest family firms. Its present head, third generation boss Keith Jones, is now in his 30th year on the board.

Founded by grandfather Jack in 1910, the company now directly employs more than 50 people – having more than trebled over the past three decades. Keith is supported at head office by his wife Gill, who has worked with him for 26 of their 33 years' married life.

Joining Gill at HQ these days are usually to be found the couple's son Paul, director and buyer, plus on a part-time basis their daughter Kate.

The company is a "family" success story in more ways than one, as Keith explains: "A lot of us have been together for many years and we get on very well – which is a great help! We all like to produce the best possible quality and to be thoroughly dependable in every way."

That is borne out by J J Jones' achievement of the highest possible rating with the National House Building Council (NHBC) – A1, indicating no claims against properties it has built.

the houses; this way, the properties are kept as affordable as possible. The absence of the development profit is offset by the weekly rent against the retained part of the equity."

Sites for THF developments are identified by the company, which invites calls from anyone with land that could be used for such purposes. Ideally, it is seeking edge-of-village sites with potential for up to 20 plots and capable of being well integrated with existing developments, along with good access to centres of employment and general community facilities.



Paul Stephens



Gerry Barnicoat

### Team at the top

**At the helm of THF Ltd are two directors with an in-depth knowledge of providing accommodation for local people who otherwise could not afford to buy their own homes.**

Paul Stephens is a solicitor who had 15 years' experience in private practice in Cornwall before launching a series of Business

Expansion Scheme companies to provide rented housing for some 250 families across southern England. Gerry Barnicoat, latterly well known as managing director of a leading Cornish-based contractor, had 30 years in the building industry. He was involved in the construction of over 1,000 affordable homes for housing associations.

"The key element in the THF formula is construction of the homes at cost," explains Paul. "We don't take a development profit on the sale of



**Every site has its special challenges – and Pentowan Gardens was no exception. Here, there were extra foundation costs on a windy, sandy site, along with the necessary moving of 11,000-kilowatt overhead electricity cables. A stretch of off-site highway also had to be built to link to the nearest adopted road.**

Despite these hurdles, THF was able to contain all these costs within the maximum permitted selling price, which actually sold three-bedroom homes at £118,000 – below Penwith District Council's stipulated maximum figure of £120,000 for a three-bedroom affordable house.

*Geoff Coombe*

**THF's man responsible!**

THF was able to achieve economies of scale through the number – 47 – of homes built on the site. With a lower total, the point would have been reached where the cost of providing affordable homes on this site would have rendered the project unviable.

The THF achievement here is all the more impressive when bearing in mind the considerable increase in building costs since planning permission was granted for Pentowan Gardens back in 2004.

**The Hayle triumph was another feather in the cap of Geoff Coombe, THF's man responsible for co-ordinating site investigation, preparation and quality control. He has over 20 years' experience with national house builders and substantial local contractors, providing invaluable expertise in identifying and resolving groundworks and infrastructure problems.**

# 'Great team effort' – site boss

# Graham



Graham Lamb – site manager

**Site manager at Pentowan Gardens is Graham Lamb, 38, who moved to Cornwall six years ago in search of a better life after a spell involving shopfitting stores throughout the UK.**

The shopfitting meant much time spent away from his wife Amanda and their two children, Rossina and Georgina. So the family relocated to Cornwall, where three of them now live in Newquay, with Rossina since having moved to Porthcawl.

Graham left school in New Alresford at 16 and immediately began work as an apprentice carpenter. In 2002 he began his Cornish experience by joining the J J Jones construction team at Poltair Homes' Penvearn View project in Cubert, subsequently moving to the company's Victoria Gardens development in Camelford.

He has been at Pentowan Gardens since April 2007, with a working team of at least 35 at any one time. The good news, at the time of going to press, is that the project will finish at least six weeks ahead of schedule – despite the record rainfall of the summer.

"We have come along in leaps and bounds," says Graham. "The occupants are absolutely delighted with their new homes and have thanked us for keeping noise and inconvenience to a minimum".

● From THF - a big thank-you to everyone involved in the building team at Pentowan Gardens – they've all done a grand job – and in particular:

J J Jones main contractor (Graham Lamb, site manager, Kevin Constance, contracts manager, Darren Fisher, finishing foreman); Malcolm Harris, plumbing; Cox & Drew, electrics; J W Lewis, roofing; Frost Builders, blockwork superstructures; R G Gay & Sons, roads (Jeremy Gay);

Jon Douglass, site surveyor, John Douglass, clerk of works, Bryan Hammond, health and safety associates; Mid Cornwall Landscaping, site landscaping and planting; Cornwall Mining Services, mining search.

Ahead of schedule – the building team at Pentowan Gardens



# Welcome Clare

**Clare Ackland has taken over as sales co-ordinator for THF Ltd following Naomi Soper's move away from the area.**



Clare (nee Burley), who married Stephen last year, has been new homes co-ordinator for the last eight years in the Truro offices of Black Horse/Bradford & Bingley/ Countrywide Properties.

She previously worked in Black Horse's rental department in Truro for two years, having moved into property after an earlier career embracing marketing (Strike Direct Marketing) and various positions in hotels and restaurants. She trained in hotel management at Cornwall College.

"I have a wonderful set of new colleagues at THF and I am thrilled to be part of such a progressive company that is offering a very attractive concept to home-seekers," says Clare, who lives at Pool.

# Safe Legal Hands

Andrew Rothwell



The term "safe pair of hands" could have been invented for Ashfords, who have looked after the legal side of things at Pentowan Gardens. One of the UK's leading full service law firms, Ashfords has offices in Bristol, Exeter, London, Plymouth, Taunton and Tiverton.

A special thank-you for their help in Pentowan Gardens goes to their commercial department, namely Andrew Rothwell, shared ownership lease, Lynne Atkinson, estate conveyancing, and Keith Oliver, Section 106 Planning.

Ashfords' South West origins go back to the 19th Century and the practice still acts for many long established firms and families in the region, together with an ever-growing list of clients across the UK and abroad. With a turnover of £23 million, it now has lawyers and staff totaling over 420, including over 250 legal specialists and 51 partners.

# Bespoke solution

Backing for Pentowan Gardens came from NatWest after THF managing director Paul Stephens approached Andy Beer, relationship director, from NatWest's property finance banking team in Plymouth. Andy worked closely with Paul to understand the developer's needs and provided a bespoke financial solution.

"Pentowan Gardens is a fantastic opportunity for people living locally to buy their own home, and I am delighted to see the selling of the properties running so successfully," said Andy. "I look forward to continuing working with THF Ltd as they grow the business and develop similar projects."

Paul commented: "I am incredibly grateful to Andy and his team at NatWest who, by really understanding, our business delivered an effective funding package."

Andy is part of the NatWest commercial banking team which works with customers throughout Devon and Cornwall with turnovers between £1 and £25 million. As part of the RBS Group, his team works alongside other divisions including Lombard asset finance, RBS International Banking Services and RBS Invoice Finance.



Andy Beer

# Ancestral link

The Pentowan Gardens project has been doubly pleasing for THF director Paul Stephens – marking a return to the town where his mother's family were in business from the late 1700s until 1935.

In 1856, his great great grandfather, Christopher Ellis, captained the Hayle cricket club and secured the visit of an All England XI, which, according to reports at the time, drew a large crowd arriving "by rail and largely by omnibus and carriages."

Christopher Ellis was a prominent member of the Ellis family who for many years owned one of Cornwall's best known breweries.

# Experts Excel



**NatWest Andy Beer**  
property finance banking team in Plymouth.



**Ashfords Simon Rous**  
one of UK's leading full service law firms.



**Trewin Design David Savage**  
Award winning architects

# Making it happen

And a big thank-you to the mortgagees:

Banks:

**Abbey  
Halifax**

Building societies:

**Nationwide  
Ipswich  
Furness**

# Snippets...

It's called "construction sustainability"... every single concrete block that went into the building of the 47 homes at Pentowan Gardens came from Hayle company Western Blocks, scarcely a mile away. In round figures, that adds up to a 200,000 block boost for the local economy!

A mature couple, attending a site open day, produced a long list of far-reaching enquiries which the agent did his best to answer, and when they left the agent was confident of an early reservation. Investigations revealed the couple not only owned several other homes but were also local councillors. They were disqualified from buying.

One deserving case was a Hayle couple who had been married for eight years and had lived with parents for four years and then in a caravan. They had struggled to save a deposit whilst friends had been luckier and secured homes with the help of parents. The THF scheme enabled them to get a step on the housing ladder several years earlier than they anticipated.

A mature couple were settled for the future in their small rural cottage when tragedy struck. Their son and daughter died, leaving two young children. The grandparents made stoic efforts to raise the children but the cottage was simply too small and finances were too tight to move. Pentowan offered a solution.

THF offer tremendous value and a great opportunity. Several divorcees have discovered this to be a chance of a new start. But one Penzance couple thought the idea of getting divorced and buying two properties too tempting to miss, so they applied on the same application form. After a chat with the agent, they remain happily married in their Penzance home.

Life is changing. More and more single buyers are contemplating buying a home on their own and therefore need to find accommodation utilising just one income. THF offer a range of designs from one bedroom to three bedrooms.

THF sites are attracting the attention of the local police. Not because there is any trouble on site - quite the contrary. They have identified the sites as offering a secure home for themselves at prices they can afford.

## Pentowan Gardens - Hayle



Newsletter designed & produced by Bluejay Design 01209 822538