

## ROUNDSTONE CARAVAN PARK, Worthing Road

Roundstone Caravan Park was founded in 1930 by Mr Bill Whitehouse and took its name from his home, Roundstone House, in East Preston near Worthing. He had seen a 1928 Eccles touring caravan which had been manufactured in Stirchley, Birmingham, and had been captivated by the smart little trailer caravan. He could foresee the potential appeal to many of being able to hitch-up and freely tour through the countryside, stopping at will and camping in idyllic spots. The craze for caravanning, or motor caravanning as it was referred to then, had, of course, already begun although its popularity had yet to establish itself in the south of England. Mr Whitehouse set to making extensive drawings of the Eccles, with dimensions, notes and details of coachwork and chassis, and made plans for the trial manufacture of two caravans to be made on the Eccles principle - both to be constructed single-handed at Roundstone House. He used the two axles from a 1919 Model T Ford.

The first caravan took shape and was finally completed on 29 August 1930. It was named "Doris" after his daughter. The second creation was named after Beatrice, his wife.

The paddock at Roundstone House also had sufficient room for some holiday caravans, either owner-occupied or rented out. The lease of Roundstone House in East Preston was not renewed and, in 1935, Mr Whitehouse purchased a large field in Southwater, formerly part of Pond Farm, alongside the main A24 Worthing Road. At this time, the only entrance to the site lay across two railway sleepers bridging a ditch, exactly where the main entrance to the caravan park is now situated. There was no water supply so a well was dug and a water pipe ran through to a hand-cranked pump. As there was also no accommodation of any kind, the family lived in a large rectangular panelled showman's living van, high off the ground on iron-tyred cartwheels, to which was added a substantial lean-to.

The entire stock of caravans was towed, one by one, from East Preston to Southwater, and were unhitched just where they stopped and just where they sank into a virtual quagmire of clay.

The war years brought all business at Roundstone Park to an almost complete halt and the only regular source of income was the site rent paid by the five tenants in residence. The letting side of the business picked up well after the war as people were once again beginning to take holidays.

When Mr Whitehouse died in 1951, the business ceased with the exception of managing the twelve tenancies of those who had either residential or holiday caravans on the Park.

The current owner, Bob Morris, Mr Whitehouse's grandson, came to Roundstone in 1957 after completing his National Service. He started the business again and was joined later by his father, Jack. During the early 1960s a permanent licence was received which enabled the Park to develop. Sadly, Bob Morris's father died in 1968, but, with the help of his mother, Doris, and wife, Natalie, he continued the business.

In the autumn of 2001 the new buildings housing the sales and service centre were completed.

Today the Morris family still run the Roundstone companies, a thriving community of eighty-five homes and caravan depot, and also Raylands Park, a landscaped holiday park in Jackrells Lane, which they acquired in 1979.



Thanks to Roundstone Caravan Park for information and pictures



The first caravans to arrive in 1936