

## THE TRUTH ABOUT *POLDARK*

Millions of viewers are hooked on the BBC's new *Poldark*. We're seduced by breathtaking images of the Cornish coastline and countryside, and stirred by complex personalities and relationships. We can all still clearly see the magnificent scenery that inspired the novels' author, but what about the characters? According to Mr Graham, they too were based on real Cornish people, living in the county at the time the first novels were set.

Many years ago, during lunch with Michael Galsworthy, head of one of Cornwall's oldest and most respected families, Mr Graham explained that the Cornish gentry in his stories were based on people like Mr Galsworthy's ancestors.



Mr Galsworthy's family has lived at Trewithen for 300 years. It's an elegant house built in 1715 at Grampond Road near Truro. At the time the *Poldark* saga begins, the Trewithen estate belonged to Thomas and Anne Hawkins (above).

Mr Galsworthy explained: "I met Winston Graham during a lunch. We were discussing his novels and he explained to me that he used people like Thomas and Anne Hawkins when creating his characters."

There are surprising parallels between the two families. Like Ross, Thomas owned lucrative mines and their success kept hundreds of locals in work. Like Ross and Demelza, Thomas and Anne suffered terrible losses. Their eldest son drowned in the Thames aged just 13 whilst he was at Eton. Keen to have their child buried in the family plot, Thomas and Anne sent a deputation from Trewithen to the school and brought his body home preserved in a barrel of brandy. Tragedy struck a second time when another son died of a chill, believed to have been brought on by eating ice cream after a vigorous bout of dancing.

Thomas's sense of responsibility for the people who worked for him resulted in premature death. At that time smallpox was a killer and medicine was being developed to fight the disease. As an example to his tenants, Thomas volunteered to have an early form of the smallpox vaccination. He died of the disease, almost certainly as a result of that injection.

Ross is also portrayed as having a great sense of responsibility for the people who live on - and work - his land and mines. As the series continues we will watch him, like Thomas, put his own life at risk to secure their future.

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