



Rossiters staff in fancy dress celebrating the store's 120th anniversary in 1978 (PR25644)



Holden Gallery in the 1960s



Anne Rayment modelling the polka dot dress in Rossiters fashion department in 1957 (PR25722)

Museum's 175 years of preserving culture in Torbay

Last Saturday - September 5 - marked the 175th anniversary of the founding of Torquay Museum.

CLARE HOWE
Torquay Museum

Originally set up by Torquay Natural History Society to house a library and natural history collections, the museum's remit has expanded.

The museum currently holds more than 330,000 items across six galleries and five on-site stores.

Many of these items are part of the natural history collections but there are also collections covering archaeology, world cultures, local history, rural life, ceramics, historic images and an archive.

With the support of the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the museum had big plans to celebrate the anniversary with a pageant through the streets of Torquay, an exhibition of objects chosen from the stores by the community, a photographic trail around the Bay and many more events.

Unfortunately, much of this has been put on hold due to the emergence of

coronavirus. The staff and volunteers at the museum are, however, determined that the celebrations will still take place even if this means later and in a different way.

This is not the first time plans to celebrate a significant anniversary have been thwarted.

In 1944, the museum was due to celebrate 100 years since the founding of its parent society, Torquay Natural History Society, but with Britain still fighting the Second World War, plans had to change and celebrations were scaled back.

The museum was, however, spared damage during the not infrequent bombing raids on Torquay and it continued to have an active schedule of events and lectures.

To commemorate the centenary, the curator A.G. Madan also wrote an article for the Museums Journal, this not only tells the history of the museum but also of the pride that it

had lasted and remained active with its society for so long when others had 'become moribund'.

Madan also clearly had optimism for the future of the museum and society.

More than 75 years on, it is clear that both the pride and optimism were well placed. Although the society changed its name to Torquay Museum Society, it is active with around 250 members and until prevented from doing so, continued to have regular lectures on a variety of topics. The museum is now a separate organisation from the society but they are still very much linked, something which is now even more unusual than it was in 1944.

Most importantly both organisations continue to be active and are adapting to new ways of working.

Torquay Museum continues to work toward making its amazing and extensive collections engaging and accessible for the public.

If you are interested in finding out more, why not visit the museum, its website or follow Torquay Museum on social media?

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Rotary centenary celebration

There will be celebrations on Sunday, September 13, to mark the centenary of the Torquay Rotary.

Rotarians will be joined by guests including MP Kevin Foster, mayor Maggie Dunbar and councillors Nick Bye, Hazel Foster and Ray Hill, and the Rotary district governor at the harbourside at 2.30pm. This was the site of the very first meeting of the club at what was then the St James Restaurant and is commemorated by a blue plaque.

Guests will then walk to the Belgrave Sands Hotel for a socially distanced cream tea and celebratory cake.