



The mayor and mayoress of Torquay at the entrance to the town hall from the Baxter Collection (PR25172)



A view of Paignton beach with bathing machines, bicycles and horse drawn vehicles from the Tully Collection (PR10126)

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# Museum's new acquisitions preserving Torbay's heritage

**BARRY CHANDLER**  
Torquay Museum

**Torquay Museum is constantly acquiring new items from the Torbay area to keep its collections relevant and displays refreshed, but without an acquisitions fund it is reliant mainly on the goodwill of donors to give or bequest new items.**

Most years will see several thousand new items added to the collections.

While the museum's ability to target weaker parts of the collection and focus collecting is limited without funds, in the last 25 years some very important local collections have come into the museum and there have been some very generous donations of objects.

Some of these gifts such as the Peter Tully Collection of images of Paignton were huge.

Peter amassed around 10,000 local items, which took dedicated volunteers more than three years to document. Peter's collection was exceptional but others are more discrete.

Sometimes they are small personal collections like Bill Neilson's, an American World War Two veteran stationed in Torquay. His small selection of letters and personal items tell of his involvement in the Normandy landings and were donated by his relatives in Virginia, USA.

They may also be from local businesses. When Rossiters of Paignton closed its doors in 2010, the museum went through the archives and while it couldn't save everything, it preserved hundreds of images, documents and objects relating to the much-loved store.

Occasionally we are offered truly exceptional collections relating to the famous sons or daughters of the Bay.

This happened in 2006 when the Fawcett family were looking for a home for the archive of the Torquay-born explorer Percy Harrison Fawcett and more than 500 items,



Bill Neilson, an American World War Two veteran who was stationed in Torquay (PR35558)

including diaries, photograph albums and personal objects came into the collections.

The museum is also a repository for archaeological archives from locally excavated sites and most notably the recent finds from the multi-period dig at Ipplepen have started to be stored at the museum.

This has begun with the deposition of more than 100 Roman coins but will eventually include thousands of finds of pottery and metalwork from the site currently being worked on at the University of Exeter.

The museum is now embarking on a new

feature on our social media where we will share newly acquired items that have come into the museum in the last 25 years.

We have started with the Baxter collection of images, which came into the museum in 2008. Bill Baxter was former mace bearer to the Torquay mayor from 1938-1950. It contains around 225 pictures of civic engagements and wonderful miscellaneous images of Torbay life mainly in the post war years.

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