

Museum anniversary celebrations are set to end with day of talks

Torquay Museum is rounding off its rather protracted celebrations for its 175th anniversary with a day of talks covering a variety of aspects of local history.

The day will include five speakers with well-known local historians and researchers form further afield taking part.

The talks will be held in Pengelly Hall at Torquay Museum which has theatre-style seating, but will also be available to watch via a live stream so that anyone anywhere can access it.

On the day you will be able to learn the story of the Battle of Torquay from Dr James Kneale of UCL, talking about how in 1888 dozens of members of the Salvation Army were arrested in Torquay for marching on a Sunday, with thousands turning out to support them.

How a local improvement Bill lead to 'the Battle of Torquay' and why the town briefly defied Parliament.

Attendees will also discover the little known stories of local women involved in the fight for the right to vote from Elizabeth Crawford, researcher and author on the women's suffrage movement, in a fully illustrated

Memories of Torbay with Clare Howe from Torquay Museum

talk describing the movement during the 19th and 20th centuries.

Well-known local historian Kevin Dixon will be looking at a time of change in Torbay, describing how the town thrived after the First World War and the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918.

Torbay gained a new identity and rose to the challenges of the 1920s making it an interesting time for the area.

The day will also include a look into the past of Torquay by way of a historical tour of the area using the museum's extensive collection of magic lantern slides.

Local history author Phil Badcott will show the images and lead a virtual walk around Torquay. It will be a fantastic day not to be missed by anyone interested in the history of Torbay.

There will be two ticket options, either £10 for a ticket to attend the day in person and have the chance

TORQUAY MUSEUM 175
Torbay's Heritage
 A day of talks to celebrate the history of Torbay and 175 years of Torquay Museum

Speakers

Phil Badcott
A history tour of Torquay using Torquay Museum's magic lantern slides

Dr James Kneale
The Salvation Army and the Battle of Torquay

Elizabeth Crawford
The 'Votes for Women' campaign in South Devon in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Dr Kevin Dixon
Torbay in the 1920s

Clare Howe
Celebrating 175: Torquay Museum, Past, Present and Future

Saturday 25th September 9.45am - 4pm
 At Torquay Museum (£10) or Virtually (£5)

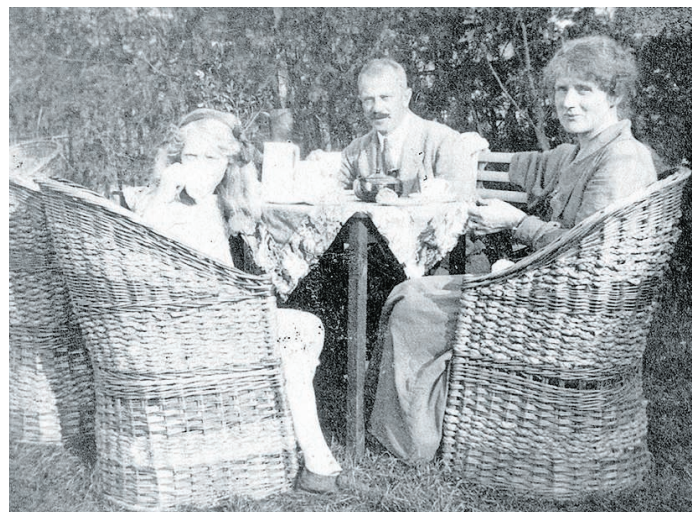
To book visit torquaymuseum.org/events or scan the QR code

HERITAGE FUND TORBAY COUNCIL

Torbay Heritage Day celebrates 175 years of Torquay Museum.

to visit the museum, or £5 for a virtual ticket to enjoy the talks from anywhere you are.

Tickets are limited for attending the day due to uncertainty over social distancing so if you want to come in person early booking is advised. More information is available on the museum's website www.torquaymuseum.org



Family enjoying tea in Preston in 1921.

Photos: TORQUAY MUSEUM



Giant Rock, Watcombe, in 1862 - one of the lantern slides catalogued with NLHF funding. (PR26259)

Father Christmas made special mid-summer visit to Paignton

The stories behind Torbay's blue plaques by Ian Handford, chairman of Torbay Civic Society. This week: the Rossiter family:

It was 2010 when Torbay Civic Society was asked by the directors of Rossiters if the family name could be included on a blue plaque to permanently reflect their connection with the store, now that the premises was leased to The Factory Shop in Palace Avenue Paignton.

Having been in touch with Keith Rossiter, of Sittingbourne, Kent, by the following July, 2011, all his fellow directors of the company had agreed we should formally proceed.

By then our researchers had discovered the initial advert for the Rossiter store at 7 Palace Avenue had appeared in March 1888, although previously sisters of the family had run a Rossiter drapery shop in Winner Street.

With the sponsorship and a Bijou Theatre Company advert in support, and the wording on the plaque also agreed, only the

The stories behind Torbay's blue plaques by Ian Handford, chairman of Torbay Civic Society. This week: the Rossiter family

biographical pamphlet and date for the actual unveiling and event was left to arrange.

We knew the event would likely attract great interest as the store was one of Torbay's most popular retail outlets before it closed in January 2009.

With the arrangements all agreed the unveiling would take place on March 31, 2012.

Prior to its unveiling at the store, the directors decided they wanted to greet everyone at the Palace Theatre, Paignton, where Keith Rossiter would be introduced by me on stage before presenting a family biography with the plaque on display.

After the presentation the large audience were treated to free refreshments in the theatre bar, before then those wishing

to witness the official unveiling walked through Palace Avenue Gardens to the store.

The official unveil was undertaken by leader of Torbay Council, Derek Mills, together with Miss Chris Tolchard, longest-serving member of staff who had been employed by Rossiters for more than 45 years.

With a large crowd in attendance, Paigntonians especially were not too surprised to see Father Christmas arrive on a summer visit, having travelled by Polar Express due to his sleigh having its mid-year maintenance.

Over many years thousands of loyal customers and children could recall the annual appearance in store of Father Christmas with Rudolph and

the sleigh. It was a traditional feature for this popular family store.

Today's summer visit was certainly a first for the society and after the unveiling a second surprise - the directors had arranged a special reception at the Palace Hotel on Paignton Esplanade and guests were offered a special ticket giving admittance.

The family history of Rossiter & Son (Paignton) Limited goes back to 1740 when Richard Rossiter arrived in Torbay and worked as a steward at Blagdon Inn, Paignton.

Over the following period another line of the family saw two sisters, Sarah and Jane - two of a family of ten - establish the first Rossiter General Drapery store in Winner Street in March 1858.

Later, Sarah alone took on the shop and extended its range into fabrics used especially for crinolene dresses, then a new fashion rapidly growing especially to the thousands of visitors coming to Torbay after the railway was established.

The First World War was a

difficult period for retailers and after Sarah's death in 1923, it was not until 1934 that with various members of the Rossiter family became involved and formally turned it into a limited company.

At the end of the Second World War with retailers still struggling to survive, it would not be until 1950 that Leslie Rossiter, with previous experience of banking, now ensured the store became financially sound and sustainable.

His added special promotions and good marketing eventually saw a successful store celebrating its centenary year in 1958. But with the arrival of the 21st century what had been a highly successful business was struggling again and although it celebrated its 150th anniversary year in 2008, the arrival of internet shopping was a turning point for the company when reluctantly the board of directors decided it was time for the Rossiter's at 7-13 Palace Avenue era to end.

They finally closed their store in January 2009 and then leased the premises.