

75 years of the Cold War - but history has a habit of repeating itself

When Torquay Museum scheduled to write an article on the anniversary of the start of the Cold War only four months ago, the events that unfolded in March of this year seemed unimaginable.

History, however, has a habit of repeating and the current actions of the Russian government were there to be seen.

On March 12, 1947, President Truman asked Congress for money to help other countries fight communist aggression.

His request became the unofficial start of the Cold War.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the Cold War. It semi-officially started in March 1947, less than two years after the Second World War.

It supposedly came to an end with the toppling of the Berlin Wall but this hiatus appears to be over.

Now more than ever, it seems of utmost importance to understand what lies behind Putin's aggressive stand against the West.

In 2020, Torquay Museum staged a temporary exhibition entitled 'The Russians are Coming! Soviet Spies and the Secret Mapping of Torbay'.

Barry Chandler, engagement and collections manager at Torquay Museum

Although this title was slightly tongue in cheek, the extraordinary revelations of the exhibition, the degree of the spying involved and the recent events in not so far away Salisbury made the museum quite wary of this topic.

In order to stage the exhibition, we had to agree not to mention the Salisbury poisonings or for that matter the origins of the maps, the lives of sources were genuinely at risk.

During the Cold War, the Soviet Union drew up detailed invasion plans of the great cities of the world: New York, Paris, London... and Torbay.

This brings into sharp focus the current events in Ukraine. This was the result of the greatest secret intelligence-gathering operating the world had ever seen,

with spy satellites, reconnaissance aircraft and undercover agents roaming the streets all over the world.

In the 1970s, while local people went about their daily life and holidaymakers visited the beaches and attractions, the Soviet military were finding out about every house, school and workplace; how to navigate there by tank; where to launch amphibious assaults; and key targets and assets in the town.

They even mapped individual garden sheds.

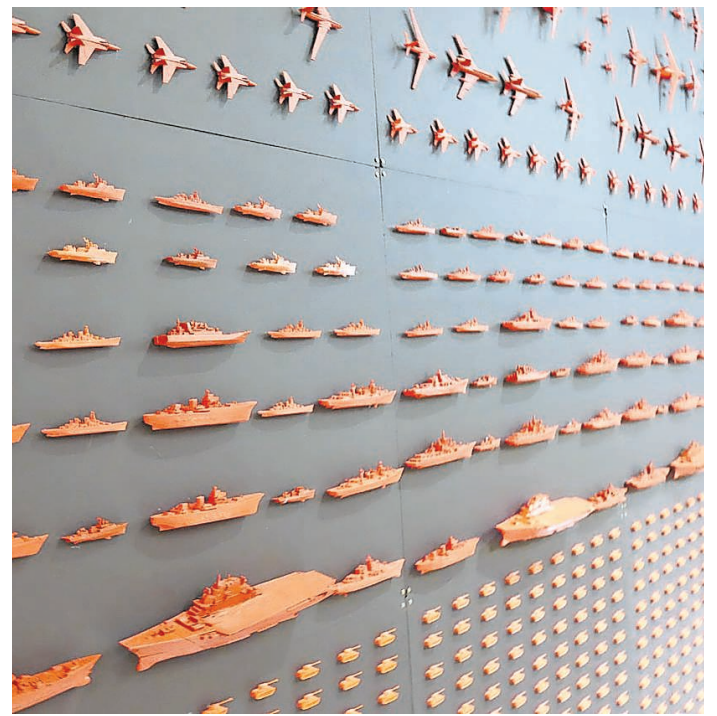
These revelations were chilling enough but we were contacted by Russian TV while the exhibition was on.

They wanted to visit and film for a short documentary piece.

We agreed, quite reluctantly, to the filming but declined to appear in the documentary talking about the exhibits.

I did, however, speak at length with the visiting journalist, who, to my complete surprise, knew nothing about the mapping project.

They were genuinely fascinated with the maps and spy artefacts, their ignorance of their own country's historic secret policies was another dark twist in the story.



The exhibition featured this model of a proportion of the Soviet army in 1980

Pictures: TORQUAY MUSEUM

Ignorance is a weapon the Russian government uses on its population and we can see the results of this daily on the news.

It appears that for Putin's regime at least the imperialist policies of the Soviet era have not been forgotten.

The secret mapping project tells that whatever we may think, we know about how the Russian government perceives the West we have little understanding of the secret policies, espionage, and the lengths they will go to, to achieve their goals.



Cold War civil defence uniform

Blue plaque honours engineer and scientist lost on the Titanic

The request for a blue plaque to honour Henry Forbes Julian - outstanding metallurgist lost when RMS Titanic sank in 1915 - came directly from Redholme House owners Mr and Mrs Brand at Braddons Hill Road East, Torquay, once the home of Mr Julian.

My first visit to Mr and Mrs Brand came in 2016 when I confirmed the society would be delighted to honour Henry with a plaque although it needed full sponsorship and grants were not available.

What, of course, we could not foresee was that Paul would be involved a serious incident at the business and for months this was life threatening.

Meanwhile, knowing nothing of this, I assumed the couple had had second thoughts and did not wish to go ahead.

Two years later having learned of Paul's accident, I discovered the couple still wished to proceed.

But now the pandemic and lockdowns intervened and having waited a for a firm date

Torbay's blue plaques by **Ian Handford**, chairman of Torbay Civic Society. This week: Henry Forbes Julian

this came in 2020. Being interested in all matters science in his teens, Henry would often be found in his father's professional workshop before choosing to become self-employed.

As an engineer and scientist by age 25 he was assisting in mine shaft work, crushing mills and at an industrial plant in Africa.

Having had arrived there in 1886 by luck 'gold ore' had just been discovered.

As a keen metallurgist and with 10,000 new prospectors around him, Henry discovered a solution of cyanogen (cyanide) helped extract gold and silver from its ore and by 1888, his process achieved yields previously thought

impossible making him immediately an international star for the world of miners.

Travelling widely as a metallurgist, he went to places as far afield as Johannesburg, Kimberly and the Upper Zambesi where he was one of the first white men to see the Zambesi Falls.

But ill-health now brought him home and eventually he settled in Shaldon after buying the marine residence of the late Lord Clifford, a villa overlooking the beach we call today The Ness Hotel.

As a founder member of the Royal Automobile Club and a member of the Royal Horticultural Society and Institution of Mining and Metallurgy, Henry still found

time to establish a research laboratory at the Ness.

In good health again he now met the Pengelly family and in 1901 even proposed to Hester, William's daughter, as they shared common interests.

Hester was a member of the Geologists' Association, Royal Anthropological Institute and the Dante Society, plus like Henry, she enjoyed travel.

They married in 1902 at St Mary Magdalene Church, Upton, on October 30 and their nine years saw much joy in travelling and in Torquay and London when new scientific papers were par for the course.

With a coal strike affecting the railway, Hester suggested that Henry put back his embarkation until April 11 by catching the alternative ship Celtic of White Star line.

But it was not to be, and on April 9 Henry left Torquay for the final time, just managing to get to Southampton in time to board Titanic.

Later, he refused to leave the sinking ship as there were still women and children aboard

and today we can only presume he was 'lost at sea on April 15, 1912'.

A memorial at St Mary Magdalene Church remains the only honour to Henry at Torquay which was unveiled at Upton on February 24, 1914, as Hester donated a scroll of the names of his subscribing friends. She lived for another 20 years before dying on February 11, 1934.

Torbay Civic Society's blue plaque to honour Henry Forbes Julian was finalised unveiled at the front wall of Redholme by Councillor and Worshipful Mayor of Torbay Council Mrs Maggi Douglas-Dunbar together with the owners and myself as numbers of people able to attend were being strictly controlled by yet another Government lockdown.

The Henry Forbes Julian pamphlet is still available by sending two second class stamps plus a stamped addressed envelope to Torbay Civic Society, Office 1, 4 Palace Avenue, Paignton TQ3 3HA