

TORQUAY MUSEUM SOCIETY

President, David G Norman BSc

Torquay Museum Society was formed in 1844 as the Torquay Natural History Society. By 1875 it had raised enough money to build the Natural History Society Museum – the iconic building that houses the Museum’s internationally important collections, where the Society is still based and holds its varied and entertaining lectures.

There are two Public Lecture Seasons each year: the Autumn/Winter Season which runs from early October until December, and the Spring Season which runs from January until mid-April. Most lectures take place on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, from 10.45am – 12 noon. Admission is free to Torquay Museum Society members, but is also open to the public for a cost of £5 per lecture, payable on the door.

Throughout the summer months the Society hosts weekly free and informal gatherings – *conversazione* – at which attendees enjoy short talks, discussion and light refreshments. The hallmark of the *conversazione* is informality and variety.

BECOME A MEMBER

Membership of the Society opens up a host of potential pursuits and opportunities to become active within the Society. As a Member, you are entitled to free admission to the museum and all of the weekday public lectures, except as noted for fund-raising events. The Torquay Museum Society membership year runs from October until the following September. Individual membership is £60 per annum and joint membership is £100 per annum. Pick up a Membership form from Torquay Museum or download it from the Museum’s website.

THE LECTURES TEAM



Literature & Arts
Ken Beevers



History
Christine Meredith



Natural History
Maggi Douglas Dunbar

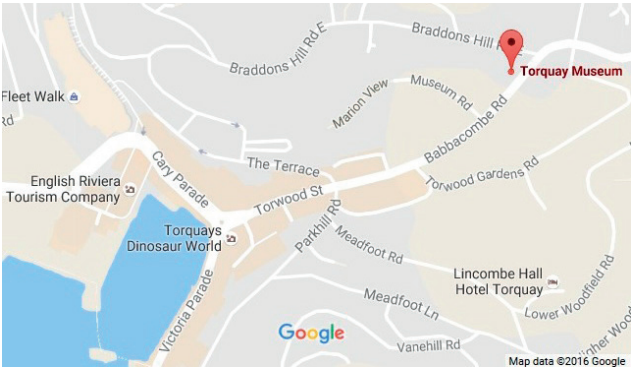


Science
David Norman

To identify who has organised a lecture, match the colour codes above with the colour-coded lecture information inside. The (green) ‘General’ highlighted lectures are organised by the team, who welcome your comments and suggestions.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

HOW TO FIND US



Torquay Museum 529 Babbacombe Road, TQ1 1HG
Tel 01803 293975 www.torquaymuseum.org

WALKING: The Museum is a couple of hundred metres up Babbacombe Road from the Mallock Clock Tower.

BY BUS: Nos 11 and 22 buses stop directly outside the Museum.

PARKING: Pay-and-display opposite the Museum or at the Harbour Car Park (access via Museum Road). Two hours free parking on some nearby streets.

THE MUSEUM SHOP

The museum shop stocks an array of books and merchandise, some of which relate to the museum’s exhibitions and local history. There is also a good stock of Agatha Christie memorabilia and books (both new and older editions).

THE MUSEUM CAFÉ





The museum cafe is open all day with a self-service coffee facility and nibbles on offer.

ACCESS

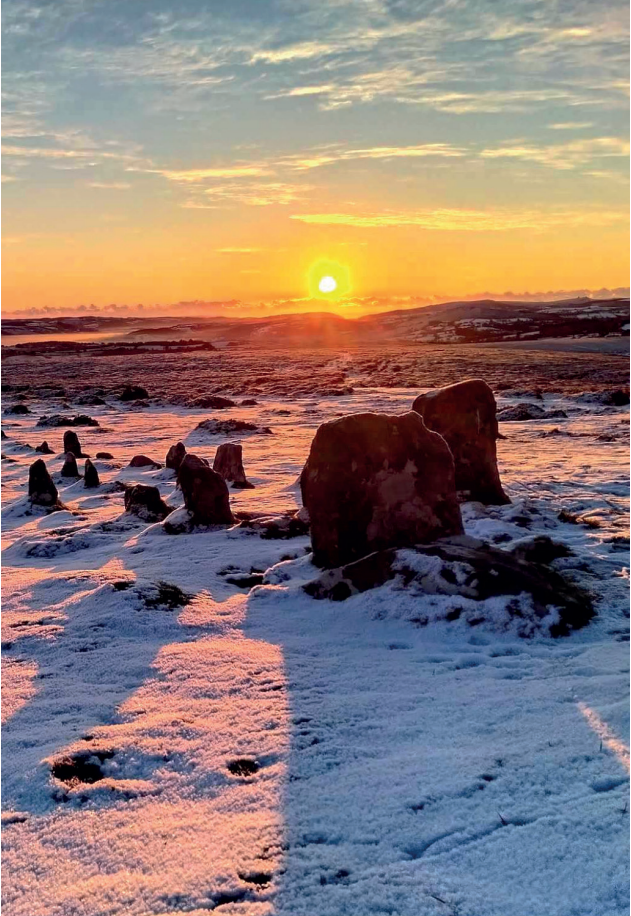
There are lifts, disabled facilities and step-free access throughout the Museum.

FURTHER ENQUIRIES

membership@torquaymuseum.org

   
Torquay Museum Society is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). Registered Charity Number 1161126.

TORQUAY MUSEUM SOCIETY PUBLIC LECTURES JANUARY - APRIL 2026



“Sunrise at Triple Stone Row”
See inside for further details of this lecture on 25th March

**Every Tuesday and Wednesday
10.45am - 12 noon
in the Pengelly Theatre**
Torquay Museum Society Members Free of Charge
Non-members £5 payable on the door
(for the lecture only).

JANUARY 2026

TUESDAY 13th

HISTORY OF THE POST OFFICE

Janet Choules

A look at how our postal system developed from pre-Tudor times to the present day, linking institutions, towns, villages and people across Great Britain and beyond.

WEDNESDAY 14th

BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION

Nathan Prescott

Butterfly Conservation in the UK: Landscape Change, Ecological Pressure, and Regional Action.

TUESDAY 20th

BENEATH OUR FEET

Grace Clifford

Based on her exhibition at the museum earlier this summer and using her Geopark home as a lens, Grace looks to shine a light on how the world of science is frequently home to objects and concepts that are undoubtedly works of art... and considers what this could mean for how we communicate and educate.

WEDNESDAY 21st

OPEN FORUM

Our first of two open forums this year gives you an opportunity to provide feedback to the trustees and suggestions for future speakers, groups, etc.

TUESDAY 27th

PILGRIM AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BRIXHAM TRAWLING INDUSTRY

Tim Bunker

The evolution of the iconic Brixham Sailing Trawler and the preservation of the 1895 trawler “Pilgrim of Brixham”.

WEDNESDAY 28th

THE HISTORY OF WINNER STREET, PAIGNTON

Nick Pannell

The story of Torbay’s oldest street from medieval times to the present day.

FEBRUARY

TUESDAY 3rd

WESSEX - AN ANCIENT LANDSCAPE

Dr Chris Davies

Wessex – an ancient landscape. Devon, Dorset, Wiltshire, and Cornwall (Thomas Hardy’s Wessex) as portrayed by artists.

WEDNESDAY 4th

LOVE POTION No 9

Suzanne McConaghy

A light-hearted look at the role of potions, poetry, and other methods of winning and keeping the love of your life.

TUESDAY 10th

WATER FOR TORQUAY

David Hinchliffe

A journey from a time of wells, pumps and cholera to the creation of a chain of reservoirs high on Dartmoor. The return journey to Torquay reveals some intriguing and unexpected stories.

WEDNESDAY 11th

ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRST TORBAY LIFEBOAT STATION

Andrew Medley

2026 marks the 160th anniversary of the establishment of Torbay’s first RNLI lifeboat station. Learn more about the rich history of the RNLI in Torbay – we’ll feature stories of past crew members and their participation in some of the dramatic rescues that have taken place since 1866. And we’ll give an insight into how Torbay RNLI expects to evolve in the next 160 years.

TUESDAY 17th

RESTORING THE BALANCE

Dr Mateo Ruiz

An introduction to the Barn Owl, the effects of changing farming practices, conservation measures for Barn Owls and the work of the Barn Owl Trust. Our speaker illustrates the close links between Barn Owls and people, and shows the environmental consequences of everyday human activities.

WEDNESDAY 18th

THE ROCKS ON MY SHELF

Roger Saunders

A tale of disasters written in the rocks around us, including the ‘oxygen catastrophe’, the Late Major Bombardment on the face of the Moon, and a peculiar tale about Lapis Lazuli.

TUESDAY 24th

PATRON’S LECTURE

AT YOUR CONVENIENCE: TORQUAY’S LAV AFFAIR WITH THE PUBLIC TOILET

Kevin Dixon

We all use them, but we often don’t talk about them! And when we do talk about them, we call them by many different names. What did we do before they were invented, and how did the private and public toilet evolve? At your convenience, do join us at a light-hearted illustrated talk about the history of toilets in Torbay.

WEDNESDAY 25th

DESTINATION UTAH: THE USAAF IN A TYPICAL ENGLISH VILLAGE

Brian Fernley

Featuring Upottery airfield in Devon, this talk illustrates the impact of around 1500 American servicemen taking up residence in a quiet English village. It looks at the views of the local population, the role of the airfield in World War II and the transportation of 1300+ paratroopers to Normandy in preparation for D-Day.

MARCH

TUESDAY 3rd

EYES IN THE SKIES: THE HISTORY AND HOPES OF SPACE TELESCOPES

Dave Norman

An overview of the current and upcoming space-based telescopes, including the James Webb Space Telescope, the Nancy Roman Planet-hunting telescope due for launch in 2026/2027, and others already in the pipeline.

WEDNESDAY 4th

THE ISLES OF SCILLY

Peter Exley

The beautiful Isles of Scilly off the western tip of Cornwall whilst rugged are endowed with a mild microclimate that enables exotic plants to thrive. This talk looks at the remarkable wealth of wildlife and stunning landscapes of Scilly. Peter has worked on the islands and leads tours there every year.

TUESDAY 10th

THE HISTORY OF A HOUSE IN HASTINGS

Jenny Ridd and Dr. Peter Marsden

Jenny and Peter owned a house in Hastings with a romantic Pre-Raphaelite history. Using historical and art records, house exploration and archaeological excavation, they describe how they uncovered the history of the house... and its famous visitors.

WEDNESDAY 11th

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF GALILEO

Bud Martin Budzynski

Keen amateur astronomer, telescope maker & musician Bud Budzynski looks at the less well known sides of the classic astronomer Galileo, using a ‘contemporary’ reporting style.

TUESDAY 17th

AROUND THE WORLD IN PICTURES AND MUSIC

Keith and Janet Choules

Described as a true feast for the senses, the presentation features photographs from Keith and his wife Janet’s extensive travels, complemented by carefully selected music.

WEDNESDAY 18th

OPEN FORUM

Another opportunity to provide feedback to the trustees and suggestions for future speakers, groups, etc.

TUESDAY 24th

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2025

John Walters

Wildlife highlights including the ephemeral hair ice forming, the Golden Horsefly on Dartmoor and Humpback Whale in Cornwall.

WEDNESDAY 25th

DARTMOOR’S STONE CIRCLES AND STONE ROWS

Peter Knight

A local sacred sites tour guide and author of 14 books on sacred sites and ancient wisdom, Peter guides us around Dartmoor’s sacred sites and examines their relationship with their landscape.

TUESDAY 31st

THE AGATHA CHRISTIE STATUE

Elisabeth Hadley

Brixham based sculptor Elisabeth Hadley created the statues of Agatha Christie and her dog, Peter, unveiled in 2025 at Torquay harbour side. She talks to us about her work and the process involved in creating the tribute to the famous crime writer that has become such a focal point for residents and visitors.

APRIL

WEDNESDAY 1st

THE TORBAY CIVIC SOCIETY

David Redman

As co-Chair of Torbay Civic Society, David tells us about its history and activities, including the locations and background for some of the many Blue Plaques placed by the society around the bay

TUESDAY 7th

BUGS TELL TALES... ENTOMOLOGY... INSECTS IN FORENSIC SCIENCE

Dr John Robson

How can insects help with crime investigation? This is an insight into forensic entomology, with an outline of the science and cases where this type of evidence has played a vital part. This is a fairly new discipline although, in fact, the first case was in 1236!

WEDNESDAY 8th

SILVER GUITARS, BOTTLENECKS AND THE BLUES

Stuart Cumberpatch

A journey into the magic and mechanics of resophonic instruments and their influence on American popular music in the 1920s/1930s and beyond.