

Celebrating Bay's champion of arts and sciences

As part of LGBT+ History Month, in the UK celebrated during the month of February, we are sharing a story of Winnaretta Singer, an extraordinary woman who was born into wealth but gave much of it away.

As her surname suggests, Winnaretta was born in 1865 into the family of one of the richest men in the world, Isaac Singer and his second wife Isabella. The Singer family moved from London to Paignton in 1872, where they built their dream house Oldway Mansion. Thanks to her father's fortune gathered during his development of sewing machines, Winnaretta received many privileges and became financially independent as soon as she came of age. Just like her mother, she fell in

VERONIKA VALIGURSKÁ
Torquay Museum

love with the arts, especially music and during her life became a benefactor to many famous artists. At the age of 22, Winnaretta reaffirmed her independence by marrying Prince Louis de Scey-Montbéliard but the marriage was annulled five years later after never being consummated. Only a year later, in 1893, she stepped into a lavender marriage with the 59-year-old Prince Edmond de Polignac, an amateur composer who was gay. Even though it started as a marriage of convenience, Winnaretta and Edmond soon



Isabella Singer with her daughter Winnaretta at the Wigwam, Paignton (PR13968)

became best friends who shared a deep love of music and travelling. Winnaretta was open about her sexual orientation and maintained romantic relationships with married women. In 1894, the Prince and Princess de Polignac established a salon in their mansion in Paris. It soon came to be known as a haven for avant-garde music. After Edmund's death in 1901, Winnaretta used her fortune to invest in the arts even more, supporting artists financially as well as emotionally. Fiercely protective of her friends, she pushed them through their failures and helped them to success. Among the artists she supported were Debussy, Marcel Proust, Igor Stravinsky, Isadora Duncan, Jean Cocteau and Claude Monet to name but a few.



The Singer family home, Oldway Mansion in Paignton (PR10526)

Winnaretta was also a supporter of sciences. She was deeply invested in sending medical help to the soldiers in World War One and even worked with Marie Curie on acquiring medical supplies and converting her friend's limousines into mobile radiology units to help wounded soldiers at the front. She was also a leader in the creation of public housing, specifically focusing on restoring buildings for abused women and their children. During World War Two, Winnaretta moved from France to London where she continued to use her connections to throw charity events. She died in late 1943 during an attack on the city. The legacy of this exceptional woman is carried on through the work of the Fondation Singer-Polignac that organises



Princess Winnaretta de Polignac (PR13969)

international symposiums about science, literature or social topics and awards medals to deserving associations or projects. Winnaretta's niece and namesake Lady Leeds donated one of the Torquay Museum's star objects, an Ancient Egyptian mummified boy and coffin on display in the Explorers' Gallery.

HOME DELIVERIES OF NEWSPAPER & MAGAZINES

(Paignton & Brixham)

Free Delivery charge on grocery deliveries.

Get an extra 10% discount off your grocery delivery with this voucher.

We also stock party supplies, stationery, cards & vape products.

Please call us on **01803 882253** or email us **northfieldnewsstore@outlook.com**



THE LONDON FRYER
EST. 1982

Open 12pm - 9.30pm every day except Sunday 4pm - 9.30pm
(Social distancing rules apply)

Deliveries available online from 5pm - 9pm within a 3 mile radius.

www.londonfryer.co.uk

Thank you to all our customers for their continued support.