



Thomas' Tea Shop sign, currently on display at The Secret Museum exhibition

# Thomas' Tea Shop sign and Anstey's Cove

**Barry Chandler** of Torquay Museum takes a look at items featuring in The Secret Museum exhibition. Today: the Latin sign for Thomas' Tea Shop

**To celebrate The Secret Museum exhibition, we will be writing about a few of our local objects in a little more detail, starting with the Latin sign for Thomas' Tea Shop dated 1869.**

This object connects us to the rather forgotten story of the ownership of Anstey's Cove and the Whidbourne Family.

In the 1860s, the Thomas family set up a tea shop on the beach at Anstey's Cove.

It provided teas and other delights which were advertised in Latin (for the amusement of their rich clientele) on the notice board pictured, translated it reads...

Picnics supplied with hot water and tea

At a nice little house down by the sea

Fresh crabs and lobsters every day

Salmon Peel, sometimes Red Mullet and Grey

The neatest of pleasure boats let out on hire

Fishing tackle as good as you can desire

Bathing machines for ladies are kept

With towels and gowns all quite correct

Thomas is the man who provides everything

And also teaches young people to swim.

In the picture is Johnathan Battersby Thomas standing at the door of his tea shop.

Jonathan's business ran into the early 20th century and was a local landmark until the council decided to follow up its interest in purchasing the cove and the adjoining property in 1922.

The agreement was between Margret Whidbourne and lease holder Jonathan Thomas and according to Ellis, the council paid £7,000 for the property.

At the time of Thomas tea shop,



Johnathan Battersby Thomas standing at the door of his tea shop

Pictures: TORQUAY MUSEUM



Watercolour of Anstey's Cove from 1860 (PR5397)

Anstey's Cove and much of Ilsham was part of the estate of the Rev George Ferris Whidbourne.

Rev Whidbourne died in 1910 and his son, also George Ferris

Whidbourne, - more of this later - died a few years later of wounds he received during the First World War.

While the estate was extensive, two lots of death duties in quick succession left the family in financial difficulties.

The G.F.W Estate was formed to administer the sales for the families concerned, and the council had their chance to purchase Anstey's Cove.

Later, the G.F.W Estate would also sell Oreshore, Leadstone and Thatcher Rock, to the council for a nominal fee on the understanding that they be kept as beauty spots.

The Whidbourne family association to the area went back to the 16th century with Captain Richard Whitbourne of Exmouth who was actually born in Bishopsteignton in 1561.

Richard was a merchant adventurer who sailed extensively in Europe and twice to Newfoundland.

He served under Admiral Lord Howard against the Spanish Armada and was instrumental in

gaining pardons for Newfoundland pirates Peter Easton and Henry Mainwaring from King James I.

Captain Richard spent 30 years cod fishing in the waters of Newfoundland and would eventually govern the colony there at Renews from 1618-1620.

Since that time Devon and Torbay became closely associated with Newfoundland with fish and timber being brought back to Torquay harbour into the mid-19th century.

Richard was eventually knighted and may have died at sea.

How the Ilsham estate was acquired by the family is unknown.

His great grandson, also Richard, married Sarah Ferris in 1733 and from this time the eldest son of the family was always called George Ferris.

This line was eventually broken with the death of George Ferris Whidbourne in 1915.

To visit The Secret Museum exhibition and see the Latin sign, book your tickets through the museum's website.