

Spotlight on volunteers who provide vital support to museum

It is Volunteers Week, a chance to recognise the fantastic contribution volunteers make to our communities and say thank you.

We at Torquay Museum could not achieve what we do without the unwavering support of our volunteer team.

The recent changes to staffing, opening hours and work patterns have underlined that.

The volunteer team undertake a variety of tasks including administration, front of house support in our combined shop and reception, collections management and general maintenance.

Philip King, visitor experience manager at Torquay Museum

There are always opportunities to help - currently we're looking to help front of house and we're developing guided tours; there are opportunities in the museum café too.

Whichever way you offer your time; it contributes to our work and helps us open the museum to the public.

Our volunteers give their time for a variety of reasons: to supplement their CVs, to get experience of the working environment or to get back to it after a lay-off, to explore new interests or just to 'get out of the house'.

Volunteers commit in a variety of ways too - some twice weekly, others once a fortnight.

Occasionally, we barely meet our volunteers because they get involved remotely perhaps because of their work or studies - there's often still a contribution to be made. So, variety really is 'the spice of life'!

Proven to be good for mental health and wellbeing some people come to us after a difficult period in their life - perhaps a bereavement, protracted illness or a period caring for a loved one.

Others want to do something different after retirement, yet others just 'want to give something back'!

Meet Sam, Barbara and Tim, (pictured)... they relocated to Devon from rural Dorset just before Covid struck.

Unusual to have an entire family volunteering together but after lockdown, a period of enforced isolation in a new town and new county they just needed to 'get out and meet people' - volunteering at the museum has certainly helped with that!

Between them, the family have a range of skills and they have put these to good use, initially helping with the maintenance of the building, more recently delivering the new season's



Volunteer Steve keeps an eye on the Museum window boxes, propagating, planting, watering and general maintenance. Credit: TORQUAY MUSEUM



Volunteers Sam, Barbara and Tim.

Credit: TORQUAY MUSEUM

leaflets and importantly engaging with hoteliers and other hosts to help build a relationship between the Museum and those who are providing

accommodation to visitors to the Bay.

If you want to try something different, why not drop me an E-mail philip.king@torquaymuseum.org

Torbay blue plaques: Her Majesty's maritime sundial monument

The blue plaque story this week is a little special as it concerns not our usual 15ins blue plaque but a smaller plaque which may still be viewed if visiting the society's People's Maritime Sundial Monument which is in what was Preston House garden, adjacent to Preston car park on Torbay Road.

The sundial celebrates Her Majesty's Golden Jubilee and the small blue plaque is mounted on the capstone being part of the monument.

The public monument today is seen as public art and although installed to celebrate the Queen's Golden Anniversary of 2002 - being 50 years as monarch - we did not install it until 2006.

Today, my feature is particularly appropriate as, of course, we are this year celebrating Her Majesty's platinum jubilee - 70 years as monarch.

It was early in my chairmanship of Torbay Civic Society that I became determined to leave a

The stories behind Torbay's blue plaques by Ian Handford, chairman of Torbay Civic Society. This week: Her Majesty's maritime sundial monument

monument of some form to celebrate Her Majesty's long reign in perpetuity.

In November 2002, we had arranged for the society to have two new trees, complete with two new zinc galvanised 5ft 6ins tall ornamental tree guards, which were manufactured by local firm Oak Tree Forge Paignton, to be formally erected on the front patio of Torquay Natural History Museum in celebration of our own silver anniversary that year, which luckily had coincided with Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth's Golden Jubilee celebration.

Our event was attended by Prince Andrew and this became the trigger for my idea to leave a memorial to

Her Majesty, in another part of Torbay being a perpetual reminder of the long service our Queen had given to the country.

The Prince was attending another function that day when I learned he was willing to formally 'dig-in' the trees we had donated, which we hoped would help make the front patio of the museum a little more attractive.

In fronting the event on behalf of Her Majesty, the Prince - in the presence of the Mayor of Torbay, Councillor Mrs H Buckpitt, museum president Michael Thompson, Torbay Civic Society president Ena Hocking and myself - completed the two-tree dig.

Now with my idea in kind, all I

had to do was find a suitable place in Torbay to carry out my idea of installing a public memorial to Queen Elizabeth. Months of searching and meetings eventually saw the society agreeing the site offered, which was the lawn/garden area of what had been Preston House on Torquay Road, Paignton.

Now the commemorative memorial itself was investigated and with various ideas put forward, including the Jubilee Sails originally destined for Quarry Bend and a public maze, we eventually chose the concept submitted by Spencer Field Larcombe of Larcombe Foundry Works Harbertonford, whose drawings of a two-metre high metal sundial he would manufacture was chosen.

It took us three years to raise the necessary funding for the memorial and granite stand, plus the roundels of granite needed as hourly markings around the lawn to catch the shadow of the sun and complete the sundial's purpose.

The stone work was carried out by Messrs Williams and Triggs (Monumental Masons) of Newton

Abbot who used a unique type of granite sourced for us.

So it was that on October 6, 2006, the society's People's Maritime Sundial was finally installed at Preston Gardens with a small plaque placed on the capstone stating: 'Golden Jubilee Maritime Memorial to celebrate the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II on 2nd June 2002'.

The event was officially attended by Chairman of Torbay Council, John Dunn, and the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Devon, Roy Barlow, plus officers of Torbay Civic Society.

After the ceremony, the large audience took refreshment at Preston Conservative Club nearby when some history was presented.

That evening a special dinner was arranged for society members at Livermead House Hotel in Torquay.

A multi-page history of the society in full colour may be obtained by sending three second class stamps plus a stamped addressed envelope to Torbay Civic Society Office No 1, 4 Palace Avenue, Paignton TQ3 3HA.