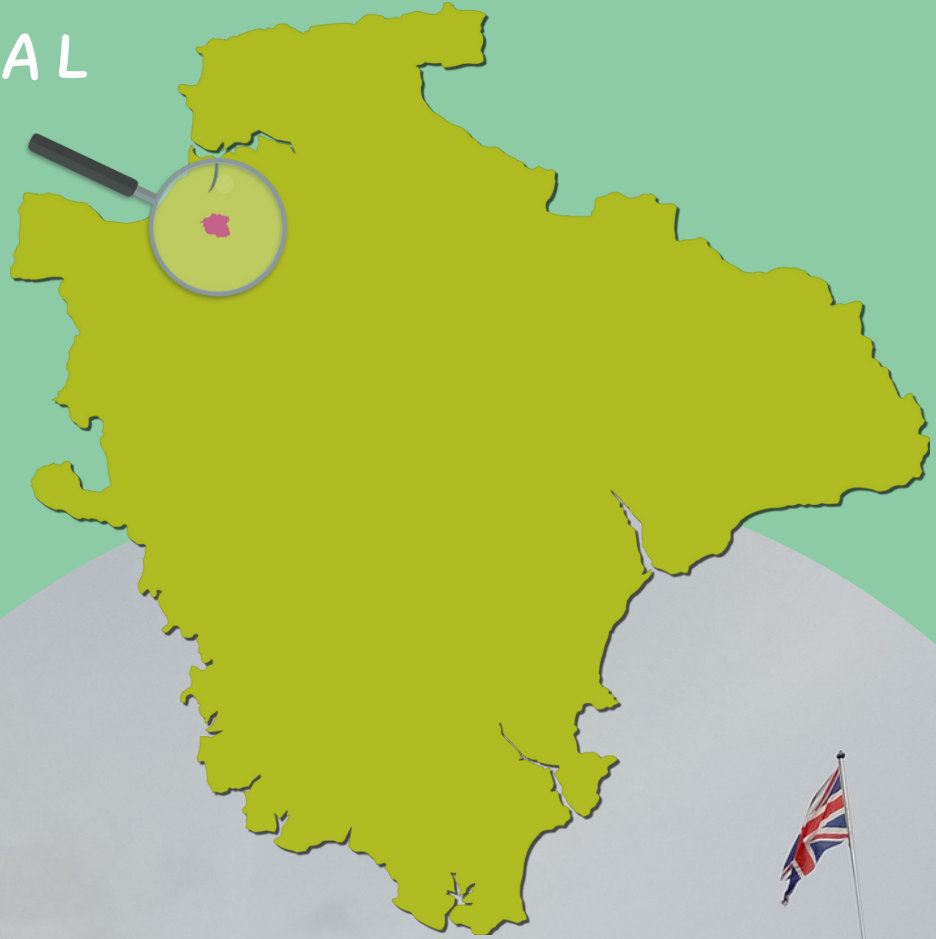


Great Torrington

PROFILE OF ASSOCIATIONAL LIFE

Completed: Oct 2022



Devon
Community
Foundation
Giving more locally

CONTENTS

• What is a PAL?	2
• Introduction.....	3
• Community Events.....	4
• Demographics	6
• Public Services and Transport	8
• Town Council	10
• Communication	10
• Education	12
• Environment	12
• Community Hubs	14
• Community Groups	15
• Industry and Routes to Employment	23
• Community Comments & Opportunities	25

What is a PAL?

A Profile of Associational Life, or PAL, provides a snapshot of what the social fabric in a place-based community looks and feels like.

Communities operate in networks of public buildings and spaces, formal and statutory organisations, informal community-based societies and clubs, workplaces, reciprocity, mutual obligation, trust and the social cohesion that comes from history of a place and how the people who live there do things together. PALs map out what is available in a community and collects stories and feelings from people who live or work there.

PALS are compiled by the DCF Community Insight Team whose job it is to develop networks and connections to better support people in Devon. Contact: insights@devoncf.com

Community
Insight
Team

POSITIVE
PEOPLE



Devon
Community
Foundation
Giving more locally

INTRODUCTION

Great Torrington is a town in northeast Torridge, it had a recorded population of 5714 on Census Day 2011. It is positioned on a Hill with steep drops on all sides. It was referred to as 'Toriton' in the 1086 Domesday survey of Devon and recorded was the presence of a castle. An earth mound is visible today which was probably part of the Keep and the Bailey lies under the bowling green. Neolithic and Iron Age remains have also been found showing that people have lived in the area for thousands of years.

The right to hold fairs in the town was confirmed by Royal Charter in 1554 but they are said to have been held there from as far back as 1220. In the twelfth century, Toriton was designated a Borough under the control of local Barons; at the time a thriving agricultural center with people travelling to trade at the large weekly markets.

Through the Middle Ages the wool industry thrived but by the 18th century glove making was the town's main employment. Followed by factory-based industry, canal work & transport, the railway, dairy farming and an abattoir.

In 1646 the town played its part in the English Civil War when the Parliamentarians defeated Lord Hopton and his Royalist army. The Battle of Torrington marked the end of Royalist resistance in the West Country.

In Victorian times young girls would get up early on May Day and wash their faces in the pools, believing this would make them beautiful. Lady Wash, a stream that runs down Castle Hill was named after this ritual.

Due to its easy access to green spaces, low levels of pollution, outlets encouraging health-related behaviours and good health services research from the University of Liverpool in 2019 concluded that Great Torrington was the 'healthiest place to live in the UK'.



Introduction Contd.

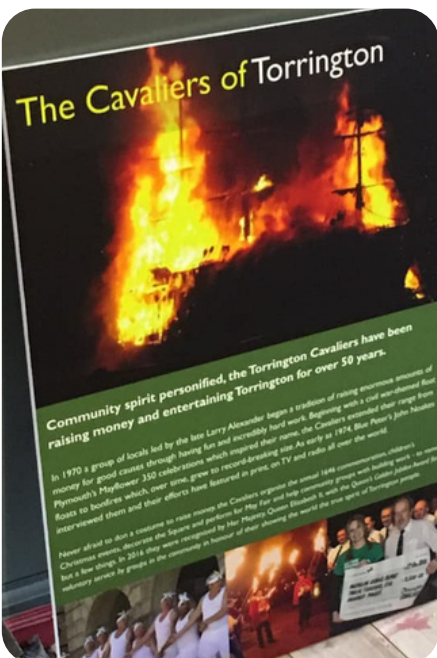
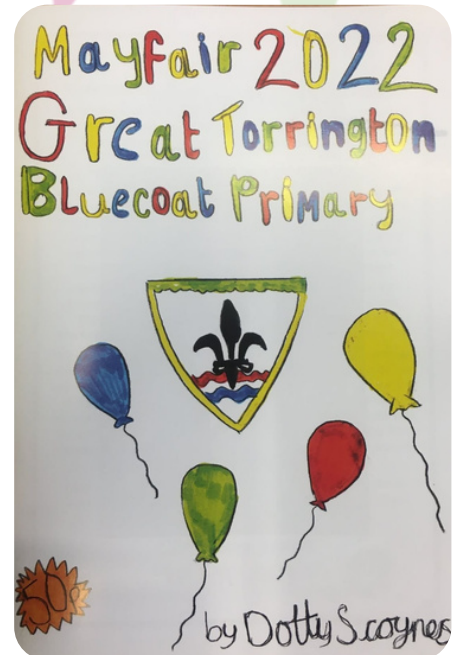
Today it is famous for its Mayfair, Cavalier Bonfires and the Dartington Crystal Factory. Dartington Crystal continues to be a large employer in the town and is the only major working glass factory in the UK. In recent years, the town has also been recognised for its community volunteering, it is said to have one of the most active volunteering communities in the UK. It is a dementia-friendly town, has a Fair-Trade group and is working towards plastic-free status.

Surrounding areas include:

Frithelstock, Monkleigh, Weare Giffard, Huntshaw, Stevenstone, High Bullen, St Giles in the Wood, Kingscott, Little Torrington, Taddipport, Langtree, Merton, Winswell, Ebberley, Dolton.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

The Mayfair is a much talked about annual event and celebration. A local Councillor told us 'you can't talk about Great Torrington, without mentioning the spectacle that is The Great Torrington Mayfair'. The first Thursday in May is Mayfair, an annual festival believed to date back to 1554 in Torrington. The town square is shut to vehicles, so that much dancing, music and games can be played. Children dance around a maypole set up in the town square. The crowning of the May Queen is performed and there is also a Carnival which takes place on the Saturday evening. Information about the Mayfair can be found on the Mayfair & Carnival Facebook page.



The Cavaliers create a huge bonfire spectacle every year, usually in August. They are world renown. The construction of the themed centre piece takes in excess of 2 years to build and the attention to detail is said to be amazing. On the night of the burning there is music and a large fireworks display, themed to music. The display in 2021 raised £80,000 for charity. They invite smaller charities and good

Community Events Contd.

causes to apply to the bonfire fund. Applications are made to the Secretary.

The North Devon Show is an annual event which takes place in nearby Umberleigh and is appreciated by those living in Torrington. It is run by the North Devon Agricultural Society.

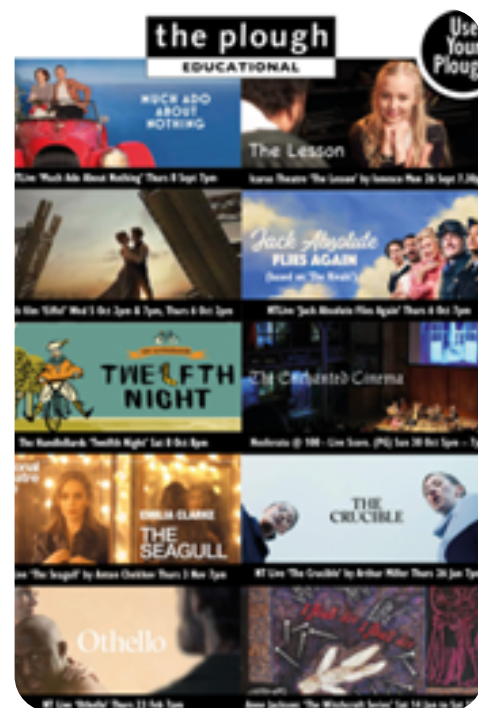
Visit Great Torrington lists attractions, special events and what to do when out and about.



The Town Hall have various events going on including lunch clubs, wedding fayres and a disco. There is a Knit & Natter group, an xmas fair, a Carers Mix & Mingle group and a Luncheon Club run by volunteers, to name a few. One of the trustees of the hall described it as a community space for all. The Great Torrington Town Hall has a Facebook page about current events.

The Plough Arts Centre is a long-standing community art and entertainment venue in the town, they have a

What's on Page for events. It has hosted some high-profile artists over the years and holds a variety of events including cinema, music, workshops and talks. It aims to provide opportunities for all people to experience a wide and vibrant range of high-quality arts events both as audience and participants. They say their mission is to 'entertain, inspire and educate'. They offer an annual programme of film, live events, exhibitions, workshops and educational outreach for people of all ages, interests and abilities. The organisation has been going for more than 40 years. they also have a TPAT Facebook page where you can keep up to date with events.



Castle Hill Community Centre runs a variety of events in the community hall including yoga, family classes, lego club, pop up theatre, fork and feast events, comedy club, circle dancing and many more. Torrington Library is in the same building and runs various drop-in activities and events.

Community Events Contd.

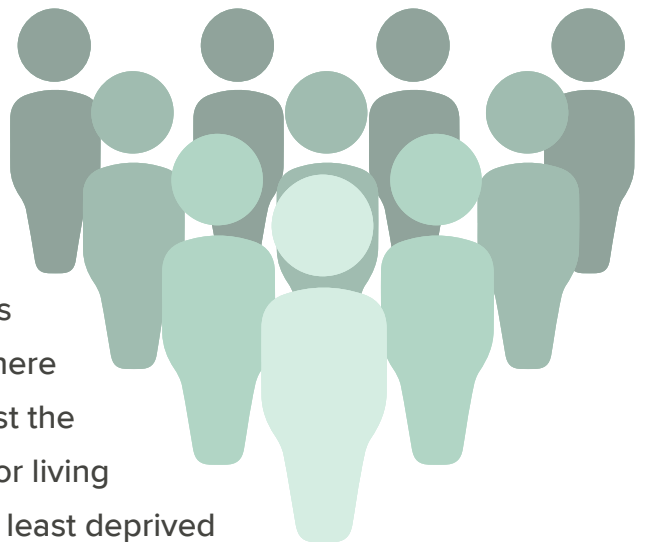
One Great Torrington has an active events page listing music, activities and workshops.

The Tarka Valley Railway runs regular events and open weekends.



DEMOGRAPHICS

Great Torrington (5566 IMD) doesn't rank as low as Bideford (1897 IMD) in the Index of Multiple of Deprivation (IMD). According to dclgapps.com In 2019 the Lower Super Output Area of Torrington was ranked at 11,759 out of 32,844 LSOAs in England; where 1 is the most deprived LSOA. Torrington was amongst the 20% least deprived neighborhoods in the country. For living environment deprivation, it scores amongst the 50% least deprived neighborhoods in the country. Income deprivation affecting children was amongst the 30% most deprived neighborhoods and 50% most deprived for income affecting older people.



Torrington is made up of 22.6% settled offline communities who undertake only limited engagement with the Internet, 32.1% digital seniors have limited or no interaction with the Internet. and 11.3% passive and uncommitted users have limited or no interaction with the Internet.

Demographics Contd.

Economic activity in the area was 30.4% which is lower than the Devon average of 31.3% in the 2011 census. Unemployment was 4.6% which is higher than the Devon average at the time of 2.8%. There were 3.6% of people in Torrington registered as sick or disabled which is similar to the Devon average of 3.4%. In Devon 'no access' to a car was at 17.4% and 44.2% of people had access to one car compared with 20.9% 'no access' to a car and 48.7% who had access to one car.

As of 2022, the crime rate in Great Torrington is 62% lower than the South West as a whole and 11% lower than the England, Wales & Northern Ireland overall figure. In total there were 459 crimes recorded in the Great Torrington area between July 2021 and July 2022. The overall crime rate in Great Torrington in 2021 was 36 crimes per 1,000 people. This is 44% lower than the Devon rate of 52 per 1,000 residents. The most common crimes in Great Torrington are violence and sexual offences, 117 offences were recorded during 2021. This is higher than 2020's figure of 95 offences. In July 2022 the Torrington Library service bus was destroyed by arsonists and there is local concern about a rise in arson attacks.

Facts & Figures: Great Torrington

IMD ranking: 5566 out of 12382

Working age poverty: 9.2%

No qualifications: 26.8%

Social housing: 12.6%

Lone parents: 26.7%

Ethnic diversity: 2.7%

Unemployed men: 5.1%

Unemployed women: 4%

PUBLIC SERVICES & TRANSPORT

The Town Council neighborhood plan mentions public transport and congestion as key issues. There are regular bus services between Great Torrington, Bideford and Barnstaple. However, it is limited in respect of employment accessibility, evening travel, and connection to the outlying villages and regional centres are infrequent. Improved connections to other centres would help reduce car dependency, reduce carbon emissions and improve people's quality of life. Improved cycling and pedestrian links could further support the enhancement of the town's tourism role.

Until the line was closed in 1984, you could take a train all the way from Waterloo to Torrington. In 2008 volunteers began to reinstate the old rail branch from Torrington as far as Bideford. The track follows along the Tarka trail. In 2015 the Railway group became a CIO with an aim of re-instating and re-opening a section of the original railway. The station site is now home to the Puffing Billy Cafe, a cycle hire shop and the Tarka Valley Railway. The Tarka Trail is 180 miles long and can be accessed from the former Southern Railways station at Great Torrington. From there it is possible to walk or cycle north to Bideford, or south along the line of the old railway track. During the summer cycles may be hired at the old railway station



Torrington is served by 43 local bus services mostly operated by Stagecoach South West. Some only operate one way and a number are weekly only service.

Belle Vue Airfield is a single runway airfield about 2.5 miles north east of Great Torrington. It is for private aviation only.



Torrington Post Office is in the process of moving into the Tourist Information Centre. It has been unable to find suitable premises in the town. Torrington



Public Services & Transport Contd.

Library is also in the same building as the TIC. It is open 4 days a week, has a children's area and offers free Wi-Fi and computer access. It also has printing, copying and scanning facilities and offers regular children's activities and hosts numerous local reading groups.

There are defibrillators at the football ground and one on the high street.

Torridge Volunteer Cars

There is a Fire Station is based on Calf Street, EX38 8EG.





TOWN COUNCIL

Great Torrington Town Council has a Facebook page with up-to-date local information and has good links with the group One Great Torrington. It has a directory, finance information and a section about the Mayfair. It also has a Neighborhood Plan outlining policies on Environment, Housing, Transport and Infrastructure, and Employment.

Torridge District Council has an up-to-date website with information and advice about the area.



COMMUNICATION

The Crier is an online Directory of local services and information. It includes health, education and voluntary services.

Great Torrington (and Rural) Covid 19 Mutual Aid and Support Facebook page still operates as a mutual aid support group.

Great Torrington Talk has an active page where you can post notices and adverts for events in and around the Torrington area.

One Great Torrington is a website about Great Torrington. It shares information about

Communication Contd.

activities, events, local shops and restaurants as well as information about the history of the town.

The Great Torrington Community Page is used by the community to share all sorts of general information.

Local radio is provided by The Voice, a station based in nearby Barnstaple that broadcasts across North Devon on FM and DAB. Most of the content on the station is locally produced.

The local newspaper is the North Devon Journal also based in Barnstaple. The Western Morning News is a regional paper widely available. Most households receive a copy of the North Devon Gazette every week.

Great Torrington Facebook group is a group to add news and events for Torrington, a central place for all local news to be shared.

Great Torrington Chats is a group where people of Great Torrington and surrounding areas can chat about things, advertise events, ask for advice and seek recommendations.

There are noticeboards all over the town, notably inside and outside the Library, at the Town Hall, outside The Plough Art Centre and in the Pannier Market.



EDUCATION

Great Torrington Bluecoat C of E Primary School has a Facebook page and a website.

Great Torrington School has a website and a Facebook page Great Torrington School. It's based on Calvesford Road, EX38 7DJ, tel. 01805 623531.



Little Frogs Pre-School

Learn Devon runs classes and courses at the Town Hall.



ENVIRONMENT

Great Torrington is positioned within a rural landscape, overlooking the Torridge River valley. Torrington Commons has 365 acres of land and 20 miles of footpaths. It has belonged to the people of Torrington since 1194 and is now managed by volunteers. It has woodland, rivers and wild meadows and they are home to rare butterflies, flora and fauna.

The Royal Horticultural Society Rosemoor Gardens are situated just outside the town. There is a winter garden, a bog garden, a rose garden, a cottage garden and a fruit and vegetable garden. It also has parkland and is owned by the Royal Horticultural Society.



Environment Contd.

Rack Park is a green space near to the center of town with places to sit and views across the valley.

There is a Torrington in Bloom group

The Rolle Canal opened in 1827 to help transport clay, lime and other commodities between the boats on the tidal river at Landcross and the lime kilns, clay pits and farms around.



The Tarka Trail follows the River Torridge and offers access to cycling and walking trails. There are many biodiverse habitats in the area including estuary salt marsh and mudflats, oak woodland, hazel coppice, hedges, ponds, streams, ditches, meadows and Culm grasslands.

Wildlife walks and possible Otter sightings near at this Devon Wildlife Trust reserve near Great Torrington.

Castle Hill Community Centre has a lovely Physic Garden which is managed by volunteers. They also grow vegetables which are sometimes used in the community cafe.



Environment Contd.

Electric car charging and recycling takes place in the Castle Hill car park.



COMMUNITY HUBS

The Plough Arts Centre is a well-used community hub offering activities, education, volunteering and social opportunities.

The Town Hall is available for anyone in the community to hire. It is used for baby showers, meetings and all sorts of other gatherings. Booking enquiries to admin@greattorrington-townhall.org.

The Castle Community Centre is home to the Tourist Information Centre, the Library, the Town Council, Citizens Advice and a cafe, surrounded by gardens which are open for the enjoyment

of all. There is also a large community hall which can be hired.

The Physic Garden volunteers occasionally collaborate with Rosemoor and have up to 30 engaged volunteers.



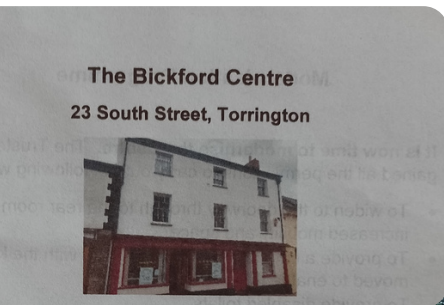
Torrington Conservative Club

The Bickford Centre is a hub for over 60s in the town. Providing a welcoming space on a daily basis. They have tea and coffee on offer

Community Hubs Contd.

and comfy chairs for people to sit on. Older adults are encouraged to pop in for a cup of tea and a biscuit. It is run by volunteers.

There are various churches that offer opportunities including Torrington Methodist Church, St Michael and all Angel church and the Church of England parish church.



COMMUNITY GROUPS

Arts, culture and heritage

The hand blown glass, Dartington Crystal, made in Great Torrington is famous throughout the world.

The Plough Arts Centre is a big part of Great Torrington life. It has been operating for 40 years and has seen performances by world renowned musicians and artists.

The Heritage Museum contains many local history displays and there is the Civil War exhibition adjacent to the town car park. It is a free museum run entirely by volunteers. The museum has a collection of objects reflecting the diverse history of the ancient market town. Most exhibits have been donated by local people over the years, resulting an eclectic collection of objects and documents which really bring Torrington's people and stories to life.



Community Groups Contd.

Arts, culture and heritage contd.

Torrington silver band practices in the Howe Concert Hall and have been going for more than 70 years.

There are many historical and cultural features of Great Torrington. Including remains of a Medieval Castle on the south side of the town, on what is now called Castle Hill. The original castle was built in the 12th century. There is a Waterloo Monument obelisk erected in 1818 by "the ladies of Great Torrington" to commemorate the Battle of Waterloo. The church of St Michael and All Angels houses one of Britain's finest church organs built by 'Father' Henry Willis, regarded as the foremost Victorian organ builder. In the 14th Century Taddipport housed a leper colony, a local artist has created a museum.

In terms of literature and music Henry Williamson's classic novel "Tarka the Otter" was set on the River Torridge a mile downstream from Great Torrington. Glenn Miller, the American big-band trombonist, arranger, composer, and bandleader, was supposed to have been a regular performer in the 'Drill Hall' (now the Plough Arts Centre) while stationed at the local Winkleigh aerodrome during the war.

There are some History and Heritage websites and web pages including One Great Torrington, Devon Perspectives, Torrington and district historical society and The Great Torrington History Page.

Community support and development

Great Torrington Cavaliers organise charity fundraising events throughout the year. In 2022 the burning of the Mayflower bonfire raised an incredible £80,000 for charity. A share of which went four named charities – Devon Air Ambulance; North Devon Hospice; Guide Dogs for the Blind Association; and Torrington Commons Conservators – with the rest going into a pot that smaller local charities and good causes that can be applied to.

One Great Torrington has a fantastic and comprehensive website bringing together the town and informing people about things to do, events, history and heritage.



Community Groups Contd.

Dementia

There is information about how Great Torrington is a Dementia friendly town [here](#).

The Secret Memorial Garden behind the Castle Hill building in Sydney House Car Park will be designated Silent Space on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons between the hours of 1:30 and 3:30pm each week. The Dementia Friendly Community working group hopes that by designating the Secret Memorial Garden as a Silent Space on these days, people living with dementia and their carers will find respite from the busy world we all live in.

The Great Torrington Memory Cafe takes place at the Meeting Room, Torrington Methodist Church, EX38 8AL. It happens on the 2nd Thursday of each month from 10.30 to 12.30.

The Plough Art Centre offers Dementia friendly screenings of films.

Disability

Home Library Service offered by Torrington Library for those unable to get to the library.

The Plough offers SEN opportunities as a part of their youth outreach programme.

The Sensory Outreach Service operates from the Bickford Centre, South Street EX38 8AA first Weds every second month from 11am to 3pm.



Disadvantaged/low income

Great Torrington Foodbank Opening times are: 10am - 12noon on Tuesdays at the Baptist Church; Saturdays at Castle Hill Building (above Library) Phone: Shirley Bere: 01805 623887 or Dave Martin: 01805 623175.

Great Torrington School Second Hand Uniform has created a second hand page for parents and carers of Great Torrington School. Families wishing to sell



Community Groups Contd.

Disadvantaged/low income contd.

something pre-loved can upload items and include whether you are selling or simply giving it away.

Torridge CVS (TTVS) seeks to improve lives and build healthier and more resilient communities.

Domestic violence

Torridge District Council has information and advice on the website about how to access support.

Food

There is a Facebook page for the Pannier Market, EX38 8HE. Co-operative Food has a shop in the town and there is a Lidl, a Spar, a Morrisons and an M&S.



Health and wellbeing

Torrington Community Hospital is based on Calf Street, EX38 7BJ.

There are social prescribers support people with a range of social, emotional and practical needs can make a really positive difference to wellbeing.

Torrington Health Centre GP Surgery is open Monday to Friday and is situated on New Road, EX38 8EL. The telephone number is 01805 622247. Castle Gardens Surgery GP Surgery, EX38 8EU, telephone 01805 623222. The surgery is open Monday to Friday, see website for up-to-date open hours.

Community Groups Contd.

Health and wellbeing contd.

Lloyds pharmacy is at number 1 the High Street and is open Monday to Saturday, tel. 01805 622174.

There is a task group called Transforming Torrington Together set up to monitor a new model of health and social care services on the NHS website.

Torrington District Council have Mental Health support and advice on their website.

Housing & homelessness

North Devon Council have information about who to contact if you find yourself homeless.

Great Torrington profile - Communities (devon.gov.uk)

The average sold price for a property in Torrington in the last 12 months was £258,839.



Great Torrington Town & Lands charity own a variety of residential properties ranging from ultra-modern to listed buildings to Almshouse flats. Several well-known commercial properties are also owned by the Trust together with a number of plots of land including many well-known such as The Leper Fields, Rack Park Gardens & Donnacroft.

Men

Great Torrington Men's Shed has been going for approximately 7 years and has up to 20

volunteers who regularly come to the workshop. They work with all sorts of projects including antiques, repairs, utilitarian items and they also create bespoke recycling boxes. The men also work on their own projects. The building they are



Community Groups Contd.

Men contd.

now based in has recently been refurbished and rebuilt by the team. It is owned by St Michael church and they were able to save a huge amount of money by being able to do the building work themselves.

Older people

The Bickford Centre offers a welcoming space for over 60s to pop in for tea and coffee. There is no website, but it is opposite the Castle Hill carpark and is well known to the local community for older adults.



Sports and Leisure

There is a Golf club in Great Torrington has juniors, ladies, mens and veterans groups that play. It is a member's club.

Torrington Bowling Club established in 1645 and sited in the old castle grounds, is believed to be the third oldest bowling club in England.

Torridgeside AFC was founded in 1989 and today it has 2 adult and 8 youth teams.

Torrington Sports Hall is on Hatchmoor Road, EX38 7DJ. It has a Sports Hall, a Health and Fitness Suite and a Synthetic Turf Pitch. It has disabled access.



**Torrington
Football Club**

Community Groups Contd.

Sports and Leisure cont.

Torrington swimming pool is on School Lane, EX38 7AJ. It is open every day of the week and offers fitness classes as well as Badminton.

Torrington RFC is based at Donnacraft Playing Fields, Hatchmoor Road, EX38 7BT, tel. 01805 624677. The club was established in 1985.

Wado Nrui Martial Arts Karate sessions take place on Holwill Drive, Torrington EX38 7LQ, tel. 01805624568.



Function Fitness is based at the Eric Palmer Community Centre on Castle St, EX38 8EZ. It offers classes, personal training and nutrition advice sessions.

Torrington AAC - Running Club

Veterans

One local we spoke to said that Remembrance Day is a big thing in Torrington, it brings people together. There is a British Legion on 38 South Street, EX38 8AB.



Volunteering

Great Torrington is said to have one of the most active volunteering communities in the United Kingdom.

The Castle Community Centre is mainly staffed by volunteers and offers a range of volunteering opportunities including gardening, maintenance, administration, marketing, information and digital media. They are always interested to hear from people who wish to become Trustees.

There is some information about volunteering opportunities on the St Michaels website.



Community Groups Contd.

Volunteering contd.

The Friends of Torrington Commons are always looking for volunteers to look after and litter pick on the Commons.

There is information on the Devon Connect website about North Devon and Torridge opportunities.

Torridge CVS can help with Voluntary & Community Support opportunities.



The Tarka Valley Railway Station often advertises volunteer opportunities on their Facebook page. Including those in HR, Insurance, Carpenters, engineers, Welders and others. It is an opportunity for like minded individuals to meet up on a regular basis, share their skills with people who become friends and give an and mental activity. info@tarkavalleyrailway.co.uk

The Plough Arts Centre are always on the lookout for volunteers and has a variety of roles to take part in. From marketing and publicity, stewarding, cafe work, gallery assistance and film projection.

The Town Hall continue to look for 'Town Hall Titans' to support with meeting and greeting guests giving individual tours, marketing/administration and organising events.

Youth and children

You can find information about the 1st Torrington Rainbows, Torrington Brownies, 3rd Torrington Brownies, 1st Torrington Guides on the Town Council website.

1st Torrington Scout

The Youth Genesis trust has a Facebook page and a website. The Torrington branch runs from Torrington Methodist church hall on Friday's from 6pm to 8pm. Ages 11-17.



Community Groups Contd.

Youth and children contd.

The Plough youth Theatre and Outreach page includes opportunities about making a Play In A Day - a workshop for 8-12 years bringing a story to life with an end of day performance. It has an after school club in Drama and Dance as well as music and craft. Other opportunities include Performance Poetry, Arts Week, sensory story telling workshops for children with additional needs.



INDUSTRY & ROUTES TO EMPLOYMENT

Torrington has long been a factory town. In the nineteenth century it was a centre of the glove making industry. The major employer today is Dartington Crystal and the shops in the town centre also provide a source of employment. Most of the shops are locally owned. Large factories deserted the town in recent years including the meat factory after a fire, and the milk factory which also caught fire has moved its production elsewhere. Various converted and purpose-built care homes in the town also provide a significant source of employment.

In the late 20th century the town suffered a major collapse of its manufacturing employment; increased commuting out for employment and changing shopping habits led to a reduction in its retail sector and a sense that the town was dying. More recently, economic regeneration has seen the growth

Industry & Routes to Employment Contd.

of small to medium-size businesses including some hi-tech operations; recognition of the value of independent shops in an accessible rural setting; and constructive efforts by local Councils and the community to make the town a better place to live, work and visit. In 2006, Tesco sought to open a large store in the town; however, this was opposed by many locals and the planning application was rejected.

Most people in the area today work in retail, wholesale or manufacture (19.3%), followed by health & social care positions (14.5%), accommodation and food (10.1%), education (9.5%) and manufacture (8.9%).

The Town Council Neighborhood Plan sets out a policy for addressing Employment in the area. It includes ideas to establish the town as a home for niche businesses, developing tourism services and opportunities for care and personal support services which are in demand in the area.



The derelict Creamery

There is a Torrington Work club that has an active Facebook page sharing opportunities and information about employment.

The Fire Station offers opportunities for training and employment and is an employer of local people, it had a recruitment banner outside the station when we visited.



Industry & Routes to Employment Contd.

Castle Hill Work hub describes itself as a vibrant, colourful co-working space at the heart of Great Torrington.

Torrington has a small brewery called Clearwater Brewery and Dartington Crystal still offers the town employment opportunities.

Quite a few of the people we met had had some involvement with RHS Rosemoor gardens. It offers worked based training, apprenticeships, professional work placements and horticultural practice diplomas. Find out more about opportunities for working with the RHS / RHS Gardening here.

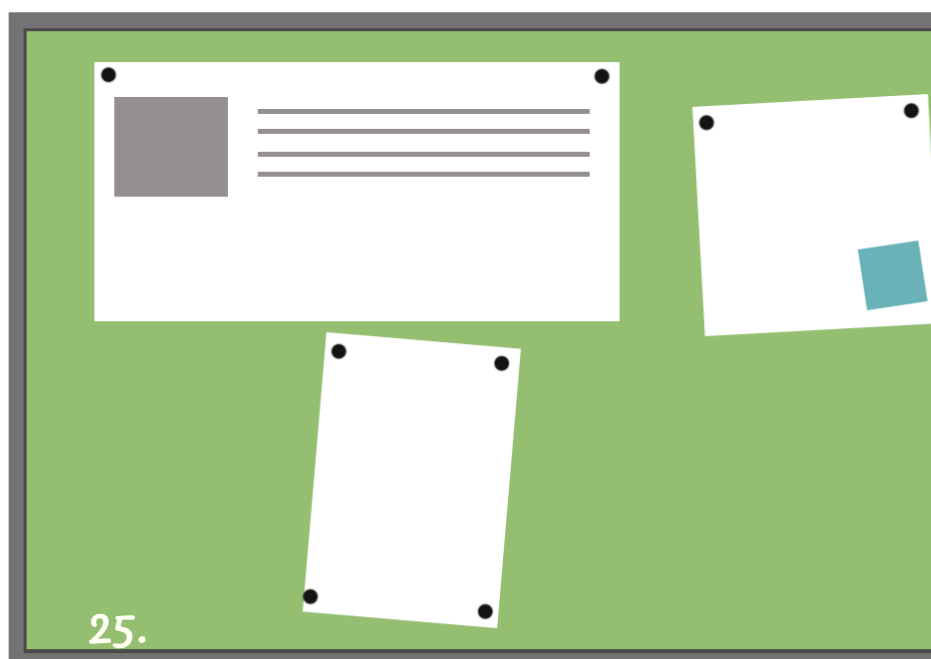
Learn Devon has a good presence in the town and offers training opportunities.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS & OPPORTUNITIES

In 2019 Liverpool University research described Great Torrington as 'the healthiest places to live in the UK'. With relatively low levels of pollution, good access to parks, green space and health services, indeed many people did describe it as a lovely place to live' with a 'great community spirit.'

Retired head gardener for Rosemoor Gardens said he knew when he moved to Torrington that 'there was no need to look any further. The community is very diverse, it has a mix of people. It is creative and a great place to live and grow in'. He went on to say that his children 'had a great experience at the schools and have gone on to be successful, well-rounded people'.

The town has many independent shops and people are proud of them. In 2006 it won a campaign to stop Tesco moving into the town,



Community Comments & Opportunities Contd.

concerns about the affect this large shop would have on local business drove the petition. The existing neighborhood plan outlines plans to preserve the independent shops and aims to avoid becoming a clone town.



The community are grateful for the Commons and work hard to maintain them. They surround the town and offer 20 miles of green paths, walks and wildlife. Many people we met mentioned the health benefits of access to the Commons. One man we spoke with, camera around his neck, was off to look for adders basking in the sun. It is a haven that surrounds the town but ultimately, said the Beadle of the town, it restricted the town's parameters.

There are strong roots in community arts with dancing, music and carnival being at the heart of annual celebrations. The Plough has been a valued community hub for more than 40 years and you can see the positive influence it has on the town. Many community groups collaborate with them on projects and many enjoy the exhibitions, cinema and theatre showings it has to offer. The Cavaliers also bring an annual spectacle to the area by building incredibly creative bonfires.

Tourism is growing with and campervans can stay overnight for a fee in the car park. When we visited there were clearly tourists staying in the town this way. The neighborhood plan mentions that there are plans to develop more accommodation in town for tourists which could in turn support local business in future.



Some people spoke of concerns for the future around rising costs of energy and the worry this causes for maintaining some of the older buildings in the area. Some felt that the community hubs and groups in the town groups although able to collaborate well together, still sometimes have their own agendas and occasionally work as if they are 'protective of their own'.

The Post Office was unable to find permanent premises

Community Comments & Opportunities Contd.

in the town, so it has been decided to temporarily move into the Tourist Information Centre to keep the service going. More than 800 people a week use the Post Office in the town. There was concern that the franchise was too expensive for someone to take it on here.

Although there are relatively low levels of crime (36 per 1000 people) compared to the Devon wide average (52 per 1000 people). Some people said they felt unsafe at night near the pubs and the carpark, knew of drug common use and would not walk in some alleyways alone. Others expressed concern for the large, abandoned old Creamery building on the outskirts of the town where there have been many reported arson attacks. The site is due for development but is currently derelict and an 'eye sore'. Anecdotally one man told us that two young people had died there by climbing right to the top of the building and falling/ jumping off whilst on drugs. There have been other arson attacks in the town which are thought to be linked. Notably the destruction of a large mobile library van which was a lifeline for many and has had to be replaced. It was said by one man that 2022 was a bad summer for anti-social behavior and theft. There was a drug raid on crack cocaine dealers and thefts from the church. We noticed a sign saying that the church was now locked for the foreseeable future at all times unless there is a service, this is due to these thefts.



Bickford Centre which offers fantastic support for older adults but does not maintain a website for information.

As the university research showed Great Torrington is a relatively healthy, happy place to live. It does have challenges and limitations, but the Town Council neighborhood plan is finding

Recent consultations have focused the challenges of maintaining and enhancing a sustainable community alongside the quality of the natural, built and historic environment. Residents in the surrounding parishes have a high dependency on Great Torrington for key services such as education and healthcare and this puts pressure on services. In 2011 10% of the population were 65 – 74 years old with the average age being 41 years old. There are still a lot of settled offline communities, this is reflected in the



Community Comments & Opportunities Contd.

ways to address them. The town intends to develop its tourism, independent businesses and its care and support services which should support the local businesses and the local people to thrive and grow in the longer term.

