

# TELEGRAPH MUSEUM PORTHCURNO



Porthcurno



## THE MUSEUM TODAY

The Telegraph Museum in Cornwall tells a truly astonishing and surprising story of human ingenuity and innovation. It is a story of global significance and a story of how people around the world began to communicate with each other in revolutionary ways which are central to how we live today.



By visiting the Telegraph Museum in the magical Porthcurno Valley at the south-western tip of Britain you will:

- **See how modern communications began and developed**
- **Discover how mobile, web, email, Twitter and Facebook work today**
- **Connect with a vital hub of global communications for more the 100 years**
- **Explore secret World War Two underground communications caverns**
- **Learn from collections of national and international importance**
- **Experience a magnificent and memorable location**



The Telegraph Museum is an independent, award-winning museum and holds the only nationally Designated Collection and Archive in Cornwall. The Museum is fully-accredited and is administered by the Porthcurno Collections Trust, a registered charity.

Within the last few years the Museum has benefitted from almost £3 million investment to improve its exhibitions, visitor experience and buildings - and to create a new learning and archive centre housing its Designated Collection.

## A BRIEF HISTORY

The story begins in 1870 when the first undersea cable was laid from Porthcurno to India. This meant that instead of talking six weeks to send a message between London and Bombay (now Mumbai), it could be done in nine minutes. By 1872 there was a connection to Australia. These events led to the creation of the Eastern Telegraph Company which eventually ended up as Cable and Wireless Limited.

By the 1920s Porthcurno was the largest telegraph station in the world with cables connecting Britain via this beautiful Cornish beach to France, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece, Turkey, the Middle East, China, Australia, New Zealand, the South Pacific, the United States, Canada, South America and Africa.



In 1970 the Eastern House building at Porthcurno became part of a training college for Cable & Wireless staff from around the world. The college closed in 1993 and in 1998 the Museum was created. A highly-successful major investment initiative led to the re-launch of the Museum in 2014.

## THE WORLD WAR TWO TUNNELS

The telegraph station played a vital role in both the First and Second World Wars. The fall of France to Hitler in early summer 1940 meant that the enemy forces were based just 80 miles from the Cornish coast. A successful attack on Porthcurno would have severed Britain's communications with the outside world. In the early part of World War Two, after discussion between the War Office and Cable & Wireless, a decision was taken to create secret tunnels in the cliffs adjacent to Eastern House. Experienced mining engineers were brought from nearby tin mines to blast out the rocks and create a huge underground cavern.

The telegraph station was camouflaged and moved underground to protect vital operations - but that didn't stop German planes from targeting Porthcurno in bombing raids. One of the key exhibits is a bomb which was dropped by the Luftwaffe but failed to explode. You can see and touch the bomb which fell on an adjacent farm.

You can visit the tunnels today as part of your Museum encounter.



## WHO SUPPORTS THE MUSEUM?

Cable & Wireless was a key supporter across two decades of Museum life. In 2010 Cable & Wireless split into two companies. Cable & Wireless Worldwide was bought by Vodafone in 2012 and the Vodafone Foundation supports the Museum's educational work. In 2016 Cable & Wireless Communications was bought by Liberty Global.

While inevitably the commercial world changes, the important story of heritage and the way in which it underpins the present and the future does not. The assets and knowledge represented by the Museum are an authentic and intrinsic part of why such businesses exist and thrive today.

The Museum has also enjoyed the support of many others including:

Arts Council England

Cable & Wireless

Charles Hayward Foundation

Clore Duffield Foundation

Coastal Communities Fund

Cornwall Council

Cornwall Museums Partnership

DCMS/Wolfson Foundation

Edith Murphy Foundation

Friends of PK

Garfield Weston Foundation

Headley Trust

Heritage Lottery Fund

Private Sponsors

ShareGift

SubOptic

Trusthouse Charitable Foundation

Vodafone

Wilshaw Benevolent Trust



Photo credit: Mike Kinsey - Real Cornwall.

## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The Museum intends to build on recent successful investment with further development phases which will underline its national and international importance and bring more of its stories and collections to public attention. It operates as a lively centre for discovery - not just about the past but about how mobile, web and fibre optic communication work today - and how they shape our daily lives.

- **We have a big emphasis on public engagement and learning**
- **We explain science and technology - and bring it to life**
- **We demonstrate how Cornwall was and is at the centre of global communications**
- **We tell the stories of pioneers and entrepreneurs who changed the world**
- **We help people understand and explore how technology shapes their lives today**



Undersea cables from Cornwall connected Britain with the rest of the world. This photograph - one of many thousands from the Telegraph Museum's Designated Archive - shows the laying of a cable on Porthcurno beach.

## TO LEARN MORE..

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