

Friends of Tredegar House Newsletter



MESSAGE FROM YOUR CHAIRMAN

Mrs Judith Rice

Firstly, may I take this opportunity of wishing all Friends and their families a Happy and Healthy New Year.

Christmas at Tredegar House commenced on Saturday 28th November and ended Sunday 20th December when the public were welcomed to come in and enjoy the special atmosphere re-created at this time of year of a Victorian Christmas. The theme was a "Christmas Carol" with Mr Ebenezer Scrooge situated in the Brown Room. Children were encouraged to make Jacob Marley's chains in the Gilt Room to decorate the tree. Also there was a Wishing Tree in the New Parlour where children could write their Christmas wishes onto brown labels and hang them onto the tree. A great time was had by all.

In February / March 2016 our Membership Co-ordinator Ms Annie Parker will be sending invitation to all new members who have joined the Friends during the last 3 years to a coffee morning in the Morgan Room where the General Manager Linda Wigley and the House Collection Manager will invite you all to a short tour of the House.

The portrait of Jane Colchester (1703-1767) Mrs Thomas Morgan by Francis Cote which is situated in the New Hall has been removed for restoration work to be carried out. It is estimated this work will take several months so hopefully the picture will be returned in the Spring 2016. The Committee have agreed to finance this work so watch this space.

It is with regret I have to announce the death of Mr Edgar King who passed away in October 2015. Mr King and his wife were members of the Friends for many years.

Friends are pleased to announce the heating is back on in the House so no need to wear plenty of thermals anymore.

The National Trust have advised that a complete overhaul of the roof will take place early 2016, the emergency repair work will take around 8/10 months.

We are planning a trip towards the end of June to Powis Castle full information will be in your April Newsletter. If there are any other interesting properties you would like to visit in September please advise your Newsletter Team.

Finally, our Talks Co-ordinator Ruth Knight has a very interesting Talks agenda for 2016 so please read through your Social Events Programme for further information.

EXTRACT FROM ARCHIVES – OCTOBER 1994

Family Portrait for Sale -

Three Morgan family portraits have recently come up for sale which the curator is keen to purchase. They consist of paintings of John Morgan and his wife, Martha, who were responsible for the remodelling of the formal gardens and the building of the Edney Gates in the early 1700's, and one of Lady Rachel Cavendish who married Sir William Morgan in 1727. Approaches have been made to the various bodies for grant aid and it is likely that The Friends of Tredegar House will be invited to make a contribution from its own fund which they have.

THE HAUNTING - By Paddy Landers

During all my years as a pupil in Tredegar House and again more recently as a volunteer, I have never believed in the stories about ghosts in the house, nor have I sensed anything strange or spooky. But all that changed one dismal night last November, when I found myself feeling very uncomfortable, maybe even, a little scared.



I refer of course to the play "The Haunting", an unfinished play by Charles Dickens, performed by Newport Playgoers for the Friends of Tredegar House. As a play of this genre it had it all; dim lighting, flickering candles, scary sound effects, disembodied voices, flying books, a moving chair and a very convincing ghost. The setting, the New Hall, was perfect and contributed considerably to the spooky atmosphere. The play also had an ending that very few, if any of us, saw coming!

The Newport Playgoers must be congratulated on their production. The actors, Chris Bissex Williams, James Symmonds and Fay Grummitt were most professional as also were the back stage team providing the lighting and sound effects. It was so good to be back in Tredegar House for our social events, and a warm Tredegar House too, so many thanks to the National Trust. It was also most gratifying to see so many people in the audience so many thanks to all of you.

ANCIENT WELSH ORIGINS - THE MORGANS

By Jill Bell

(Tredeger, Trediger, Tredegyr – prefix tre meaning major homestead with outbuildings, the latter presumed to be the name of the first owner of the homestead – 'Degyr or 'Teigr'. However because of the close proximity of the House to the prominent hill fort known as the Gaer could point to a Welsh interpretation 'troed y gaer' which means 'foot of the Gaer) In pre Norman Wales, the Morgans were a noble Welsh Clan who held land between the Usk and Rhymney Rivers. The area was known at this time, as the Cantref of Gwynllwyg and was part of the ancient Kingdom of Morgannwg.

After the Norman Conquest in 1066, the family/clan was constantly being forced to defend their land against Norman Lords, including the powerful Marshalls. In 1297, Morgan ap Hywel, an antecedent of the family was forced by William Marshall to yield Caerleon Castle.

Although the family's status as landowners was well established at this time, it was the marriage between Llywelyn ab Ifor, Lord of St Clare, and Gwynfe in Carmarthen, and Angharad, daughter of Sir Morgan ap Maredudd, Lord of Tredegar in the ancient County of Gwent, that ensured their lasting fortunes and prestige. Llewelyn was a descendant of Cadifor Fawr, Lord of Kilsant in Dyfed, while Angharad was a descendant of Rhys ap Twedur, King of Deheubarth, and the old Lords of Caerleon.

In the early decades of the XIVth Century Angharad's father Morgan ap Maredudd lived at Tredegear. Llwelyn and Angharad are said to have had three sons; Morgan ap Llywelyn (d.1370) who inherited the lands at Sancler (St Clears) and Tredegear; Ifor ap Llewelyn or Ifor Hael 1345-80 (patron of Dafydd ap Gwilym) who lived at Gwern y clippa in Bassaleg; and Philip, who established another branch of the family at St Pierre.

During this time the Morgans were forced to tread a political tightrope. Morgan ap Llewelyn's son another Llewelyn had supported the cause of Owain Glyndwr's rebellion against Henry IV in 1400 two years later the lands in Gwent and Dyfed were forfeited to the Crown. An arranged a lucrative marriage between Llewelyn's son leuan and the neice of Dafydd Gam of Brecknock, gained Royal approval and the forfeited lands were restored to the family.

It was leuan's son and heir, Sir John whose father had been known as leuan ap Morgan ap Llwelyn ap Morgan ap Llewelyn ap ifor who dropped the practice of identifying himself by a series of 'aps' and adopted the surname of Morgan. Sir John lived at Tredegear. Knighted in 1448, Sir John was known as the 'Knight of the Sepulchre' because he had visited and fought in the Holy Land Crusades.

Sir John's second son Thomas, Squire to Henry Tudor/Tewdur, was with Henry at the Battle of Bosworth Field (1485) when Richard III was defeated, and Henry was subsequently proclaimed King of England.

Among privileges granted to the Morgan family as a result of the Victory were the Manors of Bedwellty and Mynyddislwyn, these bleak moorland estates with few fertile pastures did not seem to be desirable acquisitions, ironically however, three centuries later it would be these scrub lands with the wealth of minerals beneath them that would turn an ancient Welsh family into one of the most noble and wealthiest families not only in Wales but in the whole of Great Britain.



THE CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PARTY 2015

By Pam Netherway



On Tuesday, 1st December we gathered together in readiness for the Children's Annual Christmas Party to welcome some 57 boys and girls all aged 5 or 6, Year 2 pupils from Duffryn Primary School

The Servant's Hall, with its fabulous Christmas Tree, prettily decorated and with lights twinkling awaited the arrival of the children and for the fun to begin.

Amid much laughter and shouting Mr Chips entertained his young audience with lots of jokes and magic tricks, all requiring plentiful audience participation. After the fun it was time for the children to sit down to tea, prepared earlier by Gene and her assistants. With the party food disposed of and healthy young appetites filled it was time to visit Auntie Judith who read a Christmas Story from the magical book. Now the visit to Father Christmas who waited with his sack of toys, containing a gift for every child.

All agreed the afternoon was a great success and the happy children left Tredegar House with memories of a Winter's day never to be forgotten.

FRIENDS OF TREDEGAR HOUSE CHRISTMAS EVENING WEDNESDAY 2ND DECEMBER 2015

By Gene Mills

The evening brought inclement weather but a most convivial and enjoyable time in the New Hall, filled with music, singing and verse.

The 'commere' was Christine Purkiss, who performed her role so ably, and, involving the audience in the carol-singing where necessary, admirably.

The invited artists were Dianne Pring, soprano, whose voice echoed around the New Hall and gave us songs of Ivor Novello and from the Shows – wonderful!! Peter Hourahine recited comic verse and achieved the goal of our laughter. The poems read by Sue Shea, Paddy Landers and Veronica Walsh had a Christmas theme, albeit from a different angle. They were very amusing!

A finger-buffet with Christmas Fayre was served during the interval.

The evening continued with a young tenor, Luke Farley, delighting us with songs from the musicals. It was an absolute privilege to listen to his exquisite voice.

The Mayor of Newport, Cllr. Herbie Thomas, expressed appreciation of the evening and of the work of the Friends.

Chris Purkiss got the audience involved in a rendition of The Twelve Days of Christmas, which was great fun, involving quick thinking and accurate timing. Once again, the pianist throughout was Veronica Walsh, whose expertise in playing helped to make the evening a complete success.

The proceedings ended with a chorus of us all singing "We Wish You a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year." It was a thoroughly enjoyable evening and many thanks are due to all of the invited guests and to the organiser of the event.