

# Friends of Tredegar House Newsletter



## MESSAGE FROM YOUR CHAIRMAN

**Mrs Judith Rice**

It seems like only yesterday that I was elected by the Officers and Committee of the Friends to take up the position of Chairman and what an interesting year it has turned out to be.

Tredegar House had a very successful year, March / February 2015/16 exceeded their targets. 90,285 visitors was a 12% increase for the same period last year. The House staff are finalising their plans for 2016 with many changes taking place, we will keep you posted.

The committee were advised back in early 2014 there had been a serious fire in the Busy Bees shop, which had caused the roof to fall in and the complete loss of fittings and all the stock in the unit. After extensive work has been carried out we are pleased to advise the workshops are now back in business and tenants will be moving in from March.



There is a display in the Exhibition Room telling the stories of the Morgans; the School, how Newport Council decided to purchase the land due to the new housing estate that was being built across the way and, then the big question was what to do with the House!! Three suggestions were put forward 1. Tredegar House Country Club & Hotel unfortunately this would not be available to the general public. 2. Tredegar House Convalescent Home again a very difficult task in converting the premises. 3. Tredegar House Teacher Training not in keeping with the historic nature of the House. So it was decided by the council that the most suitable thing to do was to use the House as a specialised museum with limited civic use for small receptions and certain areas of the House to be restored. Finally, all about the Friends and why we were formed plus showing our latest project – restoration of the portrait of Jane Colchester.

Our first talk this year was well attended. The speaker Monty Dart her subject Evan's Court Marshall. What an informative talk it was. We heard what Evan did in the Second World War and what an important part the pigeons played bringing back information from the front line.

On Spring Bank Holiday 30th May Tredegar House will hold Pirates' day. If any member of the Friends has a few spare hours to help out on our stall you would be made most welcome. For further information please contact your Chairman either by email or on 01633 894108.

A quote from our constitution: "The Objective of the Organisation is the education, of the public by promotion, support, assistance and improvement of Tredegar House through the activities of a group of Friends".

Finally, I look forward to meeting many of you at our forthcoming talks and social events. Once again many thanks to you all for your continued support.

## MESSAGE FROM THE EDITORIAL TEAM – JUDITH, SUE, MICHELE, PADDY AND TREVOR

Hello and thank you for being a Friend. We welcome contributions from you all. What would you like to see in this Newsletter? Do you have any Morgan memorabilia or stories. Photographs can be scanned in your own home. This is your Newsletter send us something interesting and we can include it in our next issue.



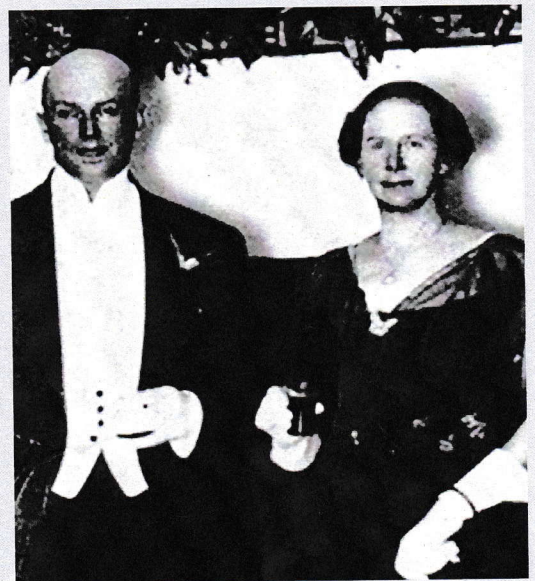


## NO 'SHRINKING VIOLET' by Monty Dart

The Hon. Violet Wilhelmina Morgan was born on 23rd September 1860 at Ruperra Castle. She was the daughter of [Hon. Frederic Courtenay Morgan](#) and [Charlotte Williamson](#). From a young age she became a keen horsewoman, in fact she followed the male Morgans in their love of outdoor pursuits, hunting and shooting. In the portrait by John Charlton at Tredegar House, she can be seen on horseback, sitting behind her father Frederic - with a view of Ruperra Castle in the background. She produced a book of hunting sketches in 1890 a copy of which is in Newport Reference Library (see link at the end of this article). On 28th August 1894 Violet married her first cousin once removed, Basil St John Mundy, at St James Church, Piccadilly, London. The wedding was described in the Cardiff Times – 'the bride wore a wedding gown of the richest white duchesse satin, trimmed with antique Brussels lace'. Her headdress was of orange blossom and myrtle and she wore a diamond and turquoise brooch, a gift from the bridesmaids – her nieces Daisy, Violet and Rose Hoare – daughters of her sister Blanche. Basil her bridegroom was a Major in the King's Own 15th Regiment of Hussars. In 1895 they were in Ireland with his regiment where their son, Frederick Charles was born on 8th March. He was to be their only child. In 1916 'Freddie' was wounded. He was awarded the Military Cross for his gallantry and devotion to duty, yet he returned to the seat of War, and was killed on 26th October 1917 and is buried at Duhallow, Ypres.

Katharine Morgan, Lady Tredegar lived apart from her husband Courtenay for most of their married life, Violet as Courtenay Morgan's sister often took the role of 'Lady Tredegar' at Morgan family gatherings and public occasions. Violet and Basil Mundy had a home in Thornbury, Gloucestershire, where she was to live for the rest of her life. He died on 26th August 1926 as a result of injuries sustained in the Boer War. Violet was described in 'Fifty Years of Racing at Chepstow' by Pat Lucas. 'Tall, usually dressed in black...she was as capable of putting a ferret down a rabbit burrow and handling a 12 bore gun as she was as following the hunt with nerve and skill which would put any hunting man to shame.' This photo of Violet and Courtenay was taken at an annual ball at Tredegar House.

Violet was greatly respected in Thornbury where she and her husband Basil are buried. The last time I visited there the grave was a mass of fragrant wallflowers. Nearby is the grave of her companion Mary Mallis, 'In loving memory of Mary for 42 years - faithful servant and beloved friend of Violet Mundy. 1870 – 1931' When Violet died on December 22nd 1943 She left £52,876/11/2d in her Will, with generous bequests to Thornbury. In researching this article I came across a description of the Mundy's. <http://www.thornburyroots.co.uk/families/mundy-violet/>. Excellently sourced you can see a digital booklet of Violet's Hunting Sketches and a Pathe News film of the tragic race in the Epsom Derby when her horse Avenger fell. Violet was described in the hunting world as 'Hellcat' Mundy – she did not suffer fools gladly. She was a product of her time, – she was feisty and fearless, so different from the latter day Morgans who abandoned the Morgan pursuits in the countryside for nightclubs and fast living.





## LORD TREDEGAR'S COAT OF ARMS ON GOSS CHINA BY SUE POWELL

Pictured here are two small Goss vases each bearing Lord Tredegar's coat of arms. The taller vase is 7cms. high and the smaller one just 4 1/2 cms high.



Although Goss ornaments were sold as holiday souvenirs they were not cheaply or crudely made. The china was very fine and much of the work including the placing of the black outline transfers and painting of the crests and gold work was carried out by hand. The coat of arms on both my vases is similar except for the "pearls" on the coronets. My knowledge of heraldry is very basic. However, the coronet of a Baron should have six "pearls" four of which are shown on heraldic crests. The coronet of a Viscount has sixteen "pearls" placed close together, nine of which are shown on crests. The larger vase depicts a coronet with four "pearls" which shows it belongs to a Baron. The smaller vase is a bit of a puzzle because the coronet shows seven "pearls". I cannot find any record of a coronet on a crest with seven "pearls" and wonder if nine "pearls" should have been illustrated this would have made it the arms of a Viscount.

If any member of the "Friends" is interested in heraldry and can perhaps solve this problem I would be interested in hearing from them.

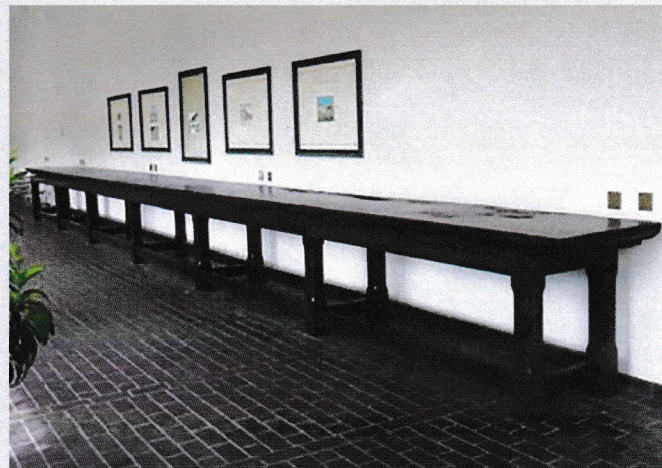
My thanks to the Goss Collectors Club who told me that the larger vase probably dates from the 1930s. I imagine the smaller vase which I received sometime later is about the same period.

## FROM FRIENDS ARCHIVES - NEWSLETTER SPRING 2007 THE CEFN MABLI SHOVELBOARD

The Cefn Mabli shovelboard is made of oak 42 foot long and is the longest single planked oak tabletop in the world! It was made in 1640 for Cefn Mabli House which lives five miles to the west of Tredegar House where it remained until 1924 when the Estate was purchased by Courtney, Viscount Tredegar.

The shovelboard and its base were moved to Tredegar House stables, but during the Second World War, the legs and supporting framework disappeared.

In 1951 Tredegar House was sold and became a school. The shovelboard was removed and stored at the Civic Centre basement for "safe keeping". There out of sight, it was soon forgotten, the tabletop became hidden by all kind of municipal stores and walls were built up around this magnificent table.



In 1987 the walls were demolished, the rubbish removed and the tabletop was moved back to Tredegar House. The table was in a sorry state after lying on one edge on bare earth for many years. It has now been conserved and a new base made for it, no attempt has been made to restore the damaged part of this shovelboard, what has happened to it is all part of its history. When you next go for a stroll in the Cedar Garden, call into the Orangery and have a look at this magnificent table.



## MEETING OF THE FRIENDS OF TREDEGAR HOUSE ON 16TH MARCH

By Gene Mills



The March meeting of The Friends was a performance by Alison Neil of a one-woman, one-act play entitled "Mrs Beeton, My Sister". It took place in the Morgan Room, which proved to be a more intimate experience than her other plays which we have seen performed in the New Hall.

The content of the play was a story told by Bessie Mayson about her elder sister, Isabella, (who later became Mrs Beeton after marrying Sam Beeton), and the rest of her extended family.

Isabella Beeton became a writer, and a famous book of hers was "The Book of Household Management", published in the middle 1800s, giving basic, practical, knowledge about running a home. She also published cookery books, although she was not a cook herself. She used and improved other people's recipes. Her life was sadly short; she died in 1864 aged 28.

Alison Neil gave an excellent performance, portraying Bessie and several other members of her family in such a believable way that one felt drawn into the play as an audience member. Alison's expertise in acting and in remembering so many lines was awe-inspiring! She provided a thoroughly enjoyable evening for the audience.

## MEMBERSHIP OF FRIENDS OF TREDEGAR HOUSE

Many thanks to those members who have already renewed; you will have received your membership pack for this year.

Your support is so valuable to Tredegar House and being involved is very special. Your membership runs from January until December and includes free parking (limited to 4 hours per day) you receive quarterly newsletters and are invited to attend many interesting talks, concerts and trips.

Our membership numbers are still very healthy, however, to date, there are a number of last year's members who have not yet renewed. Maybe this could be an oversight, should you wish to renew please contact me by email: [annie.parker@np18.wanadoo.co.uk](mailto:annie.parker@np18.wanadoo.co.uk) or Tel: 01633 422693.

Fees are:-

Single Membership £12.00

Joint Membership £18.00

## Get together with new members 23rd March 2016

