

## Friends of *Tredegar House* Newsletter



### CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PARTY DECEMBER 2016 - By Pam Netherway

On a damp, dark day Monday, 12th December, Gene and her helpers assembled in The Servants' Hall to prepare this year's Annual Christmas Party for the children of Duffryn Primary School. Some 60 girls and boys all aged 6 or 7 from Year 2 were expected to attend.

All was now ready, Mr Chips, our famous entertainer together with his marvellous Magic Show, the scrumptious party food was waiting on the table and the Christmas tree was standing dazzling in the corner. The children and their teachers arrived and once all were seated and comfortable the fun could begin.

Mr Chips with the aid of one of the young men, mystified the audience with wonderful magic. How the children cheered, shouting encouragement to their classmate and roaring for Father Christmas who was due to appear later, after all the good things had been eaten.

Now Auntie Jean was ready with a Christmas story from the Christmas Book. At last the long awaited visit to Father Christmas who presented every excited child with a Christmas gift.

What a wonderful afternoon. To be thought about back on in the future and remembered for many years to come.

### CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION AT TREDEGAR HOUSE - By Paddy Landers

Tredegar House, clad in scaffolding, looked strangely eerie and alien as we approached it in the dark. However, the moment we stepped into the House, we were struck by the beautiful decorations, the huge glittering Christmas trees, the people in elegant Victorian dress greeting us and the excellent buffet awaiting us.

It was enjoyable to relax and join in with some carol singing to put us in the right frame of mind for Christmas. Veronica Walsh, our resident pianist, helped us to sing all the old favourites and treated us to other seasonal songs throughout the evening. Chris Edmunds was in great form as compère and he led us through the programme with ease. Luke Farley entertained us with six beautiful songs, ranging from Blood Brothers to Carousel and Mack and Mabel. We had a wide variety of readings, with Sue Shea telling us about "that final bit of Christmas magic" and the child "who really wanted to be Joseph". Steve Whitehead and friends treated us to dramatic readings from "A Christmas Carol" and we heard of Pam Ayres' alternative vision of Christmas.

At the end of the evening, we were invited by Chris Edmunds to take part in a very energetic version of "The Twelve Days of Christmas" and then encouraged to think about what "Thank you" letters the recipient of those gifts really wrote.

The event was very well attended and it was so wonderful to see the New Hall so full. We were also very grateful to the Mayor and Mayoress of Newport for their attendance at the evening.



### 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 26th November going right through to Sunday 18th 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. Numbers were well up this year with 10,042 visitors across the Christmas period. This was a healthy 7% increase on 2015, not including the additional Mondays. I understand 135 visitors came to the House on the quieter Monday 12th December, but all who visited expressed they had come especially for a calmer atmosphere and to enjoy their time at Tredegar House. The second Monday 19th December was a greater success with 1130 visitors welcomed through the doors.

The theme again this year was "Christmas Carol" with Mr Ebenezer Scrooge situated in his counting house in the Brown Room. Children making Jacob Marley's chains in the Gilt Room to decorate the tree. Plus this year the wishing tree was situated in the New Hall as the Parlour was being used for sing alongs each weekend 4 times per day with Chris Edmunds on full form. (with your Chairman as his assistant).

The National Trust have advised that the work to repair the main roof will be commencing this month. Scaffold Climb Tour Leaders will be taking small groups of visitors up the Tredegar House 17th century facade scaffold staircase. So if any Friend is interested in going on one of these tours please contact your Chairman for full details.

As some of you are aware our dear Cyril Highman passed away on 4th December at the grand old age of 94 years after a short illness. Cyril was one of the founder members of the "Friends" and will be greatly missed.

It has been brought to my attention that the General Manager Linda Wigley will be leaving Tredegar House sometime in February to take up a new position with the National Trust for Scotland. This is a new role as General Manager of the Edinburgh and East Region initially based in Edinburgh then moving to Newhailes Nr. Musselburgh, once the Regional Hub is established. Some of her responsibilities will be looking after 20 properties that include a mill, printing works, Bannockburn Visitor Centre and many more historic gardens, fine castles and mansion houses. I am sure all the Friends would like to thank Linda for all her good work since being at Tredegar House over the last 18 months and wish her every success in her new venture.

I understand from Emily Price that the restoration work on the picture of Jane Colchester which used to be situated in the New Hall is rather a much bigger project than they originally thought and is still ongoing. Hopefully will have more news in our April edition.

Our Newsletter committee are always looking for interesting articles so if you have one please advise one of the committee.

### MEMBERSHIP OF FRIENDS OF TREDEGAR HOUSE -

Many thanks if you have already renewed your membership for 2017, your support is so valuable to Tredegar House.

Our membership numbers are still very healthy, however, to date; there are a number of 2016 members who have not yet renewed.

Should you wish to rejoin this year please contact by email [annie.parker@np18.wanadoo.co.uk](mailto:annie.parker@np18.wanadoo.co.uk) or Tel: 01633 422693. Fees remain the same: Single membership £12.00 / Joint or Family Membership £18.00.

## A VICTORIAN TREASURE OF TREDEGAR HOUSE COMES BACK TO SOUTH WALES

Last year that well-known writing duo Monty Dart and Will Cross and biographers of the Morgan family decided to act to secure a Victorian treasure, a silver flask with an important link to the Morgans of Tredegar House. The item languished on a well-known auction site and was first spotted by Will some years ago. Monty alerted several Morgan aficionados but there seemed no interest in it.

Will says "We knew this was a special piece. Despite the fact that the flask was in the USA we finally decided to act for fear that the item would simply disappear into the black hole of antique collecting. So we made an offer to its owner, based in New York. We know that he bought the flask from a dealer in upstate New York just outside Rochester, so it has been in America some years". Thankfully after a bit of wheeling and dealing the item was secured and it has now found its way back to its rightful home in Newport, South Wales." What Monty and Will have secured is a unique sterling silver flask made by the highly regarded silversmith, Williams and Summers of London. Marked as made in the year 1849, the flask was a special order and gift from Godfrey Charles Morgan (1831-1913) to his brother Charles Rodney Morgan (1828-1854).

What makes it special is that Charles Rodney Morgan should have become Lord Tredegar (on the death of 1st Lord Tredegar in 1875) and this would have taken place but for Charles Rodney's early death in Marseilles in France at the age of just 25. In the event it was Godfrey who took the title of 2nd Lord Tredegar.

The year 1849 was Charles' 'coming of age', that milestone was when the heir to a great house or estate reached the age of 21. The flask is inscribed:

"Charles Rodney Morgan from his brother G.C.Morgan Dec. 1849". It represents a gift from the heir to Tredegar for his birthday.

"It's a real Morgan heirloom, 168 years old, a gift from the man who became Lord Tredegar to his dear brother who would have been Lord Tredegar had he survived. It is both touching and sentimental" says Will.

Charles Rodney Morgan was the first son of Charles Morgan Robinson Morgan and Rosamond Mundy. After a promising start at Eton College, and service as an officer in the Coldstream Guards, Charles was elected MP for Brecon. A colourful character, with a taste for the bohemian life style, Charles's life is sketchy and conflicting. Unfortunately, Charles died after contracting a debilitating disease. His father (possibly his mother) but certainly Godfrey was at his bed side to offer hope and comfort and later to make the necessary funeral arrangements. It was soon afterwards that Captain Godfrey Morgan of the 17th Lancers famously went out to the Crimea to fight for his country and return a hero, and later went on to be the Morgan heir. A more detailed account of Charles Rodney Morgan's life and death will appear in a new book on the Morgans from Monty and Will in the summer.

The cylindrical flask has a hinged lid and removable tumbler on the base. The height is 10 1/4 inches and approximately 7.6 troy ounces. The condition is good for 168 years old. There are a few small dents (perhaps the result of wear from his time as a military officer but just as likely a casualty of the hunting field). Another precious Morgan artefact returns.



## TREDEGAR HOUSE FRIENDS TRIP: COUGHTON COURT, Wednesday 7th September 2016

The Friends enjoyed a very worthwhile day out at Coughton Court in Warwickshire, a National Trust property not far from Redditch. The name is pronounced 'Coat On', and it is a medieval manor house dating from the 15th Century and owned by the same family, the Throckmortons, since 1409. The house was once moated but there is little sign of that now.

The house is hugely worth visiting for several reasons. As a home to the same family for so long it has many fascinating features, portraits and objects collected over the centuries; it is not a huge house but, with its extensive outbuildings and gardens, it provides an authentic glimpse of the life history of many phases in a family of the gentry, rather than of a great noble family. The religious conflicts since Henry VIII's break with Rome are illustrated by the presence in the grounds of an Anglican church – obviously originally a Catholic one – and then a much later one built for Catholic services, once these were permitted and no longer dangerous, in 1851. It is actually a very striking example of a family somehow surviving the very worst of political and social trouble and consequences, because the Throckmortons have been staunch Catholics throughout all of their time there.



There are two other outstanding reasons to visit or study it. The gardens are extensive and truly wonderful, with beautifully sculpted hedges, lawns, a lake, herbaceous borders of stunning colour, and an orchard producing so much tree fruit and soft fruit that they are able to run a 'pick your own' service and an honesty-box!! As if all of this were not sufficient commendation, the house was virtually the headquarters for the Gunpowder Plot in 1604.

Robert Catesby, the leader of it, was the son of Anne Throckmorton, whose husband was so persecuted for his faith that he had to sell his property, Chastleton House, another National Trust property, in the Cotswolds to meet his fines. (It was bought by a Welsh sheep farmer called Jones, but the subsequent owners never had enough money to modernise it, so it is still so authentically original that it was used for some filming of 'Wolf Hall'!!)

There is a display on the theme of the Plot in the house, which, together with an excellent booklet on the topic, brings it vividly to life, as exciting if it were a contemporary television crime investigation documentary.

The baronetcy held by the family from Sir Robert, who died in 1650, died out because in 1989 another Sir Robert died childless and the title went to a Sir Anthony living in America. When he died in 1994 the title died with him. The successor owners in Britain were subsequently untitled but when they gave the house to the National Trust in 2006 they retained a right to live in part of the house for a considerable time into the future.

We were courteously greeted and helped by a lady called Wendy, the house is well-signposted, and the catering facilities were excellent. One thing we missed, because my attention was not drawn to it, is outside the grounds on the main road - to the southern aspect. There is a small railed off cross where travellers in medieval times could pray to seek protection from bandits as they entered the forest of Arden. How many other houses can boast so much genuine age and fascinating historical detail? Many thanks to Judith for a well-organised and excellent trip.