

**LIFTING THE LID -
By Monty Dart**

In the long and fascinating history of Tredegar House, there will never be another opportunity like this in our lifetime. To see the vista of Tredegar Park, the mineral garden and walk in the footsteps of the men who put the finishing touches to Tredegar Mansion over 500 years ago, the slate layers.

Currently Tredegar House is wrapped, like a giant present, in an entire layer of plastic, which covers a scaffold skeleton. The wonderful red brick which signified the wealth of the Morgan family is encased in a white shroud, ghostly and intriguing even in daylight. Those who work at the House have become used to buckets catching drips and occasional rubble falling down the kitchen fireplace. The roof, covered in Welsh slate was starting to show its age, with rusty nails and slipping slates and apparently around 600 litres of water seeping through the roof every year.



Current restoration work on the roof, during which every slate will be removed and replaced is giving visitors not only a chance to see the slate-layers at work but also a unique opportunity to sign a slate. National Trust Wales, is offering visitors the chance to sign a limited number of the 10,000 slate tiles as part of a £1.3million restoration project called 'Lifting the Lid'. This took place over one week.

So, along with members of the Gwent National Trust group and the media, a small party of the Friends of Tredegar House were invited to be amongst the first people to go on a very different tour of Tredegar House. A party of children from Duffryn Infants School had also come along to sign their slates but they were too small to make the climb to the roof.

Before doing so however, we had a safety briefing from one of the volunteer hosts advising us that the climb was fairly steep. Then, dressed in hard hats and high viz tunics we started the climb to the top.

The 68 steps were indeed steep as we made the ascent but the climb was worth it, not only for the fantastic views but our guide also told us about the original construction of the roof, and the changes made to it over the last 500 years.

Scaffold climbs are expected to run every weekday from February 20 until Friday, September 1, subject to cancellations due to bad weather.

Children under the age of 16 must be at least 1.5m high and accompanied by a participating adult. For further details please contact Visitors Reception at Tredegar House.



**PERSONAL MEMORIES FROM OUR
SPRING 1982 ARCHIVES**

I remember attending a garden party in the grounds of the house as a very young child. At the house we were able to visit the stables which I remember vividly. I was amazed at the size and cleanliness of them although there were no horses in them at the time.

Mrs P. Roberts



**CYRIL HIGHMAN (1922 – 2016) – AN APPRECIATION -
By Helen Davies**



Cyril Highman, who died on 4th December 2016 after a long life well lived, was one of the founding committee members of the Friends of Tredegar House. He was a man of integrity, humour and kindness – and my uncle.

He began life in Tredegar and the family moved to Newport in 1932. Cyril attended Newport High School and at the age of 15 sat the entrance exams for the Civil Service, something that his father decided would be a good career for him. It meant moving to London to take up employment in the Home Office. He would often talk about the fact that his father had decided his career. He had no complaints about that, saying that of course in those days a steady job, with a good retirement pension, was the dream of many.

With the outbreak of the Second World War, Cyril was keen to join up and applied to the RAF to work as a radio mechanic. He was eventually released from his reserved occupation work at the Home Office in 1942. Most of his time in the RAF was spent at various stations in the UK working with radar, but his unit was sent to Germany at the end of the war. He was there for some months and the sights he saw made a very deep impression. He had loved German lessons while at school thanks to the teaching of Mr. Dawson and had had a German landlady at the start of his working life in London. On his return to the UK he was diagnosed with tuberculosis and was sent to the sanatorium at Cefn Mabley, where he spent 18 months and where he met his wife (also a patient), my father's sister Betty, who was a Newport girl.

Fortunately, Betty and Cyril both recovered and they were married in 1949. Much of their married life was spent in Walton-on-Thames to accommodate Cyril working in London, but the pull of returning to Newport was too strong to resist when a job possibility arose for him. On his return to Wales, Cyril became involved in various societies. He was the secretary of the Newport Civic Society for many years and both he and Betty were keenly involved in the Friends of Tredegar House from the very beginning of the Society. He was meticulous in keeping records for the Friends and was secretary for a number of years. He had always enjoyed learning about local history and put this interest to very good use with these societies. He was also one of the first supporters of the Ruperra Conservation Trust.

His fascination with technology, radar, hi-fi equipment (building his own speakers at an early age) also meant that he was very interested in computers. I remember that when he bought his first one he asked someone to come and tell him about the workings and he meant the technical workings rather than how to operate the machine! It was a wonderful form of communication for him in later years and he used to keep the family up to date with each other by passing on various emails we had written to him.

We are fortunate that he decided to write his memoirs, (dealing with the years from 1922 – 1949) which make fascinating reading and are even more impressive as they were written when he was in his eighties without recourse to diaries or journals, which he never kept. He loved cycling, regarding it as one of the best forms of transport, and his longest trip was from Barnes to South Wales over a period of two days in 1940. Music was another love, especially popular songs from the famous Big Band era of the 1940s. He was a fine pianist himself. Cyril also enjoyed listening to Welsh hymn singing, no doubt due to his Methodist background!

One of the letters of condolence after his death described him as a man with an "historic memory, and a precise, properly concerned constitutionalist who would have made an excellent local government official". In a way Cyril could be said to have taken on some of that work in a voluntary fashion. Two examples are his involvement with the Blue Plaques scheme for the Newport Civic Society and the fact that he never feared to write to the South Wales Argus if he felt a point needed making. His mental ability, kindness and humour were with him to the end. We will miss him!



MESSAGE FROM YOUR CHAIRMAN

Mrs Judith Rice

On 29th March we held our 36th Annual General Meeting where I was re-elected as your Chairman for a further two years. May I take this opportunity of thanking those members for their continued support. After all business had been concluded a presentation was made by Dr. Norman Mills to Hugh Clatworthy thanking him for all his services to the Friends over the last 15 years. I am sure you will all wish Hugh all the very best of luck in the foreseeable future. We were then entertained by Christine Purkiss who gave us the history of Gilbert and Sullivan singing songs from their repertoire. Did you know that Christine was a former pupil of the Doyle Carte Opera Company in her early days? Friends you really missed a treat!!

We still have two vacancies on the Executive Committee if any member is interested in joining our happy band please contact your Chairman on the usual number.

Roofing Project – Contractors are making good progress, but the repairing of the chimneys have been quite a challenge. The House had some issues during Storm Doris with some protection being blown out of position from the fireplace in the King's Room and also some loose bricks that had knocked out protection in an attic room and the School Room. They are hoping to have some CCTV surveys carried out in the next couple of weeks on the flues that have not previously been surveyed in this area. This will help the Trust to understand which are clear and which are blocked with rubble. So watch this space.

Our Membership has continued to thrive and I am pleased to confirm we have gained five new members since the beginning of this year. Long may it continue.

With sadness I have to announce the passing of Pat Protheroe who had been a member of the Friends for many years. Pat was a member of our Sewing Group and did some wonderful work she will be sadly missed.

As some of you are aware at the end of May the House hold Pirate's day. The Friends usually have a stand where we advertise our society with some old fashion games for the young and old and advertising boards showing photos of the House. If anyone has a few hours spare to help out please contact your Chairman for further information.

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 your Newsletter? Do you have any Morgan memorabilia or stories. Photographs can be scanned in your home. This is your Newsletter send us something interesting and we can include it in our forthcoming issues.



WILL CROSS, BIOGRAPHER OF EVAN MORGAN INFORMS US:

"When an e-mail (last Autumn) began "This is in strictest confidence!" the hair on the back of my neck began to rise a bit. The item was a piece of breaking news that the source (a journalist) wanted to keep the full details of the story until he was ready to reveal it to the world.



The subject is Evan Morgan, 4th Lord Tredegar, spendthrift, poet and playboy. Evan was also known as Viscount Tredegar the last but one of the coal baron Morgans to make Tredegar House, Newport, their family seat and main homestead. The House now survives and thrives in the hands of the National Trust. Evan is one of the treasures of Tredegar House. The newest Evan Morgan revelation is highly amusing after the discovery of one of Evan's Rolls Royce motor cars in the USA. The e-mail advised: "A friend has bought a Rolls-Royce first built for Lord Tredegar in 1936. It's in the United States and undergoing some very traumatic/dramatic changes – which with hindsight are in keeping with the dynasty - and the car will be unveiled soon. As a journalist, I am producing an editorial for magazine/print use and have lots of technical history for the vehicle but am desperately seeking relevant images and pertinent details."

The journalist introduced himself as Glynn Williams, MBE, a name well known in the motoring world and a member of the Guild of Motoring Writers.

I replied to the e-mail saying that I would be delighted to help if I could I summoned up a Tredegar House insider, my writing partner Monty Dart who strives to maintain integrity on Morgan family facts. Monty and I, orchestrated a trip for Glynn and his wife "for Evan vibes" and photographs around Tredegar House and grounds, including, the stables/ garages and forecourt where the fleet of Evan's cars were once housed – Monty's husband Tom Dart joined us too and added his own expertise. According to the late George Evans (who was chauffeur to Evan from 1941-45) "Lord Tredegar had two Rolls Royces, a Hotchkiss and a Daimler. Evan always had luxury cars, when not being driven about he drove himself albeit erratically,. In 1920 Aldous Huxley portrayed Evan as the fictional Ivor Lombard in his novel 'Crome Yellow' whizzing round the country driving a car.

The results of the incredible new work on Evan's Rolls Royce are in the links which are included on the Friends of Tredegar House website, with splendid photographs from Nick Williams (son of Glynn) who was invited out to Mexico and USA to witness the car's transformation and report back to his father. The revamping of the car and Nick's tantalisingly epic photographs of the inside and outside of the new vehicle are important. Absolutely stunning shots.

The team of Sam and Derek Hard from Hard Up Garage, Street Toys in Juarez, Mexico and Michael Lightborne in El Paso have executed an amazing, fearsome job on the motor, which was unveiled at the SEMA show in Las Vegas last year. I think Evan would have been chuffed to run gunshot or ride side saddle with these clever guys, they reek of the very same spark, bravado, the same daring, the same bohemian qualities as our beloved Evan at his best and worst.

Stand by for further news if and when the car goes into a major auction in the USA. Who knows there may be a chance of the car being included in a UK sale or on display. I understand the prospects are being investigated. What a dream just to have been involved in cleaning Evan's mudguards or shining up the beautiful car mascot. Either way we shall not see the like of it again.

Will Cross and Monty Dart – 6 February 2017