



FOTH TRIP TO CHARLECOTE PARK

By Paddy Landers

The Friends' summer trip was another resounding success. The sun was shining as we set off and everyone was in good spirits. Our first stop was the Gloucester services, an innovative design and environmentally friendly building which specialises in local produce. After a cup of coffee we drove through the orchards and strawberry fields of the Vale of Evesham and through Stratford on Avon to Charlecote Park.

The Lucy family came to England as supporters of William the Conqueror and have owned Charlecote Park since 1247. The family has lived on that site ever since and today, they reside in the south wing of the beautiful Tudor Manor House. The house is approached by a long path which gives plenty of time to admire the stunning view. Visitors enter through the impressive porch that was built by Thomas Lucy for the visit of Queen Elizabeth I.

We were greeted by one of the 300 volunteers, who gave us a ten minute talk about the history of the family and the house. This was very interesting and helped us to fully enjoy all that we later saw. Because the family has lived there the whole time, the house is full of family portraits, treasures and photographs. There was a magnificent dining room with a table laid for a banquet. The dining room also housed a very ornate carved sideboard, created by a local craftsman, and presented to Queen Victoria as a gift from the people of Warwickshire. Unfortunately, Queen Victoria refused the gift so it has remained in Charlecote Park. The library is full of very old books, being carefully looked after by the conservation team, and also has a grand piano. The Drawing room is very impressive with most attractive period furniture and a harp. Next door is a games room with full size snooker table. A spiral staircase took us to the bedrooms.

Tradition has it that William Shakespeare was caught poaching deer from the estate and the young playwright had to flee to London to prevent being prosecuted by Sir Thomas Lucy. This is quite possible as the Lucy estate extended to very near Shakespeare's home. Shakespeare certainly satirised Sir Thomas by casting him as Justice Shallow in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Henry IV* part two.



MESSAGE FROM YOUR CHAIRMAN Mrs Judith Rice

Summer at long last has eventually arrived I hope you are all enjoying the long evenings warm summer days with family and friends.

Our membership has continued to thrive and I am pleased to confirm we have gained fourteen new members since the beginning of 2017. Long may it continue.

TREDEGAR HOUSE UPDATE - Roof Works -

Original work on roof is well on target but it has come to light that a small section of roof needs urgent attention. Contractors have been consulted and are able to complete this work before the Scaffolding is removed before the end of the year.

A specialist stone survey has also been carried out to inspect the condition of the lions, griffins, shields and the window. A shield and a griffin had to be removed due to their poor condition also they had to tie back a lion to make it more secure. The National Trust are awaiting the full report on what will be the next steps to be taken.

Laundry Project -

The House are pleased to announce they have received the funding from the Welsh Government in the form of a grant which amounts to £350k for refurbishing the Laundry. The Laundry will house facilities for local residents to learn new skills and undergo formal and informal training with partner organisations, such as Growing Space and Community Link.

It will include a kitchen, community meeting area, dining room and toilets, as well as some office space for community organisations.

Property and Project Manager position has been advertised. Hopefully interviews will take place in August will keep you all updated on outcome.

Co-operation between the Friends and the National Trust continues to grow stronger and many more of the Friends now Host at Tredegar House and thoroughly enjoy the experience of meeting the public and spreading the word of the history of the House and Friends.

Quiz Event -

As most of you are aware we held a Quiz Evening in May the support from the "Friends" was not good. We are planning once again a similar evening in October please see your Social Events Programme for further information.

The first week of September we have a special speaker – Mr Ron Jones MBE (who is 100) telling us all about "Goalkeeper Auschwitz" a talk not to be missed.

MEMORIES OF TREDEGAR HOUSE BY SHAUN McGUIRE -



I attended St David's school from about 1952 to 1958. Most of my friends in the area were Catholics. Because of this religious connection some of my older friends were invited to help set up the annual St. Joseph's girls' school fête run by the nuns at Tredegar House where one of my sisters attended. It took place around the second Saturday of July and so at the age of seven they invited me to help.

On my first day there I remember being at the rear door of Tredegar House by the kitchens. As the jobs were being delegated they came to me, I was given a stool and a knife and asked to weed between the cobblestones in the yard. This I did and spent many hours at the job and I continued to go there helping until the day of the fête where I also got in free. Probably many will remember these fêtes where by the 1960's about 10,000 people attended and was very well advertised around Newport's town centre and the corporation buses used to run back and forth to the house bringing the visitors. It was a time when the people of Newport could enjoy Tredegar House and the estate and the entertainment of the fête. Boat rides were also available on a boat which used to be a lifeboat, this had a small outboard motor. Go-cart ride were also available

Leading up to the fête, we used to go Tredegar House some weeks before to prepare the boat for the rides giving it a lick of paint and spending many hours in the boat and another one that we called the Gondola as it was a punt type boat with a large spike sticking out from the front. We dragged the lake with grappling hooks to remove large quantities of weed that would clog the propeller of the outboard motor. Other jobs included the erection of the stalls and childrens' rides the day before the fête and staying overnight in the marquee to prevent any vandalism.

Eventually this led to about eight or nine of us boys being allowed to go to Tredegar House in the summer at any time but we were kept well away from any of the girls especially the boarders.

This carried on for quite a number of years, in fact until I was twenty but during that time we also used to set up the Corpus

Christie procession that was held there for a number of years. Most weekends we were at the house doing some sort of jobs for the Nuns such as painting, gardening or creosoting the large gates at the side of the house. For our labour we were allowed free access to the estate and were able to use the tennis courts that were at the rear of the stables, and the two boats. I remember there being two Canadian canoes, one being irreparable. We used to play on a mass of some type of cane that was like a large bush which you could walk over or bounce on like a trampoline. This was near to other tennis courts by a thatched summer house and was built over by the later new St. Josephs High School. We often visited the memorial to Lord Tredegar's horse Sir Briggs and some family dogs. Part of this memorial was a small canon on a carriage that was used during the Crimean war and is now missing.

The Nuns looked after us well and brought out large urns of tea at various times during the day and copious amounts of homemade marmalade sandwiches which I detested but I was usually so ravenous that I ate them.

Recently one of my older friends who went there related a story to me that I had never heard before. He and two others one being the now Professor Sir Hadrian Webb were asked by the Nuns to clear an area of overgrown brambles and bushes in the menagerie of the estate near the second lake which we called the Red Lake because of its colour. Cutting into this area, they found a WW2 American Jeep complete with a star on its bonnet which had four flat tyres. After completely clearing this vehicle, they obtained some tools, took the four wheels off and carried them up to Fosters garage at the bottom of Gaer Road at Maesglas and inflated them and they stayed inflated. Taking them back to the Jeep they refitted them and a day or so later they had managed to obtain a battery and some petrol. To their amazement the Jeep started when they pressed the button and for some days they used it to drive around the estate, quite an achievement for some 16 year olds. The last they saw of the vehicle was it being used on Cullimore's farm.

Another event that happened one day when I went down to the house by myself midweek, I was asked to help an itinerant that the Nuns used to take in occasionally named Tom. In one of the



buildings off the rear courtyard surrounding the sunken garden there was a very old washing machine. This appliance sat in the middle of a large room, was made of wood probably by a cooper as it consisted of two wooden barrels, one revolving inside the other and driven by a belt that reached to a pulley in the ceiling near the outer wall. It was rod driven by an electric motor two rooms away which itself drove the rods by a belt to the ceiling. It took a couple of days to remove the driving rods and motor and also the washing machine which we broke up and were rewarded with a couple of hundred buttons. At the end of this building at the court yard end there is a small clearing and this was used by the Nuns to grow tobacco for the priests, at least that was what I was told. The plants were huge far taller than myself at the time and certainly were well concealed by the surrounding walls.

At another time, we were asked to clear a large amount of dirt, straw, possibly dung from a corner in the barn in the court yard. This had been there for numerous years and after getting half way through cleaning it I saw a packet of 10 Black Cat cigarettes which I had never heard of before and imagine my surprise when I opened the packet and it was full of cigarettes although none were smokable. Probably not as big a surprise as the man who lost them had many years earlier when he found they were missing! These are just of some of my many happy memories as a small child growing up with a country

house estate to myself where I could go riding (on a push bike), fishing for eels, as there were no fish in the lake in those days, and playing tennis I was told when I was using the boats to stay up at the island end as the Nuns were going swimming!

During this time I had taken a small number of photographs which have gone missing over the years. They included photographs of the swans which were silhouetted by the two lions that were at onetime part of the lake wall and are now missing. One photo did turn up in the last few years and although bad quality shows some of the lads working on the Gondola in the court yard. This was outside the end building of the

barns which we knew as the Yard Boathouse and housed the oar rack and other rowing items such as the rowlocks, and, in the room above accessed by a ladder, the Canadian canoes



Working on the Gondola in the court yard. This was outside the end building of the barns which we knew as the Yard Boathouse and housed the oar rack and other rowing items such as the rowlocks and in the room above accessed by a ladder, the Canadian canoes