

## FOR YOUR DIARY TALKS 2015

### WEDNESDAY 20TH MAY

Speaker - Les James

Subject - Octavius Morgan & Zephaniah Williams  
"Confession" In 1939, a copy of a letter, dated May 25th 1840 from the Chartist, Zephaniah Williams to Dr A. McKechnie, was "discovered" amongst the Tredegar estate papers. This letter to the Royal Navy doctor aboard the convict ship Mandarin, was written during the voyage of the three Welsh Chartists to their exile in Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania).

Why not come to this talk and find out more!!

The Morgan Room at Tredegar House Commencing at 7.30pm

### WEDNESDAY 17TH JUNE

Speaker - Mike Church

Subject - "Only libraries can save the world now"  
This talk will celebrate words including their use and abuse, exploring projects from prisons to sheltered accommodation etc. the Morgan Room at Tredegar House Commencing at 7.30pm

### WEDNESDAY 15TH JULY

Speaker - Don Llewellyn

Subject - "A Life behind the Camera"

Don Lewellyn worked in television for nearly 40 years. As a film editor and director he won many awards including a BAFTA in Wales and a Gold Medal at the New York International Film and TV Festival.

The Morgan Room at Tredegar House  
Commencing at 7.30pm

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 30TH APRIL

Commencing at 7.00pm

in the Morgan Room at Tredegar House

Speaker - Mrs Lorna Pearson

Buffet will be served in the Morgan Room after business has been concluded.

**FRIENDS DAY TRIP – 11TH JUNE  
MONTACUTE HOUSE, SOMERSET  
FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE  
READ OUR SOCIAL EVENTS  
PROGRAMME.**

## STRANGE SPIRITS AT TREDEGAR HOUSE

The House has an intriguing past and though subsequently altered and remodelled, can be traced back to the 1400s, through civil war, rebellion and riots. The estate was vast and tradesmen, farm labourers and servants of all description were needed to maintain the good life. Godfrey Morgan, who had survived the Charge of the Light Brigade, became Viscount Tredegar in 1909 and was a generous benefactor of the town donating much of his land to public use. He was succeeded in 1913 by his nephew, Courtney, and when he died in 1934 his son, the eccentric Evan, took residence and from then on what quiet life there had been, disappeared.

## WITCHRAFT PARTIES

A few years back Prince Charles and Lady Diana made a brief visit to the House but this was small beer compared with the lavish entertaining that Evan enjoyed so much. The famous mixed with the unknown and many society figures of the 'twenties and 'thirties were regular guests. These included H G Wells, Godfrey Winn, Prince Paul of Greece, and Lady Cunard. He kept a strange menagerie too which enhanced his notoriety. Evan became known as a 'dabbler' in witchcraft and it is said by many a visitor to the House that some rooms are very cold. The spectacular Brown Room which was used on special occasions and Evan's bedroom, the King's Room, was no doubt, where he indulged his bizarre interest.

Rumours still abound in the town and one former servant reported seeing him 'dressing up in peculiar clothes.' The Duke of Bedford, after attending a party there, noted that Lord Tredegar was a 'very odd man much interested in the supernatural.' He too found himself shivering in that room where Lord Tredegar donned cannibalistic garb, told fortunes and where an Arctic Owl flew freely.

Maybe then, it's not without significance that one of his frequent visitors was the well-known purveyor of black magic and referred to in books of Dennis Wheatley, Aleister Crowley. He gained fame for his satanic activities and is said to be the last person to attempt to incarnate Old Nick, the Devil himself. Strange or just pure coincidence?

Evan was the last Morgan to live in the House and in 1951 it became a Catholic girls boarding school under the auspices of the Sisters of St Joseph. This in itself built up a whole new set of ghost stories and eventually the council bought the House in 1974 for the pleasure of the people of the town. Indeed it proved to be a popular acquisition but the tales of spectres and spirits persisted.

## To be continued....

## MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

– Mr Alan Henshall

"Friends this is my last message as your Chairman; an eventful two years which I have thoroughly enjoyed".

Since our last Newsletter in January our monthly talks have been held in the Morgan Room. Our talks this year are on numerous subjects which should appeal to everyone, so why not come and join us. For example on 18th March our speaker was Tim Ryan speaking on History of the Severn Ferries – 1931 to 1966.

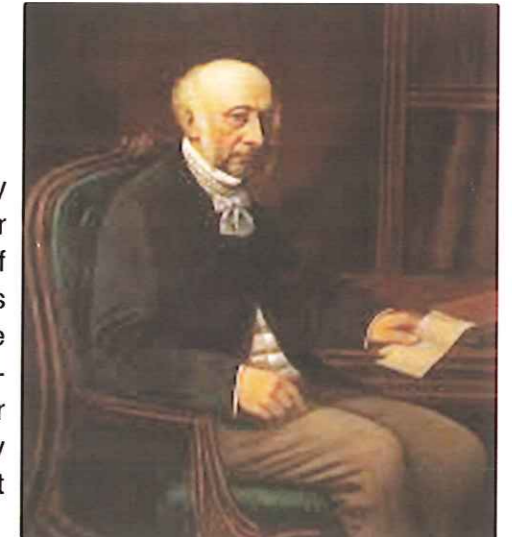
This March the National Trust will have been managing the House for three years. Since the Antiques Roadshow held in June 2014 it has become the place to visit in Wales. So Friends our House is well and truly on the map.



## DEATH OF LADY WALKER

- "A Dark Cloud has Passed Over the Morgan Family"

In September 1887 the Western Mail reported the death of Lady Walker. 'Lady Fanny Henrietta Walker was the third daughter of the late Baron Tredegar (Charles Morgan Robinson Morgan) of Tredegar Park, near Newport, and of his wife Rosamond (daughter of the late General Godfrey Mundy). She was born in the year 1835, and was at the time of her death, 52 years of age. She married, on October 9, 1854, to Sir George Ferdinand Radzivill Forestier-Walker, Bart. of Wentloog Castle, they had six sons.' The following newspaper account shows the love, affection and respect shown to the Morgan family and honours their aristocratic roots, so unlike the newspaper reports about the later Morgans.



Lady Walker's Father

## SERIOUS ACCIDENT TO LADY WALKER AT CARDIFF

On Monday evening Lady Walker, the wife of Sir George Walker, of Castleton, and sister to Lord Tredegar, met with a serious accident at Cardiff. Her Ladyship had been attending a cricket match between the ladies of Monmouthshire and the ladies of Glamorganshire at Fairwater Lady Walker was riding in a dog cart, with her two youngest sons, Master Rowland Walker and Master Charlie Walker, and the former was driving. When they approached the Taff Vale Railway Bridge, as they were passing the Glamorgan Club, the horse slipped and fell sideways. As a result Lady Walker and her two sons were precipitated from the vehicle to the road-way. Several persons immediately ran to their assistance. Inspector James and two police-constables, having procured an armchair removed her ladyship to the Alexandra Hotel, which is in close proximity to the scene of the accident. Her husband was summonsed. Sadly Fanny died on 2nd September. The Forestier-Walkers are buried at Church of St Mary the Virgin, Marshfield. A stained glass window, dedicated to Fanny can be seen in the church. Western Mail continues-

'When news of the sad accident was first published the utmost concern was manifested for the recovery of the well-known and highly popular lady. In the more immediate locality of Castleton, where her generosity and kindness of heart were known best, the inhabitants have sustained by her death a blow which words can scarcely describe. To the poor and needy she was a true and abiding friend, and every charitable object claimed and received her warmest, sympathy and help. It alone in the distribution of alms and of necessities in cases of distress was her ladyship's kindness shown, but in genuine womanly feeling and tender sympathy for her neighbours she was a true aristocrat. Many are the stories told of Lady Walker having sat by the bedside of a sick person the whole night performing the office of nurse in the absence of other friends. When her mother, the Rosamond, Dowager Lady Tredegar, died, some few years ago, the now deceased lady in a large measure took over office of almoner to the poor on the estates, who were, and are still spoken of as Tredegar pensioners. She had about her the noble characteristics of the Morgans' of Tredegar House - their fearlessness and devotion to high purposes- and, as we have pointed out, nonetheless the spirit of charity, which on every opportune occasion enabled her to become an humble instrument of goodness and love. There can be little doubt that for some time to come the dark cloud which has spread itself over the Morgan family.'

## TREDEGAR HOUSE – A Tale of Two Schools.

- In 1951 the Sisters of St Joseph of Annecy purchased Tredegar House from the Morgan family and opened St Joseph's Convent High School. They already had a school on Stow Hill but they needed larger premises for their secondary school.

- Tredegar House had been empty since Evan's death and John was anxious to dispose of the property. During the war, the family had lived in only one small part of the house with a skeleton staff and it had also housed evacuees from London. The house into which the sisters moved was in some state of neglect and the gardens overgrown. There had been some interest even then from Newport Council to buy the house but opinions were split and there had been a lobby amongst some councillors to knock the house down.



- The sisters and some former pupils remember the "Honourable John" as he was known, visiting the house on one occasion. He did a tour of the school and then wanted to sit and look at the portraits of his ancestors in the side hall. His wife visited on another occasion but had never lived in the house. Sister Pauline, former Headteacher, also remembers taking tea with Princess Olga, who she described as very charming. Olga visited the classrooms and was, in the memory of one former pupil, a very beautiful woman.

- Sister Pauline remembers the move to the House;

"One or two sisters, in turn, from Llantarnam Abbey, were there holding the fort while various 'odd jobs' were being done to prepare for the new start. Arrangements were made at the request of the Tredegar House Authorities to leave certain items of furniture and a number of paintings there on what they termed 'permanent loan' that is, there for as long as we were there. So we had the painting of the 'Charge of the Light Brigade' in the small entrance Hall and several others of Tredegar family members, carpets in the small Hall and the parlour, furniture in the hall and parlour. These were in the community side of the house and not used by the school. In this way, the spirit of all that Tredegar House had brought to its history was maintained as far as possible. During the whole of the summer holidays, before the new opening, an army of sisters - those who would form part of the Tredegar. House community and others from neighbouring communities - spent each day cleaning, polishing, carting, carrying, arranging furniture etc. It was hard work and a frantic rush to get things ready. Eventually all was in order and school opened on the scheduled date. The first assembly in the main hall at Tredegar House was an occasion for celebration. Settling in was no problem once we got started and the pupils, moving from Stow Hill, and other new ones, really appreciated the ambiance of being educated in such splendid surroundings."

- However, all was not easy going as she explains here,

"I'm not sure of the date but it couldn't have been more than 18 months, or two years, after we had settled there, I came down the main stairs early one morning and to my horror I saw complete destruction, where the ceiling had fallen, and the floor covered with debris.

Can you imagine the panic? What to do?

Classes cancelled, builders contacted, plan of work drawn up...etc. It was realised that the floor could not support the weight of desks and school furniture and that all would have to be made safe. The beautiful ceiling with its molded decoration would have to be replaced with something more practical and enduring. Advice was sought and it was decided that steel girders were needed to support the weight. While regretting the lost beauty, the criteria now was safety, and at that time we never envisioned that the status of the school would change, calling for our eventual leaving Tredegar House."

- During the convent years, the first Saturday in July was a very important day in the town's calendar as it was the St Joseph's School Fete. This was the only day in the year when the grounds were open to the public, and they came in their thousands. There were pony rides, go-carts, boats on the lake, fancy dress competitions, entertainment and refreshments. The Newport buses used to change their routes to transport people to the House and there was a pony and trap to ferry the elderly and those with limited mobility from the bus stop to the house. If you look back in the archives of the Argus you will see what a big social event it was.

## HOW WAS THE BUILDING USED IN THE CONVENT DAYS?

### GROUND FLOOR

**New Hall** was the Assembly Hall and dining area for day pupils with packed lunches

**Dining room** was the music room.

**Gilt Room** was the Art Room for most of the time but, as the school expanded it became a classroom. The Art Room moved to the **Laundry**.

\***New Parlour** was the Chapel.

\***Side Hall** was a Waiting Room.

\***Morning Room** was Reverend Mother's Parlour.

\*NB. The Victorian Wing was used for the Community of Sisters. It was not used by pupils, except the Chapel.

**Office under stairs** was the Library.

**Mess Room** was the Science Lab.

**Butler's Pantry** was the Chaplains Room.

### FIRST FLOOR

**First floor rooms** were classrooms and study rooms.

"**Chamber next to ye best**" was Sixth Form Common Room,

**Master's Bed Chamber** was the Staffroom,

**Cedar closet** was the Headteacher's office.

Along the White Corridor opposite was the Boarders Common Room.

NB There were no bedrooms on this floor during the School years.

### SECOND FLOOR

**Second floor rooms** were dormitories for boarders and sisters. In the early days of the Comprehensive, there were some lessons taught on this floor.

### KITCHENS

The **Kitchens** were used to provide meals for the boarders and the sisters.

**Servant's Hall** was the boarders' Refectory.

**Housekeepers Room** was the sisters' refectory.

### OUT BUILDINGS

**Orangery** was the Biology Lab.

**Stables** were used as woodwork and metalwork rooms in the Comprehensive school.

**Riding School** was the Gym (flagstones on floor, ouch!) the Exam Hall, and hall for school productions. A stage was erected at the far end. This room was also used for assemblies during the Comprehensive years

**Brew House** was used for cookery and needlework.

**Morgan Room** was the canteen for day pupils who had school meals. These meals were delivered daily by the Newport School Meals Service. There was also a small flat where the mother of one of the sisters lived.

**To be continued....**