

“Spring is the time of plans and projects.” Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*

In spite of the unseasonably cold Spring weather, I can't help feeling a sense of excitement and optimism as we embark on our second season under National Trust custodianship. Our first season finished very strongly. In total, we welcomed over 44,000 visitors to the house and gardens; an increase of 75% on the previous year. Typical visitor comments included; 'Wonderful house and staff were exceptionally welcoming. I look forward to visiting again. Particularly enjoyed the informality and the encouragement to touch, sit and enjoy everything'; 'Staff were brilliant, informative, and lovely to the children. Next time we will stay longer' and 'Took in this stop after our holiday in York. So glad we did, one of the best N.T. houses we've visited.' There is no doubt that things were rather chaotic at times as we all settled in to new roles and new or different ways of doing things but the overwhelmingly positive comments we received from visitors throughout the year are a testament to the hard work of every member of our burgeoning Team Tredegar!

Already this year we are becoming more organised and responding to many of the other helpful comments and ideas we received during 2012. The 2013 events leaflet is about to go to print ready to give out to visitors over the Easter weekend. This will also be distributed in leaflet sites throughout South East Wales to increase the awareness of our events programme and attract more visitors. We are trialling a new route into the gardens which allows visitors easy access to the toilets and the tea rooms before and after their visit. We are responding to requests for more information about the house and Morgan family by offering daily introductory talks for visitors and we are working with our volunteers to develop a broader programme of short volunteer-led talks on a variety of subjects. We have extended our opening hours slightly to allow earlier entry into the house and garden and we will be running a series of 'Late Night Friday' openings on the last Friday of the month in May to September so even more people can have the opportunity to enjoy a visit here. We have even managed to place a few more signs around the property to prevent visitors from getting so lost...there will be more to come!

One of the most frequent requests from visitors last year was to be able to see more rooms. To this end, I am delighted that The Friends of Tredegar House have agreed to curate an exhibition about the school era in the Derelict Room at the top of the main staircase that will open later in the year. It is also wonderful news that The Friends have generously agreed to fund the restoration of the Sir Briggs monument in the Cedar Garden. This is particularly fitting in the year in which we mark the centenary of Godfrey Morgan's death.

As a team; we listen to and discuss all the constructive feedback we receive concerning how we might improve our new visitor offer at Tredegar House. We may not always be able to act on it quickly but it will undoubtedly help us to shape our thoughts and plans for the future. We would like to encourage all Friends of Tredegar House to be part of our journey so if you have any thoughts or comments you would like to share then please email getinvolvedtredegar@nationaltrust.org.uk or write to me at Tredegar House, Newport NP10 8YW. Now is the perfect time to share your thoughts as 'Spring is the time of plans and projects'.

Joanna Cartwright, Property Manager