

Friends News

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Spring 2015



Musings from the Manor



As the saying goes.... we are getting there!

In terms of the building works we are on the home run now. The team from Taliesin are finishing off the boxing in of all the pipe work and electrical distribution boards in the little room off the parlour and oiling the new staircase to protect it as I write. Two pieces of furniture to disguise the radiators still need to be brought on site - the pieces that are already here look as though they have been here for ages and really finish the visual interpretation of each room off nicely.

I will be doing what's called a 'snagging inspection' this week so that the architect and I can pick up on all those annoying little details that need sorting out before the interior of the manor is handed back to us - hopefully on 16th March. Mostly it's things like making sure all the old cable clips have been removed, little stretches of new cable are disguised where necessary, some loose floorboards are screwed down firmly and oak plugs inserted to cover the screws and some small plaster repairs. I will even be checking all the new handrails to make sure that little rough burrs have been removed. No detail will be too small for Sophie and I to note! Once that is done I will be wandering round with the paint box to disguise the red call points for the alarm system - they don't have to be red in an historic house - just functional, as it is the staff that will operate them in an emergency and they know where they are.



We have furniture to move around the manor to reflect the changes in the use of some of the rooms once we get the interiors handed back and then we will get all the rest of the bed hangings and linen back on the bed that will be the guest bed rather than the colonel's bed from now on. The local dry cleaning company has been kept busy recently! What will be the most exciting part of the job will be finally getting the furniture up into the attics so that at last the servants quarters will look habitable. Rhys Harris has been busy making the new beds and the sewing ladies have had the unenviable task of making all the sheets and mattress covers for the beds. They have done an amazing job and the attics are going to look so different from before. We still have the chests and boxes for each servant to complete so the attics will be a work in progress as we keep adding more furniture and objects.

The last major part of the building works is the wheelchair ramp to the staircase tower door - it will have a pennant stone retaining wall and add to the feel and look of the rear of the manor rather than being purely functional. Once that is complete and therefore the staircase can be exited in an emergency, we will be able to start using it.



The gardeners are now starting to get the rear garden into some semblance of order - the huge concrete blocks that were keeping the scaffolding secure have been removed and a small gardening team is being gathered to help with getting the gardens back up to scratch. The area that we have been doing the children's activities under will eventually become the wood store for the manor so that we can keep up with demand for the additional open fires. The vegetable garden is being fenced to see if we can try and grow some veg this year without the rabbits eating it as soon as it is planted out...it seems like Spring has finally sprung and we can see the end of the building works at

last. I hope you will come and see the results of all the hard work that has gone into creating the changes at the Manor. I look forward to sharing the new look manor with you over the next few months.

Diane - General Manager



Money Matters

You will recall from our last newsletter that we were very fortunate to receive a grant of £2080 from the Ashley Family Foundation through the Community Foundation In Wales.

It will probably not come as any surprise if I tell you that Diane, General Manager of the Manor, has already spent £1500 on linen and is sourcing £400 worth of blankets to supplement those blankets which have kindly been donated to us.

So what has been made? The sewing ladies have been extremely busy over the last few weeks. In between repairing and making new costumes they have made 16 sheets and 12 mattress covers so just 4 more mattress covers to go. I also understand that they are also working on some pillows cases/covers and the first of many shirts/shifts.

They have also been very enterprising and have recycled the velvet bags the linen was delivered in. These bags have now been made into cushions which will be displayed in the ladies chamber and hopefully before too long you will be able to visit and see the final results in the newly furnished attic.

Gareth Jones - Treasurer

Easter Activity Days

Fancy some fun with the children or grandchildren this Easter weekend?



The Manor can pride itself on providing a high standard of activity days planned throughout the various school holiday periods.

Good Friday and Easter Monday will be no exception.

The activities themselves will begin at 11am - 4pm with children being able to make a variety of crafts including Easter crackers, decorating eggs, making rabbits out of old CD's and of course the must have Easter bonnet of the season which will be displayed in a parade later in the day.

An Easter egg trail will take place between 11am – 1pm and for those that love exploring for bugs, creepy crawlies and scary things that like to live under wood piles then a trip around the garden with The Green Man is a must!

Entry for the activity sessions is £5 for a child and the accompanying adult is free of charge; additional adults will be charged £1. This does not include entry to the Manor itself.

Hopefully we'll see you there.

Reminder - Volunteering at The Manor

Llancaiach has its very own Volunteer Co-Ordinator, the lovely Jan Fitzgerald. Every Friday Jan can be found at the Manor ensuring that there are volunteers in place to support the additional, and sometimes unseen, work that happens at the Manor.



Having joined the Friends back in the very early stages she has undertaken this role for almost ten years. There are always volunteering opportunities for supporting activity events and for those of you with green fingers, they are looking to ensure the gardens are restored to their former glory following the recent building work.

Whilst the sewing group are very well established they are always keen to welcome new faces. It is important to note though that this is not an opportunity to learn how to sew and so a reasonably sound knowledge of needle craft is important.

As you will all be aware the Urdd is coming to Caerphilly Borough in May and more importantly to Llancaiach. If you are a fluent\confident welsh speaker and have time to offer either for the Friends or within the Manor itself please contact Jan at the Manor on 01443 412248.

The Sessions

February half term saw the holding of the Quarterly Sessions where Colonel Prichard had the responsibility for dealing with the petty crimes within the locality.

Local woman, Dorcas Tilly, was being charged with keeping a disorderly victualling house on the Sabbath. Judged to be guilty, she spent several nights at the lock up in Gelligaer until the Saturday when she was tied to the back of a cart and dragged through the streets whist being whipped.



A casualty of Dorcas Tilly's wayward behaviour was the eleven year old Isaac Edmunds. A cousin of Rachel the Under Dairy Maid at the Manor, Isaac was the victim of too much usquebaugh (a moonshine-like drink). Isaac's age meant that he could not receive any formal punishment for his behaviour however his father saw to it that he would receive a severe beating and undertake extra chores on the farm as a consequence for his actions.

Pottery at the Manor

On first arriving at the Manor it appears to be equipped in a somewhat basic manner befitting of the time. However there is a surprising amount of information that is interwoven within the artefacts that would probably take several visits for one to absorb.

The tell-tale signs for pottery are often in the colour and design.

On the windowsill of The Parlour there is a lovely set of Metropolitan Ware. Made in London, the price would have reflected this making it only really affordable for the gentry.

With its red clay base giving it its identity, it is decorated in puritan epithets that Colonel Prichard would have found appealing.



Lacock Abbey - Saturday June 13th 2015

Set in rural Wiltshire, Lacock village is famous for its picturesque streets, historic buildings and more recently as a TV and film location.

The Abbey, located at the heart of the village within its own woodland grounds, is a quirky country house of various architectural styles, built upon the foundations of a former nunnery. Visitors can experience the atmosphere of the medieval rooms and cloister court, giving a sense of the Abbey's monastic past.

The museum celebrates the achievements of former Lacock resident, William Henry Fox Talbot, famous for his contributions to the invention of photography.

On your visit you can discover the history of the Abbey and newly opened rooms, take a walk in the grounds and enjoy spring bulbs, summer borders and the greenhouse.

Wander through the historic village with many great shops and places to have a meal, and don't miss the wonderful changing exhibitions in the upper gallery of the Fox Talbot Museum.

(the above is taken from the official Lacock website)

Prices - £ 10 Friends

£ 12 Non Friends

Please contact Lynne Lock 07745333123 or

Jan Fitzgerald on 01443 815469 to book a place.

Booking form attached.

Ghost Tours

Have you ever fancied getting up close and personal with some 'extra' inhabitants of the Manor?

Whilst it doesn't tick a box for everyone, there is no disputing that there have been a number of 'experiences' that have been difficult to explain.

It is not unusual for the staff to hear footsteps walking across the upper floors when they clearly know that no-one is up there.

Recordings are taken during ghost tours but it is only afterwards when they are played back that additional 'noises' are heard. Interestingly, on a Halloween tour, a voice was heard to very clearly speak to the person leading the tour and calls him by his name. Again, this was only picked up after the staff listened to the recording.

There have also been sightings in the gardens of a man in Victorian style dress and reports of him being seen on the top road outside the Manor.

Whether it is for you or not, the ghost tours have been popular with visitors for a number of years and full details can be found on the main Manor website. Why not treat yourself to a spooky night out with friends and family?

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## **Rachel Edmunds – Under Dairy Maid**



In her mid-twenties, Rachel came to the Manor when her father Iestyn heard about the position. Coming from a tenant farm and with her father being a drover, she was ably equipped to take on the tasks of a under dairy maid.

Her day begins, as with a lot of the other servants, at sunrise and sees her start the milking of the family's herd of 15 cows. She would have then milked them again at the end of the day.

Her responsibilities would have included making the butter and cheese for both the family and the household servants. Whilst not a difficult process, it was though a long one that involved changing cloths regularly and the very physical side of separating the curds and whey.

Aspirations for Rachel would have been typical for the time and her position in life, to include maybe becoming Head Dairy Maid or making a good marriage.

Sarah, who is the character Rachel Edmunds, has long links to the Manor as her father was a volunteer himself for a number of years. As a member of the Sealed Knot as a child, Sarah has always had a passion for history and by her own admission spent a lot of her childhood dressed in 17<sup>th</sup> Century clothes. She is now able to combine her historical knowledge with her degree in theatre studies and share it with visitors on a daily basis.



## **Time Capsule**

The story of the Heritage Lottery funded conservation work is to be preserved for future generations in a Time Capsule that will be hidden in the Manor. It will include recordings of interviews with the builders and with staff members and interpreters that have had to work on site as the works have progressed. It will also include many photographs of the Manor, as the works have advanced through to completion. There will also be photographs of the individuals that have made the work possible, such as the Friends of Llancaiach Fawr who have done an exceptional job fundraising to help furnish the new areas.

It is hoped that the capsule will help people understand why the Manor was subject to such conservation work, and commemorate the individuals whose hard work has made it all possible.

If you have any suggestions as to what else might help provide a snapshot of this part of the Manors history then contact Sean Stevenson, Development and Outreach Officer on [steves@caerphilly.gov.uk](mailto:steves@caerphilly.gov.uk)

**Sean Stevenson**

## **Check out the link**

<http://www.visitwales.com/holidays-breaks/family-holidays/llancaiach-fawr>

If you have access to the internet, follow the link above. It looks like a good place to visit!!!



## DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

### Quiz Night

Friday 13<sup>th</sup> maybe unlucky for some but not for our quiz winners ‘ **Ap Ray Ski**’.

Team members Emma, Sue, Sue, Simon and Den powered to victory answering some rather unusual questions at The Friends annual quiz night in June 2014.

As tradition dictates, this year’s quiz will be hosted by last year’s winners, so get the date in your diary early.

**Friday June 26<sup>th</sup> 2015** : to be held in the Conservatory at the Manor starting promptly at **7.30pm.**

Entry is for teams of up to six people: Friends £2.50, Non Friends £3.00

It is an evening of harmless fun, playing for the honour of the title Quiz Champions!!!!



It would be lovely to welcome yourselves and maybe your friends for the evening.

### **And finally.....**

It feels as though the Manor is entering a new and exciting phase and many of the Friends have been able to play a direct part in the support package necessary to carry off such a large scale undertaking.

Here’s to the continued success of Caerphilly Borough’s jewel in the crown.

*Happy Easter*