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Personal links between landlord and tenant on a Welsh estate: an absentee landlord's influence on the social life of an estate village in the nineteenth century

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Notes on contributor

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Abstract

This Presidential Address was delivered at the Conference of the Society for Folk Life Studies held at Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 2011; the major theme of the conference was 'Links' in terms of temporal, geographical, and social interconnections. It is a case study taken from a larger and more wide-ranging study of a small but significant part of the Glamorgan Estate belonging to family of the Earls of Plymouth, the Castle and village of St Fagans. This is now the home of the National History Museum of Wales.¹ The paper examines the social life and leisure of a rural estate's community in south Wales and the personal relationship with, and influence of, its English landowner.

Keywords

Landed estate; sports history; rural social life; Wales

This case study is of an estate in microcosm, and is perhaps slightly unusual as it does not examine the economic, geographic, or even socio-economic history of the estate. Instead, it looks at the way in which the overwhelming influence of an estate and its landowner could affect the leisure and personal lives of the tenantry and, particularly, of the workers and cottagers. There are many studies of estate housing, perhaps fewer of standards of living, health and diet, and very few of the leisure pursuits which, in many cases, brought the landowner into direct contact with not only farming tenants, but with estate workers and labourers, who made up the majority of the inhabitants of most landed estates up to and even after the period of the First World War.

Although estate celebrations are often recorded within studies of family and estate histories, and they are undoubtedly an important feature of village social interaction with the landowner, it is rarer for studies to include other aspects of the social activity of the villagers, which may not include the involvement of the owner or his family in such a conspicuous way. In addition to a review of the formal estate celebrations, therefore, this paper includes the development of sporting clubs in the village and the contribution and involvement of Lord Windsor (created Earl of Plymouth of the second creation in 1905) and his family, and looks at the differing levels of society actively involved. In addition, other forms of social and leisure activity which existed within the village will be

reviewed, including the running and use of the village public house, to assess the quality of life and the estate's contribution to this, in St Fagans during the period in question. It is certainly valid to examine accounts of the more formal celebrations in detail, as it is possible to glean genuine sentiment from the available accounts. These tend to be expressed in somewhat flowery verbiage, and are usually published at length in local newspapers.

During the pre-1850 period, there is little evidence of estate involvement in social activities apart from the family celebrations which stand out like beacons in the long years of non-residence. Parties held to celebrate marriages or the birth or coming-of-age of heirs provided a way in which landowners could involve their tenants in the affairs of their family. Such celebrations were a long-standing tradition practised on most large estates in Britain, and Wales was no exception to the rule. They offered an opportunity to show largesse to the tenantry and workers, and to receive due homage in return, which came in the form of long loyal addresses made at dinners and often presented in more durable form, duly framed and glazed. Apart from tenants' and workers' dinners, there were teas for the wives and children, sports and games, dancing and fireworks. In some cases, medals were struck or mugs produced in honour of the individual concerned, and distributed to the populace. Descriptions of the celebrations at St Fagans held in honour of the marriage of the owner's son Robert Clive and Lady Mary Bridgeman in 1852 stretched over two long columns in the *Cardiff & Merthyr Guardian*. The event included the regular discharge of cannon near the new school, evergreen decorations and coloured lights, and nineteen foot long painted transparencies of the couples' coats of arms displayed in the Castle yard.² As well as an excuse for enjoying a good time, these occasions could be an opportunity for the tenantry to show that they preferred a situation in which there was a resident landlord. A full account of the welcome given in November 1853 to Robert Clive and his young family on their arrival in St Fagans, to make it their home, is recorded in the *Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian*. This account lays much emphasis on the pleasure felt by villagers that members of the family were to be resident after some centuries of absenteeism.

Great Rejoicings at St Fagans

The arrival of Robert Clive Esq. MP, Lady Mary Clive, and their infant daughter at St Fagans Castle was on Saturday last, the cause of general rejoicings in this neighbourhood. This interesting event, of which but very brief notice had been given, was hailed with feelings of heartfelt enthusiasm, and produced scenes of pleasurable animation which nothing but unfeigned respect and rooted affection could excite amongst a whole community.

... upwards of one hundred well-mounted horsemen assembled ... to pay their manly homage to one who is the representative of a family highly esteemed here - ...

as soon as the carriage came in sight, an excellent brass band played - 'See the Conquering Hero Comes', - and those assembled filled the air with their cheering, - cannon reverberated from hill to hill, betokening the whole of the Ely Valley that an event had occurred in which ALL had an absorbing interest. Again and again were the cheers renewed, and the enthusiasm of the people could not be restrained, for the horses were taken from the carriage, and their places taken by the peasantry who drew it in triumph to St Fagans Castle, preceded by a most respectable procession, and headed by a band of music.

... When the cavalcade had reached the Castle Green it halted, and Mr William Lewis, an old and most respectable and respected tenant on the estate, read the subjoined address with much feeling and discriminating taste:-

We, the tenants of the St Fagans Castle estate, beg most respectfully to express out deep satisfaction at your taking up residence amongst us.

Our forefathers upon this the Glamorganshire portion of your truly noble parents' estate, have not for generations experienced the gratification and derived the advantages of having a landlord, or any of his family, residing upon it. We, therefore, hail your arrival, sir, and that of your amiable and noble consort and infant daughter, at this ancient Castle of your ancestors, with feelings of the greatest delight ...³

The many references to 'goodwill' and 'loud cheers', (and the fact that the writer felt that these feelings came 'from the heart'), are some testimony to the importance of the occasion registered by the

villagers.

It cannot be overemphasised that the permanent residence of the family within the village was considered to be of the utmost importance not only by cottagers, but also tenants. A resident owner was always to be preferred to an absentee, however patriarchal that absentee might be. In addition, the lavish entertainment, at the expense of the estate, was very much appreciated. Other celebrations, recorded in the local press, followed in 1857 with the birth of a male heir. This was a highly significant event, particularly on an estate where male heirs had not been noted for their good health or longevity, and where in fact the current owner was a woman. These celebrations followed the usual pattern of a separate dinner for the tenantry, followed by 'further rejoicings in which the village populace should join'.⁴ On this occasion, as the Castle was now occasionally inhabited by the family, the dinner was held in a suitably decorated marquee. Not only were there official celebrations, but many of the village houses had been decorated by their inhabitants with flags and wreaths. An even more welcome fact was that all of the workers were given an extra week's wages in honour of the occasion, which no doubt lent an added fervour to the celebrations.

During the speeches, reference was made to Liberality of the landlady⁵ and the fact that the meeting 'was a spontaneous one on the part of her tenantry to show respect to her ladyship and her honourable family', the response to this was vehement applause and a toast three times three and one cheer more, followed by prolonged cheering, as was also the toast to the young couple themselves. One of the main reasons for the extent of these celebrations was undoubtedly a sense of relief, as the presence of an heir meant the smooth continuance in the running of the estate. The tenants acknowledged this in their speeches.

The village sports which followed were probably typical of many rural areas:

These consist of running in sacks, racing with wheelbarrows (blind folded), donkey races, and steeples (sic) chases (the riders in full dress), and climbing the greasy pole, at the top of which is to be placed a beautiful beaver hat, gaily decorated with coloured ribbons, as a prize.⁶

The role of the estate in the continuance of traditional activities in the rural community is evidenced by the fact that almost identical activities were still taking place as part of Castle garden fetes over half a century later, recalled by Andrew Pettigrew as a boy living in the Gardens House.⁷

One of the most common reasons for great estate celebration was the coming-of-age of the heir. This event was celebrated on every estate of any size throughout Britain. For the coming-of-age of Robert Clive's son, Lord Windsor, in 1878, a book was published recording his lordship's ancestry and recording every press report of the celebrations. Copies of this were given to every tenant and worker. Parties were held in every part of the estate; there were three celebrations in Worcestershire, two in Shropshire, two in Flintshire and seven in Glamorgan (which included **two** separate rejoicings in both St Fagans and Penarth).⁸ According to John Davies, the trustees of the Bute estate in Glamorgan used similar, though grander, celebrations to re-establish the influence of the estate and in particular the return of the marquess:

The trustees saw the third marquess's coming of age as an opportunity to emphasise the prestige, power and benevolence of the Bute estate and staged celebrations on an enormous scale. Disraeli, who witnessed them, sought in his novel *Lothair* to interpret the motives of the trustees. 'What I wish to effect', said Mr Giles [Lothair's solicitor], 'is to produce among all classes an impression adequate to the occasion. I wish the lord and the tenantry alike to feel they have a duty to perform'.⁹

Although the Windsor celebrations were not so grand, the impression is given from the published accounts of the occasions that there was considerable *personal* feeling involved. There was a dinner for the tenantry, many fine speeches on the date of the coming-of-age, and the whole village took part in a further celebration in the October of that year, at which Lord Windsor was present:

the historic little village reserved itself for a grand display of enthusiasm until Lord Windsor could himself be present to witness it ... At the railway station, at the village inn, in front of the neatly-thatched old-fashioned cottages, flags waved, and festoons were hung; words of

welcome and good wishes, in English and Welsh, were worked in leaves and flowers, and crossed the high road from tree to tree; evergreen arches also indicated the glad nature of the day's festival ... Every homestead in the village bore witness to the blessings of peace and the excellent manorial management of the Windsor family.¹⁰

Not only was there a dinner for the tenantry and clergy of the county, but also for 400 of the workmen and 100 schoolchildren. The caterers provided 300 chickens, nearly a ton of fish, no less than four tons of meat, and 'an innumerable quantity of peaches, pines, apples, pears, grapes, nuts etc.; twenty-five hogsheads of ale; and wine to the extent that Mr. George was obliged to telegraph [to his company in Cheltenham] for a second supply'.¹¹ In the midst of the official presentation addresses and formal speeches, the workmen took the opportunity to give their own private gift to Lord Windsor, a Bible inscribed from 'the workmen of St Fagans' to which Lord Windsor responded that, 'I shall regard it as a pledge of your regard for me, and assurance of the mutual regard we shall always have for each other'.¹²

Such celebrations continued into the twentieth century; medals were struck to celebrate the coming-of-age of the (by then) Lord Plymouth's heir Other, Lord Windsor, in 1905. A white metal version was given to every tenant and cottager, and bronze and white metal medals given to friends and relatives.¹³ Due to Other's early death in 1908, the second son Ivor then had a coming-of-age celebration in February 1910, which was muted due to continuing mourning for his brother, though extra celebrations were promised later in the year.¹⁴ Wedding celebrations continued to be held; an invitation card to a garden party at St Fagans Castle on 7 September 1921, to meet Lord and Lady [Ivor] Windsor after their marriage, addressed to estate worker Charles Gardner and his wife, survives in the St Fagans Museum collections.¹⁵

However, it was not only on such formal occasions that the family and the estate provided the means for recreation and for forming personal links within St Fagans. One area of the social life of the village which was accessible to every level of the population was sporting activity. Here the estate played a considerable part in the provision of facilities, with the active involvement of Lord Windsor, certainly from the time of his coming-of-age onwards. Prior to this there is very little evidence of sports in the village apart from the cricket team, which apparently was encouraged in the first instance during the early 1860s by the rector, William David, newly arrived in the Parish, and as a young man, no doubt more active than his elderly predecessor. The biography of his son Edgeworth David relates the family interest in sports:

The comfortable rectory, where visitors were entertained so constantly and hospitably, the tennis parties and cricket matches of the English summer, the dances and skating by torchlight on St Fagan Castle ponds.¹⁶

Lady Paget (Lord Windsor's mother in law) also records the clergy involvement in cricket at later date:

a cricket match at St Fagan's, in which Windsor and Oti played against the surrounding clergy, some of the reverend gentlemen being fat and mature.¹⁷

The records of the cricket club, now deposited in the Museum Archive¹⁸, are very thin for these early years, when it seems that the village cricket was played on land near the agent's house. Jim Matthews, a former estate, employee, wrote of a period around 1900:

The cricket pitch in those days was in front of the Greenwood where Mr Robert Forrest, the agent, lived. What a sight it was to see the large tent in the field on a sunny Saturday afternoon, with the attendants carrying the necessary refreshments from the Plymouth Arms! The leading of the team onto the field by Lord Windsor was the signal for loud cheers by the villagers and visitors.¹⁹

A newspaper report of an early match at St Fagans seems to suggest that the club was specifically set up for the recreation of the villagers:

A club was established at St Fagan's some three or four years ago, chiefly for the recreation of the villagers during the long summer evenings; but throughout this period few of those who have emerged from their 'teens' have been seen in the cricket field, either attacking or

defending a wicket. On Friday last however, eleven sturdy sons of the soil summoned sufficient fortitude to appear on the ground, fully prepared to redeem a challenge which they had been given a week or so previously to meet in strenuous combat eleven members of the club resident in the Parish. This friendly home match of St Fagan's against St Fagan's had been the subject of so much previous discussion and had excited so much interest, that all work was set aside for the day, and almost the whole village turned out to witness the great encounter.²⁰

The fact that the men were excused from work indicates a certain amount of co-operation from the estate, though there is no mention of any interest from the Family. This is not particularly surprising as the estate was owned by the now elderly Baroness Windsor and her daughter-in-law Lady Mary Windsor-Clive, Lord Windsor being still at his Essex prep school.

Lord Windsor's first recorded appearance playing cricket at St Fagans was in 1870, for a 'W. David XI', captained by the vicar and including his sons. By this time, Lord Windsor had been introduced to the game at Daventry and later Eton, and despite a nasty injury, had developed an attachment to the game which he was never to lose, and which he passed on to all of his sons (see Fig.1). A pitch was later provided on estate land, created entirely at estate expense, and in 1904 the first pavilion was built. At this time Lord Windsor also brought the first cricket professionals to the club, to be employed as groundsmen. Gus Witts, a former gardener, remembered the club professional, Mr Hurst, when he first started playing cricket in about 1919.²¹ This was not highly paid work, however, and even as late as 1927, W. Towse was paid £3.10 per fortnight as groundsman, while an estate carpenter's weekly wage was £3.16s.6d.²² Towse came to St Fagans from Hull prior to 1914, and worked at St Fagans for many years, firstly as a cricket professional and later as groundsman. He is mentioned in numerous newspaper reports as 'opening with Lord Windsor' and being commended for his deadly bowling.²³

In 1905 a new house, The Court, was built in this area, and when the house was leased to Lord Glanely in later years, Lord Plymouth did not allow the cricket club to lapse. A new ground was made available on Penhefyd farmland. Since this was the home farm by this time, there was no loss to any tenant farmer, and the pitch was once more in closer proximity to the village itself. The new pavilion was moved, pane by pane, to the new site, and at the same time, a bowling green was laid for the newly established bowls team.

One of the social highlights of the year was the Cricket Club annual dinner. A number of menu cards survive for these dinners in the Museum Archive.²⁴ The tenth annual dinner, held at the Plymouth Arms in 1908, was chaired by the Earl himself accompanied by his surviving sons, Ivor and Archer, both keen cricketers. A nine course menu was followed by many toasts and numerous musical interludes, many of which were performed by members of the team, particularly Charles Culverwell, (the estate painter, who was well known for his good singing voice), and William Spiller, (son of the village policeman), who later played cricket for Glamorgan and also played rugby for Wales.²⁵ Lord Plymouth himself expressed his attitude towards the club in a speech to members on 23 September 1926:

The chief reason for my keeping up the ground here is to enable those on my Estate and others living in St Fagans to have an opportunity of playing cricket under good conditions. I do not want the primary object of the Club lost sight of, and I wish the management of the Club to be kept as far as possible in the hands of those engaged on my Estate.²⁶

During the period 1933-1944, the estate was spending approximately £400 annually on the upkeep of the ground and pavilion. The ledger for this period details work done by village wheelwright Thomas Matthews, (making a grass barrow and repainting and re-lettering the score boards), by estate foreman William Slocombe, (making a scoreboard), and the purchase of a clock for the pavilion.²⁷ Even at this later date, involvement with the club was not restricted to upkeep of the ground, members of the family were actively involved as playing members of the team and regular fixtures were also arranged between the two estates of Hewell Grange and St Fagans.

Ernie Harris was a star player for St Fagans during the inter-war and post-war years, and also played for Glamorgan; his grandmother lived in St Fagans and used to provide the much praised cricket teas. He recalled the interest which the Earl took in the club:

The Earl of Plymouth was always the captain of the side, and so the vice captain normally took over for nearly all the games of the season, but the Earl would play when he felt like it ... He was awfully keen and very knowledgeable. [He was at St Fagans] probably a month a year - when the flag was flying, we knew he was home and might play; he usually played in one game, two at the most. ... And the Plymouth family used to support the side quite regularly when they were home. They'd all come down from the Castle in entourage, the Countess and the children, sitting on the pavilion steps.²⁸

The increasing involvement of the family in the Castle and the village is reflected in the increase in the variety and number of sporting clubs established during the years at the end of the nineteenth century and during the period leading up to the 1914-18 War. There were rugby, hockey, and football teams, mostly consisting of estate employees, and a bowling green was laid when the cricket ground was moved to its present location near Penhefyd Farm. A tennis club was located on ground adjoining the river, where hockey was played in the winter, and a shared clubhouse was built. A curling rink was laid on land in Coed Bychan woods.

An analysis of the team photographs of the various sports teams would seem to indicate a class split in membership to some extent, though age may, of course, have had an equal effect. The cricket team had members drawn from across the board, including from Lord Plymouth, office workers, tenants and estate staff, and until the 1930s also contained few outsiders. In a list of the teams for the 1922 season, of twenty three players, eighteen at least are villagers. These include the village policeman, local farmers, sons of the landlord of the Plymouth Arms, the blacksmith, gardeners and estate workers. The position today is quite the opposite, with no playing members who reside in the village, though there are a few social members.

The football, rugby and hockey teams all seem to have had a number of members in common, and virtually all were young men from families of estate staff or tradesmen within the village (see Fig.2). The rugby teams for 1900-2 contained the then very young Culverwell brothers, from an old village family, who also played for the cricket team for many years. Charlie Culverwell proved to be an outstanding player and also went on to play rugby for Cardiff and Pontypridd. Both were sons of the village shopkeeper and both worked for the estate. In the same teams were John Littleton, the schoolmaster's son, and Colin Mildon, another estate worker. The team of 1904-5 contained a number of the same members, with the addition of Willie Spiller, another Welsh international, along with several familiar village family names. It is not known exactly how long the rugby and hockey teams continued, but it seems unlikely they were reinstated after the First World War, when many of the younger men were killed.

The bowls team attracted older players, and included not only Lord Plymouth himself, but also tenant farmers and estate workers. This sports club also held annual dinners, at which Lord Plymouth frequently presided. It was sufficiently prestigious to host an Australian touring team in 1911.²⁹ Mrs Mullet, daughter of the then estate sawyer, remembered her father playing bowls frequently with Lord Plymouth:

Oh, yes, they used to visit you, come around, because I know when my father was playing bowls, he was a good bowler my father; the late Earl's father, he used to come around down about lunchtime when my father was having his lunch, and he used to tap the door and walk in, you'd never know when he was going to knock on the door; and he used to say to my father, 'Come on, Joe, game of bowls this afternoon, no work', course my father'd have that afternoon off to go and play bowls.³⁰

The tennis club was always considered to be somewhat 'apart'. While it included the daughters of Matthews the wheelwright³¹ and later Mary Roper, daughter of Ben Roper, estate clerk, who were loyal members, from the time of the establishment of the club in 1910, large numbers of members did not belong to the village. Although preferential terms were available for village residents, there was

more reluctance to join, whereas the club has always been very popular with outsiders (**Fig.3**). Even Mrs Kathleen Langdon, (who might be termed a 'middle class' villager, as the daughter of estate office worker H. Daw, and the wife of a substantial tenant farmer), felt out of place there, despite being a member:

The tennis club was ruled by a lot of people outside the village, although I was a member and Phryswith [Matthews] and Bertha [Matthews] and Mary Roper - she was a big worker with the club and did a lot of refreshments - they used to have super teas. A lot of people came from outside; ... They tended to monopolise it a bit and I never felt really happy there.³²

It may be significant that, from 1908, the family had their own tennis courts and never played at the village club, whereas they did take considerable part in cricket and bowls clubs.

The curling rink, constructed by the estate towards the end of the nineteenth century, seems to have been the preserve of the senior members of estate staff and some of the tenant farmers. This also gave Lord Windsor an opportunity to socialise with members of the estate staff and his tenants, though not with the craftsmen, as was the case with the bowls and cricket. Many of these men were of Scottish extraction, which may be significant. The only remaining evidence of the activity (apart from some memories, and curling stones used as doorstops in Lord Plymouth's home at Oakly Park), is provided by a number of photographs of the players, together with the remains of the concrete rink itself, at the edge of the Coed Bychan woodland (**see Fig.4**). The photographs show Hugh Pettigrew (head gardener) to have been a keen player, together with the Forrests, John Hunter, (estate bailiff of Penhefyd farm) and Edward Akers, (tenant at Pentrebane Farm). A rink was also constructed at Hewell Grange, the main family residence, and matches were arranged between the two estates, as they were for cricket and bowls. A. A. Pettigrew, brother to Hugh and head gardener at Hewell, recalls one such match in 1903:

On 17 January, 1903, I note a curling match on the ice, in which his Lordship played. Mr Robert Forrest had brought a team up from St Fagans. I have not noted the names, but my recollection is that the Hewell team was:

His Lordship, Mr Margesson, Mr Hugh Dixon and myself
St Fagans:

Mr R.Forrest, Mr W.Forrest, J.Hunter and H.A.Pettigrew.

This was one of many such games, the latest being about 1911. His Lordship keenly enjoyed the games.³³

The clubs seem to have been provided and supported with two ends in view: the first, to provide recreation within the village for the workforce and local people, the second to provide some opportunities for social interaction in the area in which Lord Plymouth was actively interested. In this the Plymouth family were following a long tradition of landlords, perhaps best expressed by Rowland Prothero, land agent to the duke of Bedford from 1898:

No better opportunity exists for making real friends with rural workers than that afforded by a village club for which you play regularly.³⁴

The Plymouth Arms has been the main public house in the village since at least the eighteenth century. Village tradition asserts that at one time there were at least two other inns in St Fagans.³⁵ Both sixteenth century buildings said once to have been inns are still standing, and the name of each features the word 'laurel' ('Laurel Cottage' and 'The Laurels'). This may provide some support for the tradition, as the suspension of an evergreen bough as an early 'inn sign' has given many houses similar names. By the middle of the nineteenth century, however, there seems to have been only the Plymouth Arms, as attested by an anonymous journalist of the Cardiff Times in 1863:

... in respect of public house accommodation, we think the villagers are well off in only having one. It is a good house, and the fact that the same landlord has occupied it twenty years may be taken as evidence that it has been decently conducted.³⁶

This is confirmed by Thomas Morgan in his essay of 1866:

There is only one hotel which is an ornament to the place; and the people who live there are a

credit to the neighbourhood.³⁷

Throughout its history, the inn was estate property, and was rented by a tenant who was frequently required to assist in estate matters, for example providing treats for the schoolchildren, organizing the catering for village celebrations, providing haulage when necessary, and beer for haymaking. The landlord for much of the middle of the nineteenth century was James Llewellyn, a native of St Fagans, whose name frequently appears not only in the Estate accounts, but also in Parish records where he was a prominent member of the overseers. He hosted the coming-of-age celebrations of Robert Windsor-Clive in 1845, and his son, Lord Windsor, in 1878. In addition to running the Plymouth Arms, he was also a tenant farmer, renting several pieces of land for this purpose.³⁸ On some occasions his entrepreneurial instincts brought him into conflict with the agent. In order to increase his trade he once tried to organise some Fat Stock sales in the village with local auctioneers D.T. Alexander. The agent's reply to a request for permission to hold such a sale, was blunt and to the point:

I am most reluctant to seem to put any impediment in the way of anyone in this neighbourhood benefiting themselves, but at the same time I have a simple duty to perform, and that is to state the opinions of the Family on the recent sales that took place in the village. For many reasons and amongst others owing to the fact that there is no Park surrounding the Castle ... the village requires to be kept more select and in order than otherwise would be the case, and if these sales were to be encouraged it would lead to making the place much more public than it is at present, and destroy the privacy the family have always endeavoured to promote. ... but I wish you to clearly understand these precautions are necessary owing to the proximity of the Public House, cottages &c to the Castle and grounds. ... I am surprised that Mr James Llewellyn should have again thought of the matter, after my very gentle remonstrance with him on the subject, but as he is rather given to making mountains out of molehills, I trust you will consider this letter as private.³⁹

His position as landlord since 1844⁴⁰ may have induced a sense of inviolability, and in fact he retained his tenancy and remained landlord until his death in 1895. It was at this time that the relationship between Lord Windsor and the Plymouth Arms changed. After the death of Llewellyn, the inn was taken in hand and completely rebuilt. When it re-opened, a manager was installed, employed by the estate. Lord Windsor's intentions were laid out in a newspaper article some years later:

A few years ago, Lord Windsor decided to try temperance reform on his own lines. His lordship's own words were: 'On some portions of the estate public-houses were prohibited altogether, but the result was not satisfactory. I believed a licensed victualler's house, in the true sense of the term, was very desirable.'

... The house was taken over, re-built, re-constituted, re-modelled so far as the management was concerned ... A trustworthy person was put in as manager, with definite instructions upon certain points. Here, again, are Lord Windsor's own words: - 'I provide the manager with the liquors, for the sale of which he has to render an account. For retailing these liquors he is paid a fixed salary, and be the takings small or great from this source, it is all the same; in fact, he is there to discountenance excessive drinking. My idea was to prevent drunkenness, and, at the same time, not to extinguish what I look upon as a necessity of social life.'⁴¹

These efforts attracted the attention of a newspaper cartoonist,⁴² whose work is preserved in an album of newspaper cuttings recording the years of Lord Windsor's mayoralty of Cardiff (see fig.5).

Considerable effort and expense was expended not only in the running of the establishment, but also the appearance of the building. A well-known local architect was employed, Edwin Seward, who had done some work on the Castle itself during the 1890s. This description of the exterior and interior of the new building was printed in an article in the *Western Mail* of 7 March 1896, where it is emphasised that public house was for refreshment and not drinking, and that the then manager was expected to prevent 'anything like drunkenness or disorder occurring on the premises.'⁴³ The experiment evidently had some success, as the writer of a later article gives unqualified approval to the new system:

As to the appointments of the hotel, they include all that is necessary. A spacious bar gives

accommodation to a goodly company of villagers who may drop in for a smoke and chat of a winter evening; a cosy little bar-parlour is provided for special accommodation; in a garden at the back of the house cycling and other parties may enjoy an al-fresco afternoon tea; a yard and stabling accommodation are ready for beast, carriage or the speedy bicycle; and a large room upstairs is at the disposal of the local benefit society branches or for public dinners and other meetings. ... But all who enter must be mindful to draw the line, for mine host has a watchful eye and a sturdy will to put the stop on at the necessary moment. Not that he needs to exercise his powers in this direction amongst his neighbours. The people of St Fagans know so well how safe is the path of moderation, and by this time the house is famed throughout the countryside as a place where comfort and good order are the prevailing rules.⁴⁴

The Plymouth Arms, whatever its management, certainly played an important role within the village, not only for social activities, but also as a meeting place for local societies such as the Ancient Order of Foresters. It was, however, very much a place of male meetings. Women did not go there, even though it was considered a very respectable house. Alick Slocombe, estate foreman, noted that it was 'a meeting place in the evenings for most of the local men, and the general topics were gardening, work, farming, pig keeping etc.'⁴⁵ According to Bert Warden, kitchen gardener, 'Generally people, especially women, did not go to the Plymouth Arms, unless it was a special occasion, such as a Christmas party, but not regularly.'⁴⁶ Oral evidence suggests that this may have been due to the general unwelcoming atmosphere, rather than any particular discouragement of women customers. The landlord during the middle years of the twentieth century was Mr Tennick, who had formerly worked as a butler for the Plymouth family. Mr Tennick had a reputation for strictness, and was described by Mrs Joan Richards, daughter of the Home Farm bailiff, as:

like Neville Chamberlain, and he had a little fly collar to his shirt, and used to be like the Gestapo walking up and down, very strict, must do this, mustn't laugh. I remember going there [during the war] and Americans came down [from Rhydlafer Hospital] for a drink and they started to sing and he told them they were not to; he wouldn't have a piano or anything like that or any singsongs. They had upright settles and dark paintwork and woodwork. ... It was a very glum place, they had the old tap room, with the locals in the back - the old spit and sawdust - he used to just walk through and see that everybody wasn't enjoying themselves.⁴⁷

In general, villagers are inclined more to remember attending functions such as dances or whist drives in the banqueting hall and the tiny church hall than going to the Plymouth Arms. Alfred Taylor, footman/valet to Lord Plymouth, related that the only contact that the staff had with the villagers was in the evening:

if you went dancing, or you'd meet them on the village green, or in the Plymouth Arms, or the banqueting hall when there was dancing, or when we used to play cricket or tennis or bowls with them.⁴⁸

As the nineteenth century progressed, and the Estate became more active locally, the church played a lesser part in caring for the welfare of the villagers, but as a centre of village life and activity, the church was a very important to villagers' personal lives and recreation, particularly for the female population. Church going was an important part of the week; Mrs Kathleen Langdon recalls her father, formerly a choir singer at the cathedral, later singing in the St Fagans Church choir.

then as he got older he gave it up and joined St Fagans, much to their delight, because he was a good bass and he always sang the solos at harvest and Christmas and we all belonged to the Ladies' Choir, ladies in the congregation, and we used to love that very much.⁴⁹

The choir was a strong one and well supported by the men of the village. The annual outings are fondly remembered by many who were children during first half of the twentieth century. In fact, this constituted the only holiday many people had. The Mothers' Union was popular with the female population, and whist drives, held in the church hall, were well supported by both sexes. A number of people seem to have patronised both church and chapel as far as social activities were concerned. Mrs Mullet, daughter of estate sawyer J. Reid, recalled village treats when she was a child in the period prior to World War I, which demonstrate the close links between Church, chapel and Estate:

We used to have a lovely Christmas dinner in the banqueting hall, from the Countess of

Plymouth, a real Christmas dinner, ... when we'd break up from school, beautiful ... and then we'd have the Sunday School treat in the Castle gardens; you know, have a tea party down in the grounds, and have races and all kinds of little games; down the gallop, and then when we were coming home, ... we'd always have an orange to bring home and a little bag of sweets, tied up in a muslin bag, tied with blue or pink ribbon... I enjoyed myself alright. [On Sunday], go to church; we went to church and Sunday School, you had to go to church and Sunday School. We all used to go, always; we had Band of Hope in the chapel; little concerts, we used to have whist drives out here, fetes, garden party and a flower show. [Fêtes] in aid of charity, [in the Castle garden] yes, we had fêtes And then they used to have dancing in the [banqueting] hall; and we had a quite a lot of little things going on here, Morris dancing, I was in that but I was only a little teeny tot then, a little tot,... all the village children - down in the Castle grounds.[see fig. 6]⁵⁰

The flower shows were the product of the Horticultural Society, which was set up in order to encourage tidy gardens in the village, but which incidentally provided leisure activity for the men. This seems to have been started by Hugh Pettigrew shortly after his arrival in 1898.⁵¹ The first flower show is recorded in a newspaper cutting, undated but *circa* 1899, which has survived in an album belonging to a village resident.⁵² This indicates that although the main prizes were won by professional head gardeners from other estates, there were many classes in competitions which were restricted to St Fagans estate workers and cottagers. Prizes were awarded not only for produce but also for the neatest gardens, and were won by labourers, the village policeman, and the wheelwright, among others. The stated aims of the society are listed in the rules:

The Society ... shall have for its object the encouragement and development of the Culture of Fruit, Vegetables and Flowers, and also of establishing an Annual Exhibition at St Fagans according to a Schedule to be prepared ... by the Committee.

By 1912, it seems that external exhibitors were excluded and only '*bona fide* cottagers ... of a rental of not above 6s. per week ... or Workmen employed on St Fagans estate' were allowed to compete.⁵³ The flower show was a significant event in the village social calendar and was frequently attended by members of the Plymouth family.

Dances and 'socials' were held in the banqueting hall, which was built in the Estate yard and adjoining the walled gardens for celebrations connected with the birth of Lord Windsor's heir in 1885. The hall was put at the disposal of most village groups and societies for social and fund raising activities, and the Italian garden, created in 1904, was also opened up if the family were not in residence. The fund raising fêtes held in the gardens were also occasions for the village to enjoy. Notes made during the organisation of such a fête in July 1928 show the extent to which the Plymouth family were willing to provide the use all of the grounds, and incidentally the extent to which Mr Pettigrew actually controlled the activities which were allowed. The phrase 'Protested against by Pettigrew' appears more than once.⁵⁴

For quieter entertainment and also further education, a reading room was established in about 1904⁵⁵ in a room near the gate in the Castle yard, which had formerly been used as a carpenter's workshop. In general, most facilities were provided for entertainment within the village itself for the estate workers and their families, apart from private visiting and personal entertaining at home. Villagers were not restricted to the possibilities provided in St Fagans as they might have been in a more isolated situation. Due to the easy access to Cardiff by rail, those with more disposable income could take advantage of amenities such as the cinema or theatre. Kathleen Langdon recalled the first invitation received from her husband to be, a local tenant farmer:

There was a social in the banqueting hall and they went; his sister and her husband went with him. And during the course of the evening his sister sent Mary Roper over to ask me to come over and speak to her, and she said, 'I wonder if you'd come with my husband and brother and I to see the new talking film called the *Singing Fool* at the Queens' - the first talking picture. The four of us went and then on Sunday he came down to St Fagans to church, and they asked us back to supper and it went on from there.⁵⁶

Most social activity involving women took place at home. According to Laura Loveluck, visiting only stopped with the arrival of television:

We worked hard but we had a lot of fun too. There was a much better social life, Television hadn't come in then and people came visiting - you'd have supper and they used to come in their governess cars and horses and later cars, and went home ten or eleven o'clock at night.⁵⁷

Christmas saw both estate and family celebrations. Lord and Lady Plymouth continued the annual Christmas party given for the school children, mentioned above. This was a traditional treat on most estates, both in Wales and England. In addition, the estate distributed what was known as the 'Christmas beef' to each family, along with a supply of firewood. This ensured that every family connected with the estate had a good Christmas dinner and also the means to cook it. This is vividly remembered by most villagers:

There was the Christmas beast. Penhefyd was the home farm in those days and they kept cattle there. They would have a beast slaughtered at Christmas, and jointed and each family in the village was allowed so much - five lb. for a man, three lb. for the wife and so much for each child. This was delivered around the village by workmen from the estate. I did it myself when I was a boy, I used to go around with a couple of baskets and a torch. That was one of the Christmas boxes from the estate, also a couple of rabbits and a load of logs.⁵⁸

Neither of these is an unusual facet of estate village life, but they were clearly recalled and had lived on in the memories of all of the older villagers. Laura Lovelock had as child lived on the nearby St Donats Castle estate and recalls the Christmas parties she attended as a child:

I always had a lovely children's party at the Castle. As they did at St Fagans, I remember at St Donats having a beautiful work box, they sent to the school and asked each child what they would like. You asked for something very simple and I had a beautiful work box. Still got it. The Castle people all dressed up - as Father Christmas etc. There was a beautiful tree.⁵⁹

Some of the wealthier families seem to have had a very good Christmas, Mrs Langdon, daughter of Harold Daw, the Estate Clerk, in particular recalled Christmas as a very special time:

And Christmas was a great time, my father was a great one for shopping, Christmas used to start early, about November, and lots of things were put on the top of the wardrobe in their bedroom, which we never touched of course, never looked, but he loved shopping and he loved getting everything Christmassy, things for Christmas, you know, he'd get all sorts of everything you can think of, and then was a Christmas tree provided for us again, from the estate; so it was a wonderful job to have.⁶⁰

Not all Christmas celebrations were dependent upon the largesse of the estate, some traditional entertainment survived, notably the visit of the Mari Lwyd. The last Mari Lwyd to come from the village was a man known as Tom John, although Bert Warden recalled that the Mari Lwyd came every year from Pentyrch, where there was still a strong proportion of Welsh speakers. Another came from Ely. Mrs Warden remembered her last experience of the Mari Lwyd when she was about ten years of age (possibly during the 1920s):

I was always petrified of the Mari Lwyd. The responses et cetera were always in Welsh. It was a completely Welsh speaking village ninety years ago [i.e. 1880s], all the old residents spoke Welsh.⁶¹

It is notable that by the turn of the twentieth century, the Mari Lwyd aside, all of the leisure activities take place through the medium of English, apart from services in the chapel. All informants seem to relate the same story, recalling that during their childhoods the old people in the village being able to speak Welsh, and that the language was not passed on to children and grandchildren. The case of Morgan John, a former gardener, and of the same family as Tom John, the last Mari Lwyd, is likely to be typical:

My grandfather was the thatcher on the estate - John John. All the family were Welsh speaking, father, grandfather, and uncles all spoke Welsh, but they never tried to teach us.⁶²

Though *eisteddfodau*⁶³ were held during the nineteenth century, there is no evidence of any during the

twentieth. The Castle family do not seem to have been in any way 'anti-Welsh' and certainly supported both local and national *eisteddfodau*. In 1913, Lord Plymouth was a patron of the Abergavenny National Eisteddfod, and his mother-in-law writes in her diary of attending an *eisteddfod* whilst St Fagans in 1893, probably the national event, held that year in nearby Pontypridd:

At Fagans, August 7th. Went to the eisteddfod. Rain in sheets. The singing of the sad Welsh hymns by fifteen thousand voices beautiful. A bard had to be crowned; he was young, shy and pale. I performed the ceremony. He was so frightened. The most un-english crowd, nobody drunk. The Welsh are vain and like flattery; they are mad about their nationality. They are untruthful, because they like saying civil things to everybody - real Celts in fact.⁶⁴

There is evidence of St Fagans local *eisteddfodau* in the latter half of the nineteenth century, including Thomas Morgan's *Essay on the antiquities of St Fagans* which was the 'successful composition at the St Fagans' eisteddfod, September, 1866'.⁶⁵ A letter written by Agent Robert Forrest to Lord Windsor in 1886 refers to an *eisteddfod* about which nothing else is known:

I believe it is the general wish of the villagers to hold the Eisteddfod and that one or two men who were rather objectionable have withdrawn their names from the committee.⁶⁶

The only other traditional 'Welsh' entertainment extant by the twentieth century is described by a local farm tenant and refers to a very elderly estate labourer:

He danced around this brush and he used to twist it and he used to dance one way round the one end of the brush and the other way around the other end, and he used to turn it like a cross, in between his legs and jump over it back and fore. ... He was over seventy then.⁶⁷

Although all entertainment was certainly not dependent upon the estate, there were contributions in many ways which were not obligatory, but seem to have been traditional, and accepted as such.

There is certainly sufficient evidence to show that the estate, and perhaps particularly the landowner, paid attention not only to the domestic situation of its workers and tenants, but also to their social welfare. The establishment of sporting clubs was one area regarded by many landowners as an essential part of their duty, one which was also an opportunity to socialise with local people on an informal level. Personality seems to have played its part in the popularity of the landowner in this instance. There is no doubt that it was the unassuming attitude of Lord Windsor on the sports field, as well as his undoubted skill, which won him much of his personal popularity. This personal contact contributed to the general good feeling which existed on the estate, something that continued to be felt by local residents with connections to the estate long after the estate as such had ceased to exist.

¹ C. Stevens, unpublished MPhil thesis, *The St Fagans Portion of the Plymouth Estate, c 1850-1950*, copies of which are lodged in the University of Wales Swansea Library, the National Library of Wales, and the archive of the National History Museum, St Fagans.

² *The Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian*, Saturday October 30, 1852.

³ *The Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian*, Saturday November 26, 1853.

⁴ *The Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian*, Saturday September 5, 1857.

⁵ Robert Clive's mother, Lady Harriet, was by this time widowed.

⁶ *The Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian*, Saturday September 5, 1857.

⁷ St Fagans audio tape no. 6068, interview with Andrew Pettigrew, son of head gardener, Hugh: 'they used to have fetes ... and they used to have greasy poles and I also remember the apparatus for a 'rolling horse' ... they had all sorts of races for children, teenagers, adults, old people'.

⁸ W.P.Williams, *A Monograph of the Windsor Family*, Cardiff: D.Owen & Co., 1879, details of all the celebrations, including the two at St Fagans, one with in the presence of Lord Windsor.

⁹ John Davies, *Cardiff and the Marquesses of Bute*, Cardiff: UWP, 1981, p. 137.

¹⁰ W. P. Williams, *A Monograph of the Windsor Family*, Cardiff: D.Owen & Co., 1879, pp. 158-9, quoting the report in the *Western Mail*.

¹¹ Williams, *A Monograph of the Windsor Family* p.192.

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- ¹² Williams, *A Monograph of the Windsor Family* p.191; this Bible survives in St Fagans Castle.
- ¹³ A number of these exist in the St Fagans collection, all of those from village families are of white metal (example acc. No. 47.91) and others are of bronze and white metal (example 54.194.1).
- ¹⁴ *Western Mail* 10 February 1910, report details illuminated addresses presented, and speeches of both sides.
- ¹⁵ St Fagans accession no. F90.113.
- ¹⁶ M.E. David, *Professor David, the life of Sir Edgeworth David*. London, 1937, p.12.
- ¹⁷ Walburga, Lady Paget, *In my Tower*, published privately, 1924, p. 161.
- ¹⁸ St Fagans MS 3213/1- 21.
- ¹⁹ Memoir, printed in *South Wales Echo*, Saturday 3 March, 1956.
- ²⁰ *Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian*, 22 August 1868.
- ²¹ Notes taken during interview with Augustus Witts, former gardener, Castle Hill Cottages, 9 February 1982; 'I started playing aged fifteen; there was a professional coach then, Mr Hurst, who was paid by the club; the Earl was running the club then.'
- ²² Glamorgan Estate Accounts, Wages Book, 1927-1934, inspected at Oakly Park Estate Office.
- ²³ Undated newspaper cuttings, circa 1910-12, in an album owned by Miss C. Culverwell, former village resident.
- ²⁴ St Fagans MS 1538 collection.
- ²⁵ St Fagans MS 1538/74; menu card for annual dinner, 3 September, 1908.
- ²⁶ Typescript page in the Cricket club minute book (1930-1937) attached to 1932 AGM notes; St Fagans accession no. F83.168 (MS 3213/1-21).
- ²⁷ Estate ledger 1930-1944, p. 470-83, under separate heading: 'Cricket'; inspected at Plymouth Estate Office, Oakly Park.
- ²⁸ St Fagans audio tape 6585, interview with W.E.Harris, Cardiff; grandson of Welsby family of St Fagans. Recorded 9 March 1982.
- ²⁹ St Fagans MS. 1538/70, 71; St Fagans Bowling Club dinner programmes, 1911 and 1912.
- ³⁰ St Fagans audio tape 6043, interview with Mrs Mullet, daughter of Joe Reid, estate sawyer. Recorded 26 April 1979.
- ³¹ St Fagans MS. 3536/200; letter for the Club secretary to Phryswith Matthews, dated 1935, inviting her to become an honorary life member in view of her long-standing contribution to the club, as an original member..
- ³² St Fagans audio tape 6252, interview with Mrs Kathleen Langdon, recorded 23 October 1979.
- ³³ Alberta Lady Plymouth, *Robert George, Earl of Plymouth 1857-1923*. Cambridge, CUP, 1932 (privately printed).
- ³⁴ Quoted in Eric Richards, 'The land agent' In: G.E.Mingay, ed. *The Victorian Countryside*, London, 1984, vol. 2, p. 449-50.
- ³⁵ Notes taken during interview with A. Slocombe, former estate foreman, 1979: 'The Laurels, Mr Mason's house, used to be a pub called the First and Last, ... Laurel Cottage (the policeman's house) was also a pub, but a long time ago.'
- ³⁶ *Cardiff Times*, Friday October 2, 1863.
- ³⁷ Thomas Morgan, *The Antiquities of St Fagans with its Castle*. Cardiff: Lewis & Williams, 1866, p. 39 [winning essay at St Fagans eisteddfod].
- ³⁸ Census Returns, 1881, no. 53, James Llewellyn is listed as innkeeper and farmer of 26 acres.
- ³⁹ Glamorgan Record Office D/D Pl.286, estate letter book, p. 821, a letter from Robert Forrest to D.T. Alexander, 23 January 1885.
- ⁴⁰ GRO D/D Pl. 68 Glamorgan estate rental 1844, James Llewellyn is listed as having taken over the tenancy from Jane Howell, widow of the previous tenant.
- ⁴¹ Undated newspaper cutting, circa 1900, in an album in private hands.
- ⁴² *Evening Express*, Monday 23 April 1896; cutting in album detailing Lord Windsor's mayoral year 1895-6, in St Fagans Museum Archive; another cutting in the album details the interest lord Windsor took in the architectural detail, and the Elizabethan style of the building.
- ⁴³ *Western Mail*, Saturday March 7, 1896, article entitled 'Model public house at St Fagans; interesting experiment by Lord Windsor'.
- ⁴⁴ Undated newspaper cutting, in private collection.
- ⁴⁵ Personal notes made by Alick Slocombe in 1978.
- ⁴⁶ St Fagans audio tape 6020, interview with Bert Warden, February 1979.
- ⁴⁷ St Fagans audio tape 7527, interview with Mrs Joan Richards, formerly of Penhefyd Farm, 1989.
- ⁴⁸ St Fagans audio tape 6071, interview with Alfred Taylor, butler and former footman to Lord Plymouth, recorded at Oakly Park, May 1979.
- ⁴⁹ St Fagans audio tape 6052, interview with Mrs Kathleen Langdon.
- ⁵⁰ St Fagans audio tape 6043, *op.cit*.

- ⁵¹ St Fagans MS. 1538/69 programme for the thirteenth show, held in 1912.
- ⁵² Unidentified and undated cutting in album belonging to Bill Sutton, Quarry Cottages, transcribed in MPhil thesis, Appendix XVIII, p. 504.
- ⁵³ St Fagans MS. 1538/69 programme for the thirteenth show, held in 1912.
- ⁵⁴ St Fagans MS. 1800/14; transcribed in MPhil thesis Appendix XVII, p. 502.
- ⁵⁵ Glamorgan Record Office, D/D Pl. estate letter book, p. 74.
- ⁵⁶ St Fagans audio tape 6253.
- ⁵⁷ St Fagans audio tape 7531, interview with Laura Loveluck, tenant of Rhydlafar Farm.
- ⁵⁸ St Fagans audio tape 6020, interview with Bert Warden.
- ⁵⁹ St Fagans audio tape 7531.
- ⁶⁰ St Fagans audio tape 6052.
- ⁶¹ St Fagans audio tape 6020.
- ⁶² Notes taken during a personal interview, April 1985.
- ⁶³ *Eisteddfod*, a Welsh language poetry, music and literary competition, dating back to the twelfth century, see www.eisteddfod.org.
- ⁶⁴ Paget, *op.cit.*, p.4.
- ⁶⁵ Morgan, *The Antiquities of St Fagans*, title page.
- ⁶⁶ GRO, D/D Pl.285, p.422, letter dated 22 January 1886.
- ⁶⁷ St Fagans audio tape 6935, interview with Alban Francis, of Upper Stockland Farm, born 1919.

Fig.1 St Fagans cricket club, with Lord Windsor and his three sons, seated middle row and front, taken at Greenwood field in 1899.

Courtesy of Amgueddfa Cymru — National Museum Wales

Fig. 2 St Fagans village rugby team, 1901, copied from original owned by Miss C. Culverwell.
 Courtesy of Amgueddfa Cymru — National Museum Wales

Fig. 3 St Fagans tennis club tea, in front of clubhouse, early twentieth century.
 Courtesy of Amgueddfa Cymru — National Museum Wales

Fig. 4 Edward Akers, tenant farmer, John Hunter, bailiff of Home farm, and others, on the curling rink at St Fagans, c. 1910.
 Courtesy of Amgueddfa Cymru — National Museum Wales

Fig. 5 Cartoon published in the *Evening Express*, 23 April 1896, with caption: LORD WINDSOR: 'I have no connection with the place opposite madam; in fact I have gone into this trade with the express object of trying to improve upon the method many licensed victuallers adopt in conducting business'.
 Courtesy of Amgueddfa Cymru — National Museum Wales

Fig. 6 Village children morris dancing in St Fagans Castle gardens.
Courtesy of Amgueddfa Cymru — National Museum Wales.