

## Who painted Sir Charles Robinson Morgan now in the Court Room at y Gaer?

William Gibbs

As many of you will know from previous articles the Art Detectives at Art UK have helped match hitherto unattributed works in the Courtroom at y Gaer with the artists who painted them; Thomas Wood with Charles Hayter and Penry Williams with William Pickersgill.

However this fine portrait of Lord Tredegar which hangs next to Lord Glanusk in the Courtroom has until now been listed as “artist unknown”. The only evidence about the provenance of the picture comes from Edwin Poole’s informative *History and Biography of*

*Breconshire (1888)*. Describing the Shire Hall, he writes *of oil paintings that have been presented to the county after 1876 and hung in the Shire Hall, one of which is of the late Lord Tredegar, who died April 16th, 1875 (subscribed by his lordship's admirers in the county)* which evidenced that the picture was painted some time after 1876 and that it was paid for by public subscription.

Charles Robinson Morgan first took up the Brecon seat in Parliament in 1812 when he was just 20. The Morgan family had run Brecon as a “pocket” borough during the 18<sup>th</sup> century and his father, Charles Gould Morgan, intended to extend this control into the 19<sup>th</sup>. But reform was in the air and in 1832 the liberal Lloyd Vaughan Watkins won the seat. Charles Morgan came back in 1835, only to lose it again to Watkins in 1847. It is perhaps fitting that the bust of Watkins



*Sir Charles Robinson Morgan,  
First Lord Tredegar 1792 -1875*

and the portrait of Morgan continue to confront each other across the benches of the Court Room in y Gaer.

At the beginning of November, I added the portrait to the Art UK discussion page and can now reveal what has been discovered. Firstly, a report was found in the Brecon County Times for 20<sup>th</sup> October 1877, which is reproduced below.

It appears from other newspaper reports that originally the committee had hoped to found an agricultural scholarship to honour Lord Tredegar's memory, but the funds raised of around £150 were not enough and any proposal to join with Monmouthshire in erecting a memorial in Newport had been firmly rejected.

It is extraordinary and disappointing that in the full report of Sir Joseph Bailey's speech the key name of the artist is not once mentioned. We learn that the artist is well known and the remarkable fact that the portrait was painted from a small photograph. This may be the image held by the National Portrait Gallery of Lord Tredegar and his wife which was taken by Camille Silvy in June 1863.



There are two salient points about this photograph that suggest it was the one used by the artist. Though the pose is different, note the crumpling of the waistcoat which is a striking and delightful detail reproduced in the portrait. Note, too, the stalk of grain that Lord Tredegar is holding in his right hand. On the table in the portrait there is a spray of wheat or barley, emphasising his interest in agricultural improvement.

*Lord and Lady Tredegar*  
Camille Silvy, 1863, NPG



The discussion on the Art UK website threw up a variety of possible names for the artists including John Everett Millais, John Charlton who painted Lord Tredegar's son; Richard Buckner who painted another portrait of

Tredegar now in Tredegar House; W E Jones and John Collier, who was later to paint the fine portrait of Lord Glanusk hanging in the Court Room at y Gaer.

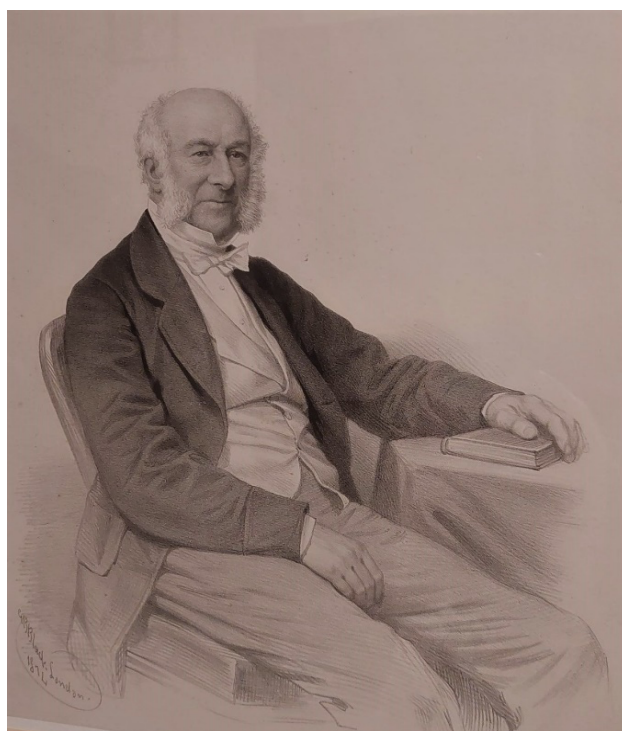
It was common practice to present all the subscribers who funded portraits with an engraving, as happened with the Wood and Penry

Facsimile of portrait in *Poole's History and Biography of Brecon*

Williams portraits in y Gaer. In *Poole's History* there is an engraving of the portrait

but no name of artist or engraver. This, Poole remarks, is reproduced with the permission of Lord Tredegar's son.

Indeed in Tredegar House the curator, Emily Price, responded to my enquiry and has found an engraving signed by George B Black which appears at first glance to be taken from the portrait in y Gaer. Strangely it is dated 1874, which is before Lord Tredegar's death in 1875 and well before the commissioning of the portrait as described by Sir Joseph Bailey in 1877.



Engraving by G B Black in Tredegar House

But Black's engraving is also different from the portrait in y Gaer in several ways, as can be seen if we place the two side by side .



An explanation for this is that the artist of the oil painted in 1877 took inspiration from both the engraving (1874) and the photograph (1863) but added his own details; the arm of the chair, the tail coat, the bended knees and the spray of wheat on the table.

And then came a breakthrough when “Art Detective” Marcie Doran, who had found the first newspaper article quoted above, found another which this time named the artist.

The article in the Hereford Times of 29<sup>th</sup> October 1877 is similar in essence to the one in the Brecon County News with the critical exception that added at the bottom is the following;

*Sir Joseph Bailey replying to Rev L Venables said that the artist was Mr William Gale.*

*She adds; I think I read every 'Tredegar' article on the British Newspaper Archive in the last 24 hours.*

William Gale is not an artist I had heard of, but he was a prolific painter with over 100 pictures which he showed at the Royal Academy in his lifetime. Most of his paintings were of religious or oriental scenes, such as the carpenter's workshop shown here or "genre" works with a moral. He can be regarded as a minor Pre-Raphaelite,



*Prayer For Those in Peril On the Sea*  
William Gale



*Nazareth*  
William Gale



*Self Portrait* William Gale,  
1823 - 1909

I have only been able to find one single male portrait among all his many paintings-this self portrait.

For those wishing to see how the Art Detectives came up with their findings you can read all the entries on the Art UK page at <https://www.artuk.org/artdetective/discussions>