



A BARONET'S DIARY

SIR RICHARD FITZHERBERT

TRIBUTE TO A MARVELLOUS LADY

It is not often that one is selected to give the address at a funeral but I had the privilege to be told on her death that Ruth Jordan had requested me. Ruth was 92 when she died in December and was a very special lady. I first met her 20 years ago when our chief guides David and Fran Holt, brought Ruth to an induction day as we opened the Hall for the first time in 1998. Ruth had a penchant for reading but a greater desire for history and took to the task of escorting visitors around the house immediately, giving a commentary that was second to none. She researched our family to great lengths and ended up giving amusing talks about the 'FitzHerberts and Tissington' at WI meetings and to history societies around the East and West Midlands. A Land Girl in the Second World War, she had been involved in various commemorations including meeting the Countess of Wessex at a tree planting at the National Memorial Arboretum. It was an honour to give my



The Countess of Wessex and Ruth at the National Memorial Arboretum

tribute of this marvellous lady in front of her family and friends at the celebration of her life at St Chad's, Longford. We will miss Ruth. May she rest in peace.



CHORAL DELIGHTS

I managed to fit in three carol services this year: in the village at St Mary's and the Methodist Chapel, which included some astoundingly good cake, and finally Fiona and I were fortunate to attend the 100th Haddon Hall Carol Service in the chapel dedicated to St Nicholas (above). Lord and Lady Edward Manners had collated the excellent Recordare Chamber Choir and local cellist Stephanie Bloor. As well as traditional lessons, they had included a poem by EE Cummings entitled 'Little Tree' and an extract from *Cider with Rosie*. It was a wonderful start to the celebrations.



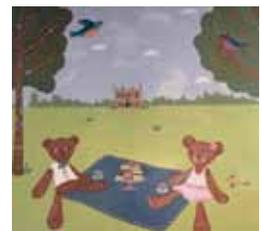
Ian Skye with the choir



Sir Richard, Ian Skye and David Walker

CAROLS BY THE FIRE

In December BBC Radio Derby came to Tissington to broadcast 'Christmas at The Big House' live from the fireplace in the Main Hall. Despite having hosted the staff party for 40 the night before, I was up at 5am to light the fires and get the kettle on to greet presenter Ian Skye and his team ready to go live at 6am. During the show Ian and sidekick Heidi Booth interviewed three village shopkeepers – David at the sweetshop, Annie at the Candle Shop and butcher Andrew Holmes – as well as enlisting the Ashbourne Singers for carols by the fireside. I had been expecting around eight members of the choir but two dozen appeared. I confess to being ready for a lie-down by the end of the manic but fun occasion.



IF ONLY LIFE WAS A PICNIC!

A visit to St Oswald's hospital in Ashbourne on New Year's Day meant a short wait in the reception area where, by surprise, Fiona and I bumped into a mural of our home on the wall. As readers can see from the photo the artist has shrunk the Hall from a 61-roomed mansion to a more compact size... one that would make our lives much more convenient!

CROCODILE'S ROCK

It took a full week to take down all the decorations for our 'Neverland at Christmas' exhibition in mid-December. Gone were Wendy's House, the Pirate Boat and the streetscape as Peter Pan, Wendy and her brothers 'flew' over the rooftops of London but we were keen to keep one creation. So now the Crocodile last seen emerging from the swamp in the Library and about to attack Captain Hook can be found loitering with menace by the village pond! Check him out before the papier-mâché fades!

