

The Corys:
John and Richard Cory



Gordon Hindess

The Corys

In January, Dyffryn House & Gardens will pass into the care of the National Trust. This reminds us of one of the most influential families in Cardiff at the height of its boom years. We remember, too, that some of the family are buried in Cathays Cemetery.

While there is much information about the family available, because Cory is a common surname and the names Richard and John recur through the generations, we have to be careful in researching the family history. The Cardiff story starts with the arrival of **Richard (1799-1882)** from the West Country around 1838. He was the owner of a small vessel trading between Cardiff, Bristol and Ireland, but he opened a ship chandlery in Cardiff, near the Custom House. At the same time, he brought over his wife and three young sons.

While still in their teens, the two elder sons, **John** and **Richard**, joined the business, which then traded as Richard Cory & Sons, describing themselves as ship brokers, ship owners, coal merchants and exporters. When Richard Cory (the elder) retired in 1859, the business was re-named Cory Brothers & Co and it became a limited liability company in 1888. The following year, its new home, Corys' Buildings, opened on the corner of Bute Street and Bute Place.

Among the many prestigious buildings in the commercial heart of 19C Cardiff, this is one of the grandest and remains today as a grade II listed building, which is being incorporated into the Merchant Place re-development as Cory Chambers.



Corys' Buildings

John and Richard became coal owners in their own right with the purchase of Pentre colliery in the Rhondda, in 1868. Other collieries in the Rhondda, Cynon, Neath and Ogmore valleys were later acquired, and the brothers also became the largest private wagon owners in the UK. With the universal demand for Welsh steam coal for shipping, and especially after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, the firm established coal depots, offices and agencies around the world. By 1908 they had 118 depots on all the major shipping routes. John was also a founder and vice-chairman of the Barry Docks & Railway Company.

By seizing the opportunities offered by the demand for steam coal and improved methods of transport, the family prospered immensely. But they were also great benefactors, assisting all kinds of movements which helped social, educational and moral reform causes. Richard Cory (the elder) became a leader of the United Methodist church in Cardiff, John was a Wesleyan and Richard (the younger) a Baptist, but all gave assistance to the temperance movement and the Salvation Army. For many years before his death, John Cory's benefactions amounted to nearly £50,000 a year and, in memory of his work for the people of Cardiff, his bronze statue, designed by Sir William Goscombe John, was erected in the city in 1905. It is in the Gorsedd Gardens and shows him with a Bible in his hand.



John Cory statue in the Gorsedd Gardens

It was **John Cory** (1828-1910) who had the present house at Duffryn [or Dyffryn], St Nicholas, built. There had been houses on the site since the Middle Ages and John acquired the estate from the Bruce-Pryce family in 1893 and promptly set about rebuilding the house. On his death, the house passed to his third son, **Reginald**, a distinguished amateur horticulturist, who was largely responsible, with the landscape architect Thomas Mawson, for creating the fine Grade 1 listed gardens that surround Dyffryn House today. The estate was leased to Glamorgan County Council in June 1939 and stewardship passed to the Vale of Glamorgan Borough Council as a result of local government reorganisation. A 50-year lease to the National Trust takes effect in

January. Initially, the gardens will be re-opened to visitors while there is a longer-term plan to restore and open the house.

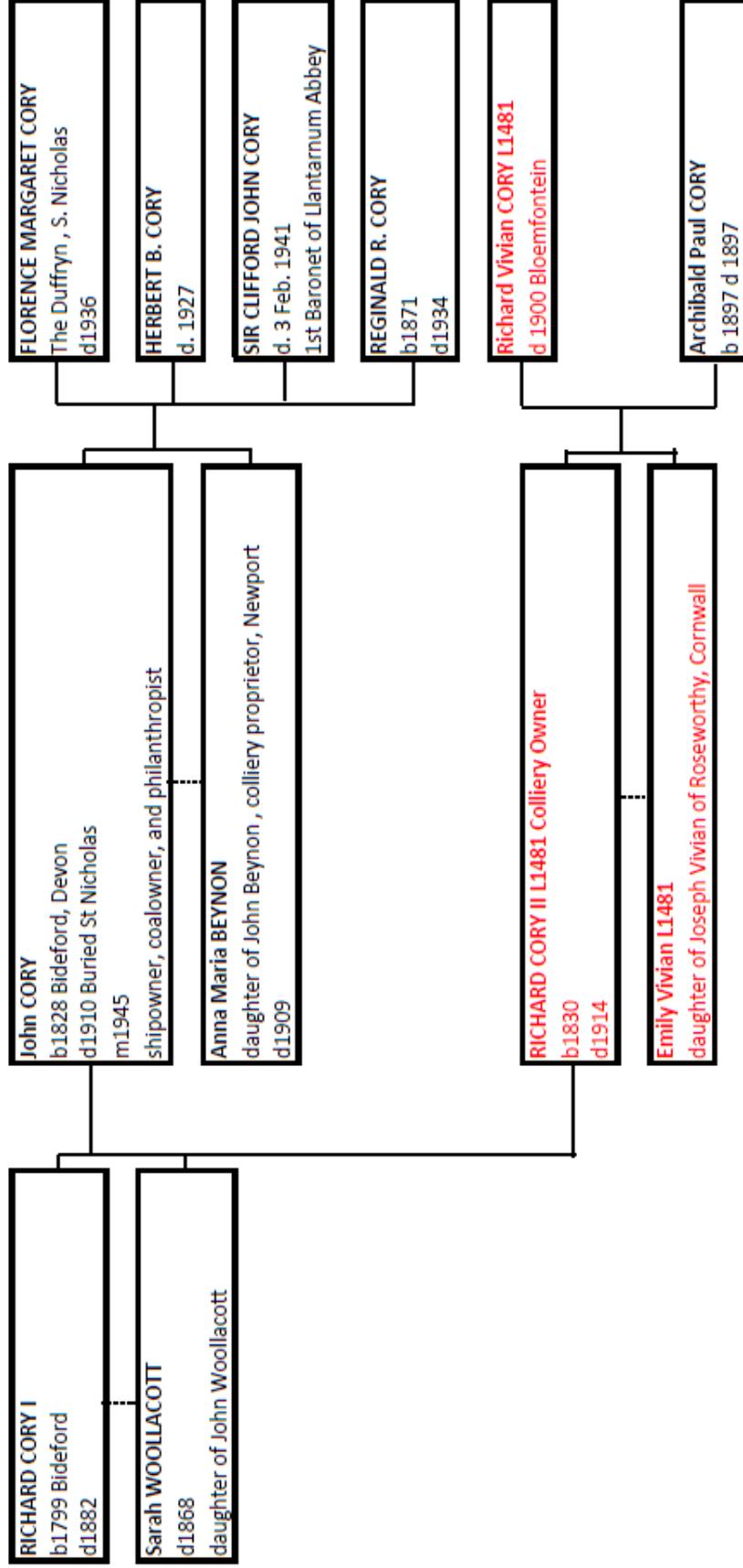
In 1907, John would have seen another of his children, **Sir Clifford**, created 1st Baronet of Llantarnum Abbey, where he had made his home. He died childless, so the baronetcy died with him. The house was requisitioned during World War II but then, more appropriately to its name, became the property of the Sisters of St Joseph of Annecy, in 1946. But Clifford is perhaps best remembered for the financial assistance that he gave to the 'Ton Pentre Temperance' brass band, which changed its name to 'The Cory Band' in consequence.

Walk into section L on the higher path from the chapels and you cannot miss a prominent red granite obelisk on the right marking the vault of Richard (the younger) Cory family.



Cory memorial obelisk

As well as **Richard**, who died in 1914 aged 84, the vault also holds his wife, **Emily**, who was 87 when she died in 1919. In addition, the memorial records five children who died in infancy and a sole son, **Richard Vivian**, who reached adulthood but was interred in Bloemfontein, where he died from wounds received in action in 1900. It would appear that there is plenty of spare room in the vault.



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