



Plate 1. Sketch by Eleanor Nicholl of the west front of the old Ham house.
National Library of Wales.

The Ham, Llantwit Major: a Wyatt House and Historic Garden in the Vale of Glamorgan

By HILARY M. THOMAS

The Ham' alias Ham House, sited on the coastal edge of the Vale of Glamorgan, between Llantwit Major and Boverton, was a home of the Nicholl family from the seventeenth century until the early years of the twentieth century. Its history is inextricably linked with the activities of the Nicholl family in Glamorgan and with their other houses in the county, some of which survive to the present day. Sadly, The Ham with its long history is now numbered among the 'Lost Houses' of Glamorgan² and its once magnificent gardens have suffered a similar fate.



Plate 2. Lithograph of the east front of the old Ham house.
Llantwit Major Local History Society collection.

The Nicholl family

The Nicholl family first emerges in Glamorgan in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as surgeons and lawyers, a family of sufficient substance to own an impressive house in Llantwit Major and to be commemorated by monuments in the parish church and by inscriptions on the bells. Pedigrees³ name surgeon Iltud Nicholl (1603-71),⁴ the third son of Iltud Nicholl (d.c.1651)⁵ of Great House, Llantwit Major, as the founder of The Ham branch of the family.

He married Barbara Yorath of Llanmaes and was in turn succeeded at The Ham by his son Iltyd (1635-1700/01). A 'Merchant Nichols one of the Ham Nichols',⁶ possibly a brother of the surgeon, is said by Iolo Morganwg to have owned a large vessel trading with the West Indies, a potentially lucrative enterprise, but to have been ruined by the Civil War. As surgeons and lawyers, as minor landowners and farmers, the Nicholls would have enjoyed a professional status within local society and a comfortable prosperity, and it may well be that the family fortunes were enhanced by profitable business ventures unassociated with farming. But it was inheritances and dowries acquired through marriage that most evidently consolidated the financial and social position of the family including the Nicholls of The Ham.

Although the pre-seventeenth-century history of The Ham is obscure it seems clear that the Nicholls acquired the property by marriage with a Turberville heiress. A Lyson Nerber of Ham is credited with the building of the house at the end of the fifteenth century, and from the Nerbers the property passed to the Vaughan family and thence to the Turbervilles of Llantwit Major on the marriage of Edmond Turberville with Catherine, daughter and co-heiress of Watkin Thomas Vaughan (?Watkin ap Thomas John) of Ham in 1578.⁷ After the marriage of their daughter and heiress Cecil with Iltyd Nicholl of Great House in 1597 The Ham passed into Nicholl family ownership and was to provide a home for their youngest son Iltyd (b.1603) and successive generations of his descendants.

An inventory of the possessions of that youngest son, compiled after his death in 1671,⁸ reveals him as a man of substance, the total value of his goods being put at £359. But it was his livestock and his crops which accounted for most of his wealth, and it is as a gentleman farmer that Iltyd Nicholl of The Ham 'chirurgeon' is represented in this document. It was land that supported his cattle and sheep, oxen and horses and produced his crops and it was land, its acreage increased by his marriage, that was the basis of his wealth. The inventory compiled in 1701⁹ after the death of his son Iltyd further underlines the Nicholl family's position as gentlemen farmers. The total value of the goods of 'Iltyd Nicholls of the Ham senior, gentleman' (father of the Reverend Iltyd and three other sons) was put at £582, with livestock and crops accounting for over £400. But the list of his personal and household possessions, which included pewter vessels, gold coins and £45 in 'ready money', suggests a somewhat greater degree of affluence than that enjoyed by his father. Iltyd had married Mary Jones, daughter of Morgan Jones of Great Frampton, Llantwit Major, and had further increased the size of his estate in Llanmaes and Llantwit by purchases. Estate records indicate that the Reverend Iltyd Nicholl (d.1733), rector of Llanmaes, still further augmented the family's landed estate after his father's death and that his descendants, by various stratagems including purchase and marriage alliances, continued to expand Nicholl landownership in the Vale.¹⁰ At the heart of these estates stood The Ham.

The Turberville connection is also indicated in another Nicholl property, Great House, Llanmaes, the history of which is intertwined with that of The Ham. Cecil Turberville, who married Iltyd Nicholl in 1597, was a member of a family long possessed of lands and property in Llantwit Major and Llanmaes and in some accounts it is a Turberville who built the first 'great house' at Llanmaes. Eventually that house and some of the Turberville lands in Llanmaes passed to the Nicholl family, but the route of that inheritance is uncertain. It may have come through the Nicholl/Turberville marriage of 1597, or more probably by the marriage of Barbara Yorath of Llanmaes to her cousin Iltyd Nicholl of The Ham in 1630, Barbara's mother Joan Turberville having inherited from her brother William Turberville. For much of the seventeenth century the Llanmaes house was occupied by a succession of rectors of

Llanmaes, and it may be that the 'Eltuito' Nicholl named as churchwarden in 1632 lived there. In 1700 the Reverend Ilyd Nicholl (1673-1733), heir to The Ham, was instituted to the rectory of Llanmaes and he made Great House his home until his marriage in 1719. He is credited with making substantial improvements to the Llanmaes house which has seen few subsequent alterations, and he also carried out improvements at The Ham where his younger brother, Morgan Nicholl, lived until his death in 1714.

The Reverend Ilyd Nicholl (d.1733)¹¹ married Susanna, daughter and heiress of John Whitlock of Bingham (co. Somerset). Their eldest son, Whitlock (b.1720), not only inherited The Ham and a share of the Whitlock and Sydenham estates in Somerset but also acquired further financial advantages through his marriage with Anne Lewis of Penllyn whose mother was a co-heiress of Humphrey Turberville of Clemenston and who was herself co-heiress of her father John Lewis. Whitlock and his wife had fourteen children and it was found it necessary to enlarge the old Ham house to accommodate this large family and their household servants. After Whitlock's death in 1788 The Ham remained virtually unchanged until the 1860s. Whitlock's younger brother John (b.1725) inherited the Llanmaes property which remained in the possession of his descendants until 1874. In that year the then owner of Llanmaes sold the property to his Ham kinsman George Whitlock Nicholl who, two years earlier, had purchased Great House Llantwit Major, the latter property having descended via the Nicholls of Tredunnoc (co. Mon.) to the Nicholls of Merthyr Mawr. So, at the end of the nineteenth century Great House Llantwit Major, Great House Llanmaes and The Ham were all brought within Nicholl of The Ham ownership.

When Whitlock Nicholl died in 1788 The Ham was inherited by his grandson, Ilyd (b.1785), Whitlock's eldest son, The Reverend Ilyd (b.1743) rector of Tredington (co. Worcs),¹² having died the previous year leaving a widow and five young children. He had married the heiress Anne Hatch, daughter of George Hatch of Windsor and his wife Mary (*née* Tyrrell), and it was at Tredington, and in Usk where they established strong links with the Monmouthshire branch of the Nicholl family, that Ilyd and Anne had their homes. Tredington was where their eldest son, Ilyd, was born in 1785 and it was at Tredington that his father was buried just two years later. As they grew up it was Monmouthshire rather than Glamorgan that provided a home for the Nicholl children and their mother, and those Monmouthshire links were further strengthened in 1807 when Ilyd married the Monmouthshire heiress Eleanor Bond,¹³ and again in 1818 when his sister Anna Louisa married William Addams-Williams of Llangibby Castle.

During Ilyd's minority, and a mere quarter of a century after The Ham had been considerably enlarged and improved, the house was to some degree abandoned by the Nicholl family and began to fall into disrepair. The widowed Anne Nicholl (*née* Hatch), with her Berkshire origins, may have had little affection for the place, although she and her children must have visited The Ham after the death of grandfather Nicholl in 1788, for grandmother Nicholl continued to reside there until she died in 1797. Anne lived until 1839, in her latter years in the house in New Market Street, Usk, acquired by her son, Ilyd, on his marriage with Eleanor Bond. This property, later known as Ynys Hafod, was extended by Ilyd and became his family's town house.¹⁴ Ilyd had claimed his Ham inheritance the year before his marriage but continued for much of his adult life to spend appreciably more time in Monmouthshire than in Glamorgan, becoming closely identified with the town of Usk and with the wider county of which he was appointed sheriff in 1830. As a result of his marriage, he became a substantial landowner in Monmouthshire, for his wife Eleanor Bond was the only surviving child and heiress of George

Bond of Newland (co. Glos.) and Court Bleddin *alias* Cwrt Bleddyn (co. Mon.), and brought with her not only the Court Bleddin property but also, through her mother Elinor Morris of The Pant, the Pantygoitre, Graigwith and Mamhilad (co. Mon.) estates. The family took an increasingly prominent role in the official life of Monmouthshire, and it was in St Mary's churchyard, Usk that Eleanor (d.1850) and Iltyd (d.1871), their eldest son and other members of their family were buried. Underlining the Nicholl identification with Monmouthshire is the inscription on Iltyd's monument in Usk churchyard which reads: 'Iltyd Nicholl of The Ham, Glamorganshire and for 56 years of this town'.

Despite this close identification with Monmouthshire, Iltyd and his eldest son, the Reverend Iltyd, took the decision in the 1850s to re-establish the family's strong connection with their Llantwit Major estate by building a fashionable new residence at The Ham. Surviving records indicate that prior to this date Iltyd Nicholl had made regular visits to Glamorgan to attend to matters affecting his estate, staying either at Llanmaes or elsewhere in the Vale with members of the family. From time to time, servants were despatched from Usk to make The Ham ready for a family visit,¹⁶ but it is evident that during the first half of the nineteenth century The Ham provided no more than an occasional residence for the Nicholl family. Ham lands were let to tenant farmers who appear to have been 'custodians' of the house, farmer John Morgan and his wife being listed as the tenants at 'Ham House' in 1851. The retirement of the Morgans from farming in 1859 and their vacating of the house, the condition of which at this date is unknown, left the way clear for the Nicholls' building plans to be realised. Delight was expressed in local newspapers at the prospect of Iltyd Nicholl senior or his son making The Ham once more the family's permanent residence and the arrival of large loads of building materials on the site in the spring of 1860 excited much local interest.¹⁷

Even as absentee landlords the Nicholls of Ham had long enjoyed a prominent place in Glamorgan gentry society and had been involved in the official life of the county as justices of the peace, sheriffs and deputy lieutenants. If that position was to be reasserted and subsequently maintained, the family needed a permanent presence and a suitably impressive residence in the county, and whatever its historic merits, the old Ham house did not meet such a need. The decision to build a new house may well have been influenced in part by the marriages of the Reverend Iltyd and his brother George Whitlock with their cousins the Nicholl sisters of Penllyn, marriages which loosened some of the immediate family ties with Monmouthshire. And the death of Eleanor Nicholl in 1850 may have prompted her husband to return to Glamorgan and re-establish his heirs in the old Nicholl family home. The Monmouthshire properties, including Court Bleddin, Mamhilad and the Usk town house, would provide residences for younger sons and other family members. Court Bleddin, long in the hands of tenants, did not become a Nicholl family residence until the end of the century when George Bleddyn Tyrrell Nicholl (1865-1941) took possession and substantially improved the property. Mamhilad, another Monmouthshire property acquired through the Bond marriage, became the home of Iltyd's youngest son, William Henry (1819-74). The house in Usk was occupied by Hume Nicholl cousins.

So, in the last decade of his life, Iltyd Nicholl turned to The Ham determined to transform the old house into a residence to rival anything in the county. An impressive new mansion house, built on the grand scale and in the fashionable Tudor-Gothic style, would forcibly re-establish the family's presence in Glamorgan. What could not have been anticipated was how brief an existence the new mansion would have, nor that the eldest son and heir, the Reverend Iltyd, already by 1851 a childless widower, would predecease his father. Father and sons must have

assumed that the new Ham house would provide a residence for many future generations of the family. But within a single generation The Ham was in the hands of tenants and the Nicholls had already distanced themselves from the property.

The mid nineteenth-century vogue for Gothic Revival architecture sprang from a desire on the part of the wealthy to display their wealth and social position in a suitably stately pile. The fact that many of those new builders were also the *nouveaux riches* whose wealth was founded largely on industry and business — in the context of Glamorgan one thinks of houses erected by the Insoles at Insole Court (1855 & 1873), the Stock Hills at Rookwood (1866), David Williams at Miskin (1864) and Lewis Llewelyn Dillwyn at Hendrefoilan (c.1860) among others — must have been an added spur to long-established gentry of sufficient means to emphasise or reassert their position in society. In the particular context of The Ham it was singularly fortunate that the Reverend Iltyd's sister, Mary, had married Sir Matthew Digby Wyatt¹⁸ thereby giving the Nicholl family immediate access to one of the most eminent architects of the day. And Wyatt's enthusiasm for Renaissance and Gothic architecture allowed the owners of The Ham an indulgent expression of taste and fashion. By the spring of 1860 Wyatt's plans had been prepared, the overall design approved by his brother-in-law and father-in-law, building materials were arriving on site and the rebuilding of The Ham was about to commence.

The improvement of nearby Dimlands, Llantwit Major, may have further encouraged the owners of The Ham to build, and to build on the grand scale. Iltyd Nicholl, in his will of 1700,¹⁹ had bequeathed four acres of customary lands 'called ye Dimlands' to his second son Edmond, and thereafter the Dimlands property was enjoyed by younger sons of The Ham. The Reverend Robert Nicholl (b.1763), sixth son of Whitlock Nicholl, who married Elizabeth Carne heiress of the Nash Manor estate and assumed the additional surname of Carne, enhanced his Dimlands inheritance by purchase and in 1799 began to build a house there. Dimlands, improved in the Gothic style by his son Dr. J.W. Nicholl Carne in the 1850s,²⁰ became the home of Sir Matthew Digby Wyatt (d.1877) in his later years. For the architect and his wife Dimlands not only provided a comfortable residence conveniently close to Mary Wyatt's own family but also enabled her husband to judge at first hand the success (or otherwise) of his newly created edifice at The Ham.

The Ham

Two views of the old Ham house depict a property of singularly engaging architectural proportions. An early/mid nineteenth-century lithograph (Plate 2) of the east front of the old Ham house shows a gabled property approached by a steep flight of stone steps at the bottom of which were a pair of ornamental gates. There are points of comparison with that other Nicholl residence, Great House, Llanmaes, both houses incorporating twin gables and entrances flanked by pillars and approached through ornamental gates. But there the comparison ends, for the old Ham was a rambling property lacking architectural cohesion, a fact indicated in the lithograph which records an off-centre entrance and an irregular pattern of fenestration on the main façade. By contrast, Great House, Llanmaes was rebuilt c.1700 to a coherent plan characterised by formality and regularity.²¹ This lack of architectural cohesion at the Ham is more clearly demonstrated in a sketch (Plate 1) of the west and south façades of the old house made by Eleanor Nicholl (d.1895). The west entrance front comprised three gabled bays, the central bay of three storeys rising dramatically above the flanking two-storey bays. A centrally located entrance porch had two pillars supporting what appears to be a semi-circular canopy, while a

pillared verandah ran along the front of the house on either side of the porch. Above the porch, at first floor level, was an oriel-type window and above this, in the gable, a single square-headed light. The round-headed windows in the south bays were of uniform design and were regularly placed in pairs at ground- and first-floor level, while in the north bay only a single window at first- and gable-floor level is shown, the ground floor obscured in the sketch by verandah and trees. The double-gabled south façade is depicted in the sketch with two main storeys and attic rooms and with a regular pattern of fenestration. The main drive wound its way up to the house, its final approach from the south ending in a turning circle in front of the porch. The level ground close to the house on this west side was laid out in lawns. As on the east side there was an approach from the bottom of the slope through a pillared gateway and up flights of steps (three) to the house. Eleanor Nicholl's sketch, unlike the lithograph, invites few comparisons with architecturally unified Llanmaes.

The Llanmaes house survives in its early eighteenth-century form to the present day. Of the old Ham nothing remains, but the inventory attached to the will of Iltyd Nicholl in 1700 reveals something of the layout of the house at that date, itemising the contents of individual rooms — hall and porch, kitchen, three little rooms within the kitchen, chambers above the hall, chambers over the porch and two chambers over the kitchen, servants' chamber, garret, cellar, storeroom. Brewhouse and cider house are also named on the inventory, and the picture that emerges is of an unpretentious, substantial property with a somewhat haphazard arrangement of rooms. A description of the old house written when it still lingered in local memory reinforces this impression.²³ It portrays a gabled building of somewhat eccentric character built on various levels at various dates, with four storeys on the north, three storeys on the east, and two storeys in north wing and in the west portion of the house. There were many steps up and down between the rooms, and the main room, a large panelled hall, was located on the east side. With its various additions, improvements and refurbishments the old house had stood for centuries. The nineteenth-century baronial-style mansion designed by Sir Matthew Digby Wyatt was a singularly imposing edifice, but it provided a Nicholl family residence for less than fifty years and stood for less than a century before being obliterated from the landscape.

Wyatt's architectural design for The Ham brought together late Gothic and Elizabethan styles ('Tudorbethan') and incorporated within it Tudor doorways, battlemented parapets and massive chimneys, an open timbered hall and minstrels' gallery. By the spring of 1862 a splendid new mansion was rising majestically on the site of its more modest predecessor, some parts of which, including main walls and some ground floor rooms, were retained. The whole grand design was to be complemented not only by elegant accommodation and sumptuous furnishings within the house but also by the formal and informal landscaped grounds created around it.

The Ham was built from blue lias limestone quarried on the estate, with Sutton stone mouldings. Internally it was wainscotted with oak, walnut and olive wood, the latter 'brought purposely from Italy by the proprietor'. Wooden panelling and ornamental ceiling beams from the old hall were inspected by Wyatt and were deemed fit to be reused in the new dining room. While Wyatt oversaw the implementation of his plans it is clear that the Reverend Iltyd Nicholl, from his temporary residence at Tresilian, St Donat's, was personally involved in the enterprise, engaging local labour to carry out the main building work and reinforcing their supervision by a Mr Richard Winter. And it was the Reverend Iltyd who had persuaded his brother-in-law to incorporate an 'observation tower' into the design for The Ham to provide a commanding view across his estate and the Bristol Channel. As work on the interior of the new mansion progressed a 'specialist' workforce was required and craftsmen and engineers from London

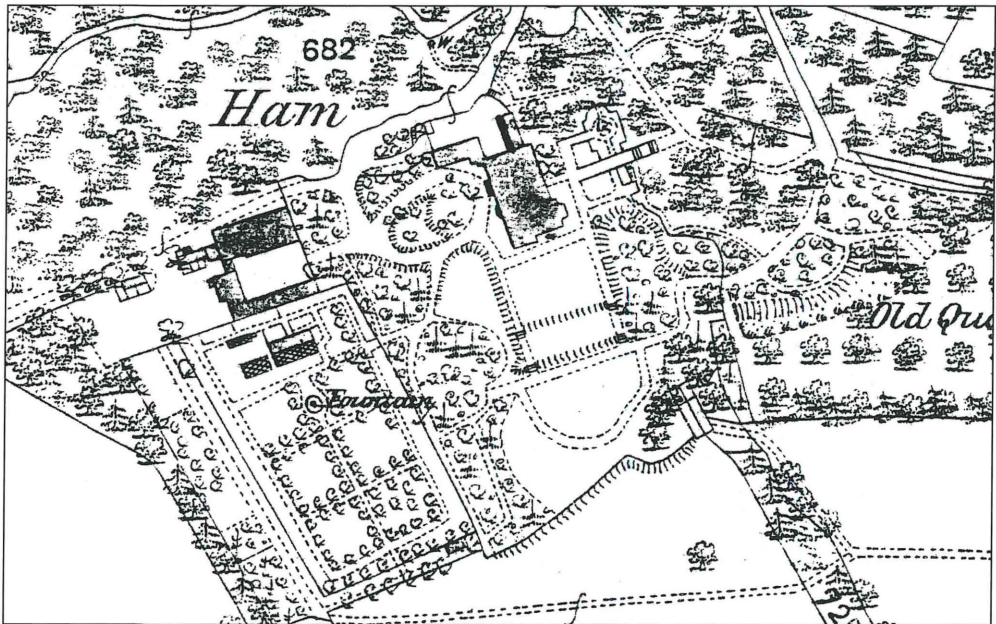


Plate 3. The Ham as shown on OS 25 inch 1st edition, 1877.

were engaged. Haliday of Sydenham was responsible for most of the fine carving in wood and stone which was such a feature of the house; chimney pieces with their elaborately carved details were the work of Poole & Sons of Westminster; heating and plumbing was installed by Potter & Son of South Molton Street, London; and the total cost of the building, including the stables and outbuildings, was just under £20,000.²⁴

Impressive the new mansion undoubtedly was, but its external appearance was altogether more massive and ponderous than that envisaged by Wyatt in his meticulously detailed and delicately coloured plans, and cost cutting has been suggested as the reason for such discrepancy. Only the dramatic silhouettes produced against the skyline when the house was viewed from certain angles relieved the massiveness of the structure, and here the inclusion, some might say intrusion, of the 'observation tower', made a significant impact. One striking feature of the house as designed by Wyatt was the marked contrast between the symmetrical garden front and the ornate, complicated entrance front, a complexity which would have been even further exaggerated had Wyatt's plan for a 'garden room' or conservatory to project from one end of the west front been implemented (Plates 4 and 5).

Internally the house was more compact than its exterior image suggested, the restricted nature of the Ham site dictating that while the house could rise to impressive height it could not spread far outwards. Wyatt's ground plan takes full account of this fact and his design for an Elizabethan hall house was realised with few modifications (Plates 6 and 7). The entrance porch on the west side of the house, with its Tudor arched doorway, led into the soaring height of the Great Hall from which, in a recess beyond an arched stone screen, a beautifully carved oak staircase (said to have come from 'the Old Palace at Greenwich')²⁵ led to the upper floors of the house via a gallery. No minstrels in this gallery but a fine organ. The three-storey Great Hall,



Plate 4. Wyatt's drawing of entrance front of The Ham.
National Library of Wales.

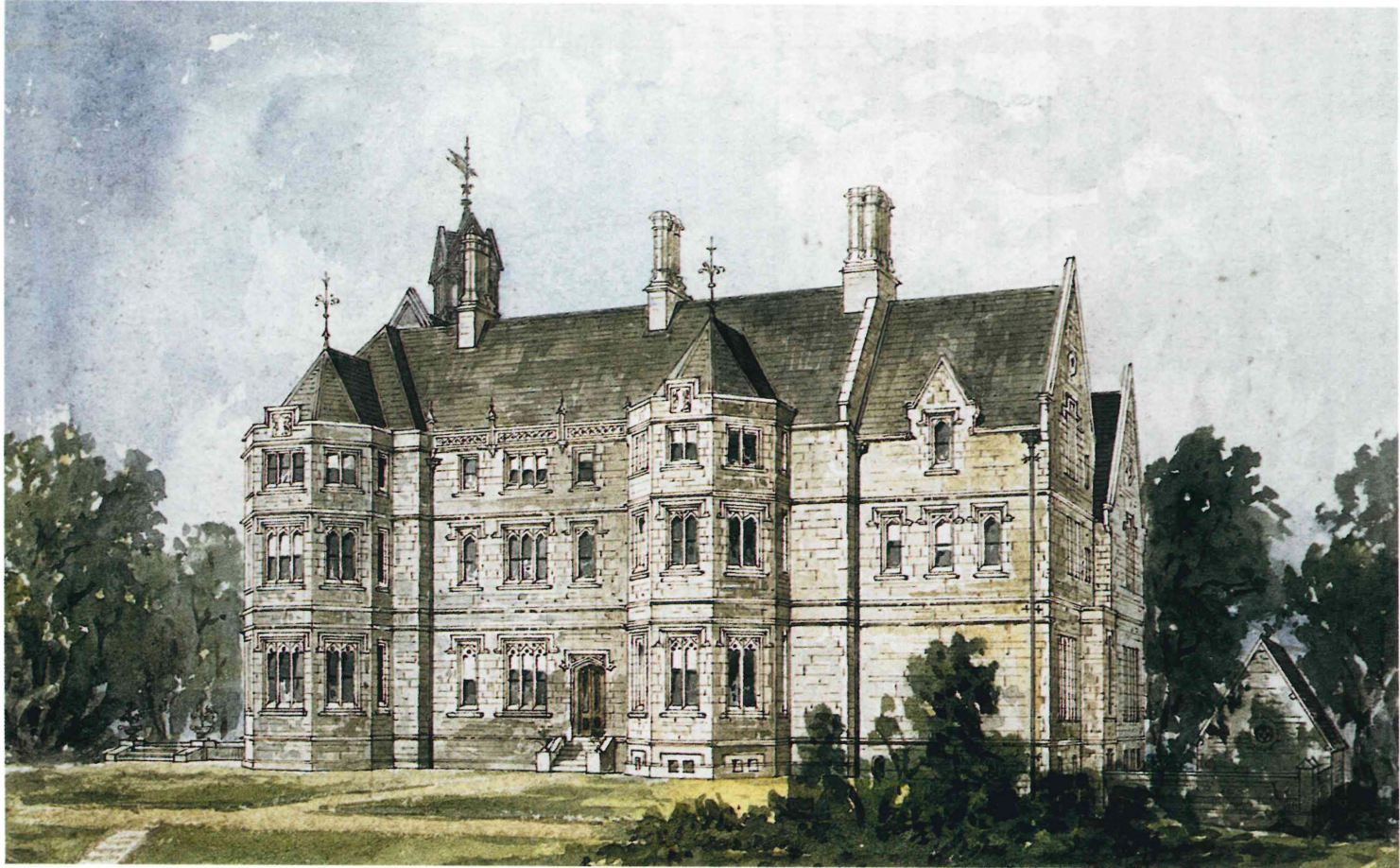


Plate 5. Wyatt's drawing of east front of The Ham.
National Library of Wales.

in true baronial style, boasted a magnificent open arch-braced timber roof, a large Elizabethan bay window, an arcaded gallery and a great stone fireplace bearing the family coat of arms and motto (Plates 10 and 11). On the ground floor facing east were Dining Room (probably the kitchen of the old house as it retained a recess in the north wall indicating the site of an open fireplace), Morning Room and Drawing Room, while the Library or Study occupied the south-west corner of the building with access into the garden (Plates 12-14). Servants' Hall and Kitchen were now sited on the north side of the building. Although not indicated on Wyatt's plan (Plate 6) a Smoking Room was also provided on the ground floor (Plate 15). Elaborate plaster-work ceilings were a decorative feature of the main rooms, that of the Library depicting Shakespeare, Byron and other literary figures. Main bedrooms and dressing rooms on the first floor were suitably impressive and were approached along corridors and staircases of a truly baronial scale. Out of sight were the essential cellars for wine and storage and the attic rooms which accommodated domestic staff.

The architectural magnificence of the mansion was matched by the furniture and other items of exceptional opulence and interest displayed in the main rooms.²⁷ Some of these had been handed down for generations in the Nicholl family, some can be attributed to more recent acquisition through marriage or purchase. In one bedroom was a magnificent old silk-covered and canopied bedstead dating from the late seventeenth century and probably acquired from Brympton (co. Somerset) the seat of the Sydenham family when, c.1739, Whitlock Nicholl of The Ham inherited a share in that estate (Plate 16).²⁸ According to one account he had the bed (known in the family as the 'Queen Anne' bed) refurbished for his marriage to Anne Lewis in 1742. In the Great Hall (Plate 10) there was a table-top formed from a slab of tessellated marble said to have been brought originally from the palace of Diocletian at Spalato to the Villa Albini in Rome and, having come into the possession of Sir Horace Mann (d.1785),²⁹ to have been bought by a member of the Nicholl family. Items of Oriental provenance in various rooms of the house included a 'Circular Ningpo Chinese Table' profusely inlaid with ivory and coloured woods, a 'Chinese Ningpo Carved Bedstead' (Plate 15) similarly inlaid and fitted with a decorated canopy, both from the Summer Palace in Peking, and a pair of elaborately carved Chinese chairs from the Imperial Palace in that city, all reputed to have been brought to this country from China in 1864 when British troops, under the command of General 'Chinese' Gordon, returned after crushing the Taiping Rebellion.³⁰ There was a valuable assortment of chairs in the various rooms of the house — Tudor chairs including one early such chair with a triangular seat, finely carved 'William and Mary' style chairs and other high-backed late-seventeenth-century chairs. Two chairs described in the 1912 account of The Ham as having been successively owned by Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-82) and J.A.McNeill Whistler (1834-1903) were then very recent acquisitions. There were numerous cabinets to delight the eye of the connoisseur. In the Drawing Room (Plate 14) stood a sixteenth-century ebony cabinet from Italy with a carved ivory panel on the front of each drawer depicting the labours of Hercules, a rare Japanese lacquer cabinet and an old English lacquer cabinet with its original gilt wood stand and cornice, the latter regarded as one of the most valuable such objects in the country. In the same room were various items of old Milanese furniture of the seventeenth century displaying exquisite inlaid work. Among the many fine pieces of walnut and mahogany furniture was a massive writing table 'once used by King George II'. And there was an old rosewood medicine chest which may have belonged to a surgeon Nicholl forbear. Undoubtedly many of these items were priceless, and undoubtedly many of them merited the attributions afforded them by nineteenth-century commentators and family members. But those

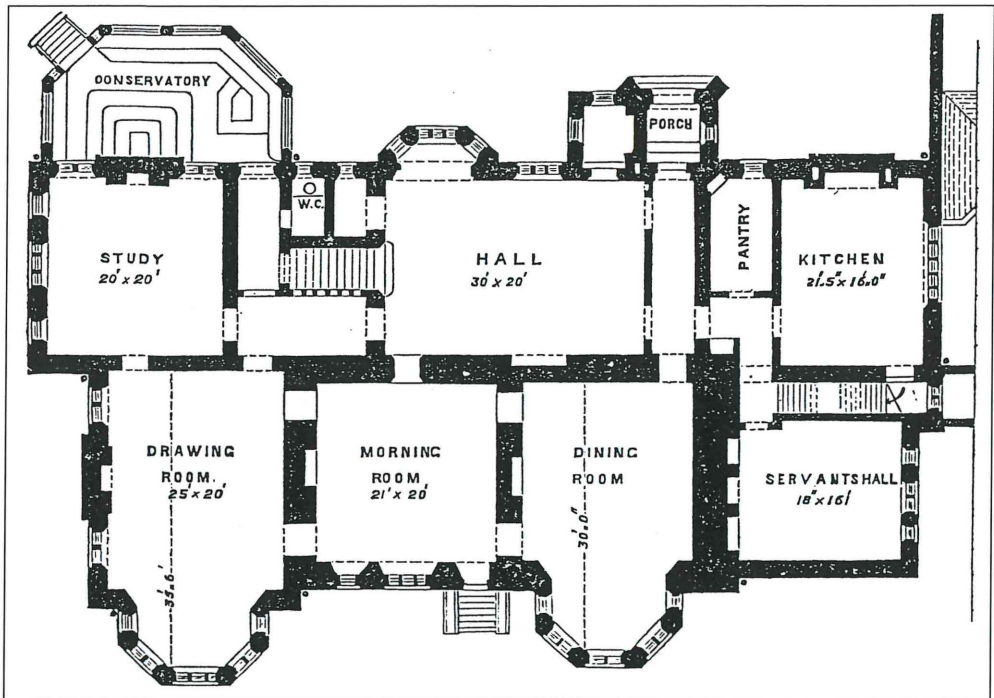


Plate 6. Ground plan of The Ham (*The Building News*, 7 May 1869).

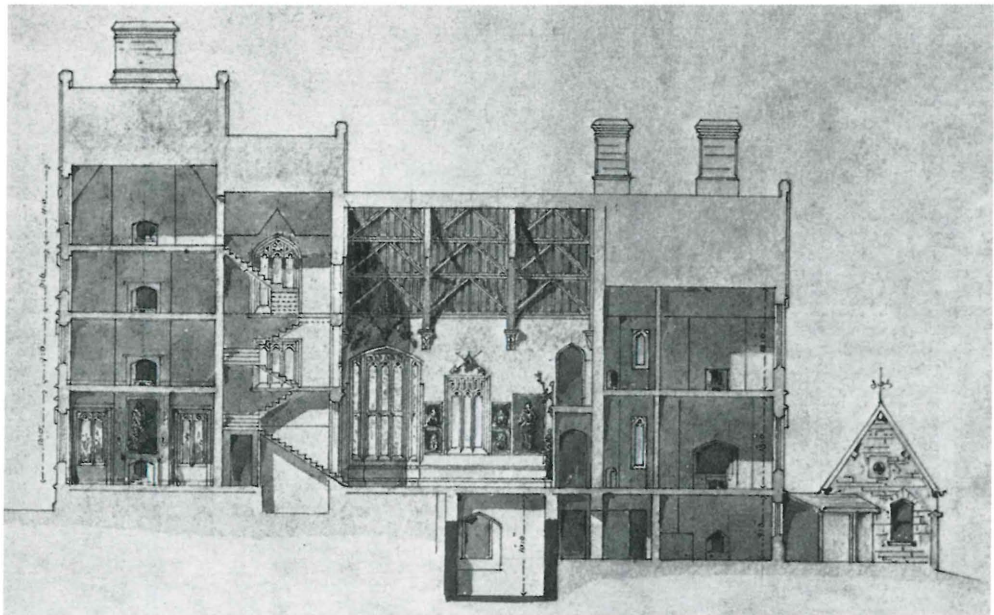


Plate 7. Wyatt's sectional drawing showing interior arrangement of The Ham.
National Library of Wales.



Plate 8. The Ham from the south-west.
Edwin Miles photograph.



Plate 9. The Ham from the south-east.
Edwin Miles photograph.

commentators and family members belonged to an age that loved to romanticise, and one cannot discount the possibility that some of the claims were exaggerated.

Walls throughout the house were hung with pictures, mainly portraits of members of the Nicholl family, portraits of British and Continental royalty and nobility, engravings of local and national notabilities. But there were also allegorical pictures and landscapes. Notable among the collection was a portrait of William III by Sir Godfrey Kneller and a portrait of the Earl of Suffolk by Cornelius Jansen the Dutch painter who settled at the court of James I. A Welsh landscape by Richard Wilson hung under the gallery in the Great Hall. In the Dining Room was a scene in Bruges by Richard Parkes Bonnington and a seascape by Nicholas Pocock. Portraits of Whitlock Nicholl of The Ham and of the Reverend Iltyd Nicholl of Llanmaes were prominently hung on the walls of the Great Hall; on the staircase was a portrait of one of the sons of Walter Evans of Eaglesbush, Neath who, so the family story ran, died before his intended marriage to a daughter of The Ham. Elsewhere in the house were portraits of members of the Medici family, portraits of Stuart monarchs, portraits of bishops and statesmen from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. In display cabinets were miniatures by such masters of that art as Richard Cosway and Andrew (or Nathaniel) Plimer, and relics of the Stuart monarchs including two snuff boxes with medallions of Charles I and Charles II. The latter items were said to have been presented to Nicholl forebears, one to Captain Richard Bond and the other to Sir Henry Browne 'who with Sir Thomas Herbert attended Charles I when he went to the scaffold'.³¹ These and other 'royal memorabilia', together with some of the furniture and paintings, are assumed to have been acquired by the Nicholls through marriage with the Bond family.

In most of the main rooms of the house were displayed valuable items of Oriental and European porcelain and pottery, much of the former inherited from the Lewises of Penllyn. There were famille rose and famille vert Chinese bowls, rare Wedgwood blackware jugs depicting the gods of river and water, Delftware plates and jars, Imari dishes, and a fine collection of Nantgarw china. And in the Library (Plate 12) was housed a priceless collection of books, successive generations of the Nicholl family having built up an impressive library. Early printed books with marginal notes apparently in the handwriting of Erasmus, Luther and others, are believed to have been disposed of at the end of the nineteenth century and to have been acquired by the universities of Leipzig and Uppsala. But there were still estimated to be some 26,000 volumes in the library at The Ham at the beginning of the twentieth century.³² Sadly, their titles are not known and the range of their subject matter can only be surmised. Their present whereabouts, like those of the family portraits and so many other items, are unknown.³³

The Ham as created by Sir Matthew Digby Wyatt and Iltyd Nicholl was baronial in style and in content, a veritable treasure house that must have mightily impressed many of those who visited it. To the modern eye, the rooms would have presented a somewhat incongruous mixture of the cluttered and the austere; to Victorian eyes they were the height of fashion and good taste. One visitor to The Ham in the 1880s considered that the house bore a marked resemblance to that earlier, fictional edifice *Northanger Abbey* with its 'large and lofty hall ... broad staircase of shining oak ... furniture in all the profusion and elegance of modern taste'.³⁴ That same guest stayed at The Ham in December, and while admiring his host's residence he was fully appreciative of the large fires in day rooms and bedrooms, the thick carpets on the floors and the heavy shutters on the windows, all of which kept cold and draughts at bay. The 'stateliness' of the mansion and the beauty of its location elicited much favourable comment; a



Plate 10. The Ham - Entrance Hall (looking south).
Edwin Miles photograph.



Plate 11. The Ham - Fireplace in Entrance Hall.
Edwin Miles photograph.

‘striking building, and quite unlike any other of the great houses of South Wales’ was how one newspaper reporter described it. Marie Trevelyan (1853-1922), local historian and author, who was given access to the library at The Ham through her friendship with the Nicholl family, was clearly impressed although her verdict ‘peculiarly beautiful’ may not have been typical!³⁵ She would have seen the house being built and, like all her contemporaries must have imagined that this massive structure would survive for centuries.

Even as the house was being built, it became clear that it would pass eventually to the second son of Iltyd and Eleanor Nicholl. Their eldest son, the Reverend Iltyd, had married his cousin Augusta Jane, younger daughter and co-heiress of Dr William Nicholl of Penllyn and the Isle of Wight, in 1842, but no son had been born to the couple, just one daughter who died in 1850 shortly before reaching her second birthday and eighteen months before her mother. So, when Wyatt was preparing his drawings for the new house, both the Reverend Iltyd and his father knew that The Ham inheritance would pass to George Whitlock Nicholl who had married Augusta Jane’s elder sister Mary Lewisa. The Reverend Iltyd died in 1867, his father four years later. Both were buried in Usk churchyard where Eleanor (*née* Bond) had been laid to rest in 1850, and the new heir to The Ham, George Whitlock Nicholl, moved into the Wyatt mansion.

While his father and elder brother were alive George Whitlock Nicholl, Barrister at Law of the Middle Temple, Recorder of Usk, Constable of Llanblethian Castle and *ex officio* Mayor of Cowbridge had lived mainly in London and at various places in Monmouthshire including Llanbadoc, and Rockfield where his eldest son was born. Thereafter he, his wife and their children made The Ham their main residence, and it was from The Ham that George Whitlock Nicholl’s funeral cortege made its way to Llantwit Major church in November 1889. For a decade after her husband’s death Mary Lewisa continued to live at The Ham with her son and heir Iltyd Bond Nicholl, but in 1899 the house and estate was rented out to J.A.A. Williams a family friend. During those years Woodford House, home to Mary Lewisa’s unmarried daughter Edith Eleanor, Court Bleddin and other Nicholl family homes would have provided temporary residences for mother and son.

The day in March 1905 when, after a funeral service in the hall at The Ham, Mary Lewisa Nicholl’s coffin was carried in procession to Llantwit Major church to be buried alongside that of her late husband marked the end of an era both for the Nicholl family and for The Ham.³⁶ Over the next few years legal and financial settlements were effected, many of the contents of The Ham were distributed among members of the family and in 1912 the remaining items in the house, some of singular value and local interest, were sold at auction prior to the house being leased to tenants.³⁷ By that date the Nicholl family of The Ham had all but severed its immediate ties with the estate. Bachelor Iltyd Bond Nicholl FSA (1862-1941) would soon move into Llanmaes House which remained his main residence for the remainder of his life. His younger brother George Bleddyn Tyrrell Nicholl was firmly established at Court Bleddin, and the youngest brother, the Reverend Digby Seys Whitlock Nicholl, had his homes on the Isle of Wight and in Suffolk.

In August 1898 a grand ‘Bazaar and Garden Fete’, hosted according to the programme by J.A.A. (Alec) Williams a close friend of Iltyd Nicholl and the man who would shortly become his tenant, had been held at The Ham (‘Ham Court’ as it was named on the programme) in support of the Llantwit Major church restoration appeal.³⁸ Attractions at the two-day event included ‘Mimicry & Ventriloquism’, ‘Palmistry, Graphology & Phrenology’ by Madame Pslieu (*alias* Marie Trevelyan), ‘Animated Photography’ and exhibitions of Trafalgar Flags and Fine Art, all guaranteed to draw large crowds. Arrangements had been made by Iltyd

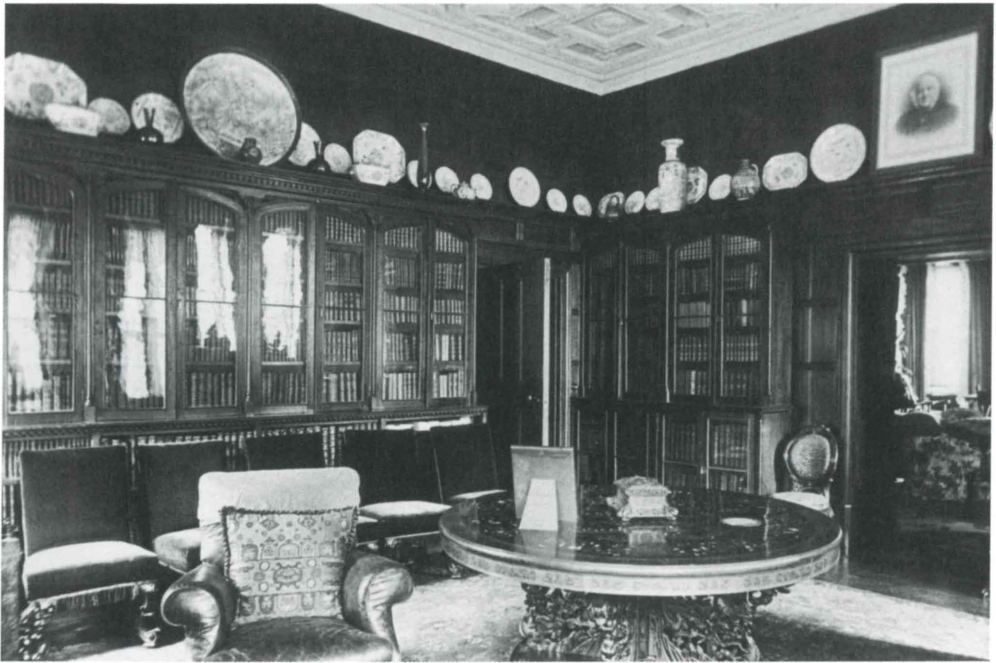


Plate 12. The Ham - Library.
Edwin Miles photograph.



Plate 13. The Ham - Morning Room.
Edwin Miles photograph.



Plate 14. The Ham - Drawing Room.
Edwin Miles photograph.



Plate 15. The Ham - Smoking Room.
Edwin Miles photograph.



Plate 16. The Chinese Bed.
Edwin Miles photograph.



Plate 17. The 'Queen Anne' Bed.
Edwin Miles photograph.

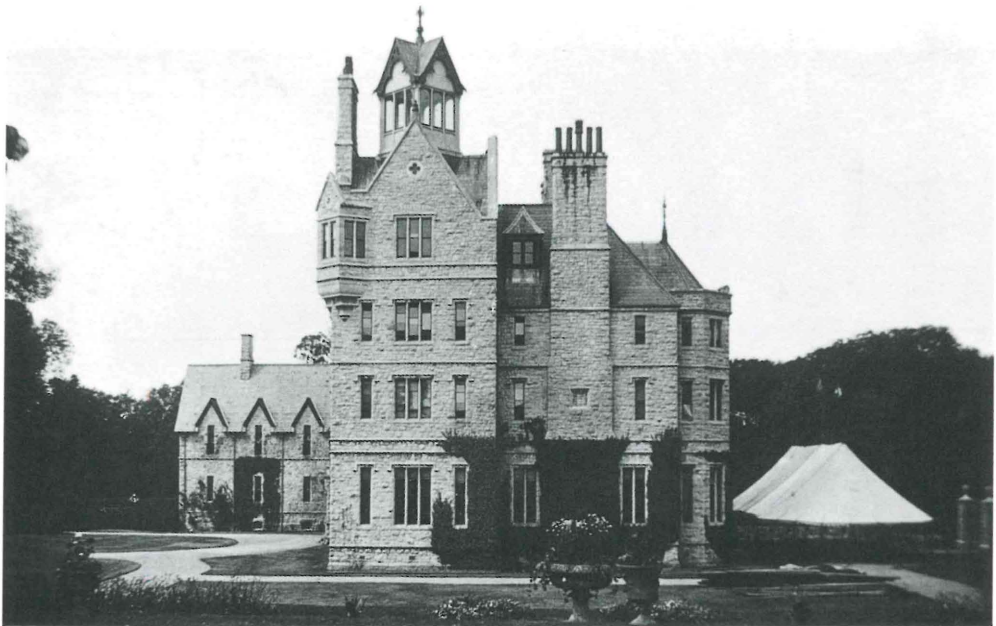


Plate 18. The Ham - view from the south-west. The marquee erected close to the house on the garden side suggests that this photograph was taken during the fete in August 1898.
Thomas Lloyd collection.



Plate 19. The Ham - Entrance Front.
Edwin Miles photograph.



Plate 20. The Ham - view from east showing rustic fence separating the house platform from the as yet unterraced slope. The figures may be members of the Nicholl family.
Thomas Lloyd collection.

Nicholl, Alec Williams and others, and while the owner of The Ham provided the venue it was his friend who was to have the more prominent role. A native of north Wales, Alec Williams³⁹ was a man of considerable musical knowledge and ability whose talents and connections added a special dimension to events at The Ham Fete. For many of those attending, the highlights of each day were recitals given on The Ham organ by the notable composer Gabriel Fauré, then organist of the Madeleine, Paris, who was staying at nearby Llandough Castle (where he composed his 7th Nocturne), and by Williams himself. The whole occasion was a considerable social event with the county nobility and gentry prominent both as participants and supporters, and in providing the venue The Ham was fulfilling the traditional country house role as a focus for social gatherings and local philanthropy. The assumption must have been that it would continue to do so for many years to come, and few of those who admired the house and strolled in the landscaped grounds could have foreseen what fate held in store.

The Gardens of The Ham

The grandeur of the house designed by Wyatt was complemented by formal and informal landscaped grounds created around it, and while the house has vanished traces of those once magnificent gardens can still be discerned today. And it is also possible to visualise, in the mind's eye if not on the ground, some of the elements of the earlier man-made landscape.

The nineteenth-century lithograph view of the old house (Plate 1) reveals nothing of the gardens then in existence other than a profusion of trees and shrubs on either side of the steps leading up to the main (east) entrance, a pair of ornamental iron gates between stone pillars at the foot of the steps and a pair of matching pillars at the top. No evidence of terracing on this slope is discernible in the artist's view, the house rather than its surroundings being the focus of the artist's attention and the depiction of 'landscape' no more than decorative. The sketch by Eleanor Nicholl puts the house in a wider context, and an account of the grounds as they were shortly before their mid nineteenth-century transformation provides considerable detail.⁴⁰

A walled forecourt on the east side of the house was bisected by a central broad flagged path on each side of which were grass plots and four cypress trees. The formality of this garden, which appears to owe its origins to the sixteenth or seventeenth century was, by the nineteenth century, softened by the climbing plants (unspecified) which clothed pillars and walls and by the introduction of rose bushes. Another garden is said to have existed on the south side of the courtyard, and its memory may be perpetuated in the rectangular enclosure shown on the 1877 Ordnance Survey map (Plate 3). Within a walled court on the north side of the old house were the various domestic offices including a dairy, and here, close to the kitchen entrance to the old house, was the well. Beyond this enclosure stood the stables and the buildings of the Home Farm.

A flight of thirty-six steps, each one-foot wide and flanked by low retaining walls, led up the steep slope on the east side of the house. In one nineteenth-century account these steps are said to have been 'remade' by the Reverend Iltyd Nicholl (d.1733) who is also credited with putting up the ornamental iron gates at the foot of the steps. A letter from George Whitlock Nicholl to the antiquarian David Jones of Wallington in 1884 supports these statements and gives an intriguing insight into the 'origins' of the steps.⁴¹ In his letter Nicholl states that 'the stairs of the hanging gardens' at the ruined Old Place, Llantwit Major were dismantled by his 'Great great or g.g.g. grandfather' taken to The Ham and 'made with the 2 big stairs', the latter statement seeming to indicate two flights of steps rather than a single one. He further states that

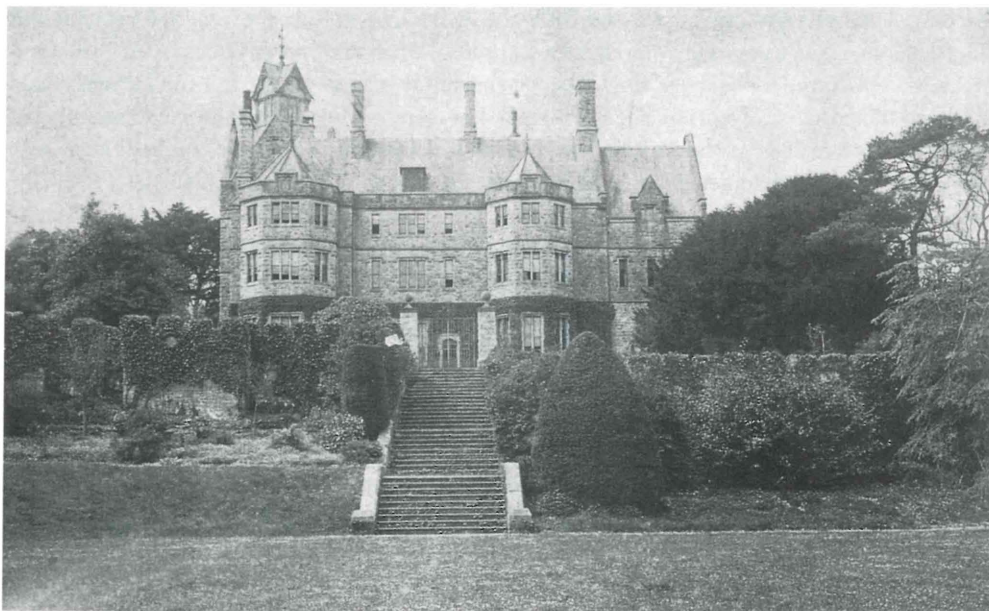


Plate 21. The Ham - view from the east showing the retaining wall at the top of the as yet unterraced slope.

Edwin Miles photograph.



Plate 22. The Ham - Lower Terrace and Croquet Lawn.

Edwin Miles photograph.

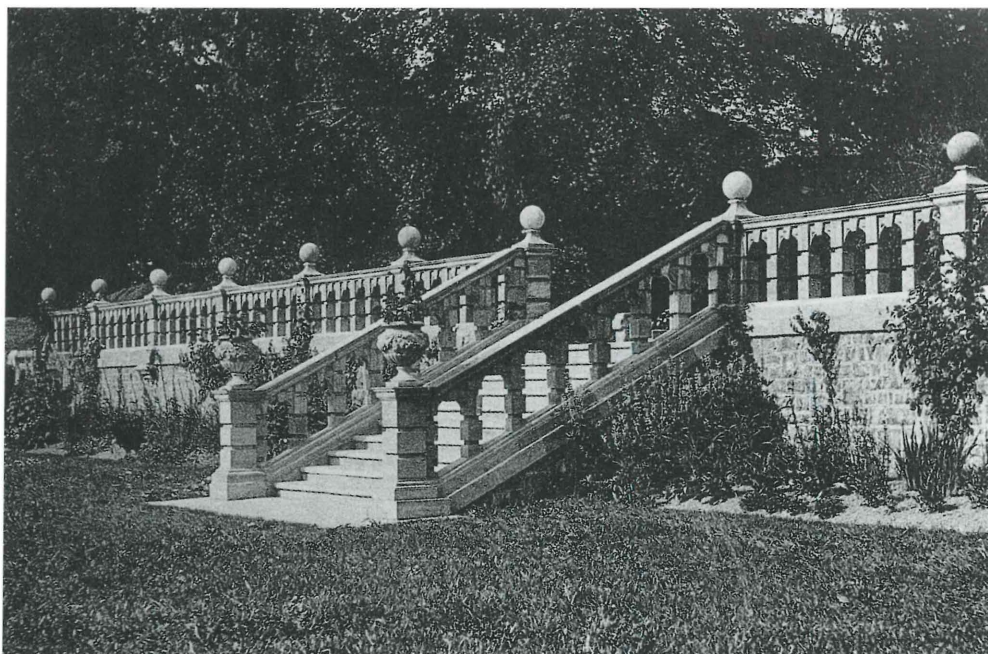


Plate 23. The Ham - Terrace and Balustrading.
From an old postcard.

mullions of the windows from the Old Place were taken to The Ham and ‘converted into pillars at the top & bottom of the big stairs’.

At the bottom of the steps, on sheltered level ground, was a road or driveway, beyond which was a garden whose content included a mulberry tree. That tree was reported to be ‘still vigorous’ at the beginning of the twentieth century when all other traces of the eighteenth-century garden had disappeared.

As part and parcel of the Victorian improvements at The Ham the grounds were redesigned and landscaped, mainly it would appear by George Whitlock and Ilyd Bond Nicholl, to make use of the natural rise and fall of the land. The 1877 Ordnance Survey map (Plate 3) shows that the main drive entered The Ham grounds from the north-west, ran past an entrance lodge down to the valley bottom, crossed the Hoddnant stream, and then wound its way up a steep slope, skirting the elevated site of the house and arriving at the west front of The Ham via a circular approach. Here, the level ground immediately surrounding the house was grassed and gravelled, with a few low, clipped shrubs in borders and beds. Further west, beyond the circular entrance drive and shielded by small plantations, was a walled kitchen garden, laid out in formal squares and rectangles, with glasshouses, fountain and a fish pond, this garden bounded on its northern edge by a range of outbuildings including a coach house and a gardener’s cottage. The stone walls of the kitchen garden, parts of which survive to the present day, were faced internally with red brick for maximum retention of heat.

But it was on the east side of the house, where the ground rose and fell dramatically, that the most impressive garden features were introduced. Here a succession of terraces was built, each confined by ornamental stone balustrades and connected by short flights of stone steps (Plates 23 and 24). Work at The Ham coincided with the High Victorian revival of terraced gardens,

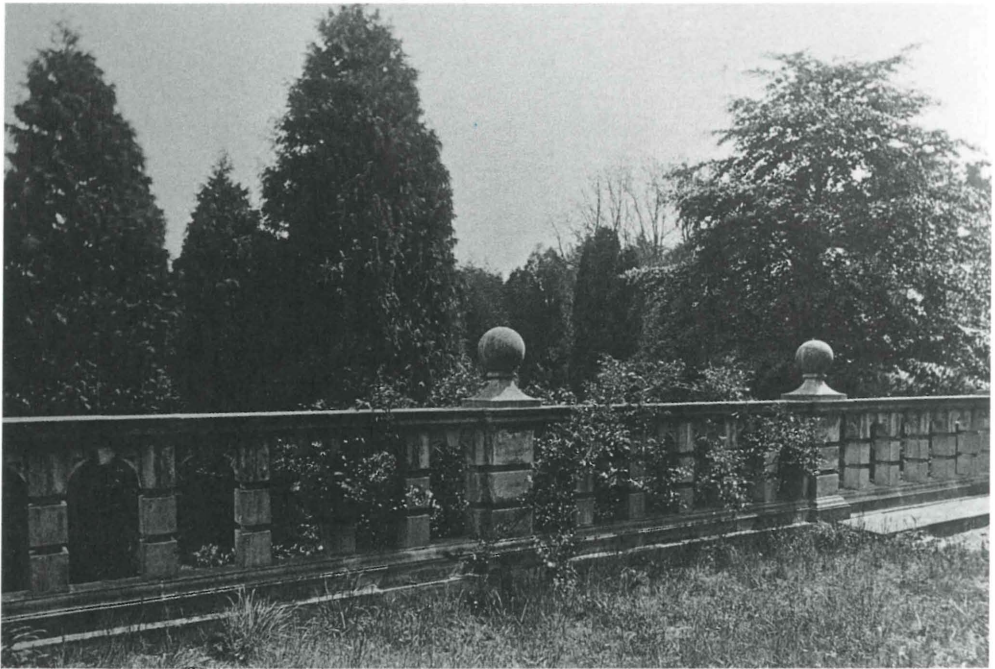


Plate 24. The Ham - Balustrading.
Edwin Miles photograph.

such as exemplified on the grand scale at Bowood in Wiltshire and Shrublands in Suffolk, while the Elizabethan terracing and ornamental stonework at Haddon Hall in Derbyshire served as the model for The Ham.⁴² The nature of The Ham site dictated in large measure the need for terracing, and contemporary accounts suggest that the influence of members of the Nicholl family in the design and planting was considerable. The precise date of the construction of the terraces has not been ascertained, but a newspaper account of 1912 speaks of them as ‘recently constructed’ by the then owner Iltud Bond Nicholl. One photograph taken before work on the terraces had begun, and which includes figures who may be members of the Nicholl family, shows the edge of the plateau around the house defined by a rustic wooden fence beyond which the ground falls sharply and seems to be something in the nature of a ‘wild’ garden (Plate 20). Another photograph (Plate 21) shows a solid stone retaining wall at the top of the slope; crenellated, and covered with creeping vegetation, this massive buttress prepared the way for the formal terracing soon to take place. In the background of both photographs the lower walls of the mansion (?survivals from the old house) are heavily covered with creepers (?ivy) trained and clipped around the windows.

A series of photographs taken in 1912 by the Bridgend photographer Edwin Miles show the landscape around and below the house transformed by a magnificent series of balustraded, formal terraces. The long flight of stone steps leading to the east entrance of the house now bisected the terraces and was flanked by low walls. Some, if not all, of the by now well-worn old steps from the Old Place, may have discarded at this time, perhaps re-used within the woodland walks on the periphery of the estate. A pair of delicately ornamental iron gates still

hung between stone pillars surmounted by pommels at the top of the steps, providing a 'claire-voie' across the valley. Both pillars and gates bear a marked resemblance to those shown at the foot of the steps (in the case of the pillars, at the top of the steps also) on the lithograph and may be survivals from the previous century rather than copies.

On the level ground at the foot of the main terraces, beyond the lower terrace and the croquet lawn (Plate 22), a sunken lawn led to a large oval pool with a central fountain and to another low terrace which faced the house (Plate 25). A short flight of stone steps at the north end of this terrace gave access to a balustraded walkway which ran along the top of the retaining wall. A single arched alcove in the end wall gave a view along the length of the terrace through a double line of stone pillars some ten feet tall which supported a frame over which were trained a profusion of climbing roses. This was still in process of construction in 1912 as shown in one of the Edwin Miles photographs where only the feet of the colonnade are in place and the walkway is unpaved (Plate 28). A 'loggia' or three-arched alcove in the centre of the terrace wall provided a splendid view across the lawns towards the house, the oval pool in front of the 'loggia' reflecting an image of the house in its surface (Plates 26 & 32). The whole effect of this terrace was essentially Italianate with stone steps, balustrades, niches and pillars, a water feature and an item of statuary. But no classical figure this, rather a delightful cherub-like figure perched on one leg atop a small mound of stones his head supporting a sun dial and one hand holding a sphere suspended from a wire/string which represented a pendulum (Plate 29). An inscription on the sundial also eschewed the classical and read 'my time is in thy hand'. The combined effect of stonework, water, the colour and scent of the roses cascading over the pergola, the profusion of virginia creeper against the back wall of the loggia, and the view across the sunken lawn to the house can still evoke its magic, albeit only in memory.

Edwin Miles's photographs show the high quality of the stonework in The Ham grounds, not only the walling and balustrading but also the stone pommels and urns decorating the terraces. Particularly charming was the cherub with the sundial of which mention has already been made. The photograph of this distinctive garden ornament was taken in May 1912, the day after the death of Edward George, a local mason who, so a note on the photograph reveals, was 'the maker and builder of the balustrades, steps and ornamental stonework in the garden'. But for this piece of local intelligence one would have assumed that all the stonework had been imported from workshops far removed from Glamorgan and assembled on site. Few of today's residents in the grounds of 'Ham Manor' realise the significance of the initials carved into one of the stone pillars that survives from the terracing, initials that record the two men who created the gardens at The Ham - **IN** and **EG** (Ilyd Nicholl the owner and planner, and Edward George the master craftsman).

Visitors to The Ham while it remained a Nicholl family residence commented on the magnificent trees, notably yews, ancient chestnuts and sycamores, and a magnificent plane tree said to be 'one of the finest in South Wales' which flourished in the grounds, but it is clear that Ilyd Nicholl cut down much old 'superfluous growth' on the east side of the house to open up the view. The variety of shrubs was also remarked upon, including those allowed to stray over the walls flanking the long flights of steps to temper their formality. Although few details of species are known and few survive to the present day, the 1912 photographs, some of which have been annotated by Ilyd Bond Nicholl, provide glimpses of trees, shrubs and other plants which then flourished at The Ham - hawthorns around the lower terrace, bamboos near one of the cascades, water lilies and irises in one of the ponds (Plates 30 and 31).

At the south-eastern end of the estate, the quarry which had supplied the building stone for

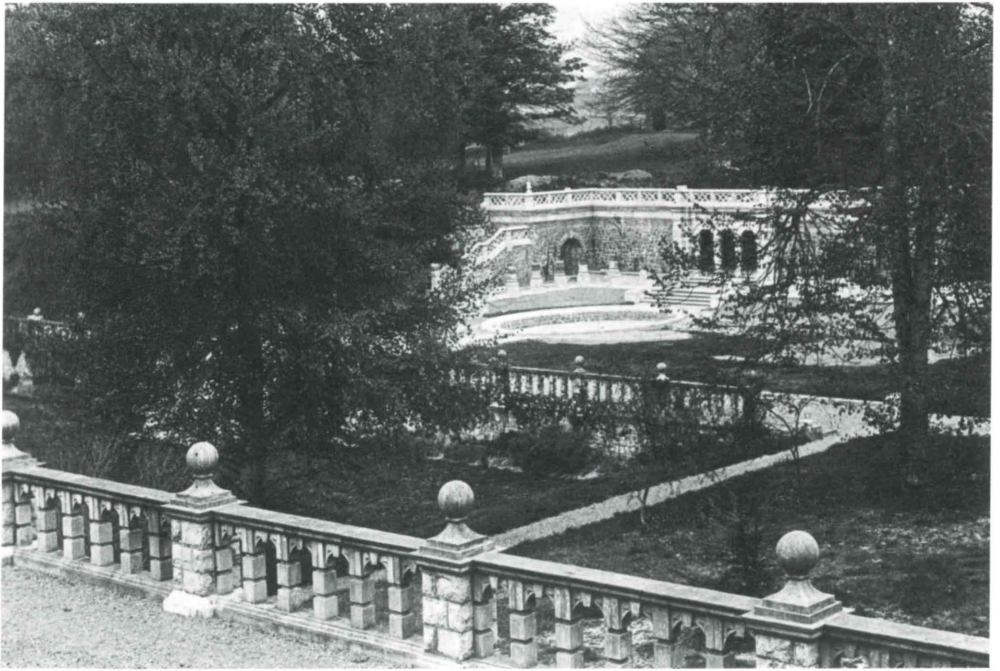


Plate 25. View from Loggia (unfinished Pergola and Fountain Pool).
Edwin Miles photograph.



Plate 26. View from terraces towards Pergola (unfinished) and Loggia.
Edwin Miles photograph.



Plate 27. Ornamental gates at east front of
The Ham.
Edwin Miles photograph.



Plate 28. The Ham - Pergola (unfinished)
with Sundial.
Edwin Miles photograph.



Plate 29. The Ham - Sundial.
Edwin Miles photograph.



Plate 30. The Ham - Bridge on Drive.
Edwin Miles photograph.

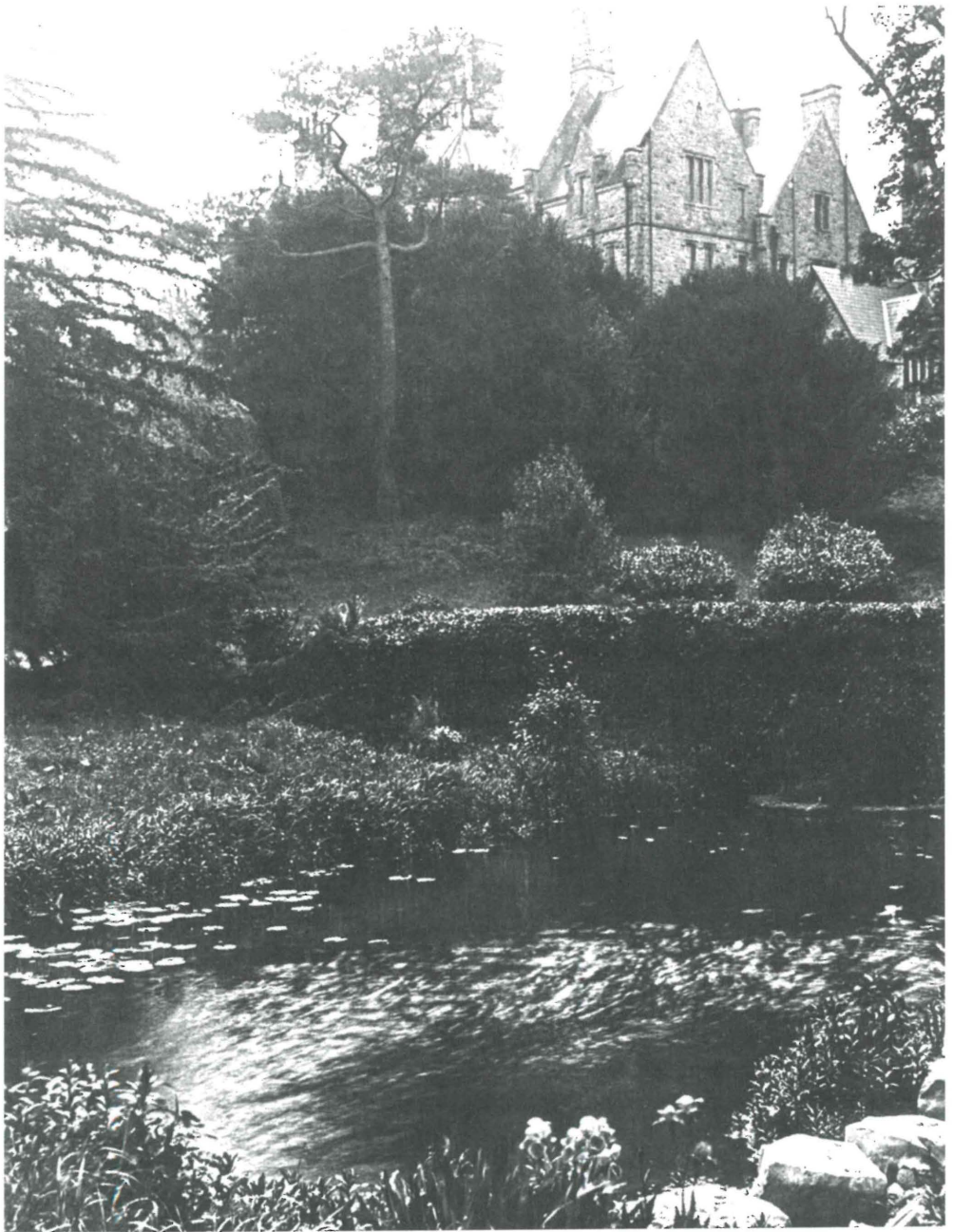
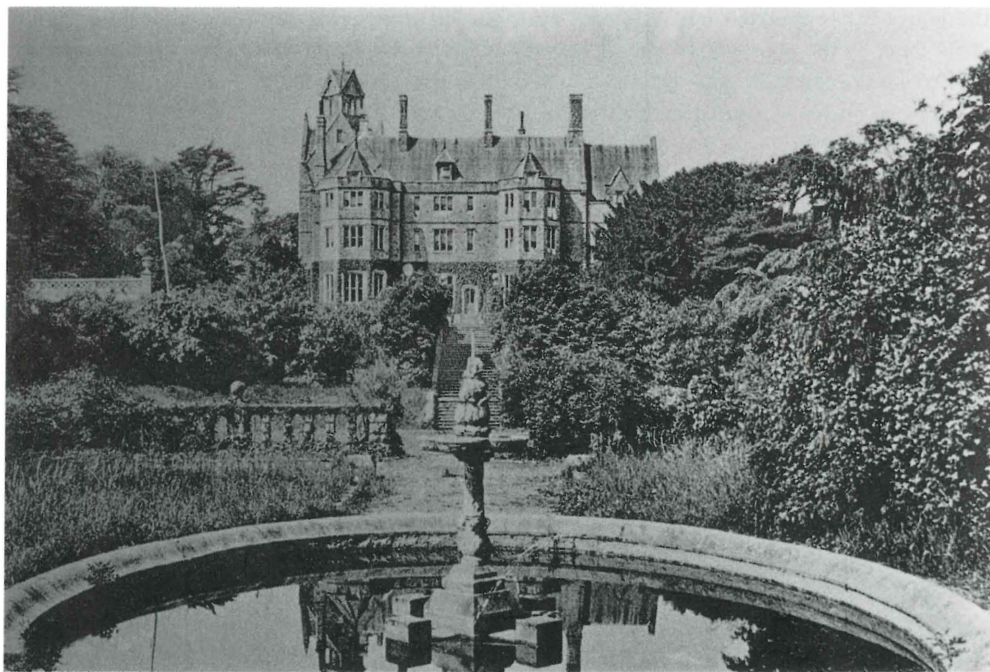


Plate 31. The Ham - Water Lily & Iris Pond.
Edwin Miles photograph.



Plates 32 & 33. Two views from Loggia in the latter days of The Ham showing encroaching trees & shrubs (Plate 32) and the house gutted by fire (Plate 33).

Llantwit Major Local History Society collection.

the house was converted into ‘a dainty rock garden with shady walks beneath its fern-clad cliffs’ and, as the photographs reveal, numerous lilac trees, while the stream which wound its way along the northern edge the site via mill race, waterfall, weir and stone bridges provided picturesque enclaves approached by tree-lined banks and paths.

The nature of the site at The Ham, the terracing and planting, the stonework features, and the juxtaposition of the formal and informal all combined to create a landscape of considerable impact and charm. Today, when Garden History is a subject of wide interest and research, the gardens of The Ham would attract much attention. But they, like the house itself, did not survive into the second half of twentieth century.

Even before the 1912 auction sale referred to above negotiations were taking place for The Ham to be rented out, leased or even sold. Prospective tenants were shown around the house and grounds by Iltyd Bond Nicholl’s agents, but terms and conditions could not be agreed and not until 1913 was a lease signed and Robert Henry Williams of Roath Court and his family moved in to The Ham, their landlord having agreed to install electric lighting throughout the house.⁴⁴ In 1919 Iltyd Bond Nicholl sold the estate, which comprised not only house and grounds but also its then semi-derelict farms, to Lewis Turnbull, head of the shipping company Turnbull Brothers. Lewis Turnbull lived at The Ham until his death in 1931, able to view from the tower room, which Iltyd Nicholl had insisted on adding to the house, Turnbull-owned ships plying up and down the Bristol Channel. His widow stayed on in the house for a few years before moving away and thereafter The Ham ceased to be a family home, although Gerald Turnbull whose main interest was in farming continued to develop The Ham farms as centres of agricultural excellence. Later in the 1930s groups of women and children from deprived communities in The Valleys were sent to The Ham for holidays under schemes devised to help families in the mining districts of South Wales, and up until the outbreak of war both house and grounds were maintained in good order.

The ultimate fate of The Ham and its gardens was a sad one. Requisitioned during the Second World War, first by American forces and later by a Scottish regiment, the house was gutted by fire in 1947, the conflagration caused by a cigarette carelessly discarded by a courting couple. A photograph taken soon after the fire (Plate 33) suggests that the grounds by that date were unkempt and overgrown, and it was now that they were robbed of much of their ornamental stonework. In the 1950s efforts were made to clear some of the brambles and other invasive vegetation and rescue what did survive of the garden landscape (Plate 32). The ruin of the house was made safe and for a brief period it seemed that The Ham might have a future not wholly incompatible with its past. But in the 1960s the Ham was sold to a ‘Leisure Company’, the derelict shell of the house was demolished and the whole site, now designated ‘Ham Manor’ became part of a development for static caravan homes. The bulldozers arrived, rubble from the demolished mansion, including elaborately carved coats of arms which had decorated the façade of the Wyatt building, were used to fill in the sunken area below the terraces and the entire Victorian/Edwardian landscape was destroyed.

Today, a few lengths of balustrading and walling survive to stand incongruously amid the uniform rows of ‘park homes’ and gardens ornamented with bedding plants and the occasional garden gnome. A few worn steps can still be uncovered in the wooded area that skirts the eastern edge of the site. Only the ‘loggia’ with its adjacent flight of steps and the vestiges of the pergola and ornamental pool survive relatively unscathed with the power to evoke something of the splendour that was Ham and to cause the informed beholder to mourn its loss (Plates 34-37).

The Ham in the 21st Century.



Plate 34. View towards Loggia and remains of Pergola.



Plate 35. View from Loggia.
The author's photographs.

The Ham in the 21st Century.



Plate 36. Surviving fragment of balustrading.



Plate 37. IN and EG carved on pillar.
The author's photographs.

Epilogue

It is against a background of the Nicholl family's long social, professional and official involvement in the life of Glamorgan, an outline of which has been attempted in this article, that the history of The Ham is revealed. Its history is also inextricably linked with the other Nicholl family residences in the county, only one of which, Merthyr Mawr house, built at the beginning of the nineteenth century by the eminent lawyer Sir John Nicholl (a younger son of Llanmaes), survives in family ownership to the present day, and the history of Merthyr Mawr is beyond the scope of the present article. Great House Llanmaes and Great House Llantwit Major both still stand and would be instantly familiar to their former Nicholl owners and inhabitants. Dimlands was demolished in the 1950s, and only its lodge remains. The lodge which still stands at the entrance to 'Ham Manor' is a remarkable survivor from the past, for this building, extended and improved in recent years, and 'much modernised' in the nineteenth century, retains within its core traces of its sixteenth-century origins as 'The Willon', home to tenants of the nearby water mill. The Ham itself makes its own sad entry in the catalogue of loss and destruction within the landscape of the Vale of Glamorgan.

Acknowledgements:

I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to the many people who have helped me in the preparation of this article and in particular those named below.

The staff in the Department of Pictures & Maps at the National Library of Wales were unfailingly helpful and met my requests for information and photographic work with speed and efficiency, as did former colleagues in the Glamorgan Record Office, Cardiff. Bryn Jones in Cardiff Central Library and the staff at Bridgend Local Studies Library Coed Parc also gave me considerable and much appreciated help. Viv Kelly, Elwyn Gibbs and other members of Llantwit Major Local History Society were generous in sharing their extensive knowledge of Llantwit Major with me and in giving me access to material in their own collections. I thank them all, as I do Andrew Renton of the Department of Art, National Museum & Gallery Cardiff, Dr Rose Kerr of the Asian Department, V&A, Stephen K. Roberts, Colin Pascoe and Brian Ll. James who answered some of my more specific queries.

I am especially grateful to Thomas Lloyd who read this article in draft form, much to its improvement in content and presentation. His informed comments and suggestions rescued me from errors of fact and interpretation and opened my eyes to aspects of The Ham which would otherwise have escaped my gaze.

Any article on The Ham and its gardens would be nothing without illustrations. Most of the photographs used in this article were taken by Edwin Miles of Bridgend at the beginning of the twentieth century and provide an invaluable record of the property in its heyday, showing house and grounds in their full glory. The 'original' sepia prints are in private possession (copies are kept by the GRO and the Llantwit Major Local History Society) and have been copied for use in this publication with the consent of the owners, and I express my thanks to Mr Angus Turnbull and Mr and Mrs Iain Colston. In this context I am greatly indebted to Bill John of Llantwit Major who gave generously of his time and photographic expertise in copying the originals and producing the illustrations for this article, and also in sharing his enthusiasm for the history of Llantwit and district.

This article owes much to the encouragement and active interest of the late editor of *Arch. Camb.*, Patricia Moore, during its preparation.

REFERENCES

1. The name Ham derives from the OE Hamm ‘an enclosure, a meadow, water-meadow’ (c.f. OE ham a habitative term); see G.O. Pierce, *The Place-Names of Dinas Powys Hundred* (Cardiff, 1968), 342. The Hoddnant stream winds its way past The Ham and through Ham water-meadows to its confluence with the river Colhuw.
2. Thomas Lloyd, *The Lost Houses of Wales* (revised edition, 1989), 85, 125.
3. G.T. Clark, *Limbus patrum Morganiae et Glamorganiae, being the genealogies of the older families of the lordships of Morgan and Glamorgan* (London, 1886), 421-3; Nicholl family pedigree compiled by Charles Nicholl (in private hands), copy in NLW.
4. Successive generations of the Nicholl family of Llantwit Major and The Ham gave the name Iltyd (*Latin* Iltutus) to the eldest son. This, it must be supposed, was a deliberate underlining of the family’s identification with Llantwit Major which derives its name Llanilltud Fawr from the Celtic Saint Illtyd and which was the base of Nicholl prosperity.
5. Will of Iltyd Nicholl, 21 Nov. 1651 (NLW LL/1651/43). G.T. Clark’s pedigree describes Iltyd as surgeon, but his will gives him the status of ‘gentleman’.
6. NLW MS 13147A, 439,457; see article by C.J. Spurgeon and H.J. Thomas entitled ‘Marsh house, East Aberthaw. A Seventeenth-Century Fortified Tobacco Store in Glamorgan’, in *Arch. Camb.* CXLVI (1997), 127-37. N.B. p. 132.
7. G.T. Clark, *op. cit.*, and pedigree notes compiled by Charles Nicholl.
8. Will of Iltyd Nicholl 1671 (NLW LL/1671/102).
9. Will of Iltyd Nicholl 1700/01 (NLW LL/1700/105).
10. It has been estimated that when Whitlock Nicholl died in 1788 his estate comprised some 650 acres, almost double the size of that left to him by his father; see Brian Ll. James, ‘The Vale of Glamorgan 1780-1850’ (MA thesis, University of Wales, Cardiff, 1971). In the Llantwit Major Tithe Assessment of 1840 (GRO P/21) The Ham estate acreage is given as 800 acres. The success of the Nicholl family in consolidating their estate in Llantwit Major is considered by Nigel Williams in ‘Landownership in the Parish of Llantwit Major 1700-1850’ (MA thesis, University of Wales, Cardiff, 1987).
11. Will of Revd Iltyd Nicholl 1733 (PROB/11/661).
12. Tredington, Shipston on Stour (co. Worcs. *temp.* Revd. I.N.; now co. Warwicks.). The Nicholl family had further connections with Tredington as revealed in the account book (GRO D/D C F/17) of Robert Nicholl (younger brother of Iltyd the rector of Tredington) where an entry for 1788 states that his brother-in-law the Reverend Richard Evans BD of Llandaff (d.1788) was ‘junior portionist of Tredington’.
13. For a pedigree of the Bonds and their relationship with the Nicholl family see *Visitation of the County of Gloucester*, 1682, ed. T.F. Fenwick, W.C. Metcalfe (Exeter, 1884), 16-20.
14. In 1826 Iltyd Nicholl acquired the adjacent property in New Market Street, built a stable and coach house on part of the land and extended his garden to the river; see Notebook of Iltyd Nicholl (CCL MS 1.641); Sir Joseph Bradney, *A History of Monmouthshire, Vol. 3 Part 1, The Hundred of Usk* (London 1923), 39.
15. Bradney, Vol. 3 Part 1 *op. cit.*, 104, 105 (Pedigrees of the Jones families of Graigwith and of Cwrt Bleddyn); and Bradney, *Vol. I, The Hundred of Skenfrith* (London, 1904), 109-10 (Pedigree of the Morris family of The Pant; with acknowledgement to Iltyd Nicholl of The Ham). A pedigree of the Morgan family of The Garn is included in G.T. Clark, *op. cit.*, 324. Iltyd Nicholl’s title to the Graigwith and Pantygoitre inheritance was challenged

by another claimant. After years of litigation the claimant's case finally collapsed at the Monmouth Assizes in 1857. An account of the case entitled *Proceedings on the trial of the cause of Jacob Morgan versus the Rev. Ilyd Nicholl*, was published in 1858.

16. NLW Llanmaes collection, especially 18511E and 18514A.
17. *Bridgend Chronicle*, 20 Aug. and 14 Oct. 1859 and 9 Mar. 1860.
18. Sir Matthew Digby Wyatt, member of a distinguished family of architects, see *DNB*. Comparisons have been made between The Ham and Knightshayes Court in Devon designed by William Burges. Closer to home, there are echoes of The Ham in Insole Court, Llandaff, a house designed by George Robinson and Edwin Seward with considerable reference to Burges. Thomas Henry Wyatt, elder brother of Matthew Digby was responsible for the 'Late Gothic' edifice Hensol Castle (1835).
19. Will of Ilyd Nicholl 1700/01 (NLW LL/1700/105)
20. Thomas Nicholas in *The History and Antiquities of Glamorganshire and its families* (London, 1874) dates the improvement of Dimlands to 1840, but Thomas Lloyd considers the work to be somewhat later. He suggests that it was probably done to keep up with The Ham which would give a date of the late 1850s or early 1860s, but an account book of 1851 (GRO D/DC E 25) records the names of men employed in the repairs to Dimlands in the spring and summer of that year, indicating that improvements at Dimlands pre-dated the rebuilding of The Ham. Wyatt's plans for the refurbishment of the interior of Dimlands during his period of occupancy were not implemented.
21. The Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales. *An Inventory of the Ancient Monuments in Glamorgan*. Vol.IV, Part 1: *The Greater Houses* (HMSO, 1981), 270-1.
22. NLW PA 5832. Eleanor Nicholl was the sister of Revd Ilyd Nicholl (1814-67).
23. *Cardiff Times and South Wales Daily News*, 4 & 11 May 1912.
24. *The Building News*, 7 May 1869, 417.
25. Wyatt's nine original plans & drawings, unsigned and undated, were exhibited at the Royal Academy Exhibition in 1865. Minutely detailed and executed in sepia ink with a delicate colour overwash, they, and associated drawings, are now in the National Library of Wales (PA 5837 - 5855). Two were displayed in the Welsh Arts Council exhibition entitled *Plans and Prospects, Architecture in Wales 1780-1914* (1975). Among the 'modifications' to the plans as executed was the omission of the garden room on the west front (Plate 4). The 'observation tower' is shown on the plans but is thought not to have been part of Wyatt's original concept for The Ham.
26. Thomas Lloyd points out that the 'Old Palace' must have been demolished c.1650 by Inigo Jones and poses the question where had the staircase been in the intervening 200 years ?
27. In describing the contents of the house and gardens in the nineteenth and early twentieth century I have drawn heavily on *Some Houses of the Nicholl Family: Great House, Llantwit; Llanmaes House; The Ham*; being a reprint of articles which were published in the *Cardiff Times* and the *South Wales Daily News* on 20 & 27 April and 4 & 11 May 1912 in the series 'Welsh Country Homes'.
28. Sir Philip Sydenham Bart. of Brimpton (*alias* Brympton), Somerset died unmarried in 1739 when the baronetcy became extinct. He had previously sold Brimpton to a Sydenham cousin; see G.E. Cokayne, *Complete Baronetage* (6 vols., 1903: reprinted in 1 vol. by Alan Sutton, 1983), Vol. II, 113. Whitlock Nicholl is said to have inherited a

- share in the Sydenham estate in 1739, and I presume this inheritance came through his wife Susanna, daughter of John Whitlock of 'Bradmore' (co. Devon) and Bingham (co. Somerset) and his wife Joan Shenton of Dunster (co. Somerset). Pedigree notes compiled by Iltyd Bond Nicholl (CCL MS 3.688) name her maternal grandparents as William Shenton of Minehead and Joan Sydenham of 'Binham' [Bingham]. A portrait of Sir Ralph Sydenham (d. 1671) was among the pictures noted as hanging in the Great Hall at The Ham at the end of the nineteenth century.
29. Sir Horace Mann, diplomat, long resident in Florence, connoisseur of Italian art and antiquities, collector etc.; see *DNB*.
 30. The description 'Ningpo' was used in the catalogue compiled when the contents of The Ham were sold in 1912. Ningpo, a port in East China at the mouth of the Yung River, was one of the first sites of European settlement in China and one of the first Treaty Ports (1842). In the context of the furniture at The Ham the designation Ningpo has no significance beyond its possible export via that port, and the probability that the style was Southern Chinese. Whether or not the furniture was in fact brought back to this country by General Gordon remains an open question.
 31. For Browne of Kiddington (co. Oxford) see *Complete Baronetage*, vol. iii, 2; *Burke's Extinct & Dormant Peerage*, 1838 edn. A baronetcy was bestowed upon Sir Henry Browne (son & heir of Sir Peter Browne who died of wounds received at Naseby) by the exiled Charles Stuart on 1 July 1658). Stephen Roberts informs me that the standard works contain no mention of Sir Henry Browne's attendance upon Charles I at his execution 'but that doesn't mean it was an invention'; see also Bradney, *op. cit.*, 38, 39.
 32. The 1912 account of The Ham (see footnote 27) states that 'The collection of books still at The Ham numbers upwards of 26,000 volumes'. Approximately the same number of volumes, on an enormously wide range of subjects, are contained in the library at Merthyr Mawr today; see Murray McLaggan, 'The Library at Merthyr Mawr: A Bibliomaniac Great Grandfather' in *Publishing History Occasional Series 2, Bibliophily*, Proceedings of the 1985 Conference, University of London Extra Mural Department, ed. Robin Myers and Michael Harris (Cambridge, 1986), 121-37.
 33. A Sale Catalogue dated Oct. 1945 (in private possession) of items being sold from Llanmaes House indicates that some of the pictures known to have hung on the walls of The Ham had been taken to Llanmaes House by Iltyd Bond Nicholl. The stone chimney piece from the hall at The Ham inscribed in Welsh HEB DHYW, HEB DHYN [*sic*], DYW A DIGON is now in Pencoed House, Capel Llanillterne. The Ham organ was presented to Llantwit Major church by the Nicholl family soon after the death of Mrs Mary Lewisa Nicholl in 1905. It is still in use in the church.
 34. David Jones of Wallington stayed with George Whitlock Nicholl and family at The Ham in December 1885 and recorded his activities and impressions in his diary. (Cardiff Central Library MS 1.640, part 5)
 35. Marie Trevelyan, *Llantwit Major: its History and Antiquities* (Newport, 1910). Marie Trevelyan's interest in local history was shared by Iltyd Bond Nicholl FSA, himself a keen antiquary, and this friendship gave her access to his library and researches.
 36. Detailed reports of the funerals of George Whitlock Nicholl (1889) and of Mary Lewisa Nicholl (1905) appeared in the *Glamorgan Gazette* on 29 November 1889 and 24 March 1905.

37. Sale Catalogue itemising valuable antique furniture and effects at the Ham to be sold by auction on 18 & 19 June 1912 (NLW Glam. 269).
38. Printed Programme of Events at the Bazaar and Garden Fete, 9 & 10 August 1898. Report of the event in *Glamorgan Gazette*, 12 Aug 1898.
39. John Albert Alexander Williams JP (b.1863) see entry in *Who's Who in Wales, 1933*. The march *Cambria*, played at the Investiture of the Prince of Wales at Caernarvon in 1911, was among Williams's musical compositions. I am grateful to Brian Ll. James for this information.
40. 'Welsh Country Homes' (see footnote 27).
41. Cardiff Central Library, David Jones of Wallington Collection, MS 3.688 Box 3. Letter from G.W. Nicholl to D. Jones, 7 February 1884.
42. Thomas Lloyd, *op. cit.*, 125.
43. Photographs of Ham house and gardens, taken by Edwin Miles, 1912. (Originals in private hands; copies held by Glamorgan Record Office and Llantwit Major Local History Society)
44. GRO Stephenson & Alexander Collection, particularly D/D SA 12/2002. I am grateful to Keith Edwards for drawing my attention to items in this collection .
45. Information supplied to the author by Mr and Mrs Iain Colston on the Turnbull family's ownership of The Ham. Mrs Colston (*née* Turnbull) was able to supply some invaluable memories of the house and gardens immediately before and after the Second World War.

NICHOLL FAMILY OF THE HAM
OUTLINE PEDIGREE

