

THE GNOLL

Ref number	GW (Gm) 50 (NEP)
OS Map	170
Grid ref	SS 760 972
Former county	West Glamorgan
Unitary authority	Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Community council	Neath
Designations	Listed building: War Memorial Gates, Gnoll Avenue Grade II; Ivy Tower Grade II; Former gate and lodges to Gnoll House, Gnoll Avenue Grade II

Site evaluation **Grade II***

Primary reasons for grading The survival of a largely eighteenth-century landscape park of very great historic interest, in its original rural setting above Neath. It lies on the flank of the Vale of Neath, long famed for its picturesque beauty. The landscape of The Gnoll is exceptional for its combination of industrial and ornamental functions and for its strong visual relationship with the surrounding countryside.

The eighteenth-century landscaping is of several phases, including an exceptionally interesting early transitional layout by Thomas Greening, in the style of Stephen Switzer, with formal and informal elements, including a (restored) formal cascade. The following phases include an outstanding informal cascade of the 1740s and the later eighteenth-century follies of a rock-hewn grotto and the Ivy Tower, which forms a prominent landmark in the Neath valley. Although the park's historic character has been somewhat diluted through the loss of the house and planting, most of its structural elements remain intact or have been restored or rebuilt.

Type of site Formal and informal park; Victorian pleasure grounds; walled kitchen garden

Main phases of construction 1720s; 1740s; 1776-90; 1811-61; 1899

Site description

For four centuries, from the sixteenth to the nineteenth, The Gnoll was the most important house in Neath. It stood on a prominent, steep-sided hill or knoll, hence its name, on the east side of the town, with magnificent views out over the town and Vale of Neath from its main west front. The house stood on a large, roughly oval platform cut out of the rock on the western side of the hilltop. The back wall of the terrace is partly faced with stone walling. The house terrace is on two levels, the northern service quarters being on a slightly raised section near the bank, the remainder of the house on the lower part. The ground plan of the house is marked out by low stone walls and back walls built against the rock-cut slope remain, as do some flights of

stone steps up it. At the northern end the stone entrance arch into the service court remains. At the south end of the house site is the site of the conservatory, with a flight of stone steps up to it. To the east is a sunken room for its boiler. Below ground there are extensive cellars.

To the north-east is the site of the former stable block. This lies below the former drive, reached by branch drives from the east and west. It now consists of a levelled rectangular area, with granite gateposts at the west end. To its west is a flight of stone steps leading to a sloping stone passage down to a very well preserved ice-house. This has a gently arched entrance and a semi-subterranean, egg-shaped chamber. To its north-east is a small terrace, built out over the slope, with a backing revetment wall and low walls around it on all but most of the north side. Flights of steps at the east and west ends lead up to the higher ground level. The terrace, although now a garden feature, appears originally to have had a utilitarian function as an adjunct to outbuildings west of the stable block.

The first house on the site was built by the Evans family in the early seventeenth century. The family was prominent in Neath and in 1632 David Evans, sheriff for that year, was described as of The Gnoll. In 1658 Thomas Evans leased the house from his nephew Sir Herbert Evans and part of the agreement was that a new house be built. Structural evidence suggests that a hall house, later the laundry, was built, probably in c. 1666. Of these seventeenth-century houses only a small amount of walling remains. By 1685 Sir Herbert's daughter Mary was the only surviving child. In 1686 she married Sir Humphrey Mackworth (1657-1727), from Derbyshire, already a prominent lawyer and entrepreneur. Sir Humphrey took possession of the estate in 1695, when his father-in-law David Evans, whom Sir Herbert Evans's wife had remarried after his death in 1679, died.

Sir Humphrey altered the house in 1702; the buildings were enclosed in a courtyard and a coach house, servant's quarters and water storage tank were added. The walls against the hillside are remnants of this phase of building. The house was extended in 1730 by Sir Humphrey's son, Herbert Mackworth (1689-1765). An engraving of 1741 by Samuel and Nathaniel Buck shows a large, rambling house of three distinct parts and phases, the earliest part with gabled roofs, another, to the north, a single-storey building (the 1666 house) on slightly higher ground and the last part, to its north, in a more classical style with a flat roof. In 1776-78 a much grander house was created by Herbert's son, Sir Herbert Mackworth (1736-91), who added a large, castellated Georgian front. The architect was John Johnson of Leicester. Engravings show that this was severe in appearance, with corner round towers. The earlier service wing was retained.

The last Mackworth to live at The Gnoll, Sir Robert, died in 1794, leaving an eighteen-year-old widow, Mary (Molly), who in 1797 married Capel Hanbury Leigh of Pontypool Park. In 1811 the estate was sold to Henry Grant. The Grant family initially resurrected the house and grounds, after they had fallen into disrepair after the departure of the Mackworths, but by the mid nineteenth century ownership had passed to a cousin, Charles Evan Thomas (1817-1902). During the century the house was gradually reduced in size. By 1845 the north-east wing had been demolished and in 1881 Charles Evan Thomas demolished the east wing and removed the castellation. The house continued to decline, part was pulled down in 1909 and in 1923 it was bought by Neath Borough Council, after which for several years part was used as a health clinic. Eventually, in 1957, the house was demolished.

The park lies on elevated, rolling ground on the south flank of the Vale of Neath. Its setting to the north and east is a rural one of pasture fields, with some copses and woods to the east. On this side the ground rises steadily to the high ground of Cefn Morfydd, while to the south and west it drops below the park to the town of Neath. The site of the house, on a prominent hill, lies at the western end of the park. The park is linear, orientated north-east/south-west. Its eastern, upper side is largely wooded, its western side is more open. The park contains three ponds and a late nineteenth-century reservoir. From the beginning of the eighteenth century onwards the park was developed to serve two very different interests - water supply for coal mining and copper smelting operations and ornament. Thus the ponds, initially constructed for industrial use, also served an ornamental function.

At the south end of the park is the wooded Preswylfa valley. The woodland is largely deciduous, dominated by ash, sycamore and beech. Half way along the valley is the Great Pond. To the north is an open area of parkland, the largest pond, called the Fishpond, a smaller pond, the Guinea Pond, to the north, and Fishpond Wood, which contains the formal cascade, to the east. The north end of the park is almost entirely wooded, some semi-natural deciduous, some conifer plantation. The woods are called Mosshouse Wood and contain the reservoir, most of the follies and the informal cascades.

There have been several entrances at The Gnoll, only two of which remain in use. The first, before the Fishpond was made, was off the Neath-Tonmawr road, at Harley Cottages. The second was the present entrance off Cimla Road, which had a gatehouse. This was demolished in the 1950s. The third entrance was the imposing castellated stone archway with a simple iron gate, on Gnoll Avenue. This was built in the 1790s, after the industrial installations below the Great Pond. The arch is flanked by lower castellated walls projecting forwards at an angle and a short stretch of wall on the west side. Inside the entrance the former drive is now a public road, lined with pines. This leads to the War Memorial Gate of Honour entrance, which consists of large, central wrought iron gates flanked by tall ashlar piers, side pedestrian gates and then curving ashlar walls on which there are brass plaques commemorating the dead of the First and Second World Wars. Inside, a tarmac drive runs eastwards up the Preswylfa valley.

At the south-west end of the park is the second entrance to have been built, now a modern entrance, off the Cimla Road. From here a tarmac drive runs north-east to join the main drive up the south side of the Preswylfa valley to the Great Pond. This is a large, roughly rectangular pond lying in the valley, with a huge earthen dam on its west side, below which the water runs in a canalised, stepped channel. Below the pond the stream is called the Gnoll Brook. The pond has a gravel path along its north side and a stone revetment wall (above which is a car park) along part of its south side. The valley below is wooded, with open glades. The area immediately below the Great Pond was the main industrial centre of the Mackworths, with large water wheels driving various industrial processes. On the north side there are remnants of industrial activity in the form of remnants of walling and a ruined stone and brick building.

The drive runs along the Great Pond dam and then swings eastwards and rises up the south slope of the hill on which the house was sited. The first part is cut into the rock, with a recessed, rock-cut seat half-way along. Below is sycamore woodland, above the wooded pleasure grounds. Further east the drive has a high stone revetment wall on its west side. The drive then reaches the dam of the Fishpond, which it crosses. A lodge stands on the south side of the drive, at the west end of the dam. This

is a two-storey Victorian building of stone, with pitched slate roofs, brick lintels to the windows and a wooden porch on the north side. The lodge has its own, small, hedge-enclosed garden. The drive then runs in a great northwards curve around the contour of the hill, leading to the former stable area and then on westwards, where it splits, one branch leading to the service court, which it approaches from the north, the other running below the house and garden to the circular forecourt area south of the house.

The central part of the park forms the core of the area that was landscaped in the early eighteenth century. It runs from the pleasure grounds on the western hill to the eastern boundary of Fishpond Wood on the east and includes the Fishpond, originally called the Upper Great Pond. The ground slopes down from the pleasure grounds to the pond and then up again to its east. On the west side of the pond the ground is open grassland, broken only by a young mixed deciduous trees flanking the axis of the formal cascade. The Fishpond is a rectilinear lake, the biggest of the ponds, elongated north-south, with a substantial stone revetted dam, with a low parapet wall, at the south end. Its west side is partly tree and reed fringed; on the east side Fishpond Wood comes right down to the water. At the north-east end the pond is fed by a small channel ornamented with two cascades of large stones and another modern one to the north, where the channel splits into two branches. Footpaths run all the way round the pond and at its north end is a modern visitor centre and car park.

Fishpond Wood is a mature wood of mixed deciduous trees, dominated by oak, beech and birch, within which is the formal cascade, which is flanked by some large limes, remnants of a more extensive avenue. The cascade, now reconstructed, is aligned east-west, running straight down the slope from a point near the top of the wood into the pond. It is 240 m in length, with a drop of 26.5 m. It falls into two sections, divided by a leat and retaining bank. The upper part is mainly a water gathering and storing section; it is the lower part which provides a dramatic spectacle of steeply tumbling water. The cascade is aligned on a long formal axis which begins in the west with the long terrace at the north end of the hill on which the house stood, continues over the ha-ha, down to the pond, up the cascade and on up to Brynau Wood and Cefn Morfydd, beyond the park.

As reconstructed in 1995, the cascade starts at the top with a rectangular stone-edged holding pond, with a lower lip on its western edge. Further earthworks in the upper part of the wood, including a U-shaped hollow with a curving dry-stone revetment wall, a dry channel to its south and further sluices, all point to defunct water management devices, related either to industrial use or to the cascade, or both. Below the pond is a substantial leat, banked on its lower side, which brings water from the north-east into a small, square, stone-edged pool. From this water is fed into an arched, brick-edged, culvert under the bank into the cascade proper below. The cascade has vertical walls of stone-faced breeze blocks and a concrete floor. Originally all walling was dry-stone, with stone flooring to the channel. Water is channelled over a series of nine steps with sills, the last a flight into a small, curving-edged pool. Below this is a steeper section down to the pond. Water falls over a series of twelve steps, two spouts and two long glides. The channel width gradually increases towards the bottom. At the foot of the slope is a modern, gently arched wooden bridge, below which the water falls into the pond down curved steps.

The northern part of the park comprises open ground on the western side, now partly occupied by a golf course and a linear wood, Mosshouse Wood, which extends from Fishpond Wood at its south-west end to high ground above the reservoir at the north-east end. The new access road sweeps round in a curve through the open

grassland to the car park and visitor centre. Within Mosshouse Wood is a further pond, the reservoir, a long, informal cascade and several eighteenth-century follies. The southern half of Mosshouse Wood is now largely conifer plantation. On the western edge of the south end of the wood is a small, informal pond, Guinea Pond. This has recently been dredged and refilled with water. It has two small islands and an earth dam, with a concrete wall on top, on its south side. A boat house which stood against the dam has gone. Water is fed into the pond via steps in the south-east corner.

The southern part of Mosshouse Wood has a number of gravel paths through it. One connects the two ponds and from this two run up the slope to a path which runs northwards all the way to the north-east end of the park. In the southern part of the wood it is built up over the slope and runs on the contour, with a leat along its upper side. There are a number of brick sluices and water in the leat runs southwards, eventually being canalised and piped at the south end. Another leat joins from the south in a deeply cut ravine, with a step down to the first one. The water eventually feeds into the Fishpond.

On the upper side of the north-south path, opposite an east-west path from the north end of the Guinea Pond, is a reconstructed gothic folly, facing westwards, with modern steps up to it. The folly, rebuilt in 1992-93, stands on a small platform on the westward-facing slope and is a semi-octagonal, castellated stone building with three rounded arches in its facade. It has a flagstone floor and sloping roof. The folly is backed by laurel bushes and woodland.

The path continues northwards from the folly through the wood to the Mosshouse Wood reservoir. This is a rectilinear lake, orientated north-east/south-west, with a massive earthen dam along its west side, at the south end of which is a walled and stepped overflow channel. The lake is situated at the head of a steep-sided valley and is surrounded by hanging oak woodland. The dam has a low, stone revetment wall with rounded slag coping and at the north end of the dam are square gate piers, one inscribed with the date 1899. A gravel path runs from an entrance on the lane to the north along the dam top, joining the path from the south at the other end. Another runs around the reservoir. On the south side, where a small stream enters, there is a rock-cut recess with water dripping down the rock face and into a narrow stone-lined channel, then into a wider silt trap and down steps into the lake. Further along the south side a stony, grass mound on the north side of the path marks the position of the moss house from which the wood gets its name.

At the east end of the reservoir the ground rises steeply and two paths wind up the slope, at the top of which there is a fir plantation, just below which are two eighteenth-century follies - a facade, now called the gazebo, and a grotto. The 'gazebo', which was rebuilt in the early 1990s, stands on a narrow shelf cut into the slope. It consists of an unroofed, rubble stone shelter, open to the west. The back wall has slightly bulging ends with slit windows; the side walls, which are the same height, also have slit windows in their rounded ends.

Below is the grotto, built into the rock face, with huge slabs of rock in front of it. Until recently its whereabouts was unknown as these rocks had fallen and obscured the entrance. Now moved to one side, the entrance is clear. It is splayed, with dry-stone revetment walling between two natural stone slab steps up to the level of the interior. Overhead is a huge, natural, lintel slab. Inside is a circular chamber carved out of the rock, with a domed roof. The floor is of random stone paving, with a rim around a central feature, now concreted, which was probably a pool. The roof has

been lined with limestone in order for it to drip and form stalactites. Below a stream runs down the slope in a ravine.

To the south of these features is the long, informal cascade, which falls down almost the entire length of the slope. It has a drop of *c.* 60m. At the top a small stream enters the wood in a pipe under the track which runs along its edge. It then runs in a narrow channel to a long iron pipe balanced at each end on dry-stone structures, with a modern support in the middle. The upper structure is roughly rectangular, slightly ruinous and appears original; the lower one, which is higher and larger, is partly rebuilt. There are overflow channels around its north and south sides and its lower side is sloping, with large stones protruding along the top and horizontal stepping towards the bottom. The purpose of these structures was to carry a water channel, possibly originally wooden, to the head of the cascade, the first fall being that down the lower side of the second. Below is a stony channel with three steps edged with flat slabs. The water then falls steeply down the slope over a series of natural, semi-natural and artificial falls. The built parts are of dry-stone walling, the stone taken from nearby outcrops. At first there is a steep drop down a natural rock face to an artificial fall, then another steep drop to a level section and a further series of dry-stone cascades, partly rebuilt. These vary in size and shape, some stepped and some having protruding large slabs to enhance the decorative and aural effect. At the bottom the water runs over a small semi-circular fall and under a low bridge, with a path over it, with dry-stone walls and an arch of dry-stone slabs. A small section of dry-stone revetment wall below the path to the north may be a remnant of the original path, probably leading over the bridge. Below the bridge the ground opens out into a boggy glade which was probably originally a pond. At the foot of this is a high, Victorian, stone dam, below which is the reservoir. Above the glade is an area of laurels which may originally have been laid out in an ornamental way.

The final feature of the landscape park is Ivy Tower, a prominent eye-catcher folly tower situated on a hilltop to the north of Mosshouse Wood, overlooking the park and the Vale of Neath. It was reached by a track from the lane to the south. Ivy Tower is an octagonal, castellated, ruined building of rubble stone construction. It has three stories: a ground floor with squared openings between buttresses, a first floor with large, gothic, arched windows and a second floor of blind, quatrefoil recesses above the windows. The tower was originally a two-storey structure, with arrow-slit windows and a castellated top. It underwent subsequent alterations, particularly to its windows. A photograph of the tower before it was gutted by fire in 1910 shows glazed and sashed windows and a small, single-storey annexe. Part of the tower was lived in and it was used for outings and festivities.

The garden and pleasure grounds lie on the hill on which the house once stood, at the western end of the park. The garden consists of the terrace to the west of the house site. The remainder is the grounds. To the south of the house is the oval forecourt area, with grass in the centre. Two paths now lead into it.

The garden terrace, which looks out over the town of Neath and beyond, is a rectangular grass platform bounded with a low stone parapet wall on the west and a revetment wall on the east. A flight of steps leads down to it from the house site and concrete steps lead down from its south side. Below is an area of sycamore and ash woodland, with an aucuba and symphoricarpos understorey. At the north end is a curving recessed stone seat and a yew on a small mound.

The grounds lie mainly to the east of the house site, but also on the slopes of the hill to the west and south. To the south, a stony path winds up the hill from the

drive, next to which is a stone wall, parts of which are broken down and parts of which are recently rebuilt. Above this is a ruinous wall at right-angles. There are large beech trees either side of the path. A narrow path branches off to the west and the wall disintegrates further north. A flight of stone and brick steps lead up the slope from the path to a higher one, which follows the contour. This has a rebuilt revetment wall. A narrow flight of stone steps, flanked by low walls with flat stone coping, leads from the former drive, now a path, up to the north end of the forecourt, below the garden terrace. Opposite the steps a ruinous curving path, with a few stone steps at the top, leads down the slope.

The crown of the hill is occupied by wooded grounds laid out informally, with paths and a few open areas. To the south of the house site, east of the conservatory site, is a dog-leg flight of dressed stone steps, flanked by low walls with some flat stone coping, leading to a path running eastwards, flanked by low, stepped walls. Soon the south wall stops and the path is flanked by rhododendrons. The path curves round to a levelled lawn, probably formerly a tennis court, cut into the slope, with a large copper beech on its east side and yews by its southern edge, with a drop to the path below.

The south side of the grounds is bounded by a stone revetment wall. At the west end the wall is low, topped with hooped iron fencing. To the east of this is a high, buttressed, stone revetment wall with modern capping at first and then with a coping of huge, flat stones. The path continues eastwards, the slope above being clothed in beech, oak and ash trees, underplanted with laurel and rhododendron. Below the summit is a rock-face of exposed stone slabs.

Below the south-east wall of the pleasure grounds is a four-sided enclosure, wider at the south end than the north, surrounded by stone walls of various heights. This was formerly the herbaceous garden but is now just rough grass. The outside of the pleasure ground wall, on the north-west side of the compartment, is *c.* 4 m high and has a blocked doorway in the centre, on a slight corner. The east wall is low, stepped up towards the north end, where it is *c.* 2.5 m high. A small belt of oaks and one yew tree runs along its outer side, below which is a levelled rectangular area, possibly a former tennis court. On the south side is a curving, rubble stone wall, *c.* 3 m high, with stone slab coping, in which is a rebuilt round-headed archway. This leads through to a sloping area of rough grass below the south pleasure ground wall. A five-sided court, with high, sloping side walls and plastered on the inside, is built against the east end of the compartment's south wall, next to Gnoll Cottage.

On the summit of the hill, reached by paths at its west end, is a roughly circular level lawn, called the bowling green. It is surrounded by rhododendrons and mixed trees, including a small group of redwoods to the north-east, beech, yew and sweet chestnut. A path runs around it, below the north and west sides and there are further paths through the woodland below them. To the north the ground slopes gently down to a long, level, grass terrace. This is cut out of the slope, with scarps above and below it. It runs east-west from the north end of the house at the west end to a ha-ha at the east. At the west end it ends at a small cliff edge, topped with low, hooped iron railings, below which is a steep drop to the service drive and a slope to the north. A flight of three steps leads down to a platform over the entrance to the service court. Two large elms flank the end of the terrace. At the east end of the terrace are low, hooped, iron railings, with a tall, thin beech tree at their north end and a yew at their south end. Next to this is a high, rubble stone wall, with a circular brick opening, which is the north end of a walled garden enclosure below the east side of the grounds. Below the railings the ground slopes down to a rebuilt stone ha-ha. It has

been rebuilt in dry-stone walling, with an upright top. Outside it is a slight ditch. The view eastwards from the end of the terrace is across the sloping park to the Fishpond and up the cascade on the wooded slope beyond.

To the north of the terrace is an area of woodland and rhododendrons, with some clumps of bamboo. Trees include two large limes, beech, sycamore and Japanese cedar (*Cryptomeria japonica*), with conifers and evergreen oaks lower down the slope. Below the terrace is a path, cut into the slope, which runs parallel with it and then north-westwards to the drive near the north end of the house. Below this path is a levelled rectangular lawn, formerly a tennis court, cut into and built out over the slope. It has a cherry tree in the middle and rhododendrons flank its south side. Further winding paths lead through the woodland below, down to the drive.

The Mackworth family was responsible for most of the major developments in the park and grounds, which took place during the eighteenth century. From at least the seventeenth century onwards there had been extensive coal mining on the Gnoll estate and the Mackworths also carried out copper smelting there. Industrial and ornamental use were therefore often combined.

There were three main phases of ornamental development: 1702-27; 1740s and the late eighteenth century. The initial phase was the work of Sir Humphrey Mackworth and it combined industrial and ornamental works. First, an elaborate and costly system of water management was installed in the area to the east and south of the house. Two large ponds, the Great Pond (1703) and the Fishpond (1705; then called the Upper Great Pond) were made as holding ponds to supply water for industrial works lower down. They were also used to supply fish. They were fed by an extensive system of streams and leats, with several small ponds in the Preswylfa valley above the Great Pond. Various mills were located in the Gnoll Brook valley below the Great Pond. The first part of this initial phase is shown in a map of Neath by M. O'Connor, dating to c. 1720. This shows the two ponds and their feeders and also a long leat looping round the west side of The Gnoll hill, from the north end of the upper pond (Fishpond) to the house and on to the west end of the lower one (Great Pond). This has now gone, but a footpath following the contour probably marks part of its route. A further, straight, channel is shown bringing water from the Fishpond to a circular feature, probably a small reservoir, on the top of The Gnoll hill. The rock-cut tank found in the bowling green by excavation is probably related to this. The major landscaping feature shown on the O'Connor map is an avenue ringing the hill, with a break to the west of the house. On the north side of the hill this is probably on the line of the present drive. To the south it sweeps around the hill through what is now the walled garden area, to a point above the bridge at the west end of the Great Pond. On the map it is labelled 'The Walks made out of the Hill'. A sweet chestnut stump, identified and removed in the 1980s, was probably all that remained of the original plantings flanking the drive. In the late 1980s the drive was replanted with a sweet chestnut avenue. The drive to the house leads off the public road to the north and sweeps round the east side of the hill.

The main landscaping of this initial phase dates to 1724-27, during which time a notable London gardener, Thomas Greening, who later became gardener to George II, laid out a park for Sir Humphrey. A letter of 1st March 1724/25 from Herbert Mackworth to the family's agent, Pleydell Courteen concerns the appointment of Greening. The style was largely formal, although very much in the extensive style of Stephen Switzer, with a great axial line (Switzer's 'boldest stroke') linking house and wider estate, the whole of which was to be designed. Greening's axis ran from the

terrace in the west over a ha-ha to a formal cascade and on up the hill beyond, where it was flanked by 'platoons' of sweet chestnut trees, which stood at the north end of the present Brynau Wood. By 1727 it appears that most of the work was finished: a letter of 25th September to Herbert Mackworth states that: 'The garden is now very near finished ... upon the plan you left'. Another letter, of 1728, shows that by then the cascade had been made: 'we have planted both sides at the cascade with mixtures of trees'. An estate map by B. Jones, dating to 1740-65, shows what had been done by then. The cascade, with a rectangular pool at its head, is there, as is the terrace and ha-ha.

The map shows further landscaping features that probably belong to the second phase, undertaken by Herbert Mackworth. These include the wooded pleasure grounds on The Gnoll hill, laid out with winding walks and the circular bowling green on the top, and the walled kitchen gardens in the same locations as at present, although with some walls slightly differently aligned. A house, Little Gnoll House, existed on the site of Gnoll Cottage. At the south end of the Fishpond was a spiral channel, rather than the straight dam as at present. This had the characteristic shape of a carp fish trap and was used as such. The Gnoll ponds still have a native stock of carp. The map also shows a public road running north-west/south-east through the park, to the north of the cascade, but this must already have been disused as such as the Fishpond cuts across it. Fishpond Wood was in existence by this time, as was the Guinea Pond, with a large open area to its north, marked 'Pleasure Ground'. This was sparsely planted with a few individual trees and clumps. The long leat from the north is shown, but there are only a few trees next to it and only the northern part of Mosshouse Wood is in existence. The park extended further eastwards at this time, to include the pasture fields on the flanks of Cefn Morfydd, Brynau Wood and Fernbank. Landscaping in this area was confined to tree planting, the major features being the 'platoons', now gone, and a large clump, still in existence, to the north of Brynau Wood. The Jones map also shows the major feature of this phase of landscaping, the informal cascade, in what was then called Cascade Wood.

This cascade, so different in style to the first, was built only twenty or so years later, in the 1740s. The estate accounts for 1743-44 record payment to a mason for work on the cascade and the Jones map shows it schematically, as a series of small pools. It is assumed that the formal cascade went out of favour at this point; certainly it was abandoned and wooded over by the time of the next estate map, by Padley, of 1801. Padley's map shows the informal cascade in more detail, including the pool, bridge and nearby circular structure (the moss or root house) at the bottom. The cascade achieved a degree of fame, through visitors' accounts of it, during the late eighteenth century. It was described by Henry P. Wyndham in 1777 and by the Hon. John Byng in 1787. Wyndham found it spectacular but perhaps a little too artificial, with too many fir plantations around it. Byng watched the fall from the 'root house' (moss house) at its foot, and saw 'the reservoir let loose to roll the stream with greater vehemence; this powerful body of water was 15 minutes in its descent of violent noise, and emotion, and was truly grand; but I own I prefer'd the first, modest and rural fall'. Wyndham also mentions the grotto, confirming its dating to the mid eighteenth century: 'A large cavern is dug from the solid rock near the beginning of the fall'. This is the only grotto at The Gnoll. There has been much debate about the whereabouts of the grotto and before this one was rediscovered and reopened in 1984 an alternative site was posited, on the south side of The Gnoll hill.

In the late eighteenth century Sir Herbert Mackworth (died 1791) added features to the park of a romantic and picturesque nature and increased the woodland area. The follies added were the temple, sometimes called Halfway House, the gazebo at the head of the Mosshouse Wood cascade, 'Cefn Morfydd Castle' and Ivy Tower. The temple, before restoration, was ruined, but its main structure of three arches could still be made out. It was castellated, with a stone-tiled roof and stone floor. The gazebo was, and is, merely a facade, intended to be seen from above, not below. It was not clear, before restoration, if the top was castellated or built to appear ruined.

Two structures built in the picturesque landscape beyond the park indicate the use Sir Herbert made of the wider landscape, 'borrowing' and enhancing it to provide eyecatchers and picturesque views. The beauty of the Vale of Neath was celebrated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the present unspoilt nature of the surroundings of The Gnoll mean that here it can still be appreciated. 'Cefn Morfydd Castle' was an eye-catcher folly on the high ground of Cefn Morfydd, to the east of the park. It is shown as an octagonal structure on the 1801 map and labelled 'Sheepcot'. It also appears as a mock castle in the background of a 1791 engraving of The Gnoll house by Morris. It has since gone, but overgrown footings remain.

Ivy Tower was built for Sir Herbert Mackworth in c. 1780 by the architect of the contemporary part of the house, John Johnson. John Byng described it in 1787: 'a tower in which is a noble well-constructed room, from whence are all the grand prospects grasp'd'. The tower is clearly shown in an aquatint of 1799 by Revd J.G. Spurgeon and is shown on the Padley map of 1801, with a semi-circular belt of trees around its east side. It was gutted by fire in 1910 and has since been disused, becoming progressively more ruinous.

The 1801 map shows the same layout of drives and pleasure grounds as the earlier Jones map, although the layout of the latter is not shown. The compartment which became the herbaceous garden, to the south-east of the pleasure grounds, is shown in its present form on the 1801 and subsequent maps. On the earlier Jones map of 1740-65 there was a more complicated arrangement of two compartments here. The spiral end to the Fishpond is still in existence; the road to the north-west of the Fishpond has gone, but its continuation through Fishpond Wood is still shown.

Confusion has arisen over the site of a 'grotto' which once housed Sir Herbert Mackworth's wife Eliza's collection of antiquities, and in particular two early Christian stones, which had been found in the upper Vale of Neath - the Macaritin stone and a stone depicting a kilted figure, dating to the sixth and ninth-tenth centuries respectively. Eliza died in 1799. The 'grotto' was 'rediscovered' in the hillside south of the house in 1823 and 1846 and in 1873 the two stones were dug out of the undergrowth. In 1922 they were placed in the Royal Institution of South Wales (Swansea). But the real grotto lies in Mosshouse Wood, near the head of the informal cascade. There is no sign of a grotto in the location in which the stones are said to have been found. It therefore seems likely that either the stones were never placed in the real grotto or that they had been removed from it, perhaps after the entrance was almost blocked by a landslide.

Molly Mackworth, born in 1775, remarried Capel Hanbury Leigh, of Pontypool Park, Torfaen, in 1797, and left The Gnoll for good. Her husband's brother, Sir Digby Mackworth, settled at Glenusk, Monmouthshire. Thus ended the great landscaping efforts of the Mackworths at The Gnoll. By the time that G. Nicholson was writing, in 1813 (*The Cambrian Traveller's Guide*), the grounds were in a poor state: 'the fish-ponds, the bowling-green, the benches, the bason of gold fish, the

velvet walks, shady alcoves, shrubberies, embellished with the chocest (sic) flowers, the murmuring water-falls - all these have perished as if they had never been'.

However, the Grant family, who lived at The Gnoll from 1811 to 1861, revived the property and were responsible for changes to the pleasure grounds. These mainly involved the planting of many exotic trees, especially conifers, and rhododendrons on The Gnoll hill. On the 1877 Ordnance Survey map the grounds are shown as densely wooded and the central open lawn, now called the bowling green, is called the croquet lawn. Charles Evan Thomas continued to develop the grounds after 1860, planting trees and rhododendrons and introducing two new garden areas, the rose garden and herbaceous garden. An agreement was reached in 1893 between Thomas and the Neath Corporation for the building of a reservoir in Mosshouse Wood. It was completed in 1899.

The history of the park and grounds of The Gnoll during the twentieth century has been one of decay and renewal. In 1923 Neath Council bought the estate as a memorial to the men who died in the First World War. At that time four gardeners were employed, the gardens were productive, the ponds were fished and the tennis courts were still in use. The War Memorial Gate was erected in 1925. Much of the park was leased out, particularly to the Forestry Commission, which introduced the conifer plantations. After 1974 many of the leases were surrendered and work was put in hand to turn the park into more of a public park, with the introduction of a nine-hole golf course, rugby pitch, paddle boats on the pond and children's playground. The informal cascade was restored by the Manpower Services Commission in 1984-85 and the grotto was rediscovered and reopened at the same time. During the early 1990s a large-scale programme of renewal took place, during which the formal cascade was investigated and rebuilt, the ha-ha and gothic folly were rebuilt, intrusive features were removed and a new access road, visitor centre and car park built. The cascade was formally opened in 1997.

The former kitchen gardens lie to the east of the pleasure grounds, on ground sloping gently to the south. To their west is a substantial stone house, Gnoll Cottage, or Little Gnoll House. This is two-storey, with pitched slate roofs and sash windows. There are three compartments to the former kitchen gardens. The northernmost one is roughly oval in shape and lies between the drive to Gnoll Cottage on the north and the curving north wall of the other two compartments on the south. Its only wall is the south one; on the north it is bounded by a hawthorn hedge on a bank, which is probably the site of a former wall. On the west it has a wall abutting an outbuilding of Gnoll Cottage. The interior has lost its original layout and is now mostly rough grass, with a single modern glasshouse in the centre.

The remaining compartments occupy a roughly rectangular area to the south of the north one, separated from it by a substantial rubble stone wall with overhanging stone coping. At its east end is a wide entrance with square stone piers. The wall is *c.* 2.7 m high here, rising to 4-4.5 m. The east compartment has a rubble stone wall *c.* 2.5 m high, with overhanging stone coping, along its east side. It is on two levels; on the upper one is a modern glasshouse; on the lower one are two long, parallel ranges of single-storey stone and brick bothies. To their south are three modern glasshouses set at right-angles to the bothies. The compartment is bounded on the south by the revetment wall of the drive, its level being the same as that of the top of the wall. There is no parapet. The third compartment, to the west, is roughly square and is bounded on all sides by rubble stone walls, those on the east, west and south being *c.* 2.5 m high. The south-east corner is rounded and towards the west end of the south

side is an entrance gap. Tipping has raised the ground level in this compartment, so that instead of sloping to the south it is level. Near the north end is a modern glasshouse.

Kitchen gardens were built on this site from the mid eighteenth century onwards; they do not appear on the O'Connor map of 1720 but are shown on the Jones map of 1740-65. The map shows a walled compartment corresponding to the two southern compartments, except for the lower level of the eastern one, which is left out. The garden is shown extending westwards to Gnoll Cottage - the west wall of the present kitchen garden is not shown. The northern compartment was not in existence at this date. The 1801 map does not show the kitchen gardens clearly. By 1877 the present layout had been built, with glasshouses in the north and east compartments. All areas had simple path layouts which have now gone.

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