

Twyn-yr-Hydd



Set in the heart of [Margam Country Park](#), near Port Talbot, Wales, the Grade II listed house is the very embodiment of late Victorian Life.

Built in 1892 for Emily Charlotte Talbot's land agent, Edward Knox, after Emily had inherited Margam in 1890. The house is set in the southwest corner of the park, part of the 850 acre estate which includes the magnificent Margam Castle, a Tudor Gothic mansion built between 1830 and 1840.

After the death of Ms Talbot in 1918 the estate passed her nephew, Captain Andrew Mansel Talbot Fletcher.

The Captain and his young family often stayed at the castle during the long summer holidays. It was during these stays that he took the bold decision to open the grounds to the public.



Following the outbreak of World War Two the British Government requisitioned parts of the Castle for the billeting of both British and American troops. It was during this period that The trustees of the Margam decided to sell the estate.

In 1942 the house and castle became the property of Sir David Evans-Bevan, proprietor of the Vale of Neath Brewery.

At the end of the war, following de-requisitioning, the Castle remained empty, and the Evans-Bevan family continued residing in Twyn yr Hydd.

It is believed that it was at the 1948 or the 1949 Chelsea Flower Show that Sir David Evans-Bevan commissioned Ralph Hancock and Son to redesign the gardens of Twyn yr Hydd. The new look was to include new walls pierced with wrought iron, a ha-ha and a formal round pond.

Outside of the main gardens footbridges criss-cross a small stream and a short distance from the house Hancock built one his trademark wishing wells complete with a wrought iron well head.

In 1973, after many years of neglect the castle and estate became the responsibility of Glamorgan County Council.

Today, the picturesque Twyn-yr-Hydd House and the gardens in which it stands are now the home of Neath Port Talbot College. Through the work of the Horticultural Department, lecturer Bob Priddle and the Royal Horticultural Society the gardens are now being restored to their former glory.

Is it very likely that the gardens at Twyn-yr-Hydd are the last major project, outside London, that Ralph designed and completed. The rose temple at Knightsbridge Green having been the last commission that Ralph completed before his death.

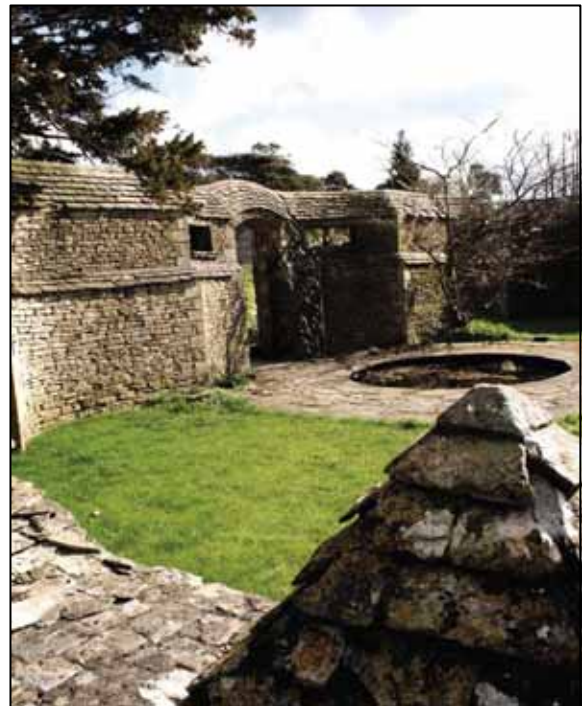
The following images show the various aspects of the garden structure and plating.

Twyn-yr-Hydd seen from the rear garden. Low stone walls, typical of Hancock, lead the eye to the back of the house.



Below is the formal round pond. Once a statue sat within the pond itself. It was long ago lost or stolen.

The magnificent wall that surround the hidden garden is in very good condition although much of the wrought piercing has long since rotted. Remnants that remain bolted in place look similar to those found in the walls which surround the well of St Theresa at Derry and Toms.



See from outside, the wrought iron gate (left) has long tendrils with leaves at each end and flower heads. It is in remarkable condition given its age.



Close-up of the wrought iron gate which now leads visitors to Twyn-yr-Hydd to the college's own garden centre.

This beautiful gate is so very typical of the style used by Ralph Hancock and similar examples can be found throughout the images taken from both editions of *When I Make a Garden*.

It was very likely made at Hancock's own wrought iron works in Surrey where he employed a team of skilled craftsmen, including a blacksmith, to make gates, balustrades and other products for use in his gardening empire.

Although Ralph died in 1950 his son Bramley continued with the business that he and his father worked so hard to establish. Even into the 1960's Hancock and Son and Hancock Industries were still producing fine garden furniture, ornaments and wrought iron.

This final image below is of the plaque placed in the garden of Twyn-yr-Hydd by Bob Priddle and students of Neath and Port Talbot College which is now based at the house. It commemorates the man who designed the gardens and gives detailed information about his achievements and life.

The plaque was unveiled in 2007 and was witnessed by two of Ralph's granddaughters (Angela and Miranda) as well as their own children. Also present were the children of Ralph's brothers and their own families. From California came Andrew Hull, husband of another Hancock granddaughter – Belinda – whose mother is Sheila.

