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# art learning resource – margam house pictures

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## Copyright Ownership

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# art learning resource – margam house pictures

This teacher-led resource for primary schools aims to demonstrate how the two paintings of Margam House by an unknown British artist (c.1700) can be used to support cross-curricular work in the classroom.

The paintings show opposite views of Margam House, built by the Mansel family out of the remains of Margam Abbey in the 16th century. The house was destroyed in the 18th century, and these are the only substantial visual record of the house that exists today.

They provide a glimpse into the lives of the Mansel and Mansel-Talbot families, who dominated life during this period, but are also an important document of a landscape and a way of life which has now been completely transformed by industrialisation.

## Using the pack

The pack is divided into 5 sections, each one concentrating on a different aspect that can be explored while looking at the paintings:

- The paintings
- The house
- The people
- The gardens and park
- The landscape

The units are not prescriptive, and can be studied in any order, as a group or alone. They are intended as starting points for related work and further study, and can be adapted to suit the interests or needs of different age groups.



The Mansel family tombs, 17th century  
Carved Alabaster Tombs  
With kind permission of Margam Abbey Parish Office



*View of Margam House, Glamorgan, Looking North, c.1700*

Attributed to Thomas Smith (fl.1680s-1719)

Oil on canvas

Amgueddfa Cymru

Purchased with the assistance of the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Art Fund, 2012

## Booking a visit

The paintings can be seen at National Museum Cardiff, as a self-guided visit, or as part of a facilitated workshop – please ask for details when you book. The paintings will however be shown at other museums during 2013-15. Please check that they are on display at National Museum Cardiff when you book.

Tel: (029) 2057 3240

Email: [learning@museumwales.ac.uk](mailto:learning@museumwales.ac.uk)

The house is no longer standing, but the original site can be visited at Margam Country Park <http://www.margamcountrypark.co.uk/>



*View of Margam House, Glamorgan, Looking South, c.1700*

Attributed to Thomas Smith (fl.1680s-1719)

Oil on canvas

Amgueddfa Cymru

Purchased with the assistance of the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Art Fund, 2012

# additional resources

## Images

High-quality digital copies of the paintings can be downloaded from [http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/margam\\_house/](http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/margam_house/)

A collection of supporting images can be found at <http://www.peoplescollectionwales.co.uk/> – search for 'Margam,' then look under 'Collections' for 'Old Margam House Education Pack'.

For an Education Pack with information on the Museum's collection of other Tudor and Stuart paintings see <http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/2702/>

## Web links

For modules and trails to be used on a visit to Margam Park, developed by a working party of Neath Port Talbot teachers, see <http://www.margamcountrypark.co.uk/default.aspx?page=2264>

The Museum cannot be held responsible for the content of any external web links provided.

**This education pack was made possible with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Art Fund, 2012**



The Orangerie at Margam Country Park  
Amgueddfa Cymru

## curriculum links

Studying these two paintings can link with many areas of the school curriculum in Wales. Many of the sections and activities within this learning resource suggest ways of using these paintings as a starting point for learning across the curriculum. The following list gives examples of how curriculum links can be formed.

### The Curriculum Cymreig (7-14)

The Welsh subject of these paintings, maps and drawings relate to the requirements of this area of learning.

### Foundation Phase

Creative Development  
Language, Literacy and Communication Skills  
Knowledge and Understanding of the World

### Key Stage 2

'Skills framework for 3-19 year olds in Wales'  
Developing Communication  
Developing thinking  
Through looking, thinking and talking about these two paintings and related materials opportunities can be created to develop enquiry skills, critical thinking and communication skills.

### Art and Design

Understand, Investigate and Make  
These two paintings can inspire and inform a whole scheme of work where pupils can develop their understanding, investigate and make something as a response.

### History

Studying these paintings and the associated material such as maps and drawings can provide an opportunity for pupils to find out about the past from a range of historical sources to build up a picture of one area in south Wales across three centuries.

### Geography

Pupils can be given opportunities to use maps, photographs and a site visit to Margam to identify and analyse differences and changes to a place over time.

# activities

## Foundation Phase

Ideas for themes and activities for exploring the paintings at Foundation Phase.

- **Play I-spy.** What can you see in the paintings?
- **Shapes:** What shapes can you see in the painting? Draw and name them. Use the shapes you've identified to design your own house and garden.
- **Counting games:** How many...?
- **Homes and houses:** What is a house? Who builds a house? What rooms are in a house? Explore different kinds of houses. Draw your own house and who lives there. Match words to the different parts of the Margam house (chimney, door etc).
- **Family:** Who were the Mansel family? What is a family? Who lives together in the house? What are their different roles / jobs? Your own family.
- **The village:** What is a village? Who lives there? What shops and businesses would you find in a village today compared with the time of the paintings? Role-play.
- **Deer and animals:** What animals live in the park? Sort the list into ones that walk / fly / swim. Find out about deer – what they eat, where they live. Investigate what animals are reared for. Identify animal sound effects.
- **Parks:** What is a park? Visit a local park. What can you do in a park? What safety rules must we remember in a park? Who uses parks – animal / people? What are people doing in the paintings? Bowling, walking, horse-riding.
- **Gardens:** Do you have a garden at home? What is it used for? Explore different foods that are grown in gardens. What is an orchard?
- **Ponds:** What are ponds for? What animals live in ponds? How do people use ponds? Why must we be careful around water? Pond-dipping.
- **Transport:** What forms of transport can you see in the paintings? Compare to today. Put different forms of transport in chronological order. Use percussion and voice to make sound effects. Play with different toys – build roads. Group into old / new.





## Key Stage 2

### Before You Begin – Familiarisation Activities

Before you begin work on the paintings, you may want to familiarise pupils with the work through one of the following approaches:

- Before revealing the paintings, describe them in detail to pupils, asking them to draw as you go along. Compare results with the actual paintings.
- Cover an A3 copy of the paintings with card. Expose a small detail daily by cutting out a square. Question pupils about what they think is still hidden.
- Tell pupils you have a mystery object relating to the pictures which will be shown to them at the end of the week. Give them 5 minutes each day to ask 'yes' or 'no' questions about the object. See how close they get to guessing what it is. Examples of mystery objects could be building materials, gardening tools, deer antlers etc.
- Play I-spy. Use a toilet roll tube to get them to focus in on small details. For older children, play I-spy in different languages.

### General Class Activities

The following activities can be done as a class to complement any of the units in this pack.

- Create your own collection of related images on the People's Collection Wales website. This could include images of work you have produced as a class.
- Create a digital story using the storybuilding tool on People's Collection Wales website.
- Investigate the period of history during which the house was built. Make a classroom display.
- Visit Margam Park and try to identify features from the painting. Find out how the Park is used today.
- Keep a class dictionary, adding in new words you come across while studying the paintings.
- Create a timeline based on the paintings – add images, quotations and facts.
- Using the paintings as a base, create a board game. Use numbered sticky dots to create a trail around the park. Pupils must answer a question correctly before being allowed to roll the dice and advance.



The Chapter House at Margam Country Park, 2012

## timeline: the owners of margam house

**Sir Rice Mansel, 1540 until 1559**

(purchased and started to build Margam House)

**Sir Edward Mansel, until 1595**

(extended the house, and began to create formal gardens)

**Sir Thomas Mansel, 1st Baronet, until 1631**

(continued to extend and develop house and gardens)

**Sir Lewis Mansel, 2nd Baronet, until 1638**

**Sir Henry Mansel, 3rd Baronet, until 1640**

**Sir Edward Mansel, 4th Baronet, until 1706**

(probable owner of Margam House when the paintings were commissioned)

**Sir Thomas Mansel, 1st Baron, until 1723**

**Thomas Mansel, 2nd Baron, until 1743/4**

**Christopher Mansel, 3rd Baron, until 1744**

**Bussy Mansel, 4th Baron, until 1750**

(the last owner in the Mansel line of the family)

**Rev. Thomas Talbot until 1758**

**Estate held by Trustees until 1768**

**Thomas Mansel Talbot, until 1813**

(dismantled Margam house)



*Sir Thomas Mansel and his wife Jane, c. 1625*  
British school  
Oil on canvas  
Amgueddfa Cymru  
Purchased, 1984

# Timeline: the development of margam house and Park

## The Monastic Era

**1066** The ancestors of the Mansel family arrive in Britain from Normandy, France.

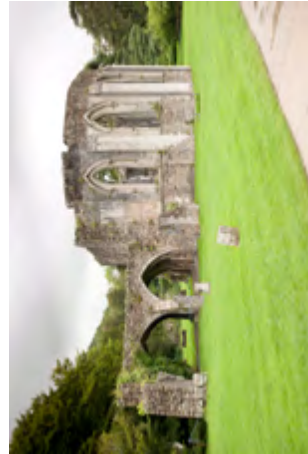
**1147** After the Norman conquest of Glamorgan, the Cistercian monks are given land in Margam to set up an Abbey. 12 Monks and 1 Abbot arrive from France.

**c. 1200** The Chapter House is built – its remains can still be seen today.

**1349** The Black Death reaches Glamorgan, wiping out a large number of monks.

**1534** Henry VIII makes himself Supreme Head of the Church in England and Wales.

**1536** Henry VIII passes the Dissolution of the Monasteries Act. Margam is the first monastery in Glamorgan to be taken over.



Chapter House, Margam Country Park  
Amgueddfa Cymru

## The Mansels

**1540** Sir Rice Mansel first leases and then buys the buildings and lands of Margam Abbey.

**1552** Sir Rice Mansel begins to build Margam House out of the former monastic range of the Abbey. This becomes the family headquarters.

**1558** Sir Rice Mansel is given permission to create a park, probably to keep in a herd of deer.

**1559** Sir Rice Mansel dies, and his heir, Sir Edward Mansel continues the building and develops the formal gardens.

**1600s** The house is remodelled and the gardens extended further by Sir Thomas Mansel after his father's death.

**1684** The 1st Duke of Beaufort is entertained at Margam. Thomas Dineley records the event, and sketches the earliest known view of Margam House. It shows fishponds at the front of the house, and the Banqueting House to the east.

**c.1700** The two topographical paintings of Margam House are painted, perhaps to commemorate recent refurbishments by Sir Edward Mansel.

**1740** The paintings are listed in an inventory of Margam – one hangs in a nursery, the other next to the steward's room. By this time the house is uninhabited, and only partly furnished.

## The Talbots

**1750** Bussy Mansel dies without a male heir, and Margam is passed through marriage to the Talbot family of Lacock Abbey.

**1772** Thomas Mansel Talbot returns home after his Grand Tour of Europe, and begins to build a new home at Penrice, Gower, as an alternative to the old house at Margam.

**1787** Work begins on the new Orangery at Margam, designed to house Thomas Mansel Talbot's collection of citrus trees and sculpture. Margam House, by now in poor condition, is gradually dismantled.

**1790** The Orangery is complete.

**1793** Margam House is finally demolished and the formal gardens removed. Remnants of the original monastic buildings, including the Chapter House, remain.

**1799** The Chapter house roof collapses.

**1806-1810** Margam Abbey is restored and given a new façade. Much of the original Norman interior is kept intact.

**1827-1835** Christopher Rice Mansel Talbot builds Margam Castle. The Banqueting House is removed to make way for this. Its façade is rebuilt behind the Orangery.

**1841** Margam village is destroyed to allow for an extension of the west end of the Park.

## 20th and 21st century

**1940-1945** Margam Castle was used as a base for World War II troops, even while the family still lived there.

**1941** Margam Estate is sold, and the contents of the Castle auctioned. The paintings of the house were listed in the auction, but were not sold.

**1973** Glamorgan County Council purchases the park, and refurbishment begins. Since then it has been in use as a Country Park.

**1974** The Park passes to West Glamorgan County Council

**1974-7** A series of archaeological digs in the park grounds reveal remnants of the old Margam village, walls and gateways of Margam house.

**1977** A fire destroys the roof and interior of the Castle.

**1996** Margam Park is transferred to the newly created Neath Port Talbot.



Margam from the Park, 19th century  
Charlotte Louisa Traherne  
Pencil and ink wash  
Amgueddfa Cymru  
Bequeathed by Lady Mansel Franklen, 1938

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# explore the paintings of margam house

These two paintings show Margam House from opposite directions. Built by the Mansel family in the 16th century, it stood as one of the great houses of Glamorgan until it was demolished in the 18th century. As the house was being dismantled, its owner Thomas Mansel Thomas wrote to a friend: 'when I have the pleasure of seeing you here next summer there will only be the old paintings of it to look at, what a mass of buildings it was,' – and his words came true. These paintings are the only significant visual record of Margam House in existence today.



*View of Margam House, Glamorgan, Looking North, c. 1700*



*View of Margam House, Glamorgan, Looking South, c. 1700*

## The subject: Margam House and gardens

When Henry VIII dissolved Margam Abbey in 1536, Sir Rice Mansel bought the estate and began to convert the old monastery into a family home. A few years later, he was given permission to form a walled park around the house; from this point Margam Park was born. It was developed and extended by successive members of the family over the next 150 years. The paintings show Margam house and gardens surrounded by the fertile landscape of Glamorgan: the front view of the house is set against three Margam hills; while the back view looks out over the Kenfig sand dunes and across the Bristol Channel to Somerset. The house completely dominates the landscape: a visual testimony to the Mansel family's command over the locality and its people.

## The style: Topographical painting

These paintings are early examples of topographical painting in Wales. Topographical painting was introduced to Britain in the 16th century from the continent, particularly Holland. It had developed from the tradition of map-making, and reflected a growing interest in recording the specificities of place. The paintings are taken from a bird's-eye-view position – low enough to see the details of the house, and glimpse of the everyday bustle of the estate; but high enough to take in as much of the surrounding landscape as possible. Air travel was unheard of, so the painter probably took sketches from the ground, and used his ingenuity to present the estate from an imaginary elevated position.

## Why were they made?

Paintings of this sort provided a visual record of a landowner's possessions. They were a statement of ownership, wealth and importance and were intended to impress, as well as being a snapshot of a place in a particular period of time. The paintings were commissioned by the Mansel family sometime around 1700, perhaps by Sir Edward Mansel, to record recent renovations.

## The artist

We do not know who painted these works. They were probably by a British painter working in the new topographical style that had been introduced from abroad – though it is unlikely that they were made locally, as this type of painting is rare in south Wales. Perhaps they were by Thomas Smith, who painted similar views for the Duke of Beaufort – the Mansels were acquainted with the Duke, and entertained him at their home a few years before the paintings were made – though very little is known about him beyond his name. The paintings were probably created as a pair, but the slight difference in size and style suggests they may not even have been painted at the same time.



*Margam House, 'The account of the official progress of his grace the first Duke of Beaufort... Through Wales in 1684'* from the original MS of Thomas Dineley, published 1888  
Thomas Dineley  
Pen and ink  
Amgueddfa Cymru



*Henry Somerset, 1st Duke of Beaufort, 1679*  
Robert White  
Line engraving  
© National Portrait Gallery, London  
www.npg.org.uk

### Questions and Discussions:

- What are these – are they photographs? If not, how were they made? What do they show?
- Compare the two paintings. Look closely at the different details.
- Think of words to describe the house. Compare it to other buildings in the painting. Does this give you any clues about the type of people that lived here?
- What do you think is meant by bird's-eye-view? How do you think a bird's-eye-view picture is made? How can we make bird's-eye view pictures today?
- We don't know who painted these pictures. Do you think it's important to know? Why? What difference would it make if we knew the name of the painter?
- Why do you think these paintings were made? Imagine the conversation that took place between the owner of the house and the painter. What do you think the owner asked for? What instructions might he have given?
- Apart from the paintings, only one other visual record of Margam House is known to exist – a sketch by Thomas Dineley (1684). Compare Dineley's sketch to the front view of the house and note differences. Which one should we believe? Discuss the reliability of pictures as a form of historical evidence. Can we believe everything that we see? (for a zoomable version of Dineley's sketch, see People's Collection Wales website)

### Activities:

- Use the 'Explore the painting' interactive to find out more about what you can see in these paintings [http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/margam\\_house/](http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/margam_house/)
- Look at the 'Topographical Paintings' powerpoint to find out more about this style of painting.
- Basic numeracy activities – count different features (*windows, deer, people*). Use pictograms to keep count. Create bar charts to compare data from the two paintings.
- Create your own topographical picture of your house or school. Sketch the details from the ground then bring them together, imagining you are looking from above. Remember to include people and animals using the building.
- Today, satellite images and aerial photography has made it easier for us to record a place from above. Look at Google Earth, or the aerial photographs of Margam (People's Collection Wales website). Identify the Orangery, Chapter house, Margam church. Use these as landmarks and compare to the painting to guess where the house would have been.

# how did the paintings get to the museum?

The paintings became part of the Museum's collection in 2012, but how did they get here? And what happened to them when they arrived?

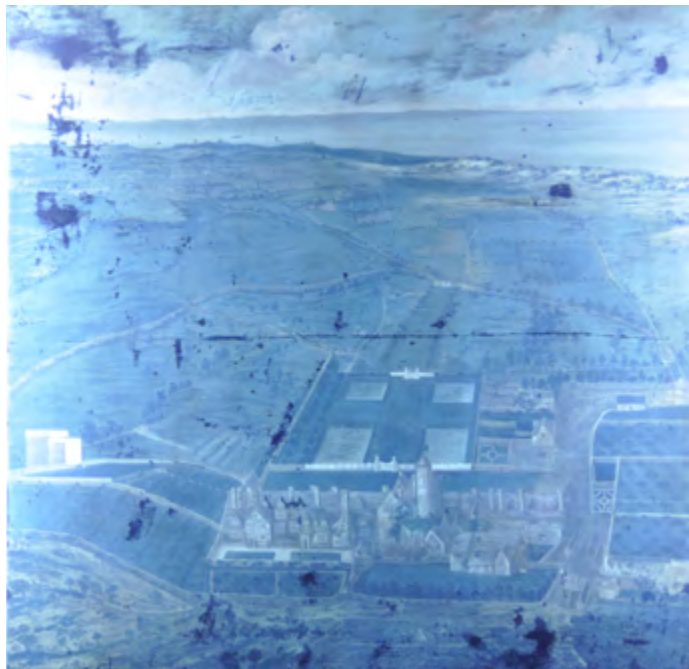
The paintings were made to impress family and visitors, and would have been proudly displayed in Margam House. We don't know where they were first hung, but by 1740 one was in the outward nursery, and the other in a room next to the steward's room. When Thomas Mansel Thomas demolished the house in the 1790s, he took them with him to his new home at Penrice, in the Gower. Seventy years later his son, Christopher Rice Mansel Talbot, brought them back to Margam and hung them in his new Castle, which still stands in Margam Park today.

In 1941, Margam was used as a base for army troops in World War II, and the owners decided to sell off the estates. The paintings were put up for sale with many other items from the house, but they were not sold. The paintings remained in private ownership, until they came up for sale again in 2012 when they were purchased by Amgueddfa Cymru, with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Art Fund.

## What happened to them at the Museum?

The Museum's role is to conserve or look after the paintings; to research and find out as much as possible about them; and to display and interpret them for different people.

At the Museum the paintings were first taken to the Conservation studio, where they were checked to make sure that they were in a safe condition to be put on display. As part of this, the Conservation team took a UV photograph of the paintings. The dark areas on this photograph reveal areas that have been painted over or restored in the past – this is common for paintings of this age.



UV photograph of the *View of Margam House, Glamorgan, Looking South*  
Amgueddfa Cymru



When they were bought, the paintings were displayed in an 18th-century gilded frame, which was not original but had been added by a previous owner. It was decided that they should be given new frames, ones which were closer to the kind of frame they would originally have had when the paintings were first made. The new frames are typical of the Stuart period – plain and dark, of ebonised wood.



UV photograph of the *View of Margam House, Glamorgan, Looking North* Amgueddfa Cymru

### Questions and Discussions:

- Today the paintings of Margam House are in National Museum Cardiff. Have you visited a museum before? Where do you think all of the paintings and objects come from? Who looks after them? Why are they there?

### Activity:

- Look at the 'Frames' powerpoint, and design a new frame for the Margam paintings. Make your new frame from cardboard– you may want to stick down pieces of string, dry pasta or beads to create different patterns. Paint your frame, and draw a picture of Margam House to go inside it.

# the birth of margam house: henry VIII and the dissolved abbey

In 1536 Abbot Lewis and the last remaining monks at Margam were forced to surrender their Abbey and its 50,000 acres of land to King Henry VIII, after he had passed an Act called the Dissolution of the Monasteries. From the remains of this Abbey, Margam House was built.

## Margam Abbey

In 1147, 12 monks and an abbot arrived at Margam from France to set up a new life. They had been given a plot of land by Robert, Earl of Gloucester, after the Norman conquest of Glamorgan. The site was perfect – the Cistercians loved seclusion and natural beauty, and Margam was an ideal place for them to worship God in peace. They employed travelling masons to build an Abbey there, which took about 50 years to complete. Despite attacks from the Welsh, who fought against this foreign invasion, the Abbey became a hub of everyday life in Glamorgan. By the 12th century it was the largest and richest



*Allegory of the Tudor Succession*,  
16th century  
Attributed to Lucas de Heere (1534-1584)  
Oil on canvas  
Amgueddfa Cymru  
Accepted in lieu of tax by HM  
Government and allocated to  
Amgueddfa Cymru-National Museum  
Wales, 1991

in Wales, but tough times were ahead: the Black Death in 1349, and the Owain Glyndwr rebellion of 1400-15 put

strain on the Margam monks, but they survived. It wasn't until Henry VIII ascended to the throne that they finally met their downfall.

## Henry VIII and the Dissolution of the Monasteries

When Henry VIII declared himself Supreme Head of the Church in England and Wales in 1534, the



*The inside of the Chapter House at Margam, 1780*  
Artist Samuel Hieronymus Grimm;  
Printer Francis Chesham  
Engraving on paper  
Amgueddfa Cymru

fate of the monasteries was immediately put in the balance. The monasteries, with their devotion to the Pope, posed a threat to the King's plans, and he was keen to get his hands on their enormous wealth; so in 1536 he passed the Dissolution of the Monasteries Act to shut down every monastery and nunnery in the land.

Margam Abbey was taken over on 20th June 1536. Abbot Lewis, 9 monks and their servants were paid their last wage and dismissed. Some went to work as local priests, while others found work on the land. The King seized



Monastic ruins at Margam Country Park, 2012  
Amgueddfa Cymru

the Abbey's most valuable possessions – jewels, manuscripts, and cash – while the furniture was auctioned on the spot. Local people ransacked the place for leftover stone, windows and wood, and the Abbey was left desolate.

### Sir Rice Mansel buys the Abbey

At first Henry VIII planned to lease out the monastic lands, but soon found that he needed cash urgently to pay for his growing army, so decided to sell instead. Very few people were in a position to buy – they had to be both rich, and in favour with the King. Sir Rice Mansel fitted the bill on both accounts and became the first person in south Wales to buy church lands, paying it off in four instalments. He moved his family seat from Oxwich Castle, Gower, to Margam, and began to build his new home there, out of the former monastic ranges. Traces of the original monastic buildings can be seen in the two paintings, incorporated into the design of the house.



Sir Rice Mansel with his wife Cecile, 17th century  
Carved Alabaster tomb  
With kind permission of Margam Abbey Parish Office

### Did You Know?

The Cistercians are also called White Monks because they wore white robes, or habits. They originated from France, and were the leading order of monks in Wales at this time.

### Questions and Discussions:

- Look carefully at the paintings, zooming in on the details of the house. Which bits do you think might belong to the original Abbey? Why?
- Have you visited any Abbey ruins before? What did it look like / how did you feel being there?
- Would you like to convert an Abbey or an old building into a home for yourself? What building would you choose to convert and why?
- Find out more about the Dissolution of the Monasteries. Do you think Henry VIII was right in doing this? How might life be different today if this hadn't happened?

### Activities:

- Find out about the Cistercian monks and the lives they would have led in Margam Abbey.
- Listen to 'Rhiannon's Story' on the 'Catch the Echoes' website. What do you think life was like for the monks after their Abbey was dissolved?  
<http://www.nptartsandents.co.uk/en/main/catchtheechoes/1538-rhiannonsstory>
- Role play – the day the monastery was taken over by the Crown. Use simple props and habits.
- Monks were among the very few people who could write at this time. Imagine you were one of the last monks to leave Margam. Write an account of your last day. Look at the designs of medieval manuscripts, and use this as inspiration for the presentation of your work.

## External Links:

Henry VIII and the Tudors (Primary Resources)

<http://www.primaryresources.co.uk/history/history3.htm>

Dissolution of the Monasteries (TES)

<http://www.tes.co.uk/ResourceDetail.aspx?storyCode=3003467>

Why did Henry VIII dissolve the monasteries (BBC class clips):

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips/why-did-henry-viii-dissolve-the-monasteries/165.html>

Map of Welsh Monastic Houses (Open University)

<http://openlearn.open.ac.uk/mod/oucontent/view.php?id=397309&section=6.3>

Tudor Wales (Open University)

<http://openlearn.open.ac.uk/mod/oucontent/view.php?id=397309&section=2.1.3>

# the building of a 'faire and sumptuous' house

The 16th century witnessed a great building boom in domestic architecture. The new houses, built by the wealthiest of the time, were larger and more comfortable than ever before. Margam House was one of the great new houses built in Glamorgan at this time. Others include St Fagans Castle, and Sker House which, unlike Margam, still stand today.

After Sir Rice Mansel had bought Margam estate from the Crown, he began to convert the deserted monastery into a family home. By the 1590s the house was well established – Rice Merrick, a wealthy gentleman and cousin to Rice Mansel, described it as 'faire and sumptuous.' Over the next 150 years the house was altered and extended by the Mansel family, the result being a long, 'rambling' building in a mixture of medieval, Tudor and classical styles.

## Exterior – front of the house

To the right (east), the building is a haphazard arrangement of medieval features – pointed archways, cusped windows, and even a medieval gatehouse, probably part of the original Abbey buildings. This was presumably the first side of the house to be built. The left side of the house, by contrast, is regular and orderly. It contains a doorway framed by a portico, supported by four columns. This more Classical side was probably developed between 1660 and 1680 by Sir Edward Mansel, who may have commissioned the paintings.

## Exterior – back of the house

The abundance of windows on the left (east) side of the building suggests these were the family rooms; the other side probably contained service rooms, like the laundry and bakehouse. The Chapter House (an original feature of the Abbey which still stands



*View of Margam House, Glamorgan, Looking North, c. 1700*

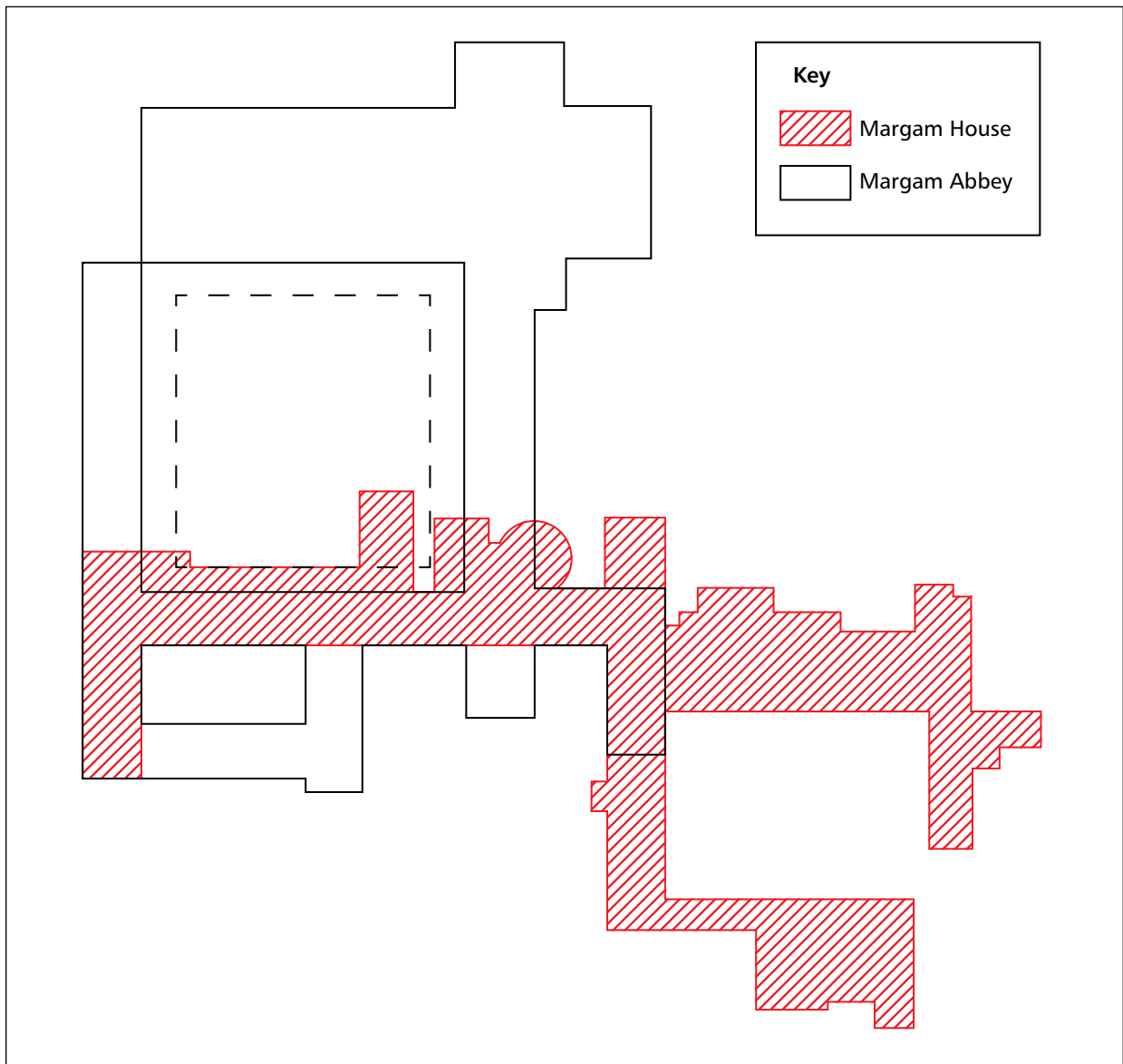


*View of Margam House, Glamorgan, Looking South, c. 1700*

today) is in the middle, with vegetation sprouting from its roof. It was used at some point for storing coal. The tall circular tower was a lookout platform; and the jumble of outdoor buildings included a stable, coach house, kennels and a dovecot, all signs of the family's wealth.



Conjectural 3D model of Margam House  
With kind permission of the Friends of Margam Country Park



Conjectural Plan of Margam House and Abbey  
With kind permission of the Friends of Margam Country Park

## Interior

While the paintings provide visual evidence of the exterior, we have only written sources to account for the interior. Inventories drawn up some 40 years after the paintings were made list all of the rooms in the house, and some of their contents.

The family rooms included a Great Hall, Dining-room, Library, Nurseries, and personal rooms or chambers with luxurious feather beds. Rooms were lit by brass or pewter candlesticks, and heated by wood or coal collected from the estate grounds. Many of the servants lodged in the house: there were rooms for maids and grooms, the miller, the tiler, even the clockmaker! Food was stored in pantries and larders, and prepared in the kitchen; and there was an on-site dairy, bakery and cheese room.

Houses of this type were usually lavishly decorated, especially the most important entertaining rooms like the Hall and Dining-room. The walls were probably panelled, and some may have been painted with frescoes. Paintings of the family and tapestries probably hung on the walls. Silver was becoming a symbol of wealth, and would have been proudly displayed.

*'Margam is a very noble seat... It appears from some ruins about it to have been formed of an ancient religious house; the modern additions are very stately... the roof being ceiled, and adorned with cornices, and fretwork of goodly artifice...'*

Thomas Dineley on a visit to Margam with the 1st Duke of Beaufort, 1684

### Questions and Discussions:

- What kind of person do you think lived in this house? *Rich / poor / important.* Why do you think this? Compare the house to your house today.
- Look at the front view of the house. Compare the right side to the left. What shapes can you see? How would you describe them? Is it a symmetrical house, or are the two sides different? Why do you think that is?
- How many people do you imagine lived in this house? Who do you think they were? *The family, guests, servants.* What different rooms do you think they would have had inside? Can you imagine how it looked inside?
- Imagine you could interview the house. What questions would you ask? *Who made you? What are you made of? What can you see / feel?* Answer these questions as a class.
- What do you think studying old buildings can tell us? *Clues about the lives of the families who lived there; history of an area; reveal how fashions and societies have changed.*



### Activities:

- Storytelling. After you have spent some time discussing the paintings, ask pupils to close their eyes and visualise the house. This is best done when they are relaxed. Set the scene through narration e.g. *'Let's go back in time, back to a time before you were born... It's 300 years ago, and the house is still standing. You are looking through the gates up at the house. It's December, and the night is cold. You see some lights flickering from a window, and wonder what's inside...'* Lead them up the avenue to the house, ask them to look inside one of the windows. *What can you see? What can you hear?* Ask them not to speak until you bring them back to the present day. Then ask them to share what they imagined through the window – verbally, or through drawings.
- Literacy. The house has been described as a 'rambling house', 'fair and sumptuous', a 'miserable mansion.' Identify which are nouns and which are adjectives. Ask children to write on post-its nouns to label the painting – *house, gate, deer*. On a different colour post-it, think of adjectives to describe these nouns. These could form the basis of a poem.
- Research into 17th century interiors. Build a cross-section of the house out of cardboard. Design and build the interior.
- We don't know what Margam House looked like inside – we only have an inventory to give us clues. What is an inventory? Draw up an inventory of your home, and include illustrations of some of the furniture or features in each one. Which of these items could you have found in Margam House in the 17th century? Did they have equivalents e.g. candles instead of lamps?
- 'Design your own house!' worksheet. This could be done individually, or as a classroom activity. Arrange the class into groups, giving each one an A3 copy of the worksheet. The sheet is passed around, and each pupil is given a minute to add their own feature to the house.

### External Links:

Animation of how the house was built from the remains of Margam Abbey (Friends of Margam Park)

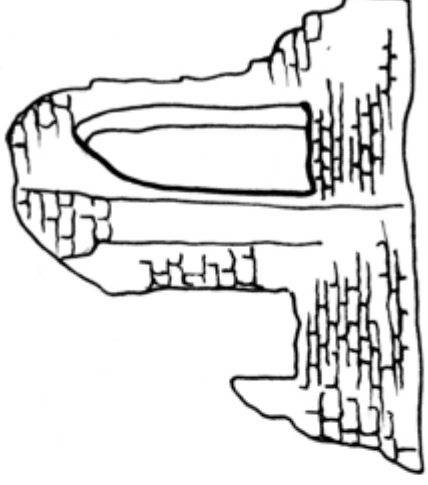
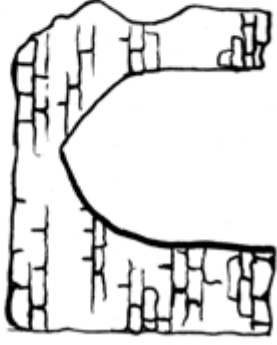
<http://www.friendsofmargampark.info/video%20clips/Animation%20page.htm>

A Tudor inventory (BBC class clips):

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips/tudor-homes/3725.html>

# Design your own house!

This is a drawing of part of the Abbey that was built for the monks at Margam. When Sir Rice Mansel bought the Abbey, he built his house out of and around these remains. Today the house has gone, but this ruin still stands. Imagine you had bought this. How would you turn it into a house? Draw your design here. Stick bits of paper over the bits you would knock down, and draw over it.



# celebrations and feasts: the banqueting house

Margam House itself no longer exists today, but the façade of its lavish Banqueting House has survived. A Banqueting House was used as an entertainment venue for celebratory feasts and special occasions. In the paintings, the Banqueting House can be seen on a slope to the east of the house; the grass in front of it is being used as a bowling green. Today it stands in a different area of the park, having been moved in the 19th century to make way for Margam Castle.

## Margam hosts a noble guest

In the summer of 1684, Margam House was bustling with preparations for a special guest: Henry Somerset, 1st Duke of Beaufort and Lord President of the Council of Wales was due to visit, as part of his tour of Wales. He arrived with his family by chariot, and they were treated to the finest hospitality by the host, Sir Edward Mansel.

## Entertaining the guests

The Duke was accompanied by Thomas Dineley, who recorded all of the details of the tour. He described how they were treated at Margam to a sumptuous banquet



*Summer House at Margam, c. 1845*  
Rev. Calvert Richard Jones (1802-1877)  
Salted paper print from a calotype negative  
© Victoria and Albert Museum, London, [www.vam.ac.uk](http://www.vam.ac.uk)

of fish, meats, deserts and wines – much of which would have been produced on the estate itself. For entertainment they were escorted up the slope to the Banqueting House to watch three footmen chase and catch a brace of bucks (male deer). The unfortunate bucks were paraded into the courtyard, and later ended up as dinner.

## The Banqueting House: what it looked like

Dineley's account also gives us a description of the Banqueting House – he reports that it was paved with black, red and white marble, and had Dutch paintings along the wall. It is likely that it was built



*Henry Somerset, 1st Duke of Beaufort, 17th century*  
Godfrey Kneller (1646-1723)  
Oil on canvas  
© Gloucester Museums Service

in Edward Mansel's time, as the initials E. M. are said to have featured in the interior design. The front façade still exists today. Its design is based on a classical triumphal arch, a style of architecture deriving from ancient Rome.

The four statues in round-headed niches represent the four seasons, but are not original features – they were added in the 19th century when the building was dismantled, and the façade moved to its present position behind Margam Orangery. A photograph of around 1845 shows the façade without the sculptures. Today the Banqueting House is known as the Temple of the Four Seasons, or Ivy Cottage, as it forms the front of the gardener's cottage.



Banqueting House façade – Temple of the Four Seasons, 2012  
Amgueddfa Cymru



Banqueting House façade detail, 2012

*The First Duke of Beaufort was 'conducted to the summer banqueting-house, built after the Italian, where regular symmetry, excellent sculpture, delicate graving, and an infinity of good Dutch and other painting, make a lustre not to be imagined. Its pavements are of marbles, black, red, mixed and white, chiefly the product of his (Mansel's) own quarries... his Grace was entertained with the pastime of seeing a brace of bucks run down by three footmen, which were afterwards led into Margam anti-court alive, and there judged fit for the table, before the huntsmen gave the fatal stroke.'*

Thomas Dineley, *The Official Progress of the Duke of Progress through Wales*, 1684

### Questions and Discussions:

- Find the Banqueting House in the paintings. What shape is the building? Why do you think it's so far from the house? What do you think it was used for? Look closely at what's happening in front of the building, and think about the name for clues.
- Look at pictures of the Banqueting House today. What is it used for today? Why do you think it was moved? Why do you think the front of the building was kept?
- What can we tell about the Banqueting House from Thomas Dineley's description? What materials was it made of? What was it decorated with? Does it tell us anything about the family's tastes? *Fashionable foreign influences, use of local materials.*
- What would be the equivalent of a Banqueting House today? Describe a time when you have had a celebratory banquet or meal – perhaps for a family celebration, or at Christmas. Where were you? What did you wear / eat / do? Did you entertain a special guest?

### Activities:

- Look at pictures of Roman triumphal arches. Design your own Banqueting House façade based on these designs. Try building it, or draw it in 3-d perspective.
- Investigate food and costume in the Stuart era, and plan an evening at your own Banqueting House. What is the reason for the celebration? Who are your guests? What would you wear? Design a menu and invitations to send out, and include details of the evening's entertainment.
- Find out about the history of bowling, and why Henry VIII tried to ban it in Britain. Play a class game of bowls.

### External Links:

Food in the Stuart period (History Cookbook):

<http://cookit.e2bn.org/historycookbook/index.php>

How to draw a triumphal arch in perspective (Artschool online):

<http://www.wetcanvas.com/ArtSchool/Toolbox/LearningHowToDraw/Perspective10/>

The origins of bowling (Hastings Open Bowl):

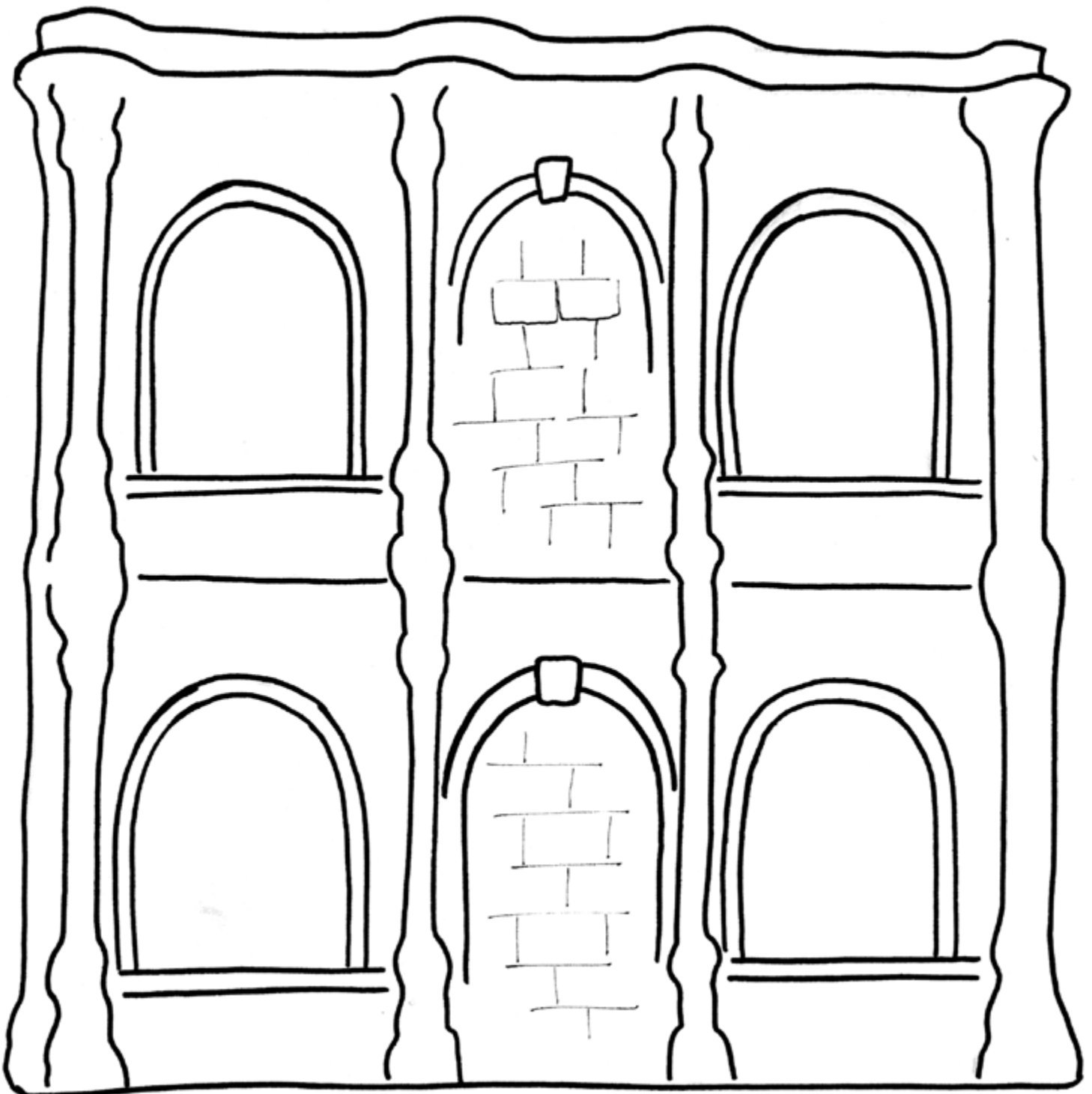
[http://www.hastingsbowlstournament.com/history\\_of\\_the\\_game.php](http://www.hastingsbowlstournament.com/history_of_the_game.php)

# the four seasons

The front of the Banqueting House is now called the Temple of the Four Seasons, because it contains statues which represent the four seasons. These were not on the original Banqueting House, but were added at a later date.

Do some research on the four seasons – collect pictures, colours, designs – and use your sketch book to develop ideas for four statues, one representing each of the four seasons. They don't have to be human figures!

Draw your final designs into the niches in the picture below (a 'niche' is a gap or space in a wall, where sculptures are placed).



# the old house is destroyed

In 1772 a young Thomas Mansel Talbot returned from Italy after four years on a Grand Tour of Europe. He cared little for Margam House, which he had inherited from his father, and was brimming with plans to replace it with a brand new mansion at Penrice. Little by little, Margam House was dismantled, and a fashionable Orangery was built in its place.

## Thomas Mansel Thomas inherits Margam

In 1750, the Mansel family line came to an end, and Margam estate was passed through marriage to an English family – the Talbots of Lacock, Wiltshire. By then the 200-year old house had been standing empty for a while – the rooms were only partly furnished, and some were being used for storage. The house was slowly deteriorating. It is perhaps



The arms of Thomas Mansel Talbot, Margam Castle, 2012

no surprise that Thomas Mansel Talbot showed little inclination to move in when he inherited the estate in 1768. Besides, he had other things on his mind – he was about to embark on a Grand Tour of the Continent, an essential part of a young gentleman's education at the time.

During his Grand Tour he became enthused by the art and architecture he saw, and wrote home excitedly with new ideas for his estates. At the same time he was developing a taste for wild, picturesque views and decided

*Penrice Castle & Oxwich Bay, Illustrations of Glamorganshire vol. 4*  
Charlotte L. Traherne  
Pencil and watercolour on paper  
Amgueddfa Cymru  
Bequeathed by Lady Mansel Franklen, 1938



Thomas Mansel Talbot of Margam Park and Penrice Castle, 1770-1775  
Christopher Hewetson (1731-1798)  
Bust, white marble  
© Victoria and Albert Museum, London, [www.vam.ac.uk](http://www.vam.ac.uk)



that Penrice, which he described as 'the most romantic spot in all the county,' was the perfect place to build a new home. He was becoming increasingly disinterested in Margam House, and confessed 'I leave Margam for Penrice with very little reluctance.' A sketch of around 1770, perhaps by Thomas himself, shows his initial ideas for this new mansion.



*Sketch of Penrice Castle, c. 1770*

Perhaps by T. M. Talbot

Pencil on paper

Margam & Penrice

By permission of Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru/  
National Library of Wales

### Margam House is dismantled

On his return from Italy, Thomas Mansel Talbot commissioned Anthony Keck to design a new villa at Penrice, overlooking Oxwich Bay in the Gower. The house at Margam was gradually dismantled: he took the library and furniture to Penrice, removed the roof and broke down the walls bit by bit until in 1793 nothing remained but rubble. He didn't want to abandon Margam completely however – he planned to turn it into a 'pleasure park.' He developed the deer herd there, kept hounds and horses, and built an extravagant Orangery on the site of the old house, to house his collection of citrus trees.

### Picturesque Penrice

One of the reasons for Thomas Mansel Talbot's relocation to Penrice was its remote location in contrast to Margam, which was situated on the main route through south Wales; he was a reserved character, who didn't enjoy entertaining and played little part in public life. But like many of his contemporaries he was also developing a taste for wild, natural scenery. While Margam was surrounded by geometrical, orderly formal gardens, symbolising man's control over nature, the landscape at Penrice was untamed: a demonstration of man's lack of control over nature. This new taste for the 'picturesque' denotes a key turning point in attitudes to nature in the 18th century.



*Penrice Castle, Oxwich Bay, Glamorganshire, 1832*

Artist J. H. Robinson; Printer J. S. Templeton;  
Publisher R. Ackerman

Lithograph on paper

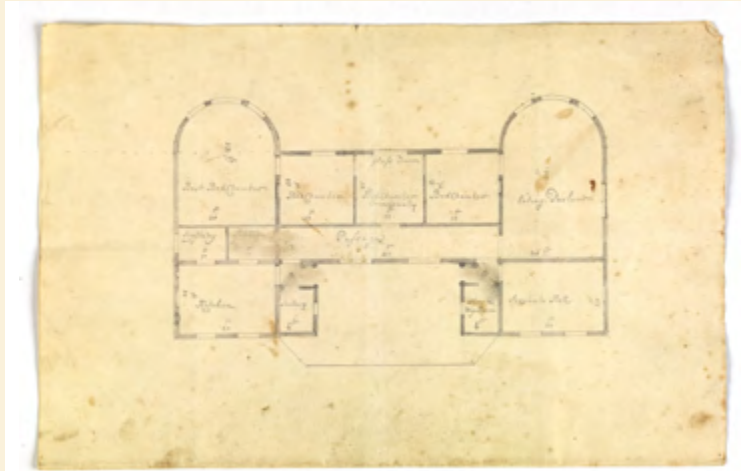
Amgueddfa Cymru

Purchased by the Cardiff Museum, 1899



## a good idea?

When Thomas Mansel Talbot returned from a Grand Tour of Europe, he decided to pull down Margam House and build a new home for himself at Penrice. He wrote in a letter to his friend Michael Hicks Beach (1793): *'My Dear Sir.... I am very buisy now in finishing my green houses at Margam by an inclosure of that with a high stone wall from the materials of the old mansion. The remainder of its walls are now levelling and covering with earth & trees, no more to be seen – when I have the pleasure of seeing you here next summer there will only be the old paintings of it to look at, what a mass of buildings it was... Yours very sincerely, T. Mansel Talbot'* (From Joanna Martin, *Henry and the Fairy Palace* (1993), pp.126-7)



*Sketch plan of Penrice Castle, c. 1770*  
Perhaps by T. M. Talbot  
Pencil on pape  
Margam & Penrice  
By permission of Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru/  
National Library of Wales

### But not everyone was impressed with his plans:

When John Byng visited Margam in 1787, as the house was being pulled down, he observed *'Probably Mr. T., a travell'd gentleman, knows not of, or esteems this treasure; but puts more store by some (unpacked) boxes of statues (as the maid called them) he has brought from Italy. This is one of the advantages of travel, to come home with a vamped Corregio, and some shabby marbles, and then neglect the real antiquities, and old pictures at your family seat!'*

Henry Skrine wrote in his *'Tour of Wales'* (1798): *'Still more must he wonder, that its owner should desert the noble seat of Margam, in the midst of a populous and plentiful county to form a fairy palace in a dreary and desolate wild, far from the usual haunts of men, and near the extremity of a black peninsula.'*

When Sir Richard Colt Hoare visited Margam in the early 19th century, he complained: *'Hundreds and perhaps thousands have been spent in the same ground in conservatories and greenhouses and this interesting relict [the Chapter House] has been suffered to perish.'*

### Questions and Discussions:

- Have you ever travelled abroad? What did you do / see / learn? Did you see or try anything new that changed the way you do things back home?
- Imagine you had inherited a 200 year-old house. Would you want to live there? Why? Would you make any changes? Do you think Thomas Mansel Talbot was right to pull down the old house? Read the different reactions to his plans. Why did people complain about what he had done?
- Why do you think Thomas Mansel Thomas wanted to move from Margam to Penrice? Have you ever moved house? What were the reasons? What were the benefits / difficulties of moving house?
- Why do you think he kept the Chapter House and some of the monastic remains, which were also part of the house, still standing? Should we value old things more than new things?
- Compare the landscape and gardens in the Margam paintings to that of Penrice. What are the differences? Where would you prefer to live? Why?

### Activities:

- As a class, map out a timeline with the key dates in relation to the house – *when was it built, by whom, who lived there, when was it pulled down*. Ask pupils to tell the life-story of the house, from the point of view of the house itself as it nears old age and is being dismantled.
- Compare different kinds of houses and buildings and ask pupils to design their own 'dream house'. *Where would it be? What materials would you use? Would it be built out of a building that already exists, or a completely new one?*
- Discuss the value of preserving things for the future, and different ways this can be done – *photographs, written form, drawings, memory, orally*.
- As a class, explore how artists have recorded houses or objects that are no longer there e.g. Rachel Whiteread's 'House'; Benjamin Franklin's 'Lost House'; or have fun discussing the concept of 'invisible art.'
- Margam Park is today also a sculpture park. You can see different sculptures by famous artists dotted around the grounds. Design a sculpture for the park to help people remember the house.

### External Links

Moving house audio clip (BBC class clips):

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips/moving-house-audio/11681.html>

Benjamin Franklin's Lost House:

<http://nookstowersandturrets.blogspot.co.uk/2012/07/benjamin-franklins-lost-house.html>

Invisible Art (Guardian):

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2012/jun/17/invisible-art-about-unseen-hayward-review>

# oranges and lemons: the orangery at margam

By 1793 Thomas Mansel Talbot had removed the last brick of Margam House, and the area was flattened off, leaving only the Chapter House and a few monastic ruins standing. He built in its place a magnificent Georgian Orangery, the longest in Britain and a key feature of Margam Park today. Designed to house his collection of citrus trees and sculpture, it was built of sandstone from Pyle, and rubble from the demolished house.

When Thomas Mansel Thomas inherited Margam Estate, he also became the owner of a collection of around 100 citrus trees – mostly orange – at Margam. In July 1727, the gardener Joseph Kirkman draws up a detailed list of the trees, and described them as ‘in perfect health and full of fruit and beautiful in their leaf.’

## Where did the trees come from?

When Thomas Dineley visited Margam with the Duke of Beaufort in 1684, he didn't mention the collection of orange trees. The earliest mention is in a servant's notebook of 1711, where it is noted that they were moved to the gardens in May. Presumably the collection arrived at Margam between those two dates – but nobody knows exactly how. Folk stories have arisen to explain their existence. Most of them claim the orange trees were intended as a gift for Royalty, but that the ship carrying them was wrecked on land belonging to the Mansels, so the family claimed them as their own.



*Tour through the vales of Glamorgan: Margam orangery, church and chapter house, 1819*

Thomas Hornor  
Watercolour

Image courtesy of Glamorgan Archives



Lime trees at Margam Country Park, 2012

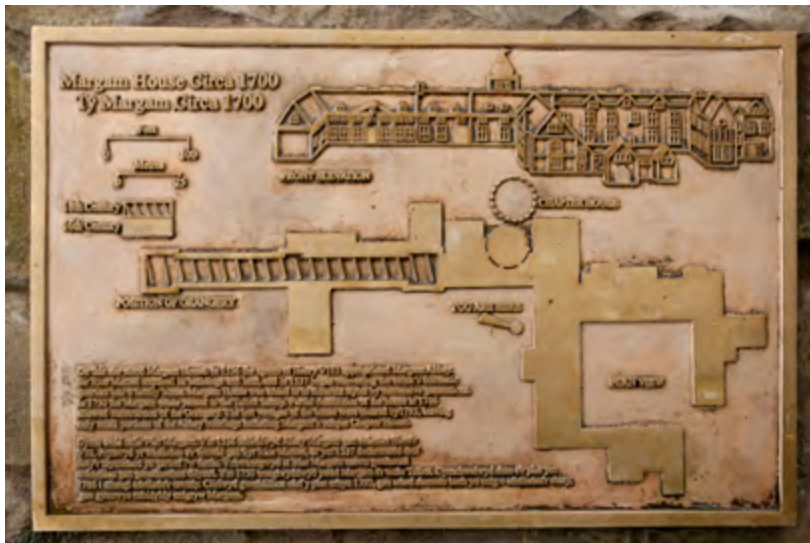
## Building the Orangery

While old Margam House was being dismantled, Thomas Mansel Talbot was busy drawing up plans for an Orangery to replace it. He employed the architect Anthony Keck to design the building, which was inspired by the classical building he had seen in Rome on his Grand Tour. Hopkin Llewellyn, the steward at Margam, was put in charge of the project, and Snook the gardener was asked to supervise the labourers and carpenters, mostly local men.



*The Orangery, Margam, c. 1845*  
 Rev. Calvert Richard Jones (1802-1877)  
 Salted paper print from a calotype negative  
 © Victoria and Albert Museum, London,  
[www.vam.ac.uk](http://www.vam.ac.uk)

The Orangery took 3 years to complete. The main body is long and narrow, with 24 tall windows facing south, to let in as much light as possible. Coal fires set along the back wall kept the trees warm. The trees were kept in boxes, and arranged in three rows. They were wheeled out to the gardens during the summer months. At both ends of the Orangery were pavilions, and these were used to display the sculptures that Thomas Mansel Talbot had bought on his Grand Tour.



Plaque at Margam Country Park showing location of the Orangery in relation to old Margam House



Interior view of Margam Orangery, 1979  
 © Crown copyright: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales / © Hawlfraint y Goron: Comisiwn Brenhinol Henebion Cymru



Orangery at Margam Country Park, 2012  
 Amgueddfa Cymru



Orangery at Margam Country Park, 2012  
Amgueddfa Cymru

### Did You Know?

Orange trees come originally from China, but have been grown in England since the Elizabethan era. They were popular with the upper classes in the 17th century as an exotic treat. They were eaten as fruit, and used as decorative features in formal gardens or on dinner tables, where guests were encouraged to pick their own dessert!

### Questions and Discussions:

- What is a citrus tree / where do they come from? Can they be grown in Wales? *talk about fruit, seeds; show on maps.*
- Do you have a greenhouse in your garden? What are greenhouses used for?
- Different types of citrus fruits – handling / tasting session
- What can oranges be used for? *Eating, drinking, perfume or scent, cleaning product.*

### Activities:

- Listen to 'Catch the Echoes: The Villager's Story' for a fictional account of how the orange trees got to Margam. Imagine you were one of the villagers present. Write an account of what happened. Draw a picture to illustrate the event. (<http://www.nptartsandents.co.uk/en/main/catchtheechoes/1630-thevillagersstories>)
- Many stories exist about how the orange trees came to Margam, and we don't know which is true. Stories can change over time. Play a game of Chinese whispers – ask pupils to form a line. The first pupil in the row reads from a card a story of how the orange trees arrived at Margam. Pass it on. The last pupil reports aloud.
- The Orangery measures 327 by 30 foot. Inside there were 3 rows of trees, the largest of which was 2 feet wide. Convert these measurements into metres, and draw a scaled plan of the Orangery. Draw lines on the diagram to show where the 3 rows of trees would have been, leaving equal gaps between each row.
- Find out how oranges were used in the Welsh tradition of Calennig, and make your own.
- Oranges and Lemons is a nursery rhyme that originated in the 17th century. Learn the rhyme and find out the gruesome story behind it.

### External Links:

Farming citrus trees in the Caribbean (BBC class clips):

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips/farming-citrus-fruit-in-the-caribbean/4768.html>

Orange Trees (Fruit Expert):

<http://www.fruitexpert.co.uk/orangetrees.html>

Oranges and Lemons – the nursery rhyme (BBC)

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/london/content/articles/2009/05/13/oranges\\_and\\_lemons\\_origins\\_feature.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/london/content/articles/2009/05/13/oranges_and_lemons_origins_feature.shtml)

# who lived in the house?

A household the size of Margam would have needed a lot of people to keep it running. Not only was it home to the Mansel family, there were probably also around 50-70 servants lodged there at the time the paintings were created. Most of them were employed to look after the house and gardens; others took care of the park or worked on the farm.

## Chief roles in the household

Sir Edward Mansel (4th Baronet) was probably the owner of the house when the paintings were made around 1700. He would have played an important role in household management, looking after the properties and the tenants who lived on the estate. A steward was employed to help him, and was expected to keep the estates family's finances in check. The steward was the most senior position of all those employed at the house, and as a man of high standing had his own room.

The chief cook, head gardener and curate of Margam Abbey were also men of high standing. Key roles like these were often passed down families from father to son. They were responsible for supervising their various assistants and servants, and received a comfortable income. In 1684, the chief cook at Margam, John Brown, could afford to leave in his will 23 bread loaves a week for the poor of Margam village. A stone plaque can be seen today at Margam Abbey, commemorating his kind deed.



Detail of *View of Margam House, Glamorgan, Looking South*, c.1700

## Servants

Edward's wife Martha would have had overall charge of the domestic servants. Every member of the family had their own personal maid or servant. In addition, there were servants to look after coal and fuel; wine and beer; there was even a resident rat-catcher, and a man to clean people's boots! The women who worked in the house, like the kitchen and dairy maids or the laundry maid, would have been under the supervision of a housekeeper. Male servants or apprentice boys were employed to maintain the estate, carry out repairs, and to ensure security. This included the gamekeeper, who looked after the deer; coachmen and grooms, and a porter who was situated in the gatehouse. Others were employed to run the farm.

## Entertainment

A fiddler and a harpist kept the house entertained with music. In addition, the family would have been frequently visited by Welsh bards, who were paid to sing the praises of the family. One of the regulars at Margam was Dafydd Edward, a local man who considered himself a household bard to the Mansels, and referred to Sir Edward Mansel as his 'master.'

On the 2nd December 1740, the steward Watkin Jenkins wrote the following letter to Thomas, 2nd Baron Mansel, updating him on the running of Margam house in his absence, and advising him on how to keep the housekeepers happy in the run-up to Christmas.

*My Dear Lord,*

*It was a customary thing in your ancestors to give the poor house keepers pieces of beef, barley loafes and some money against Christmas. If your Lordship pleases there is two bulls that may be given and some barley of your own which would be a great act of Charity...*

Watkin Jenkins

(Penrice & Margam L1207, National Library)



*Thomas, 2nd Baron Mansel of Margam with his Blackwood Half-Brothers and Sister, 1742*  
Allan Ramsay (1713-1784)  
Oil on canvas  
© Tate, London 2012

## Questions And Discussions:

- Think of all of the different jobs that need to be done in your home (*cooking, cleaning, gardening, repairs*) – who is in charge of these?
- What kinds of jobs do you think would have been done in Margam House? Remember this was a self-sufficient house, which means that almost everything they needed – food, laundry, fuel, drink – would have been produced on the estate. Discuss the different roles of servants in the house, and illustrate through role-play with props.
- Look closely at the figures standing at the back of the house. Zoom in so that you can see them closely. What are they doing? Who do you think they are? Look for clues in their costumes / accessories. Perhaps one of the figures is Edward Mansel, with some of the chief servants of the house.
- Read the letter that the steward Watkin Jenkins wrote to Thomas Mansel in 1740. Thomas Mansel was living in London at the time. What does he recommend? Why do you think he recommended this? What does the letter suggest about Watkin's role in the house at the time? *Running the household while Thomas Mansel away.*



**Activities:**

- Describe the house from the fictitious point of view of one of the servants who lived there. Try to imagine what life was like – what were your daily tasks? Do you enjoy working there? Include a description of the house, your role in the house, and the people you work with.
- Design and build a stage set, based on a section of the painting. Create puppets based on the different characters you can see in the painting. Make up a play to be performed in this 'theatre.'
- Using pre-cut speech bubbles, ask pupils to think about what the characters in the scene at the back of the house are saying or thinking. Attach with blu-tac.
- Zoom in on one of the characters in the painting. Using this scene as your starting point, plan a comic strip about something that happens to the character during that day.

# the mansel family tombs

Nestled in the south aisle of Margam Abbey is a small chapel containing 4 striking alabaster tombs dedicated to members of the Mansel family of Margam. They were probably created by the grieving widow of Sir Lewis Mansel, who died in 1638, as a tribute to her husband's family. The members of the family depicted each played a part in the development of Margam House and estates. The tombs are among the finest of their kind in south Wales, and their opulence reflects the enormous wealth and success of the family.

## The tombs

The tombs are made of alabaster and marble. Each one is topped by near life-size representations – or effigy – of the deceased, hands clasped in prayer. Their bodies are buried elsewhere. The men wear armour, while their wives are dressed in costumes appropriate to their period. Three of the tombs have little 'weepers,' or kneeling figures carved along the outside, representing the grieving children left behind. They also show that even in death, as in life, a person is surrounded by family.



*Left and below left:* Tombs of the Mansel family of Margam Park, 17th century  
Carved Alabaster  
With kind permission of Margam Abbey Parish office



Wall memorial to Sir Edward Mansel  
With kind permission of Margam Abbey Parish office



'Weepers' on the Mansel family tombs

**Sir Rice Mansel (c.1487-1559)**

Sir Rice Mansel transformed the future of the Mansel family when he bought Margam Abbey and estate from King Henry VIII in 1540. He moved the family seat from Oxwich Castle in the Gower to Margam, and began to build Margam House out of the Abbey ruins; and by 1559 he had been given permission to impark, which was the beginning of Margam Park as we know it. He was a distinguished soldier, and a keen supporter of King Henry VIII. He is shown with his wife Cecile Dabridgecourt.



Tomb of Sir Rice Mansel of Oxwich and Penrice with his wife Cecile, 17th century  
Carved Alabaster tomb  
With kind permission of Margam Abbey Parish office

**Sir Edward Mansel (1531-1595)**

Edward Mansel inherited Margam House and estates when his father, Sir Rice Mansel, died in 1559. He continued his father's work on the house and started to create a formal garden in the park. Like his father, he was also a soldier, and became Sheriff of Glamorgan. He is shown with his wife, Jane Somerset.



Tomb of Sir Edward Mansel with his wife Jane, 17th century  
Carved Alabaster tomb  
With kind permission of Margam Abbey Parish office

**Sir Thomas Mansel (1556-1631)**

Sir Thomas Mansel extensively remodelled Margam house and gardens after his father's death. He played an important role in local concerns, being Sheriff of Glamorgan three times. He was knighted in 1591, and in 1611 was made a baronet by King James I – one of the first ever to be granted this title. He married twice, and is shown here with both wives – Mary Mordaunt, and Jane Pole. A portrait of Sir Thomas with his second wife Jane can be seen at National Museum Cardiff.



Tomb of Sir Thomas Mansel with his first wife Mary, and second wife Jane, 17th century  
Carved Alabaster tomb  
With kind permission of Margam Abbey Parish office

**Sir Lewis Mansel (c.1594-1638)**

Sir Lewis Mansel died just 7 years after inheriting Margam estate. His tomb was commissioned by his grieving wife, Elizabeth Montagu, and is strikingly different to the other tombs. It was probably made by Maximilian Colt, who sculpted the tomb of Elizabeth I in Westminster Abbey.



Above: Tomb of Sir Lewis Mansel with his wife Elizabeth, after 1638  
 Attributed to Maximilian Colt  
 Carved Alabaster tomb  
 With kind permission of Margam Abbey Parish office

Right: 'Weepers' on the tomb of Sir Rice Mansel

**Did You Know?****Family pride**

In Tudor and Stuart society, lineage was very important. The upper classes used their lineage to legitimise their position in society, and to demonstrate familial pride. Family arms and mottoes feature in many portraits of the time; they were also emblazoned over halls, churches, windows and tombs. The tombs in Margam Abbey are a celebration of the Mansel family lineage. The Mansels were one of the most important families in Wales, but they were not Welsh themselves – their ancestors came from France. They probably came to Britain after the Norman conquest of 1066, and some members of the family settled here.

## Questions And Discussions:

- Look at pictures of the tombs at Margam Abbey (*People's Collection Wales website*). Describe what you see. What do you think it was made of? What do you think they feel like / texture? What do you think they are? Why do you think they were made?
- Look at the people represented on the tombs. What kind of people do you think they were? *wealthy, successful, important*. Why do you think this? *Costume, the fact they had effigies made*.
- On the tombs, the family are shown praying. Why do you think this is? *Importance of religion, to ensure a good afterlife*. Imagine you were to design a tomb for yourself. What would you be shown doing – a favourite activity perhaps? What would you be shown wearing?
- Look at the small figures around the tomb. What are they doing? How many can you see? Who do you think these might be?
- Look at the portrait of Sir Thomas Mansel and his wife Jane. What is a portrait? Have you ever had a portrait of yourself made? What did you wear / what are you doing / where is it now? Why do you think this portrait was made? Describe what you see. What clues can you find that tell us what kind of people they are? Compare the portrait to the tomb of Sir Thomas Mansel. Who do you think the third person could be?
- What is a family? Why are families important? How do we remember or celebrate our families today?



*Sir Thomas Mansel and his wife Jane, c. 1625*

## Activities:

- Find out more about the portrait of Thomas Mansel and his wife Jane on the 'Explore this painting' interactive <http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/rhagor/interactive/mansel/>
- Find Margam Abbey in the paintings. This is where the tombs are today. Look at pictures of the Abbey today. Do you think it has changed?
- Look at the portrait and tombs and draw the costumes. Find out about Tudor and Stuart clothes, and see if you can name the different items. Paint a portrait of yourself in costume. Make replica ruffs and collars from paper, card, lace and wire.
- Find out what 'lineage' means. Draw your own family tree.
- Find out what an 'effigy' is. Make an effigy of your own using a small doll or a figurine, a plasticine mould and plaster cast.

**Links:**

For more information on the portrait of Thomas Mansel and his wife Jane

<http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/2702/>

Guide to exploring sculpture, including notes on making a plaster cast (V&A):

<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/t/teachers-resource-sculpture/>

Tudor costume – children (BBC class clips):

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips/childrens-clothing-in-tudor-times/3334.html>

# the villagers

Margam House not only played a role in the lives of the people who lived there: it was also at the heart of its surrounding community. This is shown clearly in the two paintings – the house appears as a focal point in the landscape. The paintings are filled with vignettes of everyday life of local villagers as they go about their daily business. But who were they? And what kind of lives did they lead?

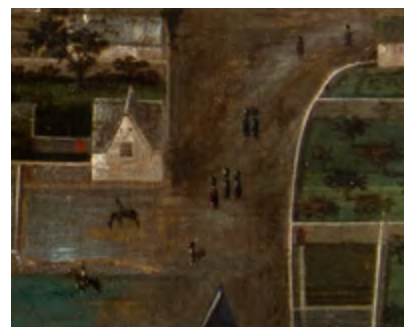
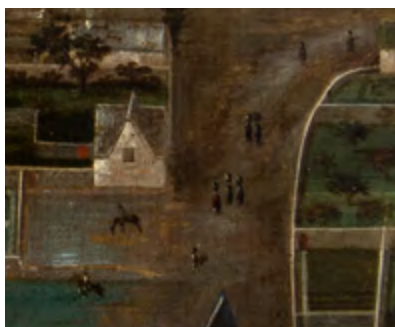
Every wealthy landowner had on his estates a body of freeholders and tenants. They provided an important source of income to the landowner, and were also expected to offer obedience and support in return for being allowed to live on the land. Most of the people shown in the paintings probably either lived or worked on the Margam estate, and were an essential part of its daily life.

## Occupations

Most of the people of Glamorgan at this time earned a living through agriculture, and small farmhouses can be seen dotted around the landscape. Farmers worked the land with methods that had changed very little since the time of their forefathers. As well as farm labourers there was a slowly increasing number of industrial workers, including women sent out by their families to earn extra income. Industrial work at the time was low-paid and dangerous – fires, floods, and explosions were common.



Detail of *View of Margam House, Glamorgan, Looking North*, c. 1700



Detail of *View of Margam House, Glamorgan, Looking South*, c. 1700

In the local village a cluster of small businesses and local craftsmen would have been based, serving local needs. This probably included a tailor, saddler, shoemaker and clockmaker, weavers and felt makers; and a village pub. Local shops would have sold a variety of goods like nails, candlesticks, food and earthenware. Travelling pedlars were also a common sight, selling small items from their packs like gloves, combs and hooks.

## Housing

The old road which winds around the boundary of the park in the paintings is dotted with barns and farm buildings. It leads up to Margam village, a cluster of modest thatched cottages, in sharp contrast to the imposing family mansion. These rural houses would have varied in size and lay-out, depending on the wealth and occupation of the tenant, but most of them would have been modest single-roomed huts. The longhouse, in which families lived with their cattle under the same roof, is considered a typical Welsh home of the time.

## Clothes

Wool was widely available, so warm clothing wasn't difficult to come by. Stockings, flannel and cloth were all produced locally; and there were also a few felt makers, who supplied the hat industry.

## Food

Craftsmen and better-off farmers could afford to eat relatively well. Common food of the time included beef, mutton, poultry, bread, butter and cheese. The poorest classes, which included landless labourers and those without work, had little access to meat – barley -bread was their staple food, and in difficult times this could be made from acorns. Those who owned a small strip of land could grow their own vegetables which could



*Margam Abbey, early 19th century*  
Samuel Prout (1783-1852)  
Watercolour  
Amgueddfa Cymru  
Purchased, 1925



*Margam Abbey, early 19th century*  
Samuel Prout (1783-1852)  
Watercolour on paper  
Amgueddfa Cymru  
Purchased, 1925



*Margam Church and village, Glamorganshire, 1830*  
H. Bond after H. Gastineau  
Engraving on paper  
Amgueddfa Cymru  
Purchased by the Cardiff Museum, 1888



be boiled with small scraps of meat to make cawl. The poorest villagers often depended on the charity of rich neighbours, especially in periods of bad trade. In March 1709 the Steward of Briton Ferry wrote to Lord Mansel about the starving condition of local coal-workers: 'whole troops of them followed in ye streets of Swansea last Saturday and humbly acknowledged your goodness in saving their lives by corne beforehand, they added there had been no trade for six weeks... some of them declaring that they had eat no bread in nine days, but live on cockles. I'm sure some of them look more like skeletons than men.'



*Margam Church, c. 1840*  
G. O. Delamotte  
Lithograph on paper  
Amgueddfa Cymru  
Purchased by the Cardiff Museum, 1899

## Crime and violence

In the 16th century, George Owen of Henllys had written that the people of Glamorgan were 'very tall and populous, impatient of injuries, and therefore often quarrels with great outrages; thefts in some parts too common.' The incidents of theft continued into the 17th century, this included cases of stealing sheep, cattle and livestock, and highway robberies. But violence wasn't just the domain of the poorest classes. Members of the gentry were also prone to heated quarrels in a bid to protect their names or positions.

## Pastimes

The centre of social life for Welsh labourers and small farmers were the large farmhouses, where they could enjoy singing, dancing, storytelling and football, as well as debating the Bible. Local taverns was also a site for entertainment. Cock-fighting and bull-baiting were popular spectator sports; as were running, wrestling and archery competitions.

## Fairs

Regular fairs and markets were held, where food and the products of domestic industry such as wool was sold; and every September many villagers would flock to the great fair at Bristol. These were key features in the economic life of the time.



17th century circular cockpit,  
St Fagans: National History Museum  
Amgueddfa Cymru

### Did You Know?

#### What happened to Margam village?

Margam village was demolished in the 1840s, when the owner of Margam estate at that time, Christopher Rice Mansel Talbot, decided he wanted to enlarge his kitchen gardens. He moved the inhabitants to a new village, Groes. A few buildings from the original Margam village still stand today, and traces of its buildings were found at Margam Park in a series of archaeological digs in the 1970s.



Margam Park grounds – site of former Margam village  
Amgueddfa Cymru

### Questions And Discussions:

- Look at the people walking outside the walls of Margam Park. How many can you see? What are they doing? Who might they be, and where might they be going?
- Why do you think the painter has included these people? *sense of scale; glimpse of everyday life; shows the people who live off the land belonging to the Mansels – statement of influence and authority; adds interest and narrative.*
- Use the photographs of the archaeological dig at Margam Park to discuss the role of Archaeology in helping us understand our past.



Photographs showing archaeological dig at Margam Country Park, c. 1975  
Images courtesy of West Glamorgan Archive Service

### Activities:

- Figure drawing. Look at the figures in the painting. How have they been painted? Slowly or quickly; in detail or sketchy. What colours have been used? Try to paint some figures in the same style. Discuss different ways artists have represented figures in landscapes. Compare the paintings to work by L. S. Lowry. How are they similar / different?
- Look at the later depictions of Margam village illustrated in this unit and compare to the painting. Has much changed?
- Choose one of the people in the paintings, and imagine you are that person. Write a monologue of what you are thinking as you go about your daily business. Include a description of the house as you pass it by.
- Look at the rent roll taken on the Margam estate in 1682 (*People's Collection Wales website*). This gives a record of the people who lived on land belonging to the Mansels, and how much they paid. Try to read some of the names on this document, and see if you can find out how much they paid.
- Look at the list of householders in Margam, 1756. Make a list of the different occupations you can see, and create a bar-chart showing this information.
- Use the Great Welsh Sessions website to search for crimes that happened in Glamorgan, and the parish of Margam around the time of this painting (1700) [http://www.llgc.org.uk/sesiwn\\_fawr/index\\_s.htm](http://www.llgc.org.uk/sesiwn_fawr/index_s.htm) (National Library of Wales)

### External Links:

A list of householders in Margam, 1756:

<http://www.genuki.org.uk/big/wal/GLA/Margam/1756.html>

The longhouse (Peoples' Collection Wales):

<http://www.peoplescollectionwales.co.uk/Item/35765>

For more resources see BBC Hands on History

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/handsonhistory/archaeology.shtml>

# worksheet

In August 1898, a poacher called Joseph Lewis was hung for murdering a gamekeeper, Robert Scott, in the woods at Margam. The poem below was written about the event, and published in the South Wales Daily Post.

## **'Murder most foul' by C. Westwood**

*Joseph Lewis: In Margam Wood*

*Soft lights were in the summer sky,  
The air was all perfume,  
When Lewis, down the mountain path,  
Came walking to his doom.*

*He turned into the covering wood,  
No man can tell his thought,  
But on the listening summer air  
Was heard the deadly shot.*

*He fled the spot – he has his gun,  
He changed his clothes in vain  
For clear behind the avengers came,  
He bore the mark of Cain*

*And now by law and justice tried  
He's numbered with the dead,  
For men still keep the olden text,  
'Gainst blood unjustly shed'*

*See passion's work! The summer eve  
When calm twilight fell –  
A murdered man – a widowed home,  
And now, the felon's cell*

*'Tis done! The dark death-telling flag  
Droops on the conscious air,  
His debt to man he now has paid  
For his soul we breathe a prayer*

### **Task**

Explore the Crime and Punishment website ([http://www.llgc.org.uk/sesiwn\\_fawr/index\\_s.htm](http://www.llgc.org.uk/sesiwn_fawr/index_s.htm)) to find out about crime and punishment in Glamorgan around the time of the paintings (around 1700). Search and find out what kinds of crimes took place in Glamorgan.

Under 'Accused' search for Joseph Emett, Thomas Phillip, Jenkin Griffith and Hester Jenkin and find out what crimes they committed at Margam. Write a poem based on one of these.

# gardens for pleasure

When the paintings of Margam House were made (around 1700), the gardens were used in the daily running of the household: they were a source of food, and of plants and herbs for medicinal purposes. But the entertainment factor was becoming increasingly important, and a series of formal pleasure gardens and planted groves became a key attraction at Margam. The gardens today bear little resemblance to those in the painting, as they have continued to evolve and develop over time.

## The monastic gardens

The Cistercian monks were a self-sufficient community who used the gardens at Margam to grow food for themselves and for the local poor. They also grew a variety of herbs for medicinal purposes, like woundwort, valerian, violets and lilies. They built their Abbeys in secluded, naturally beautiful spots, and so would have taken pleasure in the landscape around them, but probably would not have created man-made pleasure gardens as we know them today.

## Gardens for pleasure

When Sir Rice Mansel built Margam House out of the former Cistercian Abbey, he continued to use the kitchen gardens and orchards to grow fruit, vegetables, herbs and flowers for the household; while fish and meat (mostly rabbit and venison) came from his newly-created park. But he was also aware of the latest fashion in garden design, and began to set out a series of formal gardens at Margam as a source of pleasure, entertainment and exercise. His son, Edward, and later his grandson, Thomas, continued to develop and extend these gardens.

A sketch by Thomas Dineley gives us an idea of how the gardens looked by 1684. They show a series of walled courts, and a pond which is being used for fishing. These additions were probably the work of Sir Thomas Mansel earlier in the century. We can see that the Banqueting House and bowling green had also been built by this time, probably by Sir Edward Mansel, who was then owner of the house.



*Margam House, 'The account of the official progress of his grace the first Duke of Beaufort... Through Wales in 1684' from the original MS of Thomas Dineley, published 1888*  
Thomas Dineley  
Pen and ink  
Amgueddfa Cymru

## Symmetry and geometry in the gardens

The two paintings show a later, extended view of the gardens. By this time, they had been divided into several walled compartments, and were more symmetrical in appearance: rectangular ponds are arranged either side of a central avenue, and the trees are arranged in neat rows or diagonals. Everything appears orderly and contained. As Gervase Markham wrote in 'The English Husbandman' (1613) : 'it is most necessary for keeping the earth in order, which else would grow wilde, and like a wilderness, brambles and weeds choking up better Plants, and nothing remaining but a Chaos of confusednesse'

Ideas about order and symmetry in garden design had trickled in to Britain from the Continent. This type of garden design was intended to demonstrate man's control over nature, and its popularity in the 17th century may have been a response to the chaos of the Civil War. The gardens at Margam are not wholly symmetrical however – they had gone through a century of change and re-development, reflecting the changing tastes of successive members of the Mansel family.



Formal gardens, Margam Country Park, with Banqueting House and Margam Abbey in background, 2012



Orchard at Margam Park today, 2012  
Amgueddfa Cymru



Orchard at Margam Park today, 2012  
Amgueddfa Cymru



Gardening at Margam today, 2012

## Gardeners

Household records tell us that there was a gardener called John Thomas employed at Margam in 1661, and that several new garden walls had been built under his supervision. Gardeners were usually male, and were well esteemed in the household. John's duties would have included buying trees and plants, designing plots, and supervising his gardening assistants. Women were sometimes employed to look after the kitchen and herb gardens, or for weeding.

### Fact Box

The records of Margam House give us a glimpse into what was grown in the gardens at the time the paintings were created. A list of seeds and plants bought from London in 1700-1705 includes a variety of different vegetables, salad items, herbs, flowers, fruit and trees (see 'Gardens' powerpoint); while the following tulip roots were planted into pots in October 1702:

Double yellow no. 5  
 Double stripe no. 4  
 Double crowne no. 6  
 Double fooles coate no. 2  
 Double gold collar no. 3  
 Double (edged with pinks no. 1)  
 White  
 Whited edged, with red Tulip  
 Roots

### Questions And Discussions:

- Ask children if they have a garden at home. Describe it. Who uses it? What is it used for? Compare to the Margam gardens. Discuss and explore the school garden.
- Talk about water features in gardens. What can they be used for? Why is water important?
- Explain the words symmetry and geometry to pupils. Ask them to find examples of geometrical shapes and symmetrical designs in the paintings. Explain why the use of geometry was important in garden design at this time.
- What is a perimeter? Trace the garden perimeter with your fingers.
- What is the difference between natural and man-made features? Pick out examples of each in the painting. Compare the gardens to the surrounding landscape. Do you think gardens are natural or man-made? *Created, shaped and manipulated by people.*
- Margam was a self-sufficient household. This meant that almost everything they ate was grown in their own gardens. Do you grow any food in your garden at home? If not, where do you get your food from? How do you think it got there? Discuss the importation of food and the impact this has on the environment – sustainability.

**Activities:**

- Use the 'Gardens' powerpoint to find out what was grown in the gardens at Margam. Combine with a handling / tasting session. How many do you recognise? Visit a farmer's market or supermarket to see how many you can spot.
- Grow some vegetables from seed or bulbs, from the Margam gardens list.
- Create a 3D model of the gardens in the paintings – or design your own inspired by the paintings. You could use felt for grass, and foil or cling film for water. Use symmetry and geometry in your design.
- Find out where tulips come from and explore the 'tulip mania' that happened in the 17th century. Experiment with different materials, colours and techniques to create your own collection of tulips.

**Links:**

Spring Bulbs for Schools project (Amgueddfa Cymru)

<http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/scan/bulbs/>

Sustainable Shopper workshop (Amgueddfa Cymru) – see schools programme at

<http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/learning/cardiff/>

Planting bulbs (BBC class clips):

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips/planting-bulbs/9464.html>

Growing vegetables in a Tudor garden (BBC class clips):

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips/growing-vegetables-on-a-tudor-farm/3729.html>

Tulip Origami (Activity TV)

<http://www.activitytv.com/93-tulip-flower>



# all in a knot: the knot gardens at margam

A simple, square knot garden can be seen in the paintings of Margam House. Knot gardens are decorative features formed by hedges grown in a symmetrical pattern, and designed to be viewed from above. They were first introduced to Britain in the Tudor period, and their popularity continued into the 17th century. The modern-day maze developed from these early knot gardens.

The designs for the knot gardens of the 17th century came from many different sources – gardeners could look for inspiration in architecture, embroidery, carpets or wood-carvings. Once the design was decided, low-lying plants like hyssop or lavender were planted to form the pattern, and the space in between was filled with gravel or crushed brick in different colours. The manipulation of plants into an orderly geometrical patterns demonstrated man's control over nature.

Though the knot garden at Margam is very basic in design, knot gardens elsewhere could develop into complex shapes and patterns, usually twisting or overlapping to form a 'knot.' The most elaborate examples from this period are the knot gardens at the Palace of Versailles in France.

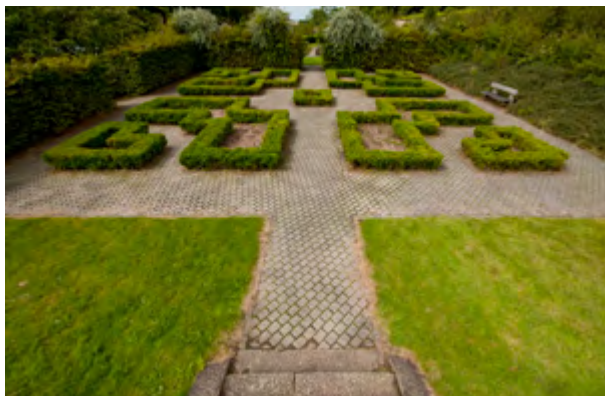
Today, you can see simulated knot gardens at Margam Park – though they appear similar in design to the gardens shown in the paintings, they are not the originals.



Oblique aerial photograph of Margam Castle Kitchen Gardens, 2007

Toby Driver

© Crown copyright: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales / © Hawlfraint y Goron: Comisiwn Brenhinol Henebion Cymru



Formal gardens at Margam Country Park, 2012  
Amgueddfa Cymru



### Did You Know?

#### Sacred geometry: circles and squares

The square and the circle were often used as basic shapes in the designs of the period – not only garden designs, but also in architecture and ornament. They had a symbolic meaning. The circle is pure, simple and never-ending, and is therefore considered divine; while the square can be calculated through simple mathematics, and is considered to represent mankind. The square and the circle combined represented the union of man with the heavenly or divine.

### Questions And Discussions:

- Find the knot gardens in the painting. What shapes can you see? Are they symmetrical? What do you think they were made from? What do you think they were used for? Do they remind you of anything?

### Activities:

- Design and grow a mini knot garden. Use a plastic or foil container as your base. Put a small layer of soil on the bottom and sprinkle with water. Draw your design on a piece of card the same size as your container, and cut out the areas where you want the hedges to grow. Put the card inside your container, and sprinkle cress seeds over the exposed soil. Remove the card, taking care not to move the seeds. Water carefully if the soil dries out, again taking care not to move the seeds.
- Grow a larger version in your school garden.
- Make a symmetrical garden design by folding a square piece of paper in half, then in half again until you have a square a quarter of the size of the original. Cut simple shapes from each side of the square. Open it out, and stick onto a different coloured background.

### External Links:

Shapes and symmetry (Primary Resources)

<http://www.primaryresources.co.uk/maths/mathsE5.htm>

Rotational symmetry in textile design (BBC class clips):

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips/rotational-symmetry-in-textile-design/667.html>

Collection of mazes, labyrinths and knot gardens (Pinterest)

<http://pinterest.com/brialibedson/mazes-labyrinths-and-knot-gardens/>

# worksheet

Knot gardens are made of hedges grown in a symmetrical pattern, with coloured gravel in between.

Knot gardens were popular in Tudor and Stuart gardens. They showed man's control over nature.

Look at examples of different knot gardens. Use the grids below to design your own – remember to make them **symmetrical**. Symmetrical means that one side is an exact reflection of the other.

You may want to look for ideas in the patterns you see all around you: on wallpapers or furniture.



Formal gardens, Margam Country Park, 2012  
Amgueddfa Cymru





# the deer park

Margam Park contains the largest herd of fallow deer in south Wales. They are believed to have descended from a small herd brought to the park by the Mansel family in the 16th century. The two paintings of Margam House contain little vignettes of deer frolicking in the park – this is the earliest visual evidence of the deer at Margam.

## Deer at Margam

We have no definite date for the introduction of the deer herd at Margam, but it was probably around 1558, when Sir Rice Mansel was granted a licence to create a 100-acre walled park at Margam. Many of Glamorgan's great houses boasted deer parks. They provided a source of food as well as pleasure – hunting was a favourite pastime of the upper classes. However, wild deer are known to have existed in the forests of Margam even before the park was created, and it is said that one of the abbots at Margam Abbey kept a pack of hounds for hunting.

When the Duke of Beaufort visited Margam on his tour of Wales in 1684 just before the paintings were created he was accompanied by Thomas Dineley who delighted in the deer at Margam. He observed how they liked to swim in the marshes, and that they 'thrive to such an extraordinary weight and fatness as I never saw or heard the like.' He also noted that the Duke and his consort were treated to a spectacular show one evening: they watched 3 footmen chase and catch a brace of bucks at Margam, which were later served up for dinner.

In more recent years, Margam has introduced other species of deer to the park, including Père David, an endangered species native to China. Today, the park is home to about 300 fallow deer, 64 red, and 34 Père David.



Detail of *View of Margam House, Glamorgan, Looking North*, c. 1700



Detail of *View of Margam House, Glamorgan, Looking South*, c. 1700

## Problems with the deer

The deer at Margam have been a source of problems, as well as pleasure. They have in the past caused much annoyance to local farmers, by feasting on crops, saplings, and on the thatch of buildings. One farmer, Charles Hayward, spent 42 nights on guard in the winter of 1847 in a desperate attempt to protect his turnips from the dreaded deer!

## Deer management today

By 1740 the number of fallow deer at Margam had dropped considerably, probably due to excess hunting, and it was suggested that 800 new deer should be introduced to the park to boost their numbers. The situation today is starkly different. Deer are the largest wild animal in Wales, and the lack of natural predators like wolves and bears, means that their numbers are growing fast. Wild deer pose a threat to our woodlands – they prevent young trees from growing by nibbling on the bark and eating the saplings; and as the number of deer increases, so does their impact on the landscape.

*My Dear Sir,*

*...I don't think you could do better than send somebody over to the cottage for my old labourer James Jackson, to know how the deer were fed... We always gave them as much as they would eat and stinted them a day & half before hunting, giving only water... they'll not be fit to hunt before the first week in December. I think they appear'd to be as fine & wild as any ever bred at Margam. Carrots is a very good thing for them, also beans split & a turnip or two after hunting... Yours very sincerely, T. Mansel Talbot*

Letter from Thomas Mansel Talbot to Michael Hicks Beach, 8th Nov 1793  
(Joanna Martin, *The Penrice letters* (1993), p.127)

## Questions And Discussions:

- Look carefully at the deer in the paintings. How would you describe the way they have been painted? *Detailed or sketchy, quickly or slowly.* Why do you think they have been painted in this way? Do they remind you of anything? Cave painting?
- Have you ever seen a live deer? Where were you? What happened?
- Take the Margam Park deer herd tour (see link). Where do deer live? What do they look like? What do they eat? Find out the different names for female deer, male deer, and young deer.
- Why do you think it was popular for deer to be kept in a park in the 17th century?
- Read the letter that Thomas Mansel Talbot wrote to Michael Hicks Beach. What does it tell you about why deer were kept at Margam? What did they eat?
- Deer are often still hunted for pleasure as well as food. Do you agree with this? Try to think of both sides of the story. *Deer management vs animal cruelty.*
- What other animals can you see in the paintings? What other animals might you find in the park today?

### Activities:

- Use the 'Your Paintings' (BBC) website to explore different paintings of deer and stags. Compare them to the deer in the paintings of Margam House.
- Try to paint deer in the same style as the paintings. Use black paint on a green background, and paint them using just one brush. Try different poses – leaping, walking, lying down. Stick all the class paintings together to form your own deer herd.
- Make a list of different verbs to describe what the deer are doing in the painting – *sleeping, leaping, walking, wheezing*. Make a list of adjectives to describe the deer. Match them together and try to make a poem.
- Act out the scene with the Duke of Beaufort being entertained by a deer hunt at Margam. How do you think the different characters felt? How do you think the deer felt? Make deer masks out of paper plates for the role-play.
- Count how many deer are in each field, and calculate that number as a % of the total number of deer in the paintings.
- Make a class collage of the woods at Margam including different animals that you would see.

### External Links:

Margam Park deer herd tour (Margam Country Park):

<http://www.margamcountrypark.co.uk/default.aspx?page=2231>

Your Paintings (BBC):

[www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/)

The Deer Initiative:

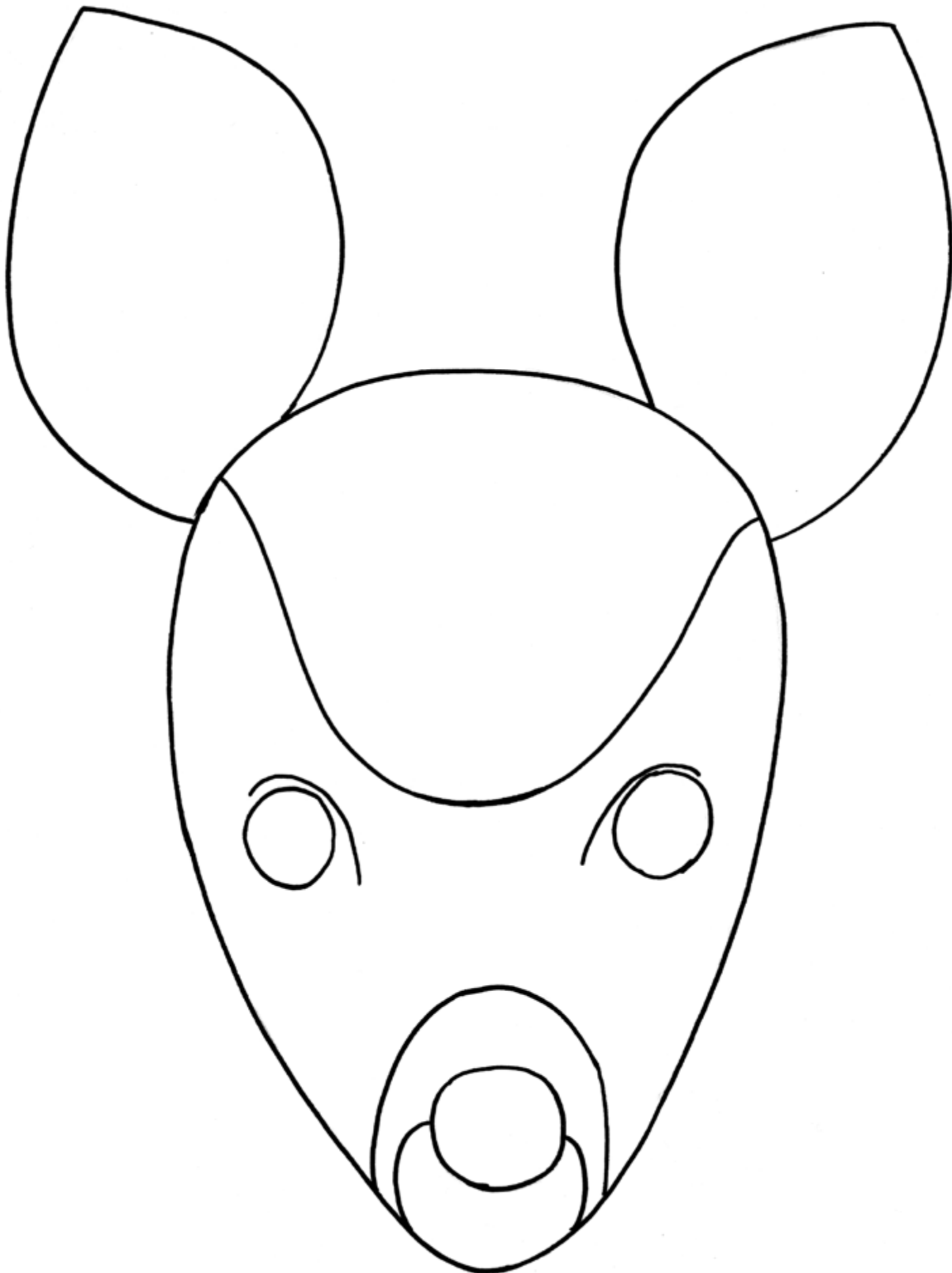
[www.thedeerinitiative.co.uk](http://www.thedeerinitiative.co.uk)

Pere David deer (BBC):

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips/chinese-deer-reintroduced-from-britain/10526.html>

## worksheet:

Use this template to make your own deer mask from card. Remember to mark out where your eyes will be before you draw in the different features. Perhaps you want to add some antlers!



# mapping margam

What is a map? A representation of a geographic reality – or can it be something else? Today maps are valued as objects which provide insights into how people see the world, and as artworks in their own right. This considers three early maps that feature Margam, each of which embodies a different approach and outlook in the recording of the local landscape.

## John Speed Map of Glamorganshire, 1610

This map comes from John Speed's 'Theatre of the Empire of Great Britaine' – the first major atlas of Britain available in print. Speed's maps were intended as a practical guide for travellers – he has indicated the key features of each county – mountains, rivers, as well as castles, bridges, and churches – to help them on their way. On this map, Margam features as an enclosed park.

Speed was the first to add sketches or views of towns as little inserts on his maps: his map of Glamorganshire includes early views of Cardiff and Llandaff. They look like sketches made from the air, and reflect a growing interest in representing townscapes in visual form. This interest in recording local views contributed to the development of topographical works, like the paintings of Margam House. Today Speed's maps are valued for their decorative appeal, and for being the source of the earliest pictorial views of many British towns.

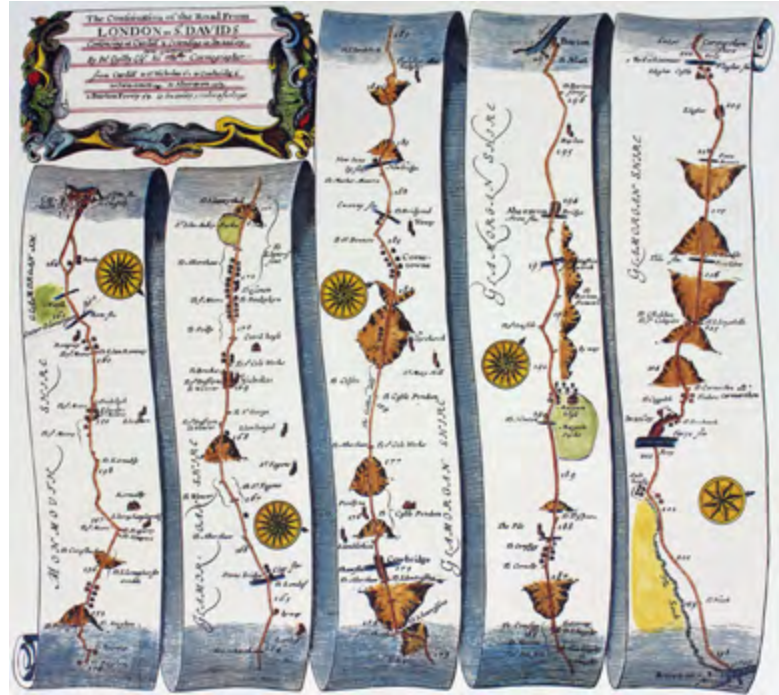


Map of Glamorganshire, 1610  
John Speed  
Engraving, hand-coloured watercolour  
Amgueddfa Cymru



### John Ogilby's Ribbon Road Map of Glamorganshire, 1675

Instead of trying to produce an accurate view of the land from above, John Ogilby has represented the journey from London to St David as one long road unfurling on a ribbon – an imaginative approach to map design. Ogilby had set up a new printing press in London after his first property was burnt down in the Great Fire of 1666, and it was here that he created his ribbon maps. His approach assumes that travellers will only take one route – straight ahead – and that no detours will be made: a systematic, if unrealistic way of looking at travel. Margam House and Park are both noted on the map – it was a key stopping point on the main route through south Wales.



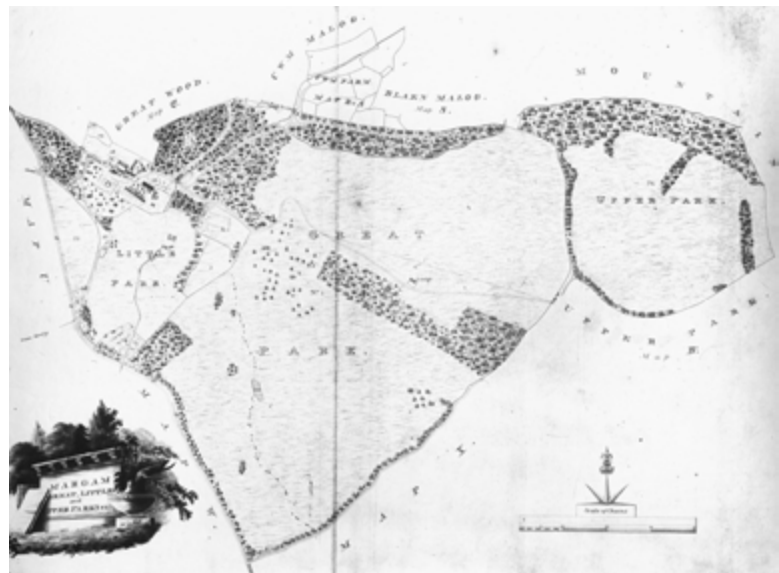
*John Ogilby's Ribbon Road Map, 1675*  
John Ogilby

Image courtesy of Glamorgan Archives

### Robert Wright Hall's Estate Map, 1814

Hall's Estate Map documents all of the lands and farms that were part of the Margam estate in 1814. The example here shows the park itself, but this is just one page of the entire volume. By this time, Margam House had been demolished, but the map shows the Orangery that had recently been built in its place, as well as the ruined Chapter House. The Park itself is divided into three areas: the Little Park, Great Park, and Upper Park.

At the time all 34,000 acres of Margam estate belonged to Christopher Rice Mansel Talbot, making him the largest landowner in Glamorgan – but he was just 10 years old. The estate was put into the care of Trustees until Christopher came of age, and they commissioned these maps as a document of everything belonging to the young heir.



*Margam Estate Map, 1814*  
Robert Wright Hall of Cirencester  
West Glamorgan Archive Service

REFERENCE.			
31	Tenants and Parcels	Quantity	Value
In Hand			
1	Great Park	24000	£ 1000
2	Little Park	4000	£ 150
3	Pasture	2000	£ 75
4	Ryebury	2000	£ 75
5	Norway	2000	£ 75
6	Plantation	1000	£ 37
7	Garden	1000	£ 37
8	The Cottage and garden	1000	£ 37
9	Moorland garden	1000	£ 37
10	Septenary ground	1000	£ 37
11	Garden	1000	£ 37
12	Wood	1000	£ 37
13	Wood	1000	£ 37
14	Upper park: clear ground	1000	£ 37
15	Wood	1000	£ 37
M <sup>r</sup> William Williams			
16	Home garden &c	1000	£ 37
17	Garden	1000	£ 37
18	Wood	1000	£ 37
19	Wood	1000	£ 37
20	Wood	1000	£ 37
21	Cottage & garden	1000	£ 37
22	Wood	1000	£ 37
23	Wood	1000	£ 37
24	Wood	1000	£ 37
25	Wood	1000	£ 37
26	Wood	1000	£ 37
27	Wood	1000	£ 37
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92	Wood	1000	£ 37
93	Wood	1000	£ 37
94	Wood	1000	£ 37
95	Wood	1000	£ 37
96	Wood	1000	£ 37
97	Wood	1000	£ 37
98	Wood	1000	£ 37
99	Wood	1000	£ 37
100	Wood	1000	£ 37

Each map comes with its own reference table, noting the acreage annual value of that particular area. This includes a list of all of the tenants living on that patch of land, and how much they paid in rent. This type of map is not intended for the traveller, but is a clear statement of wealth and ownership; land is carefully divided and documented, and treated as a valuable asset.

Margam Estate Map – references, 1814  
Robert Wright Hall of Cirencester  
West Glamorgan Archive Service

### Did You Know?

The earliest maps were usually made with brushes, ink and parchment, with just a few copies being produced at a time. The development of the printing press in the 15th century completely transformed this – they were suddenly able to be produced on a massive scale, and distributed more widely. The dawning of the digital age in maps has been described as a revolution equal to that of the printed age. Who know what lies in store for future maps?

### Questions And Discussions:

- What is a map? What are maps used for? Think of times when you or your parents have used maps. Where was the map from? What form did it take (paper, atlas, digital)?
- How do you think maps are made / who makes them?
- Do maps always tell the truth? Think about maps from the past. They couldn't see the earth from above, and not all countries had been discovered – do you think old maps are always accurate? How do you think maps were made in the past? Look at examples of old maps.
- How do we know that the maps we use today are more accurate? *Satellite imagery*.

## Activities:

- Explore the three maps (*copies on People's Collection Wales website. Tip – right-click and save to your PC to enable zooming*). Find Margam, and see what other places you recognise nearby. Take time to look at the details of the maps – do they include drawings or decoration? What does the text say? Are they coloured or black and white?
- On the Hall map, look for the Orangery and Chapter House. Find the Chapter House in the painting of Margam House. Use this information to note on the map where the house used to stand before it was pulled down.
- Look at the John Speed map. Make a similar map of your local area. Include any local features that would help someone find their way around. Draw picture views to go in the corners of your map – perhaps of your house or school.
- Create your own ribbon road map of a walk around the park. Look at the paintings first to decide your route. Where would you start, and where would you end? Where would you stop in between? Map out your journey on the ribbon. Think about what kind of writing you want to use, and remember to decorate your map.
- Look at the list of people who lived on the grounds of Margam Park in 1814 (*Hall's map*). The list shows how much land they occupied (under 'Quant. '), and how much they paid per year, in pounds, shillings and pence (under 'yearly value', £ s d). Find out about the old system of currency in Britain. Write out a list of all the people and how much they paid. Who paid the most? Who paid the least? Put them in order of highest to lowest. Add up the totals. Make a bar chart showing the different payments.

## External Links:

John Speed maps (University of Cambridge):

<http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/deptserv/maps/speed.html>

<http://www.cam.ac.uk/research/news/mapping-the-origins-of-a-masterpiece/>

Ogilby Maps (John Ogilby's Britannia):

<http://www.fulltable.com/VTS/m/map/ogilby/b/SH965.jpg>

Developing map skills on a visit to Margam Park:

<http://www.margamcountrypark.co.uk/default.aspx?page=2268>

Future of Paper Maps (Geography – About.com):

<http://geography.about.com/od/understandmaps/a/Future-Of-Paper-Maps.htm>

How they mapped the world (BBC class clips):

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips/how-they-mapped-the-world/10346.html>

Aerial view and abstract map-making (BBC class clips):

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips/aerial-view-and-abstract-map-making/9316.html>

# the sea

Glamorgan has a long coastline, which has always played an important part in local life. Poor road conditions and nearby hills meant that it was easier to travel from Glamorgan by sea than by land. As a result, the county had better connections to the west of England, Cork, Cornwall and Bordeaux than to other parts of Wales. One of the Margam paintings shows a view looking out to the coast of Somerset, with the Bristol Channel in between dotted with ships. This was an important trade route – but also a dangerous one, plagued with instances of smuggling and shipwrecking.

## Exports and imports

The ports of Glamorgan provided an outlet for trade. Glamorgan was famous for its dairy produce, and local butter and cheese was shipped out in large quantities, along with corn, livestock, animal skins and wool; mostly to markets in the west of England. Every Wednesday a 'Welch Market-house' was held at Bristol selling products from south Wales. Coal, iron and lead were also sent out through the local ports.



Detail of *View of Margam House, Glamorgan, Looking South*, c.1700

The ports were also a means by which foreign goods could find their way to Glamorgan. Imports included cloth and linen for making shirts, canvas, salt, oil, and candle wax, all of which were sold on in local shops. Luxury imports included Spanish wine, tobacco, perfume and brandy – these were sold on to the richer local families. In 1713, Thomas Mansel sent a ship full of wheat and Barley to France, and asked the captain to bring back for him bottles of Graves Claret wine from Bordeaux.

## Impact on local life

Not only did the ports provide an outlet for local farmers and industrialists to rid themselves of surplus stock; they also provided a source of income for local people who were employed to haul the cargo and stock the ships; and extra money for wealthy landowners like the Mansels, who charged for their use. But this coastal trade also had its downside – piracy, smuggling and shipwrecks were common. Smuggling was so widespread on the Bristol Channel that a customs collector at Cardiff wrote to London pleading for help from the authorities in 1732. The people of south Wales were sometimes accused of 'wrecking', of deliberately luring ships to their doom by tying lanterns to sheep or cows.

## Shipwrecks

The Bristol Channel was a dangerous stretch of water, and shipwrecks were frequent. Landowners could claim the rights of ownership for any goods washed up from wrecks on their shores – if they could get there first. Local villagers, if they caught wind of the wreck, would descend on the ship and strip it of as much as they could carry away. This was called 'looting,' and was made illegal in 1753.

### Questions And Discussions:

- What is the sea? What lives in the sea? What can people use the sea for? What are the dangers of using the sea?
- Have you ever travelled by sea? Where did you go? What was it like? Discuss different methods of sea travel.
- Why do you think travel by sea was important in the 17th century? *Poor road conditions, no air travel, contact with other countries.* Was sea travel safe? What problems might they have come across?
- Look at a map of Wales. Can you find out from this the name of the sea in the painting of Margam House?
- Discuss the meaning of imports and exports. Why is overseas trade important? *Goods produced in some countries that can't be produced in others.*

### Activities:

- Listen to the 'Catch the Echoes – The Villager's Story, 1630' for a fictional account of a shipwreck in Margam. Write your own account of the event. Remember to decide who you want to be first – a villager, a sailor, a member of the Mansel family who own the rights to the ship – and write the story from that point of view.
- Imports and Exports. Bring in a selection of toys, items, and food and ask pupils to read the labels and sort into groups (produced in Wales or Britain / produced abroad).
- Divide class into groups or countries, and give each group cards representing a selection of items or foods produced in that country. Each item should have a price value. Ask groups to barter with others for the exchange of items. One group could be pirates, and attempt to steal cards from other groups. See what each group is left with at the end, and discuss.

### External Links:

The Ann Francis shipwreck at Margam (Amgueddfa Cymru)  
<http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/rhagor/article/1948/??&>

Shipwrecks in Kenfig:  
<http://www.kenfig.org.uk/shipwrecks>

# worksheet

In December 1698 a ship called Martha was wrecked on Kenfig sands. Sir Edward Mansel, then owner of Margam House, claimed 350 hogsheads (casks) of white wine from the ship for himself. But not all shipwrecks were so straightforward – quarrels over who owned the ships were common, as Sir Edward Mansel's great grandfather, also called Edward Mansel, found out in 1583...

## The case of the Ann Francis, Dec 28 1583

### Edward Mansel vs the Earl of Pembroke

On the night of 28th December 1583, a fleet of 8 ships called the Ann Francis was wrecked two miles from Margam House. Edward Mansel sent his brother Anthony to claim the goods.

But he had a shock when he arrived with the villagers had got there before him, and the ship was being looted! About 100 local people were rushing around taking all they could find, and wielding swords, daggers and javelins.

Worse than that, he was met by George Williams, servant to the Earl of Pembroke, who had been sent to claim the goods for his own master. A fight broke out, each side claimed that they owned the rights to the wreck. The Earl of Pembroke and Edward Mansel took the matter to court.

In the meantime the real owner of the Ann Francis, Francis Shaxton, heard about the wreck and came forward to claim it back. He explained that the Ann Francis had taken a delivery of wheat to Spain, and was returning back to England when it got shipwrecked in Glamorgan.

The Earl of Pembroke and Edward Mansel were ordered to give back all of the goods they had taken from the ship – but Edward Mansel refused until the argument had been settled with the Earl. Eventually it was decided that the Earl was in the right – but by then, the cargo had been returned to Francis Shaxton. The Earl and Edward Mansel walked away empty-handed.



Tomb of Sir Edward Mansel with his wife Jane  
Carved Alabaster  
With kind permission of Margam Abbey Parish office



Henry Herbert, 2nd Earl of Pembroke, c. 1590  
British School  
Oil on canvas  
Amgueddfa Cymru  
Purchased, 1965

# worksheet

Look at the list of what was found on the Ann Francis. Imagine you are a villager at the site of the shipwreck. You don't have much time, as Edward Mansel and the Earl of Pembroke are on their way. Which items would you choose to take with you and why?

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Finders keepers? Items found on a wreck became the property of the person who owns the land the ship was wrecked on. Who do you think should have the right to items found on a shipwreck?

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A list of some of the items found on the Ann Francis – after the looters had taken away all they could carry!

- |  |                               |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 10 cannons                               | A barrel with some tar        |
| 5 Ladles                                 | 1 glass bottle                |
| 2 flasks                                 | Cloves                        |
| 2 Anchors                                | 2 boxes of marmalade          |
| Cables                                   | A silver whistle with a chain |
| Ropes                                    | Spanish silver                |
| Piece of the main sail, torn and spoiled | 5 handguns                    |
| 3 pieces of the main mast                | A steel Targett (shield)      |
| A small mast                             | Calico                        |

*(National Library of Wales, Penrice & Margam 5278)*

# 'shocked and devoured': kenfig sand dunes

Kenfig was once a thriving coastal town, but the natural movement of sand and a series of violent storms caused it to be gradually buried under sand. In the 16th century, the antiquary John Leyland reported that all that remained was 'a little village... and a castle both in ruin and almost shocked and devoured with the sands that the Severn Sea there casteth up.' Kenfig sand dunes can be seen in one of the Margam paintings, lit by a patch of sunlight. By this time the town had been completely 'devoured.' A building peeks out from the sands to the right – perhaps the keep of Kenfig Castle, which is all that remains of the town today.

The coastal town of Kenfig was founded by the Normans around 1140, after they had conquered Glamorgan. There they set up a small community with its own castle, town hall, hospital and church; and nearby a plot of land was given to the Cistercian monks to set up an Abbey, which later became the foundations of Margam House. The Welsh fought hard against this foreign invasion, but despite this Kenfig thrived; until, that is, the sand started to creep in.

In 1316, the monks of Margam Abbey complained that a large area of their land had been rendered worthless by an accumulation of sand which destroyed their crops.

This was the beginning of the end for Kenfig. Despite desperate attempts to keep the sand at bay, the town was slowly engulfed by a series of dunes. By the 1480s the situation was so bad that a new road was built, to bypass Kenfig – this is the main road leading to Margam House in the paintings, the present-day A48. By 1655, just one cottage remained on site the home of a man called Leyshon Morgam. Everything else had been buried under sand, and the inhabitants had moved to the higher grounds at Pyle and Mawdlam.



Kenfig sand dunes  
© Scott Hand, CCW





*Above and right:* Recent excavations at Kenfig sand dunes  
© Scott Hand, CCW

In the 1660s, Sir Edward Mansel extended his Margam estate, and bought the manor and borough of Kenfig from the Earl of Pembroke. This recent purchase may be the reason why the painter of Margam House has taken care to draw attention to the dunes with a beam of sunlight on this otherwise cloudy day.



### Did You Know?

#### **The dunes today**

Today, Kenfig sand dunes are part of an important National Nature Reserve. In the painting, the area is mostly sand with a few patches of scrub and foliage – but today the area is almost completely covered in greenery, and the sand barely to be seen. This greenery has made the dunes stagnant – there is little natural movement of sand, which is endangering the lives of many of the rare birds, plants, insects and other creatures that live there. Countryside Council for Wales are currently pioneering an attempt to uncover the sand at Kenfig, to restore its natural movement – the exact opposite to what the inhabitants of the town were attempting to do 500 years ago!

### Questions And Discussions:

- What is sand used for? *Play, leisure, construction material*. Explain the word ‘habitat’ and that sand is also an important home for different insects, animals, and plants. What kind of plants and creatures live in the sand?
- What do you think sand is made of? How did it get to the coast?
- Have you visited Kenfig sand dunes, or dunes anywhere else before? What did you see / do there? Did the dunes look as they do in the painting?
- Where do sand dunes come from / how do you think they are created? Discuss why they are important. Explain what is happening at Kenfig sand dunes today.
- Ask pupils to imagine that their home is being engulfed in sand – what would they do? would they move elsewhere or try to stop it? How? Religious Education: the Biblical story of the man who built his house on sand.

### Activities:

- Collect a small sample of sand and explore its features. What does it look / smell / feel like? Look at the sand under a microscope. How many different colours can you see?
- Make your own sand dunes using a plastic tub, sand and a straw. Blow through the straw and see what happens. Now place an object in the sand e.g. a large pebble and blow again, towards the pebble. This should create a mini dune, as the sand forms a drift around the rock.
- Search for sand dunes on the Your Paintings (BBC) website, and look at the different ways artists have painted dunes. Compare to the Margam painting. Make your own sand dune picture. Experiment with materials – perhaps you want to sprinkle some sand in with the paint, try out different colour sands, or use pieces of sand-paper in a collage?
- Visit Kenfig Nature Reserve and document the different plant and animal life you see.

### External Links:

Costing the Earth: Sands of Time (BBC Radio 4)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio/player/b01dtk1>

CCW project to save fen orchids on the sand dunes (BBC Nature)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/nature/17339061>

17th century Kenfig

<http://www.kenfig.org.uk/kenfig.c.17>

Sand dune formation (BBC class clips):

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips/sand-dune-formation-and-movement-the-dune-of-pilat/3247.html>

# transport, industry and change

At the time these paintings were made, Margam was primarily an agricultural community. Coal, iron and copper works existed, but they were small-scale and of secondary importance to the rural economy. But by the second half of the 18th century, the Industrial Revolution was underway, and the transformation of this fertile landscape into one dominated by heavy industry had begun. Today the landscape around Margam is dominated by Port Talbot and its steelworks, Eglwys Nunydd reservoir, and the M4 motorway.

## Margam Mountains – timber and coal

The painting of the front view of Margam shows the house framed by three hills: Craig y Capel, Craig Cwm Maelwg, and Mynydd y Castell (left to right). The hills are recognisable by their shape, but do not appear today exactly as they do in the paintings – the artist has manipulated their location to give the impression that the house is of central importance in the landscape – all of the major lines of the land lead towards it.

These hills are heavily wooded. Timber was in high demand at the time. It was used for fuel, construction, and later became important for industrial metal smelting. As the woodlands were gradually stripped of timber, the demand for coal as an alternative fuel increased. Coal had been mined at Margam since monastic times, and at first was used for domestic and agricultural purposes. But by the 17th century it was sold and exported in increasing numbers. Small-scale coal works may have been concealed in these woodlands, though they have not affected how the landscape appears today.



Margam hills today  
Amgueddfa Cymru

## Port Talbot and the steelworks

In 1834, a group of local entrepreneurs came together to campaign for the improvements of Aberavon harbour. They wanted improved shipping facilities to cope with the growing demand for coal exports. The new harbour was named Port Talbot, after Christopher Rice Mansel Talbot who was a key player in the developments, and who owned the Margam estate at the time.

This new town of Port Talbot later became the site of a major steel-working complex. Several different plants were built in the area from 1901 onwards. Today the steelworks are owned by Tata Steel Strip Products, but they are also known as Abbey works, because remnants of Margam Abbey still stand at the site. The steelworks dominate the landscape and economic life of Port Talbot today; around 3.5 million tons of steel is produced there a year. The area they occupy lies just outside the view depicted in the Margam North view; but Eglwys Nunydd reservoir, originally built to provide water for the steelworks, now occupies the area towards the right of the sand dunes. The reservoir is today used for recreational activities.



*Entrance to Port Talbot*, 19th century  
Charlotte Louisa Traharne  
Pencil and watercolour on paper  
Amgueddfa Cymru  
Bequeathed by Lady Mansel Franklen, 1938



Abbey Works, Margam Steel Works  
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Steelworks at Port Talbot, 2012



## Transport

In 1774, Henry Penruddocke Wyndham wrote that 'the Welsh are so rarely visited... (due to) the general prejudice which prevails that the Welsh roads are impracticable, the inns intolerable, and the people insolent and brutish.' Though Wyndham enjoyed a good complaint, there was some truth in his comment. Few outsiders ventured into Glamorgan before the middle of the 18th century; the roads were poor and travel was mostly by foot, coach, or horse and carriage. But things were about to change dramatically.



View towards the Bristol Channel with the M4 and Eglwys Nunydd Reservoir. Margam Chapter House and Orangery in foreground, 2012

In the 1770s, Thomas Mansel Talbot, owner of Margam estate, took an active role in improving local road systems to allow the transportation of heavy materials like coal and iron, which were being produced in increasing numbers. Canals, bridges and new roads were built to cope with the demand. Then, in 1850, railway mania gripped Port Talbot with the arrival of the Great Western Railway, which completely transformed long-distance travel.

The 20th century saw the building of the M4 motorway, a huge engineering feat. The motorway replaced the A48 as the main route from Wales to England, and has been called 'one of the most important developments in the recent history of Wales.' (Martin Johnes, 'M4 to Wales – and prosper!', 2012) This development in road travel marked an economy that was becoming increasingly reliant on manufacturing and commuting, and less on the heavy industries which required travel by road and sea.

The M4 motorway now slices its way through the area of land between Margam Park and the coast, in the South view painting. The small village of Groes, which was built in the 1840s to house the villagers of Margam when their community was destroyed with the expansion of Margam Park, was in turn destroyed by the building of the M4.

### Did You Know?

#### **Travel, travel, travel – but not near my Castle!**

Perhaps the person who played the biggest part in local industrial developments was Christopher Rice Mansel Talbot, who inherited Margam estate in 1824. He invested heavily in Port Talbot docks, Port Talbot ironworks, and the railways in south Wales. When the first train arrived at Swansea in June 1850, he urged the local people to 'travel, travel, travel,' but insisted that he didn't want to hear the trains from his home, Margam Castle – so the tracks were laid as far from Margam Park as possible.



Christopher Rice Mansel Talbot (1803-1890), 1834  
Alfred, Count D'Orsay  
Pencil and chalk  
© National Portrait Gallery, London, [www.npg.org.uk](http://www.npg.org.uk)

### Questions And Discussions:

- Look at photographs of the landscape around Margam today, and compare with the paintings. What has changed? What has stayed the same? Can you identify some of the features in the photographs? *Do you know anyone who works in the steelworks?*
- What modes of transport can you see in the paintings? Compare with modes of transport today. Discuss how long journeys took by foot, horse or coach and compare with today.
- Discuss the Industrial Revolution and the impact it had on the south Wales landscape.
- List all of the things that have changed since the paintings were made. Discuss the impact these changes have had on the area. *Think about everyday life of people in the area; the landscape and environment; population.* Have these changes had a positive or a negative impact?
- Search for Margam on the Your Paintings website ([www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings](http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings)) to find images of Margam Abbey steel works. Compare these to the paintings of Margam House. What can we tell about the different ways of life from these paintings?

### Activities:

- Find out about the building of the M4. Have you ever travelled on the M4? As a class, list the advantages and disadvantages of the motorway. Imagine plans are underway to build a new motorway in your local area. Your school and the houses around it are to be destroyed. Split the class into groups (e.g. *regular commuters; school pupils; teachers; local business owners; environmental activists*) and debate – is it a good idea?
- The village of Groes, near Margam, was destroyed when the M4 was built (*photographs on People's Collection Wales website*). Around 100 years earlier, Margam village (seen in the paintings) was destroyed when the kitchen gardens of Margam Park was extended. Choose one of these stories and write a diary entry from the point of view of one of the villagers.
- Create a class display on the steelworks, its history, and how it has changed the local landscape.

## External Links:

Ordnance survey maps (People's Collection Wales)

<http://peoplescollectionwales.co.uk/Places/FullMap> (use the menu tab on the right to select survey)

Port Talbot: A Brief History

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/southwest/sites/local\\_history/pages/sr\\_jones.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/southwest/sites/local_history/pages/sr_jones.shtml)

The M4 in South Wales, by Martin Johnes (Wales Online)

<http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/welsh-history/articles/2012/04/09/welsh-history-month-the-m4-in-south-wales-91466-30725427/>

Teachers guide to using OS maps as a learning resource (Ordnance Survey)

<http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/oswebsite/education-and-research/teaching-resources/free-maps-for-11-year-olds.html>

The coming of the railways (BBC class clips)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips/victorian-railways-iron-horses-audio/7783.html>