

The River Tawe



The River Tawe reveals the histories and present day realities of the Lower Swansea Valley.

The local community and city of Swansea have reclaimed the riverbanks & neighbouring land, previously poisoned by the industrial waste from tin, zinc, and copper. Plants, trees and wildlife now thrive where once nothing would grow.

The Swansea smelters developed great skill in the construction and management of the reverbatory, and found it particularly suitable to the great variety of finely pulverised ores of every conceivable composition, which reached their port from all parts of the world.....The Vivians' Hafod tip, was reputed to be one of the highest copper slag tips in Wales, and covered a five-hectare site alongside houses specially built for the workers.

By the 1930s the river, which had given the valley, its life, now ran like a sewer.

'The hardy moss clings to, and even thrives on soilless rock. It dies on the copper slag bank.'

'New Land for Old.'
The Environmental Renaissance of the Lower Swansea Valley.
Stephen J Lavendar, University College of Swansea. 1981

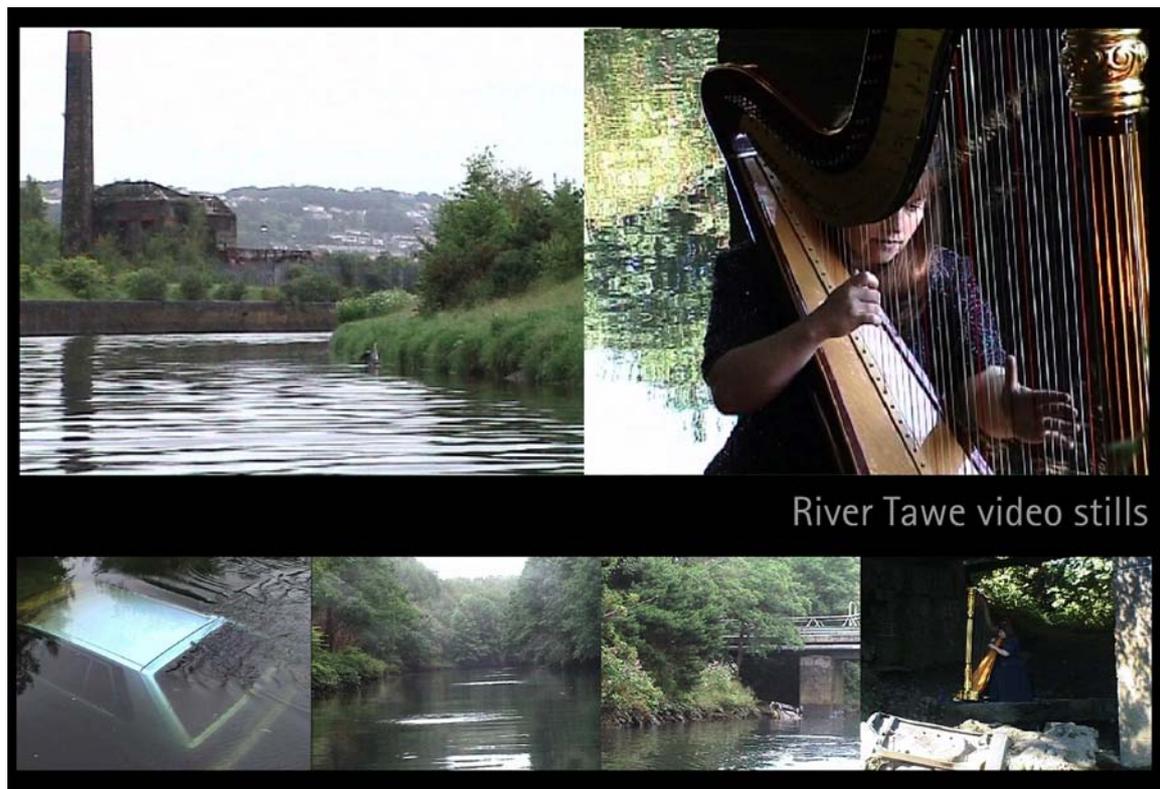


Tawe Video (duration 11 mins)

The River Tawe video takes us on a journey through time - compressing a 45min boat trip through the Lower Swansea Valley. This contemplative journey through the historic industrial landscape reveals a poetic and moving performance by a Welsh Concert harpist, Nia Jenkins.

'a lyrical and yet political journey' Tim Davies & David Hastie (Locws Catalogue ISBN 0-9545291-0-3)

Journeying up river we pass the Hafod works where Swansea Museum archive footage infiltrates with voices from the past.. 'you know our names; Morris, Mackworth, ...Villiers, Vivian, Dillwyn, Grenfell..' the towns and cities streets named after them, their faces fade and the river flows on..under the bridge, creaking and dripping....



.....and onwards up river through burgeoning banks replenished & vibrant with growth. The fizz of the oxygenators breathe new life into the river, where once nothing would live.. now there are fish breeding, flowers growing, birds fly across our path as we move onwards as far as the boat can go.. before being too shallow and too crowded with a new waste, a contemporary dumping ground of cars & supermarket trolleys.. to find ourselves mesmerised by rippling harp strings and reflective patterns of light as Nia plays Hasselmans' 'La source' – a tribute to the river.



Credits:

Annie Lovejoy (artist) <http://www.annielovejoy.net>

Nia Jenkins (harpist)

Robyn Tomas (translation & narration)

Mac Dunlop (sound editing 2006)

Production:

Concept, camera & editing: Annie Lovejoy

Cameras: Mac Dunlop, Neil Jenkins,

Sound: Roger Mills

River transportation and advice: Dave Hoskins (Swansea Marina),

Advice, research and onsite support : Sue James (Swansea Museum),

Archive footage: Swansea City Council

Commissioners: Tim Davies & David Hastie (Locws International 2002)