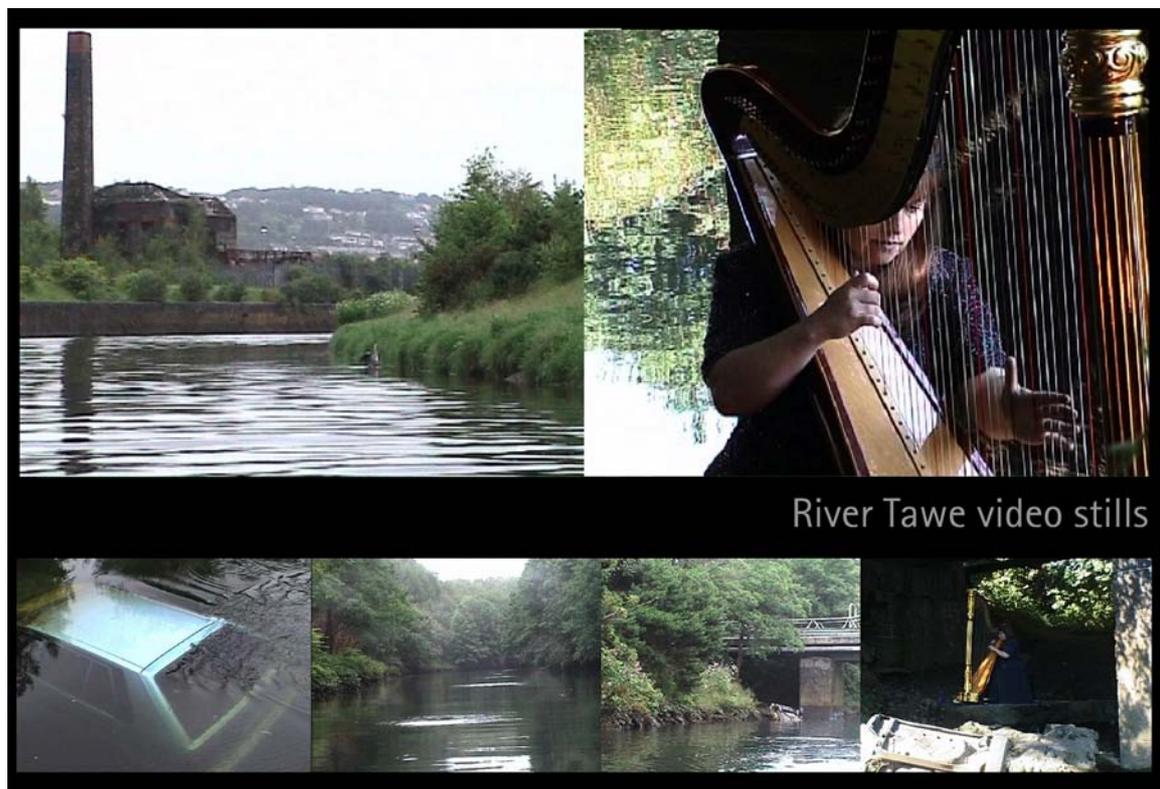


The River Tawe Video

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 ends with 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.

'you could look at it as a way of bringing back the poetry of beauty to Hafod, the area of the city that was at the heart of the industries here, and is now very depressed. Hafod today is known for car stealing and is remembered in recent history for its enormous slag heap of poisonous waste. However in the 18th century it was considered one of the most beautiful spots in Wales (the name means 'Summer Meadow'). Poems were written to the beauty of the place, the most famous of which reads; 'Delightful Hafod, most serene abode, Thou sweet retreat, fit mansion for a God.' excerpt from communications with Andrew Deathe, Swansea Museum.

'River Tawe' video display: Locws2 (7- 29 September 2002)

The work was projected on to the front of a shop window in a prime city centre location 26 Castle St. Swansea, and was also shown for the duration of Locws2 on a small monitor at Swansea Maritime Museum replacing a Lower Swansea Valley documentary footage.



'The projected film and subsequent boat trip opened up a section of the river and Swansea's history which is normally unseen and unknown even to many local people...



... by now it is dark and I turn my drift toward the bright lights of the city's commercial centre where the evening's bars and clubs are warming up for their regular Saturday night carnival. At the top of Castle Street I am pulled abruptly from the escalating mêlée...projected onto one of the rain-smearred shop fronts, the street's neon merges with an image of ebbing waters and soothing sounds of a harpist playing from the riverbank. The lively conversation and traffic on the street is infiltrated with voices from Swansea's past.

Once a beautiful oak-lined valley with clear flowing waters, the onslaught of industry left the Lower Swansea Valley brutally devastated, transformed into slag-heap wasteland where not even weeds would grow; the largest area of industrial dereliction in Britain. After more than 3 decades of restoration and reclamation work, the valley has been resuscitated and is once again a place of green beauty.

Not quite believing it I book a place on one of Annie Lovejoy's boat trips to see for myself..



The boat floats upstream passing riverbanks which really are green, kingfishers and herons flying above. Along the route however, the scars of industry are still clearly visible, as are the scars of our own era – plastic bottles, trolley skeletons, the rusted shells of burnt-out cars.

Our journey pauses for thought alongside the deserted Vivian & Son's engine shed where harpist Nia Jenkins dressed in glittering blue serenades us from the riverbank. We survey the Romantic scene; simultaneously soaking in the very present beauty of the harp music, the valley's industrial past, its restoration and reflecting on the city's future we have yet to create.' Emma Safe. 'Longshore Drift' Locws International Catalogue text.



Concept, camera & editing: Annie Lovejoy, cameras: Mac Dunlop, Neil Jenkins, sound: Roger Mills
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Tim Davies & David Hastie (Locws International)