

Swansea- Seascape Archaeology

Seascape archaeology is fairly similar to landscape archaeology but is also quite different and consists of many different aspects compared to landscape archeology. A seascape will normally consist of one or possibly more of these features: ship wrecks,docks,ports,harbours,and may other physical features such as lighthouses (Ford,2011).

Although the term seascapes does not restrict the features strictly to the sea features can also include those in the sky as in the Pacific the peoples used to use the sky to navigate the sea, and aeroplanes also crash into the sea and create archaeology (Ford,2011). Some features can also be navigations tools that are used at sea and some things can also be intangible such as mythology (Ford,2011). This essay will discuss the seascape of Swansea Bay which is coastal city with a very rich history and a site that contains many different features which define it as a seascape. Swansea is located in the South of Wales which can be seen in Figure 1.



Figure 1: (digimap,2019). Map showing the location of Swansea

The city of Swansea has a very rich and important cultural history, especially when discussing the city as a seascape. Due to its positioning on the coast (as seen in Figure 1) Swansea docks is extremely important to the history of the area as the copper industry bloomed in Swansea due to this, and Swansea was known as a copperopolis (Swansea Museum,2019). The industry developed around 1720 by two men that ran the copper works in Cornwall who saw Swansea's position as an advantage to them (Swansea Museum, 2019). The docks were extremely important during the World Wars and during these times the docks were used to make and ship things for the wars which also made Swansea a huge target during this period and it was bombed extensively (Swanseadocks.co.uk,2019). The docks were very important to Swansea which has made them the town they are today. Figure 2 shows the docks and how big they were which emphasises Swansea being majorly important to the copper industry in the early 1900s. Figure 3 shows that the docks were still being used in the 1920s and it can be inferred if they



Figure 2: (digimap,2019). Map to show what Swansea docks looked like during the 1900s.



Figure 3: (digimap,2019). Map showing how the docks had expanded in the 1920s.



Figure 4: (digimap,2019). Map showing what the docks looked like in the 1960s.

had expanded the docks then there must have been more demand for the industry. Figure 4 depicts the that there was not much change to the docks from the 1920s to the 1960s which means that the docks have a very rich history and lasted for a very long time and were in use for a very long period of time. Figure 5 shows the contemporary Swansea

which shows that the docks are still there and are an important feature to Swansea, although most of the docks in modern day are not in use and some have even been turned into marinas where people can keep their boats (Swanseadocks.co.uk,2019). Marinas also make the place aesthetically pleasing to the influx of tourists Swansea now gets being a coastal city.

Archaeologists can use maps like these to interrogate the seascape and see the use of a certain area or seascape over time like I have done with Figures 2,3,4 and 5 to interpret the use of the docks and to investigate the change over time. Swansea being a copperopolis is the moment in history which people tend to focus on more although they have a much earlier history.



Figure 5: (digimap,2019). Map showing the contemporary Swansea.

On the beach which is less known to the local people there is evidence of fishing weirs between Blackpill and Swansea Bay, these weirs have been said to have been used until the late 19th century (Nayling, 1998) which means they have a much earlier history. Upon finding these weirs archaeologists interrogated the seascape in a number of ways to find out what the features were and how they were used, and even the the location of the weirs in the beginning of the process. They used aerial photographs to take pictures of the weirs which made them and their features a lot more clearly to the archaeologists (Nayling,1998). To investigate the weirs archaeologists have also take detailed photographs of the weirs which is also known as their fieldwork (Nayling,1998) archaeologists use this as they can get first hand experience and is a good way of interrogating the landscape. Further investigation on these weirs revealed a lot about the history of Swansea, and that the weirs were in use dating back to the medieval period (Nayling,1999).

Finally, archaeologists can use marine maps to interrogate a seascape, as seen in Figure 6 the map shows archaeologists where all the shipwrecks that have been previously discovered are located. As well as this archaeologists can see all the different physical features like ports and docks as they are all highlighted on this map and the more you zoom into the map the more features are revealed. Also in Figure 6 you can see the clear difference in the beach and the sea as they're different colours, the sea also has different colour variations which shows archaeologists the different depths of the sea.



Figure 6: (digimap,2019). Marine map of Swansea Bay.

Swansea as a seascape is very interesting as it has a very rich history especially when it come to the exploitation of the sea and the strategic positioning of Swansea and its docks. Also archaeologists have used a range of ways to interrogate this landscape to find out about its history and how the seascape was used.

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