



'Afon fy Nghalon'

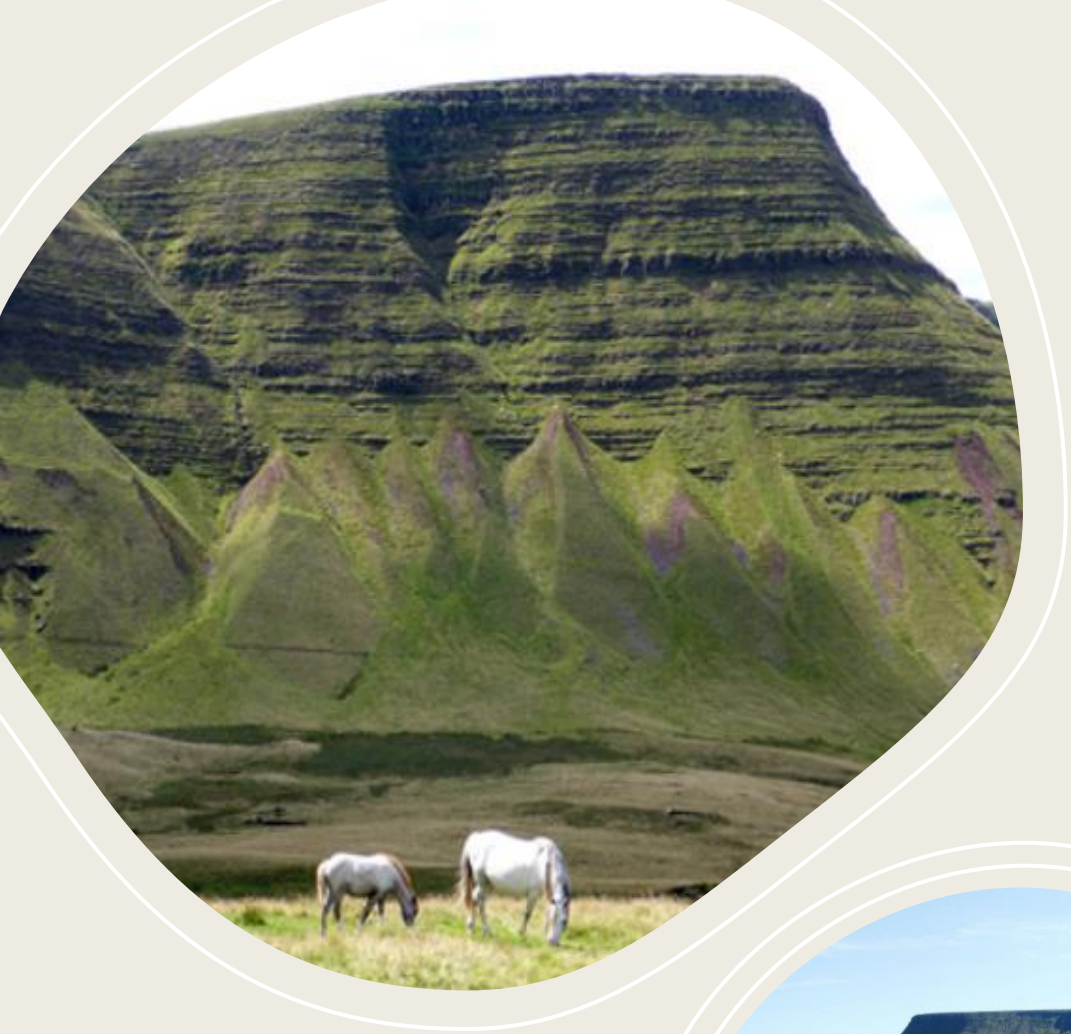
Afon Tawe

'River of my Heart'



Belonging – a landscape to which you feel a deep connection

The landscape I have the deepest connection to is a small
patch of nature that skirts the edges
of Afon Tawe (River Tawe)



The Rivermouth

Afon Tawe/The River Tawe originates from deep in the heart of Bannau Brycheiniog (The Brecon Beacons) and extends a full 30 miles, cleaving its way through South Wales to meet the sea in Swansea Bay.

The river mouth reveals itself at Y Mynydd Du (The Black Mountains), drawing much of its water from Llyn Y Fan Fach, a large lake settled at the base of the mountain.

Pictured: Y Mynydd Du, the Black Mountains; Llyn Y Fan Fach Lake.

My connection

The connection I have with Afon Tawe began around my 5th birthday. I was finally old enough to go on longer walk with my grandfather, who would cheerfully hand me my very own tiny red Swiss army knife and encourage me to carve sticks and dig in the soft earth with it.

The riverside became our special place, about three miles from our house. We wandered down there most days, and watched the rest of the world pass us by.



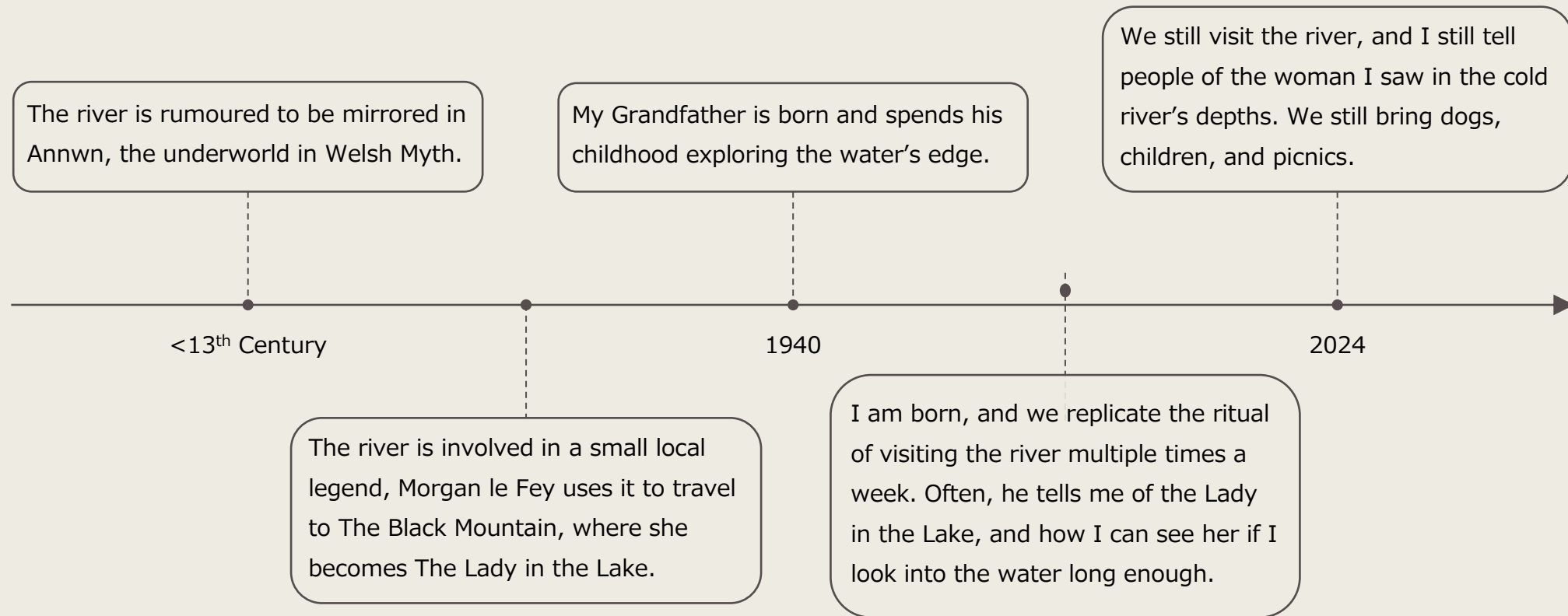
A photograph of a man with grey hair and glasses, wearing a bright green polo shirt, sitting on a rocky riverbank. He is looking towards the right, where a bridge is visible in the background. The riverbank is covered in smooth, rounded stones. In the foreground, the back of a dog's head is visible. A large, semi-transparent white circle is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing text.

**My grandfather at the
riverside, a place he has
visited since he was a
small child.**

(Also, our very annoying,
beloved dog, Ratty!)



Timeline



The Hierophany

FROM SPACE TO PLACE

When the river trips became something that only my Grandfather and I would do together, they became special. We were the only one's witness to this weekly pilgrimage, using the journey to explore the world and separate ourselves from the modern world. When we go to the river, we are 'other' from our normal lives, our only aim is to go to the riverside and watch the water pass.

It became truly different when I saw a woman's face looking back at me from the black depths of the water. As an adult, I know it was likely a figment of my childhood imagination, or a trick of the eye, but even now I scan the bubbling surface of the water.

You know... Just in case!

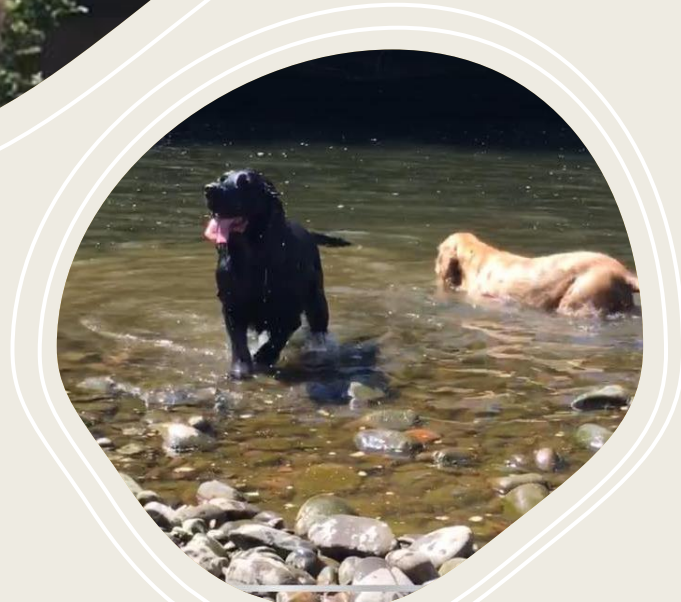


The land is personally sacred to me, a concept known as topophilia (love of place). Yi-Fu Tuan, a geographer that coined the term topophilia, defined it as the "effective bond with one's environment" – describing a person's mental, emotional, and cognitive ties to a place. Topophilia is associated with nature's ability to create a restorative environment for human beings.



Summary

Our sacred riverside began as a myth, a funny forgotten-by-most place. As we visited it, the connection and its sanctity grew. It is beautiful there, even when we are apart, but it's true sanctified nature seems to appear when we are together. Perhaps it is the act of our shared visit that completely transforms the space into place.



I have written a small entry on the group forum as a companion to my presentation, as I am unable to present it live.

Thank You

Lauren

