Visual Enquiry

Research Report- Llyn Llech Owain

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After considering my local area, I decided to focus my research around Llyn Llech Owain Country Park. Growing up in Carmarthenshire meant that the folklore surrounding the lake was always taught from primary school age and was the destination for many school trips. Being local and having free access with a great park made it a perfect place for schools to take over-excited kids. I've grown up visiting the lake on school trips and with family on weekends, but it wasn't until I was older that I began to appreciate the true beauty it holds.

Managed by Carmarthenshire County Council, Llyn Llech Owain is situated on the outskirts of Gorslas village with a 158-acre expansion of woods, heath and marsh with nature trails, a café, a children's adventure area and visitor centre.

Legend has it that the lake was accidentally created by an overflowing well that was once situated on top of the Mynydd Mawr mountain, with its entrance protected by a huge slate and watched over by a young serviceman named Owain Lawgoch. Each day, Owain was cautious and made sure the slate was replaced after extracting water for himself and his horse. One warm summer's day, Owain removed the slate so the pair could quench their thirst with the water from within the well. Shortly after, the pair fell asleep nearby without covering the well back up. Upon waking, Owain saw a torrent of water pouring down the hillside and flooding the land. He managed to put a stop to it by galloping around the pouring water on horseback, the marks created in the ground by his horses' hooves stopped the water leaking any further. Thanks to Owain, we now have what is known as Llyn Llech Owain- lake of Owain's slate, a wonderful lake surrounded by peat bog which attracts all sorts of rare plants.

(Information board situated at the edge of the lake)

(Looking out to the peat bog habitat)

The park mostly consists of coniferous woodland planted back in the 1960s and some broadleaf woodland. Many varieties of birds make a home amongst the branches. Bird lookouts are situated around the park where species such as Tits, Goldcrest, Treecreeper, Jay, Green Woodpecker, Buzzard, Swallow and House Martin can all be spotted. In the warmer months, Dragonflies and Damselflies gather

around the water and there are dozens of butterflies about. The moist peat bog around the lake provides the perfect home for rare bogbean, round leaved sundew and the royal fern plants, this rare habitat is what makes Llyn Llech Owain a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

The park's Visitor Centre is situated on the edge of the lake (pictured above) absorbing the amazing views of the lake and its surrounding area. The Visitor Centre is home to an exhibition and any useful information on the history and management of the park. The tower to the right of the above image was part of a pumping station used until the 1990s to supply the local communities with water. The park offers many different paths and tracks some with wheelchair access, a long forest hike and bike trails. Thanks to a Welsh Government grant, the park will be undergoing upgrades to the landscape and paths along with an improved playground and visitor and education centre. The aim is to make the park the ideal place to "work from

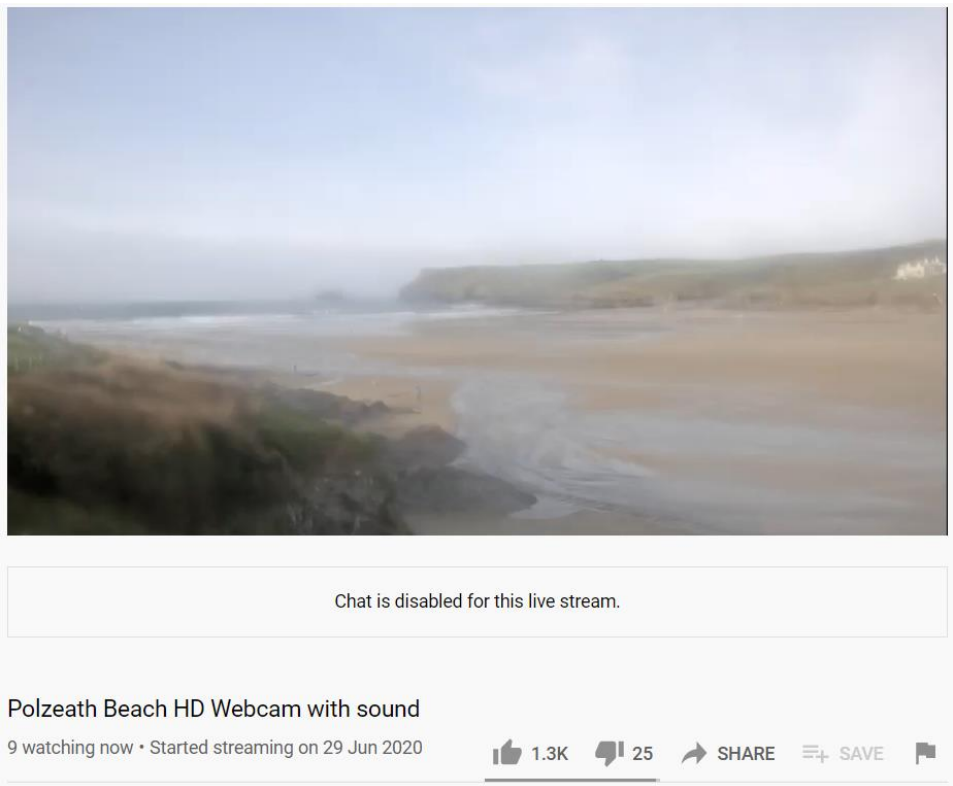
home” offering hot desks and giving workers more flexibility to work within their community.

Because of my connection growing up visiting the park, I want my work to be somewhat personal to me. While producing my body of work for this project I’d like to reflect on the beauty I have found within the park that I haven’t always appreciated or noticed while growing up. I’d also like to emphasise how the changes being made to the park over the years have an impact to the overall scenery but the lake and what’s below its waters has always remained the same and remains as a reminder of the folklore that’s been repeatedly narrated.

(‘Ways to say Goodbye’- Ariel Schlesinger)

Compton Verney is an art gallery and park offering an award-winning gallery surrounded by parkland and lakes. Located in Warwickshire it has been the home to many installation based, commissioned artworks. Artist Ariel Schlesinger navigates

sculpture, conceptual and installation art. His commissioned sculpture ‘Ways to say Goodbye’ was at the park from October until September of 2020. The sculpture aims to challenge our perception of the ordinary and highlights our relationship as humans with the nature around us. Schlesinger’s tree is cast in aluminium and holds shattered mirrors within its branches. It invites us to explore our everyday lives and appreciate the unique and remarkable qualities within. Schlesinger’s work encourages us to look at what we see as familiar in a new way. The context of this installation piece is what attracted me to it as well as how the man-made nature of the sculpture changes the landscape it’s positioned in. This inspired my body of work as my aim was to portray a similar message of appreciating what we see as our everyday lives and looking at aspects of it from a new perspective. I acknowledged this and likened it to how I have adapted and changed my perspective on the beauty of Llyn Llech Owain over the years.



https://youtu.be/zXpV8pbrrAo

Contemporary artist Mishka Henner is another individual who helped influence my work, specifically his project ‘Seven Seas and a River’. An installation project made up of 8 live broadcasting videos all positioned around the world in an inward facing circle. Each camera shows a body of water in an ever-changing environment. Henner found each of the cameras online and the reasoning behind their presence is not known. Each camera is positioned at the edge of the Pacific Ocean, North Atlantic Ocean, Barents Sea, Adriatic Sea, Caribbean Sea, Celtic Sea, Suruga Bay and the Saint Lawrence river in Quebec. This body of work represents the mystery of the sea and water, from tsunamis and storm surges to jet disappearances and the lives of those lost trying to cross borders. Water and the sea has a huge impact on our lives and could threaten our survival due to the rising levels. The context of Mishka Henner’s ‘Seven Seas and a River’ influenced my work due to the circumstances the lake is said to have been created. Due to the accidental flooding of the valley Llyn Llech Owain has impacted the surrounding areas and drawn visitors to its location. Taking the folklore into account, without the accidental actions of Owain Lawgoch we may not have been able to appreciate the beauty of the lake or the park its surrounded by.

While creating my portfolio of work, I made several visits to the park each time producing more and more work. Using digital photography, I set out to capture the beauty and calmness I see in the park and around the lake. I also used a waterproof camera to capture what’s below the waters of the lake. Through this, I wanted to emphasise how the ever-changing surroundings of the lake has no impact on what is below the waters.

List of Weblinks

https://westwalesholidaycottages.co.uk/blog/llyn-llech-owain-country-park-near-cross-hands/

https://www.walesonline.co.uk/special-features/16-myths-legends-west-wales-13112729

https://www.visitwales.com/attraction/country-park/llyn-llech-owain-country-park-571404

https://www.mysteriousbritain.co.uk/folklore/llyn-llech-owain-the-lake-of-owens-flag/#:~:text=Folklore%20suggests%20that%20this%20lake,slab%20that%20capped%20the%20well.

https://www.discovercarmarthenshire.com/places/kidwelly-the-gwendraeth/llyn-llech-owain/

https://www.thebestof.co.uk/local/carmarthenshire/community-hub/local-guides/view/llyn-llech-owain/

https://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/nature/sites/places/sw/llyn_llech_owain.shtml

https://gwallter.com/travel/poets-and-rebels-at-llyn-llech-owain.html#respond

https://www.inyourarea.co.uk/news/carmarthenshires-llyn-llech-owain-country-park-set-for-major-improvement/

http://www.swansearamblers.org.uk/Self_Guided_Walks_Pages/SGW_AN/2011_12_03-Llyn-Llech-Owain-SGW_AN_Main_Page.php

https://www.comptonverney.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Interview.pdf

https://www.comptonverney.org.uk/thing-to-do/ariel-schlesinger-ways-to-say-goodbye/

https://mishkahenner.com/Seven-Seas-and-a-River