

Voices of the Square Mile
Created by Alice Eklund
Translated by Lowri Morgan



There's something that tells the truth about everyone here, depending on what you're looking for.

For us it's the mountains.

High ground.

Mountains
Mountainous
Mountainous

ooh

wild
wild

green

rough?

Living things wander and graze

close

mythic

powerful, I think

community

lonely

rain.

Wet...haha, wet yeah.

Summer or winter there's something different to see.

And there's something about this place?

A place for your soul to have peace.

Yeah there's a strapline..a place for your soul to have peace...that one's true isn't it?

People - people too. How have people shaped it, yeah?

Mhmm.

I knew how important landscape was to people but, I couldn't appreciate that.

The landscape tells a story-

ye-

people's relationship with landscape-

it does.

There's history in every area - how has the landscape contributed to that history

We don't often understand the history that's behind us.

It's our habitat it's not just nature, we're part of it

I don't know, I find myself pulled here somehow

It's the landscape that pulls people in

Pulls people in to choose it as a second home

Because there's a lot of freedom in the landscape, maybe that's why the highlands are so attractive

Discovering the freedom in the landscape

I never felt the urge to leave.

Um, to be honest, when I was growing up I wanted to escape too

We have three kids, they've all left home by now, but, when they do come home they're always out in nature.

That's always what I wanted too, to climb up the mountains after coming back, because, there's - there's no opportunity when you live in Cardiff is there?

I just feel - I appreciate it even more now, I want to make the most of it, and with my little boy, I really want him, that it's normal to him, that we go to the mountains.

A lovely place to raise children, where you can give a bit more- I think- a bit more freedom to your children, so that they enjoy being outside, being in the land is easier to live in than the estate I was raised on in the middle of town.

I- I feel like kids that grow up these days, don't - they don't have half the connection that I did with nature when I was climbing trees and building dens and all that.

The primary school kids - that is- if we can get - grab them - even if it's just ten percent of them deciding to stay in Eryri for their livelihoods, that'll be a good thing.

I think if-

if adults, the people that are around young people understand more about the challenge facing nature and the environment, maybe there's hope that-

the discussions and language that are used around nature,

um, is more appropriate for young people and will hopefully inspire them to-

to- want, to appreciate it yeah?

I have to say yeah, thinking back to my school days, they were alright, but I think the thing I enjoyed most- the project that I enjoyed most yeah, was um, like telling the history of the farm I grew up on, where my dad grew up, where my grandad grew up, and just got the chance to pick dad's brain. All the names of the fields that belong to the farm, logging them, looking for them, brilliant names like

"Cae Stryd y Cerrig", "Cae Cetyn"- "Cae Post", oh yeah, just diving into the history behind those names, and um, putting them on paper and then I have a book at home- GCSE History I think it was.

I like looking back at it and the family that lives on the farm now they really like borrowing it and just reading up a bit more about the history of the place.

If anyone is trying to look for an address- if they go out and look for any farm, and never been there before - the name helps someone to find it. It describes where it sits in the landscape.

Because of where I live the farms are named after the Mabinogion, Bryn Saeth, Bryn Cyfergyd - so I think, and the history behind those names.

No I think the Welsh language is for me personally - like if there's a Welsh name on somewhere, or I don't understand the Welsh name, it doesn't feel like Wales, it doesn't feel like home, I don't have a strong connection with it without a Welsh name.

You know if you change the names, of these houses and all of it, the history goes with it

We keep the language going because people know the names of places - places, they mean like where I live like Llanfairfechan, that means "church of Mary" so the history of the places are in the language as well.

They ask , "Oh why is it, why's the name been changed?" you know, type of thing and you have to explain then, "well you know the name hasn't changed, they've just liked, dropped the English name"

I'm- I see it as a positive thing to keep the language alive and to keep the importance of the language, respecting it too but if you went abroad you'd call the buildings names in your own language wouldn't you - but they'd have different names, local names

But yeah there's, yeah, there are nice names, there are - they don't always translate either? No they don't.

I feel like Welsh names are a lot more descriptive, um more quirky, more - I don't know, there's something really unique about Welsh names for places, I think, they- because they're so old I think, the names have come from centuries ago

Saying that, we've gotten lazy ourselves too-
We have-
Because there's hundreds of "Llynoedd Du" around North Wales
(laughter)
- and it's so confusing!

I think that Welsh names, for-for species are I feel - and I'm not sure if there's a cognitive bias here but I feel like there's-there's a lot more love and thought that have gone into those names.

The language is so important, I think, isn't it? And it explains what the landscape means and it's interesting seeing older names and trying to work out what they mean, because some of the words aren't used anymore, so it's a lot of work to discover what the meaning behind the name is, isn't it?

If it pains you - when I lived in Maentwrog ages ago, there were Welsh names but now it's changed to the likes of 'Happy House' you know? And not, that's not, the Welsh itself is disappearing like that you know?

I don't think our generation is very good at showing people where these things are or reciting the history, definitely at the site. I only know that something exists in some poem somewhere, because I've read it in a book and I just love nature - I've got an interest in History.

And like you say with these generations, passing on the myth- the -the- all of these things that we've spoken about, passing on the names, so it's not something that just stops with this generation.

I do a lot of work recording the verbal history of the older generation within the community. That means a lot of cake-eating, so difficult, such a tough job. But I- there's one question I ask a lot of them "do you think that the natural world has changed"- Yeah, yeah "since you were young?" and they do, they do, a lot of them say that, they just see less of it- yeah- so the Carneddau farmers talk about how they would go out and mark the nests of the trees in the fields before going to cut them.

Yeah I find it odd in a way - the authorities have been encouraging people on social media -

"take a picture, share it"

and now we're saying the opposite kind of

"don't take too many pictures, don't share too much, these places are sensitive and fragile"

Sometimes I feel a lack of confidence in us, sometimes we're really confident, with a rugby team or a football team, so we could be more confident about different aspects of our culture, um, that would raise awareness, create more educational language around wonderful things-

We are too humble.

Respect is the key word really, because you want people, you want to show our world, what we have to offer but you want people to respect it when they visit, and like you say language landscapes and culture and everything, those stories aren't out there.

I'd go straight to Blodeuwedd, I don't know why but I think that's the nearest one from where I come from.

Branwen's story from the Mabinogi, myth, um people often roll their eyes when you talk about Mabinogi because everyone's heard of them and there are so many richer local stories maybe, um, but it's an epic story, and one of our main myths as a nation and you can imagine it from rock to chair - Harlech Castle still stands, and you see the myth happening in front of your eyes.

Dinas Emrys because it makes you feel like the red dragon has won the battle and all that, and Gelert because he's a PR marketing genius-

I take people up to where they came from - Llech Ronw, I was raised on old farmland, Llech Ronw, where the boulder is with the hole- hole- hole in it, right down into the river, um, so yeah that's a good place to go, maybe a bit of PR marketing genius

The myth of Culhwch and Olwen and where the Twrch Trwyth goes on his well-rampage through Wales and then the names, the local names that refer to - places like 'Mochdre' refers to the fact that the Twrch Trwyth ran through it and created havoc.

Rock, boulder in the Carneddau-

Oh right-

with a name after a local tradition of 'Maen Cwrw'

Oh really?

Just a boulder on it's own in the middle of nowhere-

so that's where they'd go-

because, when they took them up from the lowlands, to the common land again, um, they stayed there for

a pint of beer-

yeah-

that was provided in that area

So you can get more and more people, of local things like the story 'Bwlch Rhiwgyrn' Bwlch Rhiw Gyrn was like Arduwy, the civil war spies that were hiding right - a gap in the old road, and they would use horns to pass messages back and forth and such.

And that's what a lot of these stories are, symbols like you say-

yeah-

it's a symbol of power to-

yeah-
even though fairies are real, you know that don't you-

There's a famous quote from Tolkein isn't there about the way he uses Welsh in his work and he's inspired by the Welsh and says like-

"Welsh is of this land"

and so forth, and I think that is true isn't it? People do, they do, by protecting the land they do use Welsh from day to day and they think about it in a way and they take care of the place where both co-exist.

Helps to create connections with a place and um, it becomes part of- part of yourself.

If you don't make the effort to learn more about these stories, it's not going to come to you if you don't make an effort is it?

And to be out in nature people want to know the history, want to know the information

And also maybe to help people to discover interesting things about themselves?

Every square mile has literature, folk tales and myth,
you would be able to like walk down the road from anywhere in Eryri and there's a myth specific to that area there and they, sometimes they link to mythology
like nearly mythology, but most of the time there is a link to a historical event or a historical message that was important

And that's what we are, isn't it?

We adopt a completely verbal heritage. Everything we create, say, has been passed down verbally.

No it's a very, it's a very special place.

No, I can't imagine living without nature around me.

Every day there is just something to look at that's different

um

new colors

smells that change.

Really appreciate everything we've got here now, um

And what it can give you
and what you can give it too.

We live in the best place on earth, really now.

Why would you want to go anywhere else?

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