



RE ——— IMAGINED

A CONVERSATION ABOUT
OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH
BUILDINGS AND PLACES.

—

**RE —
IMAGINED**

**A CONVERSATION ABOUT
OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH
BUILDINGS AND PLACES.**

CONTENTS	
FOREWORD	4
INTRODUCTION	6
PLACES	8-39
BIOGRAPHIES	40

FOREWORD

Carole-Anne Davies

Chief Executive
Design Commission for Wales

This is the beginning of a conversation.

It is an exploration of our relationship as human beings to the buildings and places we create, occupy, are curious about or have come to love. It sits outside the parameters of pragmatic considerations that characterise design, planning and development practice. It is simply about the imaginary, the curious, the joyful and at times the nostalgic connections at play between people and their places.

This conversation began some years ago as myself and a colleague dipped in and out of thoughts about beauty and what seemed an increasing disregard for its value. Part of the exchange also included a series of his engaging drawings of buildings in Wales, frequently 19th century structures, accompanied by a tiny, irreverent festive addition, to ensure their suitability as Christmas cards. Every one of them captured the gravitas of the extraordinary inheritance of outstanding buildings in Wales – many of them sadly stripped of their use, lying fallow, or at risk. As casual demolition has taken the place of inventive reuse and refurbishment in recent years, the cards took on an archival, documentary significance for which they may never have been intended. Taken together they told a story and a history and offered the possibility of reimagining, and revisiting, the potential of such an inheritance.

Our day to day lives are intimately entwined with the spaces we occupy and the places we come to know. Our experience of a place, our knowledge of it, the emotional attachments we form to the people who live there, all affect how we think and feel about a particular place. In Wales the ‘milltir sgwar’ concept speaks directly to that experience.

In recent years the Coronavirus Covid-19 pandemic has illuminated why our buildings and places matter, and why they should be of highest possible quality. Even before these events, in our leisure time, on walks home or travels abroad, we visit, wonder, revisit and reimagine the lives of places and buildings – we speculate as to the secrets they hold and what took place within them. We wonder at the craftsmanship that made them and their sheer heft.

Along our paths and waterways, in our woodlands and clinging to our hillsides are places and buildings to which we assign anthropomorphic attributes. We reimagine what they really are – bringing a new dimension to their stories just as a reader brings their interpretation to a novel; or as a viewer brings their experience and perspective to a painting or sculpture.

We strike up dialogue, compose poems; we reimagine lives and after-lives, for the places we love or for which our fascination endures. It is no more complex than that – a simple human, emotional response to the world we have formed and continue to shape.

The designers and artists included in this conversation have been free to select places they find to be special, to have individual or collective significance. They have not been asked for academic texts, profound ideas or inflated language. They have simply been invited to respond in their own authentic way.



Image: Wayne Forster

OUR EXPERIENCE OF A PLACE, OUR KNOWLEDGE OF IT, THE EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENTS WE FORM TO THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE THERE, ALL AFFECT HOW WE THINK AND FEEL ABOUT A PARTICULAR PLACE.

INTRODUCTION

Alan Francis
Gaunt Francis Architects

Perhaps, with a little imagination and the benefit of a curious old place at your feet, you might squint slightly and think not just of how things might have been then, but what part this place plays in your understanding of where we are now.

I do that a lot. I am lucky enough to live on the brim of the south Wales coalfield, where the measures are closer to the surface, and where you get that interesting mix not only of levels and deep pits, but of ironworks, wharfs, lime kilns and sometimes, just discarded metal. Some of these places are now celebrated tourist spots but for me the more interesting ones are those that are hidden away and, often, forgotten. And whilst some are buildings – structures above the ground of one sort or another – others are of the ground itself; infrastructure carved out of the earth, as if to understand them fully you need to create a subterranean model.

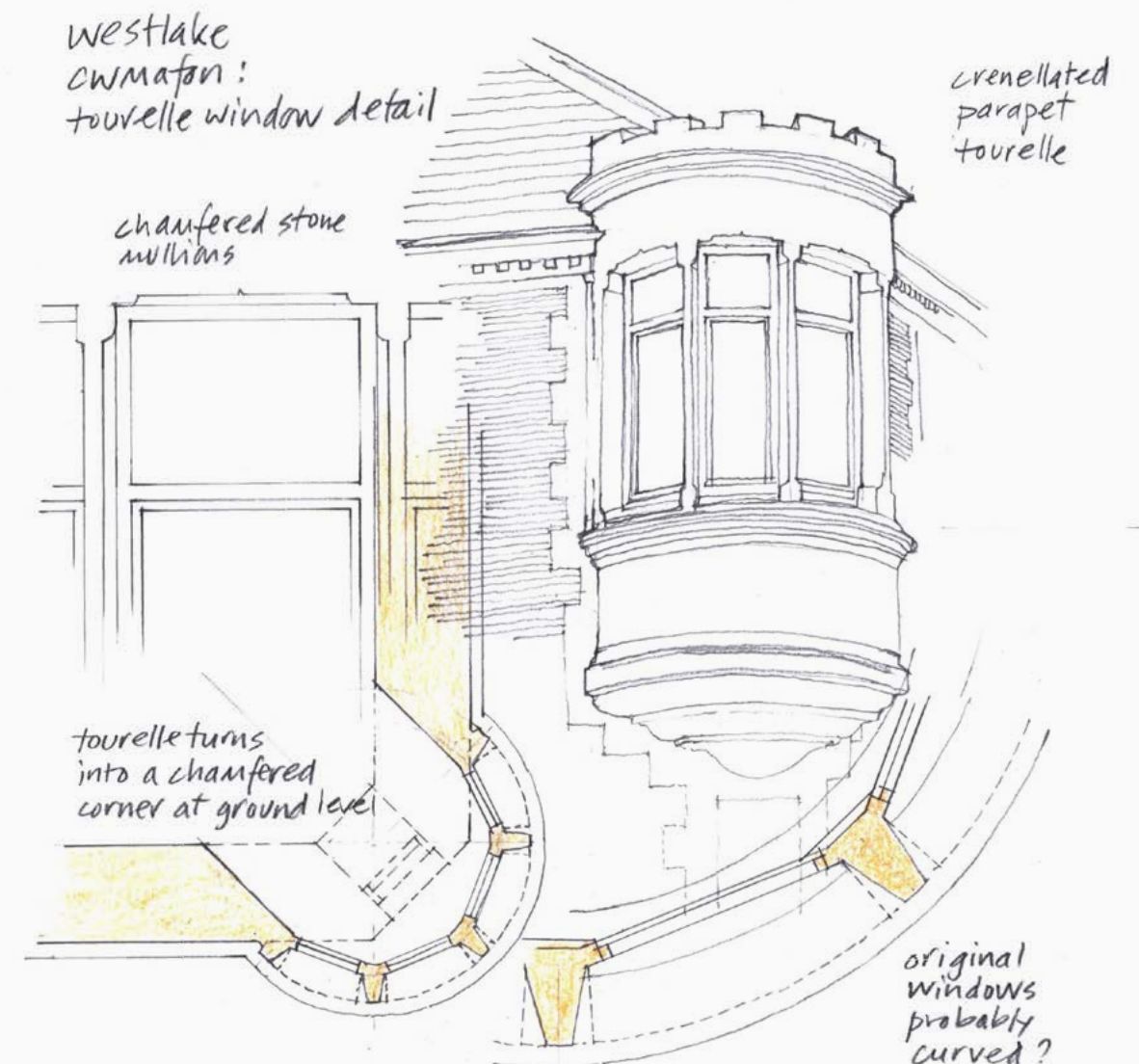
As a young boy, I was always curious to wonder what lay behind the many little locked gates that appear on our mountain sides. And they existed in remote and inaccessible places. As Mike Biddulph says in his piece about Cardiff's dock feeder 'you wouldn't know what it did or does'. But as I learnt that these little gates hid important colliery connections, that formed important parts of people's working lives, and that these connections were even driven from one side of the mountain right through to the other side, I marvelled at the scale and ambition of it all. I think now how important that all is to many of us. We are of that place.

Many of these things attracted innovation, great skill and expertise in their creation, even though they had everyday, ordinary uses. Some would be hard to replicate now, largely by the fact that 'risk' is the defining factor in contemporary development. There is an excellence and an integrity to many of these structures and places, that is borne out of a confidence in the future. They still stand as testament to a way of living and working then, and you suspect their makers thought they'd be there forever. And yet they are often a small remaining limb when the main body has been removed. But that doesn't spoil the moment. Are they important to us? And if so in what way? If they are, do we simply recognise that and leave them be, or re-imagine how they might form parts of our world looking forwards?

This little booklet celebrates a few of these things. Each author has described what the place means to them, not literally but emotionally, and that is the key to this. Hopefully they will start a conversation about the importance not of the past, per se, but how our past informs who we are, and what we'd like our future to be. There is perhaps no more challenging or opportune moment to think about our future with the boldness, ambition and urgency of our forebears.

Perhaps, next time you wander past a hidden relic, or just something that's always been there and you've never properly stopped and wondered why or wherefore, you might squint slightly to see it differently, and ask yourself – what does it mean to me now?

**THERE IS AN EXCELLENCE AND
AN INTEGRITY TO MANY OF THESE
STRUCTURES AND PLACES, THAT
IS BORNE OUT OF A CONFIDENCE
IN THE FUTURE**



PLACES

ANGLESEY BARRACKS
AND OLD BOMBSTORE,
LLANBERIS
SION LLWYD 10

THE WASHERY,
HAFODYRYNYS COLLIERY
CHARLOTTE HAYDEN
& KIMBERLEY HARRIS 14

THE BOILER HOUSE,
BRYNMAWR,
BLAENAU GWENT
GAVIN BIRT 18

THE WESTLAKE BREWERY,
CWMAVON, TORFAEN
ALAN FRANCIS 20

SEA-WALL PUMP HOUSE,
WENTLOOG LEVELS, CARDIFF
JAMIE BREWSTER 22

CILELY COLLIERY,
TONYREFAIL
KATHERINE JONES
& WILL MILLARD 24

DOCK FEEDER, CARDIFF
MIKE BIDDULPH 26

THE CEDARS,
PONTCANNA, CARDIFF
MIRANDA DETTWYLER 30

PORTHGAIN
MORLLYN GLAS
BLUE LAGOON
CHRIS LOYN 32

OFFA REVISITED
CLAWDD OFFA
WAYNE FORSTER 36



ANGLESEY BARRACKS AND OLD BOMBSTORE, LLANBERIS

SION LLWYD



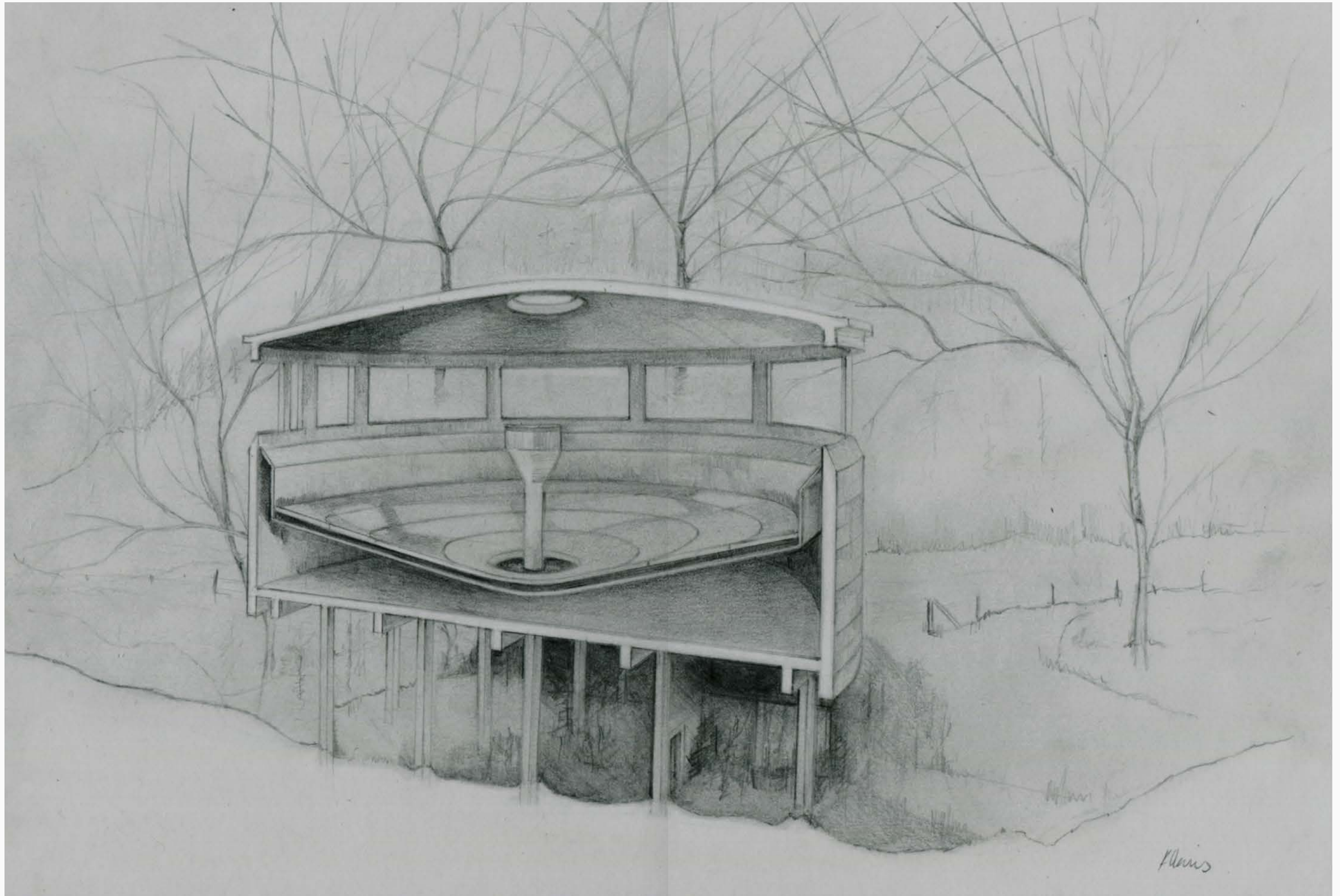
Around a mile and a half from the old barracks we can see how a building and a landscape have already been reborn and have played a part in not one, but two periods of historical importance. Before the Second World War, this site had already lived one life as the Glyn Rhonwy slate quarry. The infrastructure used to transport huge quantities of slate from the quarry, coupled with the huge empty pits left by the mining, translated perfectly to fit the very particular brief of storing colossal amounts of explosives during the war.

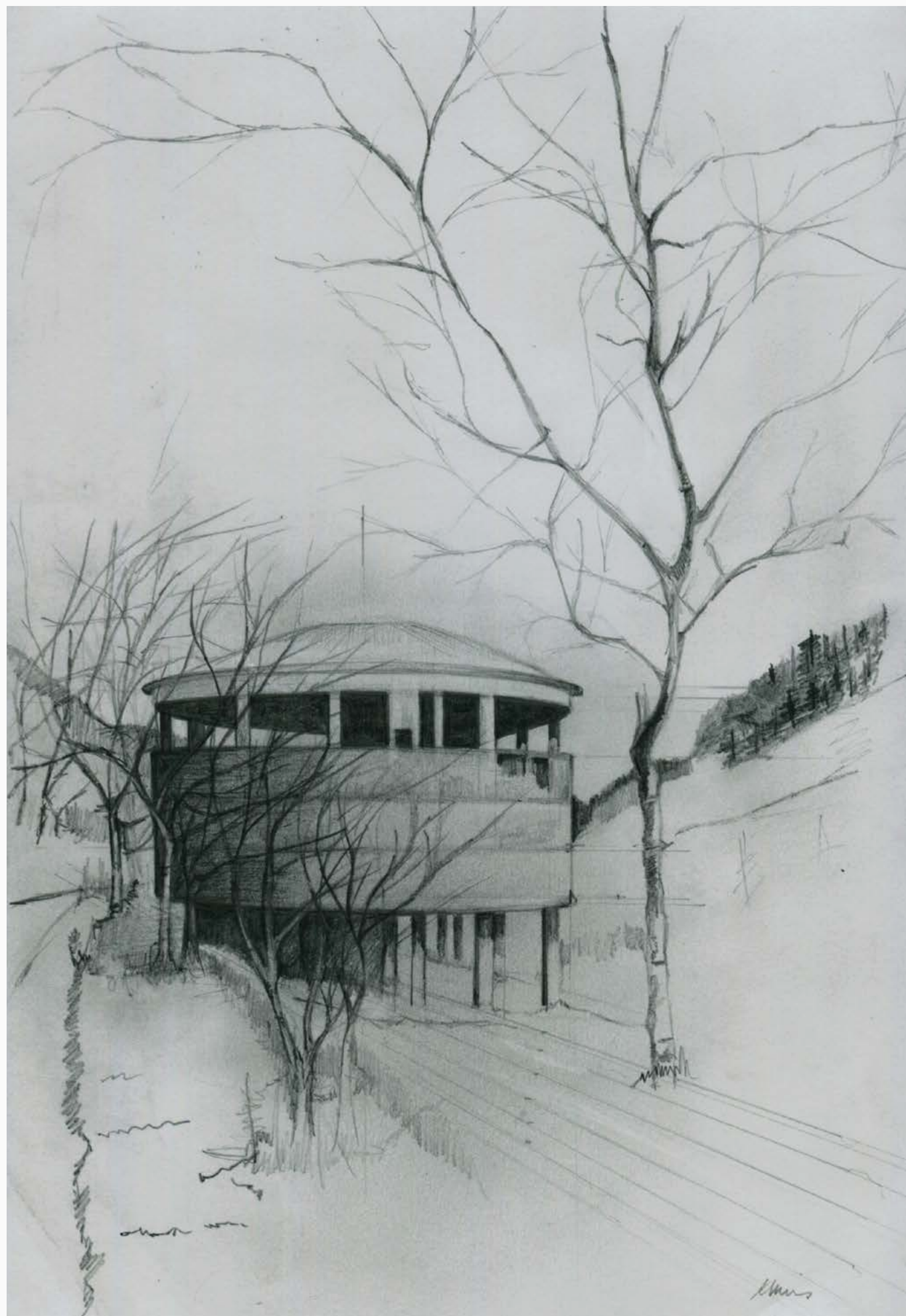
A blanket of tonnes of slate-waste weighs heavy on the arched vaulted roof. The slate and the trees growing amongst them gives the impression of the landscape swallowing the building whole - a deliberate choice of course, to both hide the building in plain sight from enemy planes, and to act as armour from any bombs that dropped. The propensity to use the North Wales landscape to secrete things away during the war is also evident on other sites such as Manod Mawr near Blaenau Ffestiniog, which housed London's National Gallery's priceless art collection. But it is not only the remoteness that made this the perfect location. The availability of materials, labour, existing transport connections and cavernous quarries came together as an ensemble to serve the national and international interests in their 'hour of need'. It was, for a fleeting moment a site of huge importance, like a fire burning brightly and very briefly, before returning to darkness. I'm reminded of a poem by a poet who lived not far from here, R. Williams Parry who eloquently compares this sensation of fleeting wonder to a shooting star:

Digwyddodd, darfu, megis seren wib¹

Today, the arches look weary and tired from carrying the heavy load. Eryri's climate has slowly peeled the concrete from its reinforcement bars, like meat from a carcass. The vast concrete husks are bricked up and dressed in colourful graffiti. However, even with these cosmetic imperfections, this hunkering giant gives no hint of buckling. Rather, it looks ready to be reborn again someday, fully prepared for whatever challenge may be thrown its way next.

1 Line from the poem *Y Llwynog* by R. Williams Parry





THE WASHERY, HAFODYRYNYS COLLIERY

**CHARLOTTE HAYDEN
& KIMBERLEY HARRIS**

After many years of cleaning something so valuable for Wales, Hafodyrynys Colliery coal washery still stands in a pure and natural state, despite being found just off Wales' most polluted road. Its circular shape is reminiscent of something supernatural, yet the way it has remained untouched in the valley for over 100 years reminds us of our need to feel connected and grounded to nature.

Hafodyrynys has recently made the news for its decision to demolish homes to improve air quality. Currently the houses of Woodland Terrace stand abandoned due to be demolished at the time of writing. But the somewhat sad state of the empty homes evokes a different sentiment to the coal washery that still remains in the valley. Instead it is a wonder for those who pass by as it still remains in its original form among the valley.

The washery's size is striking but what is also fascinating is the way it sits among its landscape. In almost an island of fields among the valley, and between the A472 and Crumlin Road, the hues of green from the land, sets an interesting landscape for this structure. In fact, the wildness of the land surrounding it reminds us of how nature can recover and take over, and a bare structure like the washery is just another part of this organic process. The washery almost acts as a green lung to filter pollutants from the air. As it once cleansed precious coal, it now cleanses the valley by remaining in its natural state.

This structure isn't disappearing into the landscape as its size is unforgiving, yet it sits comfortably among its surroundings, now inhabited by horses. Just a few miles away that houses wait to be demolished to reduce nitrogen dioxide levels, however here the washery remains, perhaps also helping to cleanse the environment by simply standing still and bare. The A472, the most polluted road in the UK outside London, is just the other side of the washery, but still there is a sense of tranquillity that the washery brings to this part of the valley. We know that it once had such a vital role for Wales' economy, yet it still feels critical for this village's environment in the way it stays natural.

The mine here existed from 1868 to 1966 but even after the 1960s the washery continued to process coal from other local collieries. The washery was needed as coal that comes from a mine is a complex mixture of materials. As well as the coal itself, pieces of rock, sand and various materials are contained in the mixture. So before coal can be sold to consumers, it must be cleaned. In 1985 the site was cleared yet remarkably the landowner requested that the circular slimes settling tank of the washery was retained.

Though coal mining had significantly damaging effects on the environment, this building spent years washing and cleaning coal in an attempt to meet the demands of the industry and local economy at the time. Now, we see the building as if it acknowledges the impurities of the past, but it is also happy for nature to take back its control, even in the midst of a heavily polluted 2021.



THE BOILER HOUSE, BRYNMAWR, BLAENAU GWENT

GAVIN BIRT

“Don't you know I'm still standing better than I ever did? Looking like a true survivor, feeling like a little kid.”

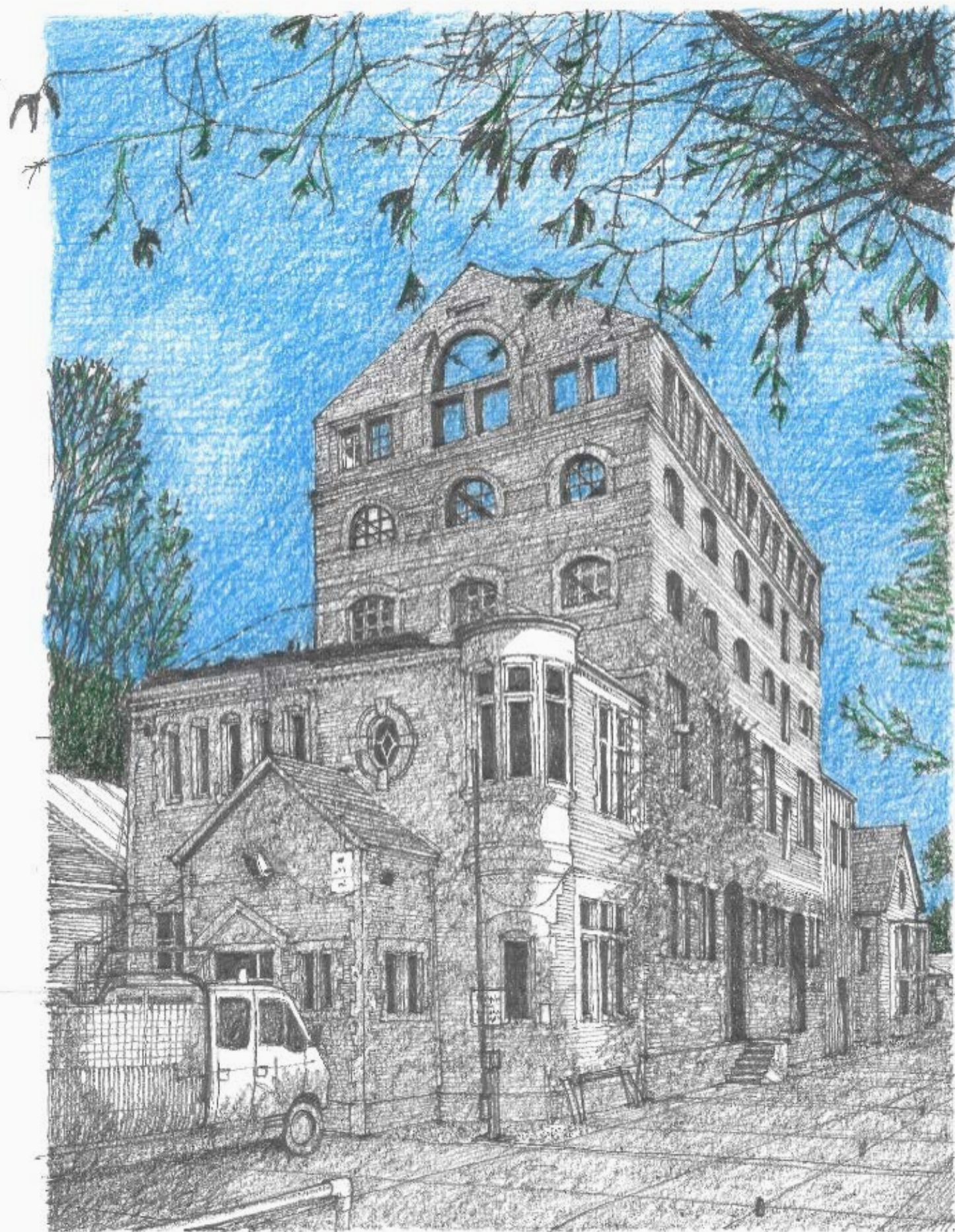
Bernie Taupin's lyrics for Elton John describe survival in the face of adversity. The Boiler House at Brynmawr is still standing. It was the technical component housing steam-producing machinery to heat the Dunlop Semtex rubber factory. We should now see it as a beacon of hope in an austere, deprived socio-economic landscape. Originally sited in Brynmawr to regenerate the area, the boiler house was a small part of the architectural tour de force of the Brynmawr Rubber factory – the Dunlop factory. Designed as part of the Festival of Britain between 1946 and 1952 on egalitarian principles its architectural and engineering pedigree are well documented, as is the demolition of most of the listed buildings in 2001, paving the way for a highway dominated retail park and its most recent 'drive thru' coffee shop addition.

What remains is a thing of beauty. We can still wonder at the engineering excellence that created the thin shell concrete structure. The graceful lines of the parabolic arches which sit lightly, floating over their brickwork base and separated by a narrow ribbon of glazing. Flues, glass, the spiral stair and working innards have been swept away. Yet still, the elegance of the latticework glazing frames to the gable arch produce a beautifully delicate counterpoint to the solidity of the cast shell of the roof. This structure transports me into a world of imagination. Never mind that it is standing cheek by jowl with today's coffee outlet. Disregard that it is strangled by the roads, roundabouts and railings of highways engineers. It still maintains its integrity. It transcends the built form that has come to encroach upon it. It is a Welsh chapel, a place of architectural worship now that the nine-domed cathedral has been ignominiously usurped by a supermarket.

What of those contemporary buildings? Will they in their inevitable condition of dereliction retain the same qualities? Will they fire the imagination or engage the curiosity of a child? Will they survive politics, avarice and nature's erosion? Will they come to hold the memories of a young boy routinely playing in the empty shells of forgotten edifices, making dens from detritus or defending imaginary fortresses?

Will they inspire future generations?

Will the redundant buildings of the 2000s stand the test of time, like this boiler house, and serve as the repositories of the imaginations of the children of 2090? This building, still standing, shows us the foresight and skills of its patrons, designers and craftsmen. With its natural poise and elegance, it continues to inspire. It makes me feel like a little kid in my Dunlop green flash daps, dreaming of becoming an architect.



THE WESTLAKE BREWERY, CWMAGON, TORFAEN

ALAN FRANCIS

My backbone has gone, but I am undeterred. Fire can destroy most things, but I am made of sterner stuff. You may have suggested my removal, but I've been through a lot and I have no intention of giving up now.

My foundations were hewn 120 years ago, in a bed of limestone next to the Afon Llwyd that afforded me a constant water supply for the golden liquor I was set up to create. I'm a little lost in the tight narrow valley, lost midst the abundant beech and ash, but I couldn't survive in the urbanity higher up the valley, where the river was young and weak. And there was ambition and confidence in my set up you see; you can see it in my dress – not only my sheer size and scale (six storeys – imagine! You can fit plenty of the fine stuff in that frame), but my jewellery too. See that Diocletian arch? The elegance of my cast iron capitols? That projecting corner office window with crenelated parapet and freestone dressings? I am as handsome as can be. My owners chose George Adlam as their creator, and in me he let all his passion explode in a flurry of polychromy and flamboyance, that none of his later creations matched.

But no-one can survive solely on civic pride and commercial nous. Within 30 years I was almost down and out, overtaken by the distress of post war decline. But my townspeople are an enterprising lot, and nothing if not socially aware. In 1936 the 'Eastern Valley Subsistence Production Society' grandly proclaimed my new use, and I look back with pride on the idea that I helped create an independent experiment in 'self-help', where artisans and tradesmen hand crafted stuff within me, in return for a share from the smallholdings around me. I was busy again! Children's dresses were being made under my clerestory roof; railway uniforms on the floor below. I had a bakery and butchery on the ground floor and allotments outside. This quiet and isolated part of the valley had a new future, and I was at the centre of it.

And now another phase of my life is ahead of me. The fire could have finished me off, but I re-imagined myself in earlier times and I can do so again. Your questions haven't passed me by of course. I am not 'sustainably located'. My community is dispersed. Mainstream industry left this valley when Big Pit closed. But I can see, from the changes that emerge in a post-pandemic vision, a whole new potential way of life, wrought from agile working, short stay tourism and the emerging dialogue around re-use rather than re-build. I might even get a low carbon re-fit as a living, working co-operative, using some of the political ideals that helped keep me going through tough times in the past.

I don't need demolition. I do need some love and care, but I am robust and flexible, and I will rise again. You wait and see.

THE SENTINEL SEA-WALL PUMP HOUSE, WENTLOOG LEVELS, CARDIFF

JAMIE BREWSTER

I am here.

My location on the tidal marshes gives me a prominence, yet I often feel like I'm hiding in plain sight. The ambivalence of passers-by has almost rendered me invisible. I should be a landmark but for some reason I'm mostly ignored.

I don't see many people now - I'm aware of dogs and their owners behind me, walking along the old sea-wall, but hardly anyone ever comes over to see me up close or to climb up my staircase. Regular visits of council engineers have long passed – direct contact is extremely rare now. Even local graffiti artists have moved on.

My functional necessity was not questioned when I first appeared. I've been accepted, even in my unkempt state, but have always felt somewhat anonymous. Very few stop to look at me and access across the marshes is too tricky since my bridge was allowed to rot away.

I'm a protector – I remain ready to act whenever necessary. Catastrophic flooding events happened here until the 16th century. Roman soldiers from Caerleon built the sea wall defences but I'm needed to release the pressure should the power of the Severn prove too much.

My shape and profile has been generated from the need to withstand a massive tidal range but my creators have worked hard to lift my presence above the purely functional.

Take some time to look at me carefully and closely and you'll begin to see some craft, some care... some beauty even. I'm quite proud of my fortress-like qualities – notice me from a distance and my powerful form emerging from the sea mist should intrigue. A simple solid structure, my proportion is enhanced by the diagonal profile of a staircase. Come closer and you'll appreciate the symmetrical composition as well as the robust texture of my concrete shell.

I sit on a protective rocky outcrop and my profile has been arranged in two halves. The base has gently sloping sides. An unnecessary gesture to some perhaps, but a designer's careful consideration of my form has given me an elegant profile. Above the base, a simple access door is arranged centrally with an expressed surround supporting a canopy now long-gone.

Penetrations in my concrete skin are kept to a minimum - just one tiny window opening in the sea-facing facade, located off-centre. Someone's really thought about my proportion and composition.

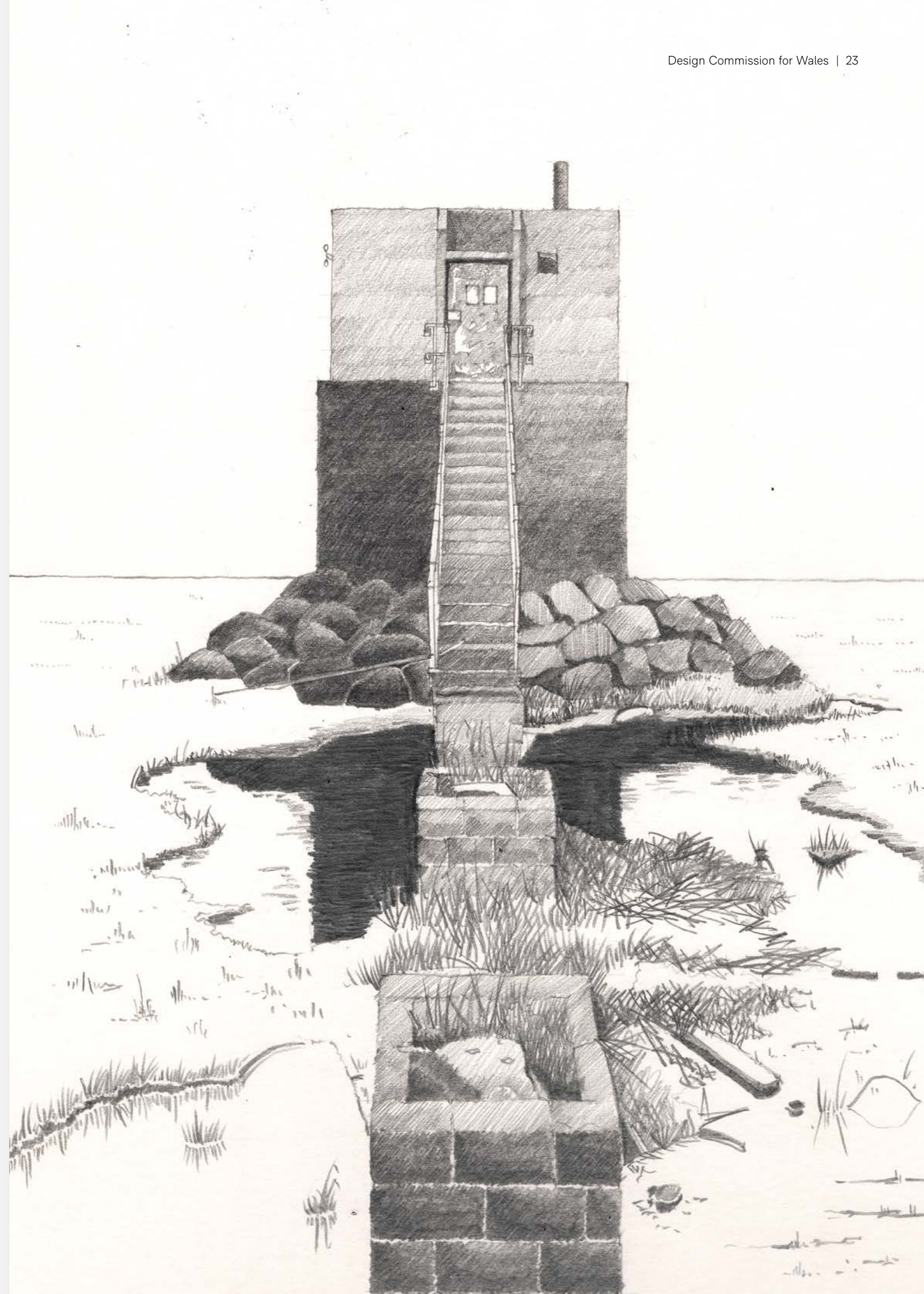
Completing the assembly is a steel flue, extending vertically and highlighting my potential as a landmark. Look carefully and you may also notice I'm aligned with the remains of an old 'putcher-rank' used for fishing. So much of me and my surroundings go unseen.

Not everyone likes the way I look now. Often shrouded in sea mist, you may see my concrete edifice sitting proudly in the marshland but you may prefer it if I wore a different covering, or even if I wasn't here at all.

And yet there's so much more than function to be found here.

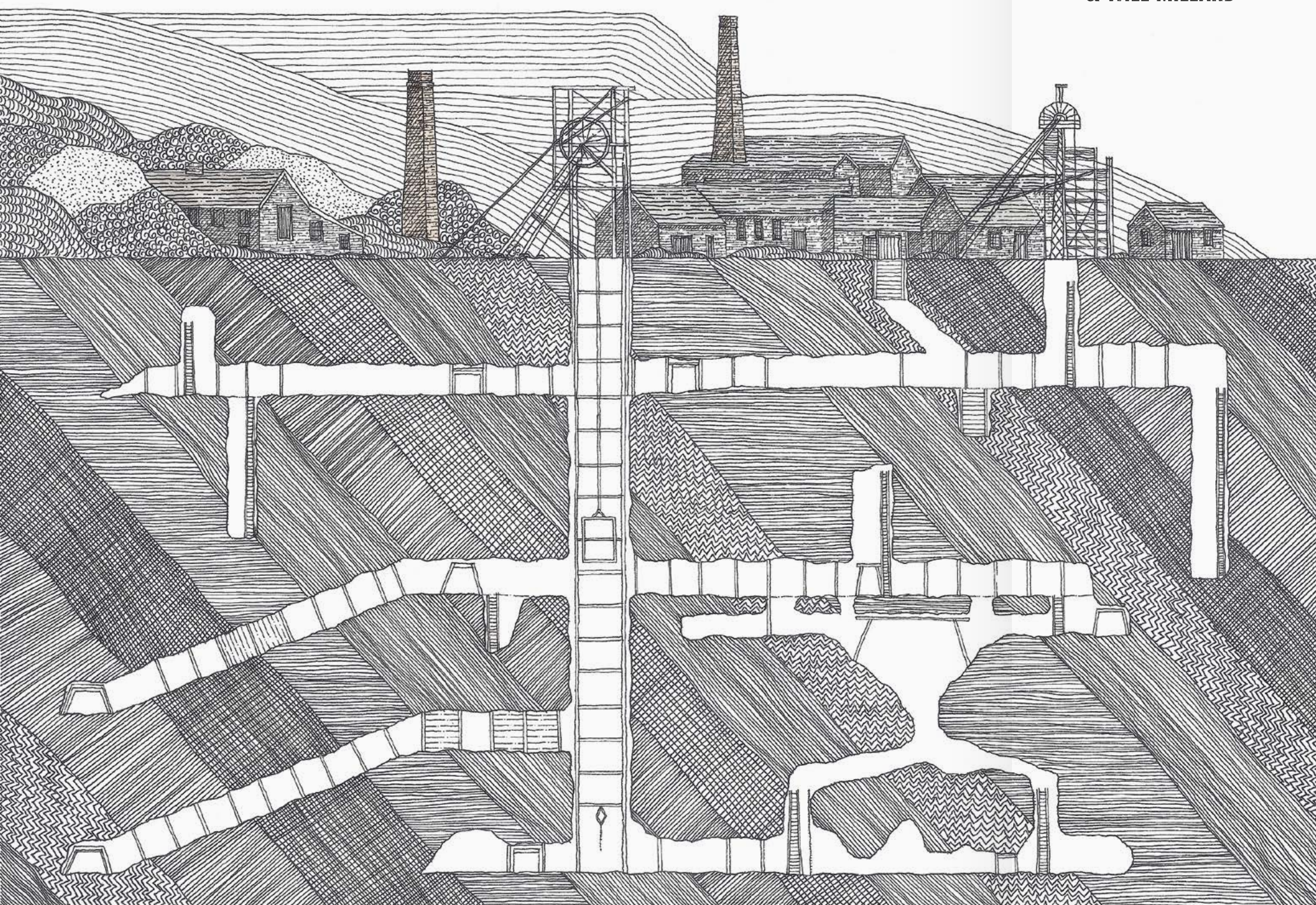
Take some time and appreciate a venue where the rich history of this area, to many unknown, could be advertised and celebrated.

Instead of walking-by, consider me a place to pause and appreciate a spectacular panorama.



CILELY COLLIERY, TONYREFAIL

KATHERINE JONES
& WILL MILLARD



We, as humans in this post-modern world, rarely consider what lies beneath our feet. We see, and celebrate, our world on a horizontal axis only. One that is mostly surrounded by open air, and, for at least half a day, sunlight. When we do venture underground, it is hard to engage with the actual physical and emotional feeling of what it really means to be under the earth. The London 'underground' for example, is a well-lit, efficient and sterile tube sealed from the actual element that makes up its name. Being underground, and being able to touch and tunnel through earth, is a different experience altogether. It is claustrophobic and hot; dark, and often quite primal. Your senses are warped, you lose your sense of time and your spatial awareness; you adjust to hear better than you could ever see, your sense of direction is more instinctual, your movements are restricted, yet efficient and effective. Then the release back into the air and sun feels like a rebirth – you can actually smell fresh air when you come back up; you are suddenly so much more aware of how the air moves. Freely breathing and openly seeing somehow feels like an all-new privilege, and not a right to be taken for granted.

What we see here though, and when we consider the legacy of south Wales coal especially, is a world in a cross section and scale that heads directly down in its importance. It is that cross section that still continues 'hidden' beneath our feet – and yet, holds so much of the historic value. We have largely removed the pit wheels that would have hung in the air in every direction across the south Wales coalfield, alongside many of the old buildings and pit chimneys. Much of the folklore and culture of mining exists today only in stories, old films, images, and the scars of the last living generation of underground workers. Yet the real area and arena of work, lives on, for now, in a darkness locked deep below our feet.

When many of the mines closed after the strikes, the coal board removed the buildings and repurposed their materials and machines, but they simply capped-off the shafts themselves. Leaving the actual workings intact, and the tools and chambers behind in the dark, ossified for only the length of time it would take for a timber prop or roof support to rot through and collapse. Surprisingly, the process of collapse has taken far longer than the miners back then might have expected. A metaphor in itself, for the enduring resilience and spirit of the Welsh miners.



DOCK FEEDER CARDIFF

MIKE BIDDULPH

Hidden beneath much of the city is a source of its original wealth – the water that filled the dock that hosted the ships that collected the coal that fuelled the world. We are behind a royal college that stands confidently on north road. It is a bold contemporary design.

This is the quiet side.

If you stand here in the summer you can hear the music and voices that one day will inspire and entertain us. It is incredible. The talent really makes you wonder. The time, love and conviction that has brought people to this level of achievement; and as I get older, they seem to get younger. I can hear them though because within the city this is a very quiet place. It is also a place where different aspects of Cardiff's past and present quietly combine, and for me at least they offer an optimistic and joyful view.

Like many canals in Wales, it's a quiet, serene and beautiful addition to the place. Very understated, you wouldn't know what it did or does, unless you had managed to look at it on a map and chart it's very difficult route from the river Taff to Bute east dock. Built to deliver its water and wealth, it is like so many great engineering achievements that just rest in their landscape and actually enhance them.

Later it has become crude, hard, buried and ignored. Here it is glorious and appears to be completely natural. It isn't, of course. It is man-made. Why, in the future, couldn't it and similar engineering achievements be more like this in other places? No reason at all.

I suppose that I have a slightly romantic sensibility. I draw and am drawn to detail and that ragged natural mix of water, trees and plants that fill this view. It's not something that I can now enhance by design. It has a life of its own, and I want it to be natural and endure without me. I suppose it is managed, but I don't want to know about that! For me the naturalisation of that once straight line on a plan is where this place's beauty can be found. It was the leaning tree really. That is what drew my attention and excitement. It combines with the other trees against the grey winter sky, and the drawing allows me to go beyond the camera frame to capture the wide panorama.

I wonder if some people might think that a leaning tree has actually failed. Not me. I wanted this tree, and others like it, at the heart of my world.

IF YOU STAND HERE IN THE
SUMMER YOU CAN HEAR
THE MUSIC AND VOICES
THAT ONE DAY WILL INSPIRE
AND ENTERTAIN US.

IT IS INCREDIBLE.

THE CEDARS, PONTCANNA, CARDIFF A DEFENCE AGAINST ZEPPELINS

MIRANDA DETTWYLER



window cut in a riser by her father,
facilitating conversation between flats,
a friendship

wallpaper layered and peeling history,
bathroom for disco, bathroom for calm, bathroom of flowers

Kitchen garden through the window only,
until access granted, old tenants gone,
the garden is for you

A child's bedroom,
different child, later, door madly doodled,
electric 70s dreams.

Here's a cupboard, massive, lovely, hiding staircases rerouted,
why?
Cynthia knows.
Keeper of memories in her echoing castle.
An entire life she's been here, bar the war,
spent in safety in the Valleys.
The last inhabitant.

What was meant to be a few years became a girlhood, a
womanhood, a motherhood, a life

As the houses grew up,
the orchard down,
the Canna under,
the place evolving from manor to home for the aged to
apartments
an archive of the city's imagination.

She caretaker
to a citadel of lofty dusty space encased in stone,
a stillness, a waiting, a discovery

Does the head curator know anything? He does!
His mother was born here.
The spiky blue metal a defence against zeppelins,
the alarming carpet hiding secret delights.

Let's knock through this wall to discover another stair, a grand one,
waiting in the dusky light.

ffenestr wedi'i thorri mewn gris gan ei thad,
yn hwyluso sgwrs rhwng fflatiau,
yn gyfeillgarwch

papur wal haenog a hanes sy'n plicio,
ystafell ymolchi disgo, ystafell ymolchi pwyll, ystafell ymolchi o flodau

Gardd gegin trwy'r ffenestr yn unig,
nes bod mynediad wedi'i ganiatáu, hen denantiaid wedi mynd,
mae'r ardd ar eich cyfer chi

Ystafell wely plentyn,
plentyn gwahanol, yn ddiweddarach, drws wedi ei ddwdlo'n wyllt,
breuddwydion trydanol y 70au

Dyma gwpwrdd, anferth, hyfryd, yn cuddio grisiau wedi eu hailgyfeirio,
pam?
Mae Cynthia yn gwybod.
Ceidwad atgofion yn ei chastell atseinol.
Bu yma am fywyd cyfan, ag eithrio'r rhyfel,
wedi'i wario mewn diogelwch yn y Cymoedd.
Y preswlydd olaf.

Daeth yr hyn a oedd i fod yn enethdod, yn
fenywdod, yn famolaeth, yn fywyd

Wrth i'r tai dyfu i fyny,
a'r berllan leihau,
y Canna dan,
y lle yn esblygu o faenor i gartref i'r henoed i
fflatiau
archif o ddychymyg y ddinas.

A hithau'n ofalwr
i gaer o ofod llychlyd uchel wedi'i orchuddio â charreg,
llonyddwch, disgwyliad, darganfyddiad

A yw'r prif guradur yn gwybod unrhyw beth? Ydy, mae'n gwybod!
Ganwyd ei fam yma.
Mae'r metal glas pigog yn amddiffyniad rhag zeppelins,
y carped brawychus yn cuddio danteithion cyfrinachol.

Gadewch i ni guro drwy'r wal hon i ddarganfod grisiau arall, un crand,
yn aros yn y golau cyfnos.





'...A PLACE OF STONE, EARTH AND WATER.'

PORTHGAIN

Unexpected scale in this little port. This is where the huge slabs of fractured stone were brought from the cwar and reshaped for buildings and for roads.

And so, I thought as I wandered, in awe looking at this vast quayside structure that as well as industrious activity, occupation and massive danger to life - at both the quarry and the yard - one enormous difference between then and now would have been the noise. Today we hear in this precious place only the gannets and gulls, the sea and the wind-awel y mor. But then in the days of the quarry ... Imagine The crashing of the rocks, the thunderous sound of the water powered saws, grinding through the slabs of stone, the crushing machines and the loading of the ships to deliver their pieces of Wales to far off places. A short period in the ever-changing life of this coastal place, but can we not -should we not - reuse this legacy? Can there be a glimmer of hope that we go forward with confidence - the same confidence which enabled so many great buildings and interventions to be realised in the past? The very ones we feel now are so precious, but which are too often prevented from experiencing new life.

I am reminded of the closing paragraph to Dylan Thomas' autobiographical book 'Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog' ...'the light from the one weak lamp fell in a rusty circle across the brick heaps and broken wood and dust that had been houses once, where the hardly known and never forgotten people of that dirty town had lived and loved and died, and always lost.'

Is there not a gateway to a more enlightened future creating the marks on the landscape of our time - not just looking back at what was or down at what is, but instead seeing what can be?

MORLLYN GLAS BLUE LAGOON

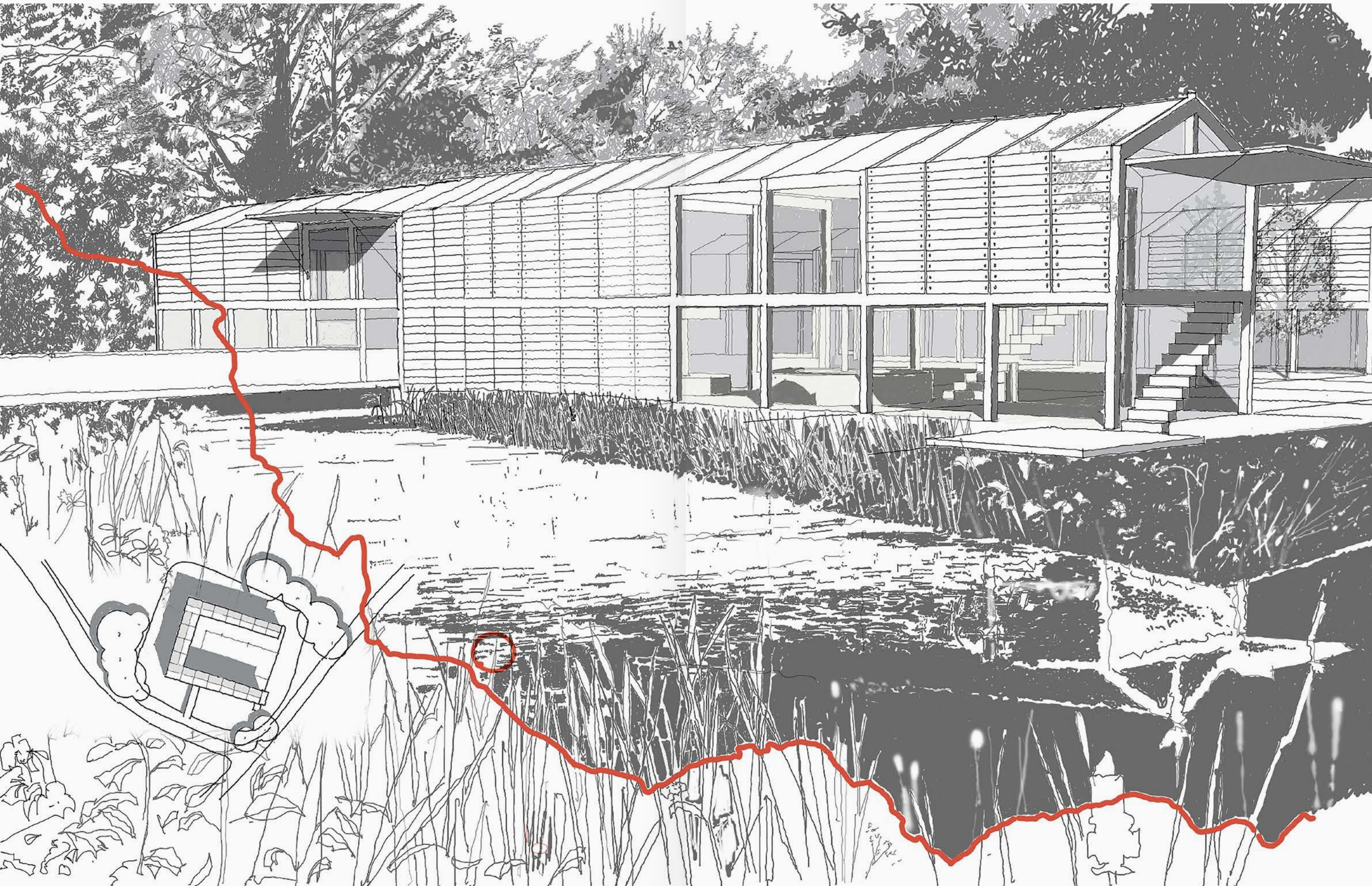
Once a cwar, where the slabs of gold and black rock were hewn from the cliffside and carted to the nearby harbour of Porthgain. It was on the edge where the pettles and bones are pinned by the wind to the ragged ledge that I sat and dreamt of those times gone by. Always a place of stone, earth and water.

The scar of the cwar now healing as nature reclaims the embedded remnants from this time of change. The workers houses, made of the cliff, now crumbling, returning from whence they came, stone by stone. Soon only to be memories of what was once.

Should they be kept? Frozen in aspic or given a new life? Or should they be left to disintegrate and to quietly disappear, their imprints on the land and the sand erased, gone, their existence confined to the history books, like so much of our heritage? Through resistance to reuse, through inability to reimagine - just looking, not seeing potential.

Meanwhile, time rolls onward 'thou by the dials shady stealth mayst know times thievish progress to eternity.'

CHRIS LOYN



**'THERE IS NO WAY TO EXIST ON EARTH,
NO ALTERNATIVE PATH, OTHER THAN TO
FOLLOW THE EDGES THAT GUIDE US EVEN AS
THEY EXPOSE US TO RISK AT EVERY TURN.'**

The World on Edge, Edward S Casey Editor; Indiana University Press, 2017

**OFFA REVISITED
CLAWDD OFFA**

WAYNE FORSTER

Walking the edge: Lines of flight

I was born and live in Newport, Monmouthshire at the southern tip of what is known as the Welsh Marches. A march or mark was and remains, in broad terms, any kind of borderland', as opposed to a national "heartland". More specifically, a march was a border between realms or a neutral, buffer zone under joint control of two states in which different laws might apply.

Edgelands and borderlands and interstitial space have always seemed to me to be interesting if difficult to define and claim – places where things happen – flux and flow.

More recently the word liminal has been used to describe the 'feeling' of these places and I find myself drawn to the unique and combined feeling of eeriness, nostalgia, and apprehension one gets when presented with such places outside of their designed context.

Re-imagining the edge

The proposed re-imaginings here are inspired by recent Nordic architectural projects where a strong emphasis on the characteristics of the site intended to enhance place and experience have proved highly successful in interpreting place and enhancing and framing the quality of the site and also become a mediating element between man and nature. Hence the 'Lines of Flight' ambition – to create places that encourage a desire to experiment and explore, to learn, grow, and boldly venture forth but also to engender the feelings noted above.

The interventions are planned along Offa's Dyke – the first two at the Devil's Pulpit and Hen Gwrt are drawn. Offa's Dyke is the UK's longest linear earthwork, stretching for over 120km through the borderland between England and Wales. It delineated the western edge of Offa's kingdom (c8thc) in opposition to the Welsh polities. Its role as an administrative boundary – if it ever was such a thing – was short-lived; the modern border between England and Wales was fixed in the 1530s and is not generally contiguous with the Dyke. Nevertheless 'Offa's Dyke' is widely used as a shorthand for the border, and the earthwork itself – a scheduled Ancient Monument, has helped create a space in both English and Welsh imaginations which is neither one nor the other but has its own identity as the 'Anglo-Welsh borderland'. The presence of the Dyke in the early modern imagination is situated in discourse around modern cultural identities, and how contemporary understanding of identity is framed through phenomenology, archaeology, identity and belonging in a border landscape.



Images

**Monmouth - Pandy: Cider Mill and Travellers Rest:
Melin seidr a theithwyr yn gorffwys**

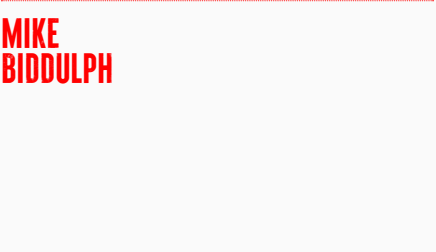
Cutting through green Monmouthshire – 'rolling hills and cider mills' – the dyke passes through the ancient village of Llandilo Crossenny, a local administrative and ecclesiastical centre based on King Iddon's grant of land in the 6thc to the church which built St Teilo's church and, later, Hen Gwrt, (built by the Bishops of Llandaff) and reputedly the home of Shakespeare's 'davy gam'. This site of Welsh Saxon, Norman and English conflict through the ages the village once had a long-established hostelry, le Hostry, closed in 2002. The proposal is for a new hostelry, cider and perry mill to welcome weary travellers on the moated island of Hen Gwrt adjacent to the line of the dyke.

Chepstow – Monmouth: Devil's Pulpit: Pulpud Cythreulig

The first structure exploits the magnificent view from two rocks on the escarpment overlooking Tintern abbey. The legend is that it was from here the devil openly tempted the Cistercian population of Tintern to leave monastic life. The view virtually on the dyke itself is a celebrated moment on stage one of the walk.

1 Chisholm, Hugh, ed. (1911). "March". Encyclopædia Britannica. 17 (11th ed.). Cambridge University Press. p. 698.

Biographies



**MIKE
BIDDULPH**

Having been an urban design academic in both Liverpool and Cardiff for 25 years, Mike now works for Cardiff Council as an urban designer in their Place Making team. He established the MA Urban Design at Cardiff University, and has published extensively on urban design, planning and regeneration themes. He is also currently a Commissioner for the Design Commission for Wales.



**GAVIN
BIRT**

Gavin Birt is a graduate of the Welsh School of Architecture. Following employment in London with John Assael and Bristol with Niall Phillips, Gavin migrated back to Wales in 1995 to join Alan Francis. He now runs the Cardiff office of Gaunt Francis Architects and leads the retirement living and care studio. Gavin is retained as Architect for the UK's market leader in luxury care communities, gaining planning consents and delivering built schemes throughout England, notably on previously developed Green Belt land and often incorporating historic, listed structures.

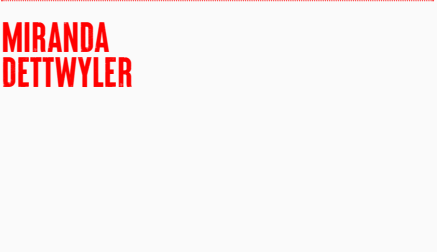
When not relying on the talented team at GFA to deliver a myriad of award-winning projects, Gavin tries tackling the solo pursuits of golf, karate, swimming and motorcycling!

JAMIE BREWSTER

Jamie Brewster is an architect and senior associate at DB3 Architecture. His principal skill is as a designer and has been recognised by the RIBA with Silver Medal Runner up in the RIBA President's Medals for Architecture and through a number of award and competition successes such as his winning entry for Europan 4.

Whilst Jamie has multiple-sector experience and a varied portfolio he also has experience and interest in the healthcare sector. In particular, based on his own personal experience Jamie has a keen interest in the design of facilities for inpatient care.

Jamie supports the use of technology as a design tool but gains most enjoyment from and is a keen advocate of hand-drawing and traditional forms of architectural representation.



**MIRANDA
DETTWYLER**

Miranda is a project architect at Loyn + Co Architects, originally from the United States of America. Having spent her early working life as a physicist, she then studied architecture in Vienna and Cardiff, seeking work that would stretch her as much creatively as analytically. She has lived and worked in eight countries across three continents, gaining wide experience of the built environment, from mudbrick mosques in Bamako to Italian garden cities and Viennese Marxist public housing. Her scientific background allows her to cast a dispassionate eye on the work architecture does to shape lives and use those findings to guide her creatively.



**WAYNE
FORSTER**

Professor Wayne Forster was deputy head of the Welsh School of Architecture from 2002 until 2022. Wayne's current role in the School centres on activities in academic leadership in design, teaching and learning and practice-based research through the School's Design Research Unit (DRUw) which was set up to pursue design-based research.

DRUw have won a number of design awards including RIBA awards for design in 2001 and 2010 and for research conducted in UK Universities in 2013.

In his approach to architecture, emphasis is placed on the geographical context of the building – on topography, climate, light and tectonic form and energy use and sustainability. This approach has dominated much of his work over the past 25 years both in the design studio and in more orthodox research work – the use of local low impact materials, building techniques based on tradition and innovation and especially the design of the building envelope in response to an appreciation of the local climate are all constituent parts of critical enquiry and practice.



**ALAN
FRANCIS**

Alan Francis co-founded Gaunt Francis (with now retired David Gaunt) in 1997, having previously worked in both public and private sectors in London and Wales.

He now heads up the London office, maintaining an active involvement in all projects, as often as not still sketching by hand in meetings and at the drawing board.

Alan was chairman of the Design Commission for Wales for eleven years from 2006-2017. He is also an academician with the Academy of Urbanism.

Alongside 35 years post-qualification experience in mainstream commercial development, he has maintained a keen interest in music and rugby football, as well as the ongoing conversion and extension of his 16th century grade II listed cruck-framed barn in the Brecon Beacons.

Biographies

KIMBERLEY HARRIS

Kimberley Harris studied at the Welsh School of Architecture and currently works at Gaunt Francis Architects. A keen photographer, studying Documentary Photography at Ffotogallery in partnership with Cardiff Metropolitan University. She is drawn to recording the lives of post-war buildings and Concrete constructions.

Her photo series documenting the demolition of Alison and Peter Smithson's, Robin Gardens, in Poplar East London, was exhibited on the South Bank as part of the Blueprint Architectural Photography awards. Architecture and photography often overlap with a recognition of the potential of design to elevate the ordinary.

She is a keen campaigner for the recognition and preservation of Twentieth Century buildings.

CHARLOTTE HAYDEN

Charlotte Hayden is a Specialist Study Skills Tutor for university students with Specific Learning Differences. She has studied at the University of South Wales and Cardiff Metropolitan University, as well as studying and training at Cardiff University. Her background is in journalism, English and creative writing and teaching.

Charlotte is also a writer for young women and has been published online and in paperback. Her writing often has a stream of consciousness style, and she has a passion for reading and writing about the conflicting thoughts and feelings that women can have in the modern world. You can find some of her previous published writing via her website: <https://desperwrite.weebly.com>

Charlotte has lived in South Wales for 15 years and enjoys learning and creating with friend and architect Kimberley Harris.

KATHERINE JONES

Katherine is an architect and artist based in Cardiff. She uses her work to help people to connect with the people, places or moments that matter. She does this by creating beautiful drawings, inspired by her architecture experience, as well as bespoke memory boxes.

She uses pen, ink and watercolours to create intricately detailed drawings of buildings and landscapes. From wedding venues, to individual's homes and cityscapes to historical houses, she seeks out the hidden details and reinterprets them to create stylish, meaningful artworks.

Over the last two years, her work has featured on BBC Radio 4 and she's been commissioned by the likes of the National Trust, Tower Bridge, Microsoft and the National Museum of Wales.

SION LLWYD

Sion is a practising architect (Gaunt Francis Architects) and illustrator. He grew up in Caernarfon, North Wales and graduated at Cardiff's Welsh School of Architecture. After working in London on university buildings and train stations, he returned to Cardiff where he has designed laboratories, hotels and retirement villages.

As well as illustrating cards for charities and private commissions, he produces hand drawings - primarily in pencil. His detailed monochrome style concentrates on the light, tone and texture of his subjects.

CHRIS LOYN

Chris is a chartered architect with over 30 years' experience and is passionate about providing the best possible quality of environment for his clients.

As the founder of Loyn + Co Architects, he set up in practice in 1987. In 2015 Chris received the Dewi Prys-Thomas Award for his personal contribution to architecture in Wales.

Chris is a visiting tutor at the Welsh School of Architecture and was also recently awarded the title of Professor of Practice at University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

Chris runs a drawing course at the Wales Institute for Sustainable Education at the Centre for Alternative Technology, is a well-recognised artist and a member of the Royal Watercolour Society of Wales.

WILL MILLARD

Will Millard is an award-winning television presenter and writer who has lived and worked with some of the remotest people on earth. His hit BBC Two series *My Year With The Tribe* and *Hunters of the South Seas* saw him immersed in the lives of the Bajau sea gypsies, Lamaleran whale hunters, and the Korowai of the West Papuan rainforests. He was awarded the BAFTA Cymru Award for Best Presenter and the Realscreen award for best Travel and Exploration.

For almost a decade, Will explored the jungles of New Guinea and West Africa. He has written about his adventures for numerous national and international magazines; and spoken to theatre audiences across the UK; but since having kids his focus has turned to the wonders on his South Wales doorstep. He has gone on to present numerous BBC Wales series on local rivers, urban exploration, history, and fishing; including the long running *Hidden Wales* series; and has written (and ghost written) best-selling books about remarkable British people for Penguin and Pan MacMillan.

His debut book, *The Old Man and the Sand Eel*, for Viking, saw him spend two-years attempting to break a fishing record, and he has recently published a series of early-reader books for Magic Cat, which take young children deep into the lives of the incredible animals that live in our ponds, trees, gardens, and rockpools.

Born and brought up on the river banks of The Fens, Will still believes the wild is inherently magical and that capturing and sustaining that feeling in everyone could yet save the world.

ABOUT THE DESIGN COMMISSION FOR WALES

The Design Commission for Wales promotes good design across sectors, pursuing its vision for a Wales that is a better place.

We provide bespoke Client Support, Training and strategic Design Review Services alongside events, seminars and publications, some of which support national design and planning policy and guidance in Wales.

The Design Commission for Wales is a private limited company (DCFW LTD), incorporated in 2002 as a wholly owned subsidiary of the Welsh Government. Registered office: 4th Floor, Cambrian Buildings, Mount Stuart Square, Cardiff CF10 5FL.



