Slate, Ruin, and Resilience: An Exploration of the Cultural and Community Legacies of the Welsh Slate Mining Industry

By Idris Owen

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***Figure 1**: Cwmystradllyn Miners, taken in 1952 (Source: Gwynedd Archive)*

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[redacted]

"The content of this dissertation is entirely the work of the author"

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the historical and cultural legacies of the Welsh slate mining industry, focusing on the Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill and the landscape of Cwmystradllyn. By exploring these smaller, peripheral sites, the research broadens understandings of industrial heritage beyond dominant narratives centred on major quarrying centres. It highlights how transient sites contribute to the socio-economic and cultural identity of North Wales, despite their often-overlooked status.

A mixed-methods approach was employed, integrating archival research, semi-structured interviews, autoethnographic reflections, and photographic documentation. Archival analysis reconstructs the mill's brief yet ambitious operational history, revealing its challenges and the socio-economic drivers behind its establishment. Interviews with local residents and descendants of miners provide insights into the site's enduring cultural resonance, while autoethnographic and visual methods capture the emotional and sensory dimensions of the landscape.

Findings demonstrate the interplay between material remnants and cultural memory, showing how industrial ruins function not only as physical structures but also as sites of lived experience and community identity. The research critically engages with authorised heritage discourse, illustrating tensions between community-driven narratives of resilience and the commodification of heritage for tourism (Smith, 2006). It also addresses archival silences, particularly regarding the contributions of women and informal labour, which remains underrepresented in official heritage frameworks.

By situating Cwmystradllyn within broader debates on industrial heritage and post-industrial regeneration, this study contributes to a more inclusive understanding of how small-scale industrial landscapes shape narratives at local, regional, and national levels.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Welsh Slate Mining Industry

The Welsh slate mining industry played a pivotal role in shaping the industrial, cultural, and environmental landscape of North Wales during the 19th and early 20th centuries (Hughes, 2004). Once referred to as the nation that "roofed the world" (Cadw, 2021, [np]), Wales became a global hub for slate production, exporting materials that adorned iconic structures across the globe (Roberts, 2015a). Yet the industry's influence extended beyond economics, leaving enduring legacies on the region's social structure as the mines forged close-knit, resilient communities shaped by the rhythms of quarry life and shared labour. Generations of families were connected through their work in the quarries, fostering a distinct cultural heritage characterised by oral traditions and regional pride (Barker, 2015). This deep connection to the slate industry shaped not only livelihoods but also the identity of North Wales, influencing its language, stories, and sense of community (Jones, 2013b; Roberts, 2015a).

By the early 20th century, economic and industrial shifts led to a gradual decline in slate production. The closure of the quarries transformed both the physical landscape and the socio-economic fabric of quarrying communities, leaving behind abandoned sites central to cultural memory and heritage discourse (Edensor, 2005; DeSilvey, 2006). These "industrial ruins" (Edensor, 2005, p.208) became enduring visual reminders of a once-thriving industry, and whilst unused, they maintain a powerful presence in the region, symbolising resilience and serving as a backdrop for cultural reinterpretation (DeSilvey, 2006). Yet the lives and heritage of the miners remain deeply embedded in the legacy of North Wales. For many, the mines represent more than industrial history; they are central to Welsh national identity and a sense of belonging.

It is this collective memory of the quarrying communities that continues to shape regional narratives of pride, solidarity, and endurance (Jones, 2013b). This legacy is reflected in the Welsh language, cultural traditions, and nationalist sentiment that the slate industry fostered, particularly during the height of industrial prominence in the 19th century (Smith, 2006). Today, the remnants of the slate industry serve as both historical landmarks and active sites of heritage tourism, offering opportunities for reflection on the past while contributing to the local economy (Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, 2021).

1.2 Focus of the Study

While much has been written about the historical and economic aspects of slate mining, there is still a need to explore how these spaces are currently understood and utilised, particularly in the context of smaller, underexplored sites. These lesser-known ventures, unlike the larger and widely celebrated quarries such as Blaenau Ffestiniog, Penrhyn, and Dinorwig, offer critical insights into the precarious and transient nature of the slate industry. By examining these smaller sites, we gain a deeper understanding of the socio-economic and cultural impacts of quarrying on rural communities, highlighting the experiences of those often overlooked in historical narratives (Smith, 2010; Williams, 2011).

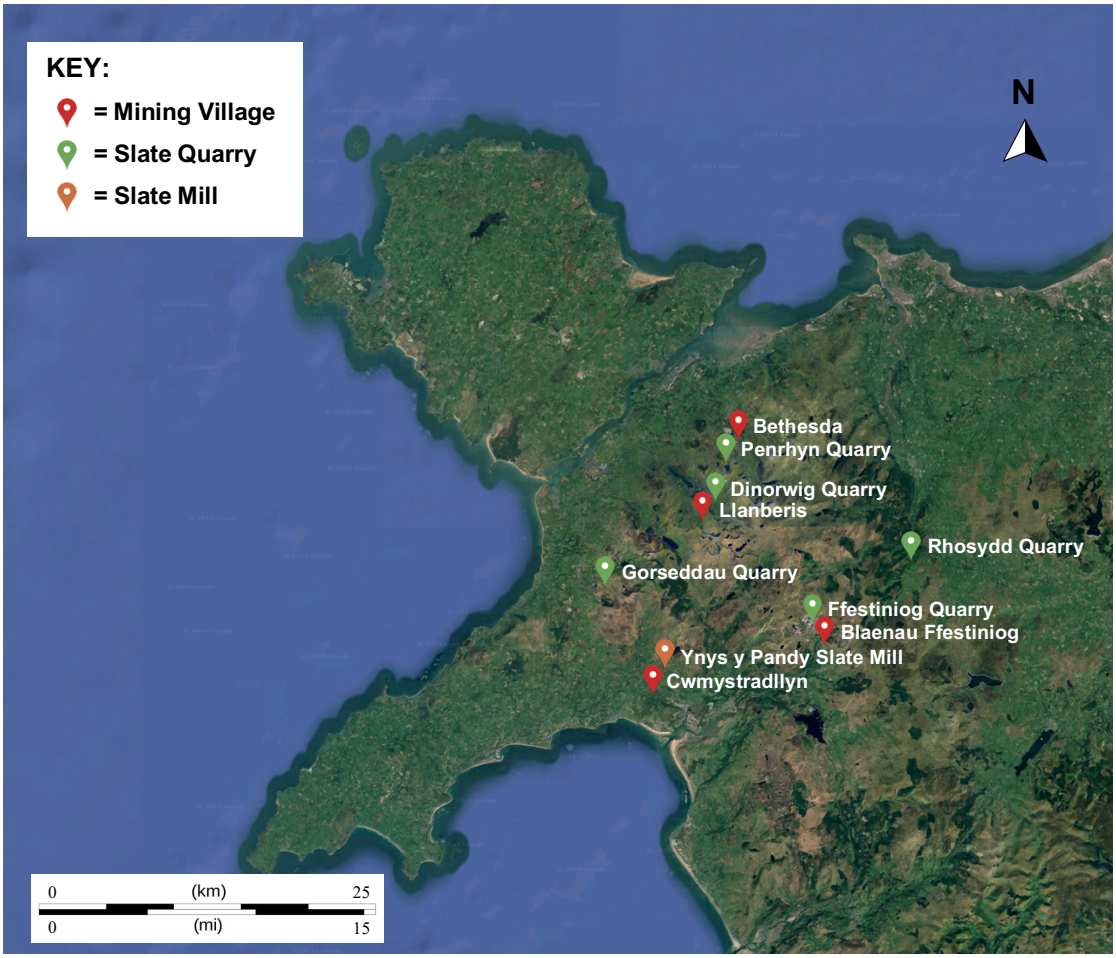

Figure 2: *Key sites of interest related to the Welsh Slate Mining Industry that are discussed in this dissertation, including mining villages, slate quarries, and the Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill (Source: Author's own, 2025).*

This dissertation addresses this gap by focusing on the enduring legacy of Cwmystradllyn and the Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill, examining the intersections of heritage, memory, and national identity in these spaces. Drawing on my personal connection as a descendant of a family that lived in Cwmystradllyn, this research benefits from unique access to oral histories and a personal lens through which to explore how the mill's history continues to resonate within the community today. Central to this investigation is my ancestor, Huw Elliot Jones (1839–1890), who worked at the Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill during its operational period in the late 1850s and early 1860s. His letters, diaries, and family records form an essential part of the archival materials used in this study. Through Huw's personal writings, I traced both the intimate lived experience of slate mining and the broader socio-economic pressures faced by workers and their families during the industry's peak and decline.

This study explores how identity is shaped by and intertwined with the slate industry, while also assessing the socio-economic and cultural impacts of the mill's operation and eventual abandonment. These insights inform broader discussions on heritage preservation, sustainable development, and the revitalisation of post-industrial landscapes (Roberts, 2015a).

1.3 Research Aims and Objectives

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What historical and societal factors influenced the development of the Welsh slate mining industry in Cwmystradllyn during the 19th century?
2. How did the slate industry shape the physical and cultural landscape of Cwmystradllyn during its brief period of operation?
3. What is the current significance of the Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill, and how does it contribute to local cultural identity?

By integrating historical analysis, cultural geography, and contemporary heritage studies, this dissertation provides a nuanced perspective on the legacy of smaller industrial communities and their role within broader industrial heritage narratives. It explores how these communities navigated the rise and decline of the slate industry, how memory and identity are shaped by industrial heritage, and how contemporary heritage discourse negotiates the balance between preservation, representation, and community engagement. This study critically examines how peripheral sites like Ynys y Pandy contribute to ongoing discussions about industrial decline, cultural resilience, and the ways in which communities engage with post-industrial landscapes.

CHATPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Historical and Economic Context of Slate Mining

The Welsh slate mining industry occupies a significant place in industrial and cultural geography, offering insights into how natural resources historically shaped regional economies, societies, and landscapes (Hudson, 2010). Gwyn (2022) underscores this by highlighting the distinctive geological conditions of North Wales, where abundant, high-quality slate deposits spurred industrial development from the late 18th century onwards. Roberts (2015a) builds on this perspective, linking industrial-scale quarrying to global trends in resource extraction. This period saw advancements in transportation which facilitated the export of raw materials to distant markets. By the 19th century, Welsh slate production had become a cornerstone of global roofing material supply, significantly influencing urbanisation processes across Europe and the Americas (Thomas, 2005; Jones, 2013a). Whilst academia has studied the global economic role of Welsh slate, less attention has been given to how these networks shaped the lived experiences of quarry workers and their communities.

Scholars have examined the dual role of the slate industry as both an economic engine and a cultural force. Economically, slate quarrying created employment opportunities, fostering the growth of quarry towns and ancillary industries (Morris, 2012). These industrial networks were deeply embedded within the broader context of British industrialisation, reflecting patterns of resource dependency and uneven development (Price, 2019). Culturally, the industry influenced community structures, with generations of families reliant on the quarries for their livelihoods. Barker (2015) argues that the slate industry fostered resilient, close-knit communities characterised by unique cultural practices and oral tradition.

Despite its celebrated role in global architecture, the Welsh slate industry was marked by harsh and often perilous working conditions. Roberts (2015b) details the immense physical demands of quarrying and the severe health risks faced by workers, particularly silicosis, a lung disease caused by prolonged exposure to slate dust. Graham and Howard (2008) highlight a paradoxical reality: while underground workers faced the immediate dangers of structural collapses, those working above ground in slate mills often had even shorter life expectancies due to prolonged exposure to fine slate particles. Chronic inhalation of slate dust led to ‘miners’ cough’ and severe lung infections, exacerbating already precarious health conditions. This contrast underscores the broader reality of 19th-century industrial labour, where the drive for efficiency and profit often came at the expense of worker welfare, with occupational health risks frequently overlooked (Price, 2019; Morris, 2012).

2.2 The Decline of the Welsh Slate Industry

The decline of the Welsh slate industry reflects broader structural shifts in global economic and technological systems during the 20th century. Scholars identify a confluence of factors, including shifting market demands, industrial mechanisation, and economic downturns, all of which weakened the sector's long-term viability (Hudson, 2010; Morris, 2012; Roberts, 2015a). In particular, the emergence of alternative materials offered cheaper and more adaptable solutions, further diminishing the demand for Welsh slate (Barker, 2015). This transition exemplified industrial restructuring, as traditional resource-based industries struggled to adapt to new technologies and production methods (Hudson, 2010). This shift reduced the need for skilled labour while increasing operational costs, ultimately compounding the industry's decline (Morris, 2012).

Beyond its economic consequences, the decline of the slate industry also transformed the cultural and physical landscape of quarrying communities. Drawing on broader studies of industrial ruins, scholars such as Wheeler (2014) and DeSilvey (2006) examine how the physical remnants of declining industries are reinterpreted as sites of cultural memory and heritage. Rather than being viewed purely as symbols of economic failure, these post-industrial landscapes have taken on new meanings through heritage tourism, artistic interventions, and local memory work. For instance, DeSilvey (2006) argues that industrial ruins invite reinterpretation as spaces of nostalgia, resilience, and identity formation. Similarly, Wheeler (2014) highlights the role of community-led conservation efforts in framing former industrial sites not just as remnants of past labour but as valuable heritage landscapes that contribute to regional identity.

2.3 Landscape: Theoretical Foundations and Industrial Transformations

The concept of landscape has long been central to geographical studies, offering insights into the relationship between human activity, history, and the physical environment. However, landscapes are not simply passive backdrops to industrial development; they are socially constructed spaces shaped by power, memory, and ideology (Cosgrove, 1984; Wylie, 2007). The Welsh slate landscapes exemplify this, as their framing within heritage discourses has often emphasised their aesthetic and historical significance while downplaying the harsh lived realities of quarrying communities. Cosgrove (1984) and Daniels & Cosgrove (1993) argue that landscapes function as representations of power, selectively structuring historical narratives in ways that reinforce dominant ideologies.

As Cosgrove (1985, p.55) asserts:

> *"Landscape is thus a way of seeing, a composition and structuring of the world so that it may be appropriated by a detached individual spectator to whom an illusion of order and control is offered."*

This perspective suggests that landscapes are not neutral physical spaces but are instead curated and shaped by dominant social and political forces. The process of heritage designation can reinforce this by selectively emphasising certain historical narratives while marginalising others. By prioritising visual spectacle and controlled narratives, heritage frameworks may limit alternative ways of experiencing and understanding industrial landscapes. Whilst Cosgrove (1984) argues that landscape is framed by dominant power structures, other academics, including Wylie (2007), emphasise its lived and performative nature. As industries decline, their material landscapes do not disappear but instead take on shifting meanings, shaped by processes of decay, reinterpretation, and evolving heritage discourses (Edensor, 2005; DeSilvey 2017; Maddern & Adey, 2008). While Edensor (2005) and DeSilvey (2006) emphasise the aesthetic and material transformation of industrial ruins, less attention has been paid to how these spaces are experienced and reinterpreted by local communities today. Industrial landscapes do not merely preserve history; they also contain what Maddern & Adey (2008) describe as *spectral geographies*. These sites retain the lingering presence of their industrial pasts, shaping the ways in which they are currently experienced. This presence is not static but rather evolves over time through physical deterioration and structural erosion, complicating conventional approaches to preservation.

Beyond their visual and material dimensions, landscapes are also experienced, performed, and inhabited. Wylie (2007, p.149) critiques traditional landscape analysis for treating space as a passive setting, instead arguing that landscape is "to be lived in" and performed through human action and movement. This challenges static interpretations of landscape and emphasises its ongoing construction through social and cultural practices. Similarly, Ingold (2000) introduces the dwelling perspective, which shifts the focus from viewing landscapes as external objects to recognising them as dynamic environments that people continuously engage with and shape through daily practices. This perspective is particularly useful in understanding industrial heritage, where abandoned sites remain entangled in contemporary social life rather than existing as frozen relics of the past.

Extending these ideas, Rose (1993) critiques disembodied approaches to landscape, suggesting that scholarly analysis must account for lived experiences, subjectivities, and

situated perspectives. This is particularly relevant in former industrial sites, where workers' histories, tourism, and preservation efforts intersect in contested ways. While Wylie (2007) and Ingold (2000) focus on how landscapes are shaped through direct interaction, DeSilvey (2006) highlights how industrial ruins undergo constant reinterpretation within heritage discourse. She argues that these sites are not simply preserved but are subject to shifts in meaning, shaped by decay, conservation efforts, and evolving public engagement. These perspectives collectively underscore the tensions between conservation strategies, heritage tourism, and the ways communities remember and interact with these spaces. Rather than serving as static monuments, industrial landscapes remain in flux, where material traces of labour persist in ways that complicate fixed narratives of decline and renewal.

By incorporating these theoretical approaches, this research reframes Welsh slate landscapes not merely as relics of industrial history, but as evolving spaces shaped by power, representation, and lived experience. Understanding these landscapes requires engaging with the complexities of ideology, contested memory, and embodiment, moving beyond fixed interpretations of industrial heritage to consider how these sites continue to shape identity and cultural meaning in contemporary contexts.

2.4 Heritage: From Industrial Sites to Cultural Identity

The study of heritage encompasses both tangible and intangible dimensions, reflecting the ways in which historical sites, cultural practices, and collective memory contribute to place identity (Graham et al., 2000). In the case of the Welsh slate mining industry, its physical remnants serve as material anchors for historical interpretation, while oral histories, traditions, and lived experiences represent intangible aspects of heritage. However, heritage is not neutral; it is shaped by power dynamics, institutional decisions, and socio-political agendas that influence which histories are preserved and which are marginalised (Zukin, 1995; Hoelscher & Alderman, 2004). Mitchell (2000) argues that landscapes actively shape societal narratives rather than simply reflecting history, reinforcing or challenging dominant interpretations of the past. The UNESCO World Heritage designation exemplifies this process, transforming Welsh slate landscapes into internationally recognised heritage sites and reinforcing their historical significance within global heritage frameworks (UNESCO, 2021). This recognition has facilitated economic investment and tourism, reframing slate landscapes as cultural assets. However, scholars argue that such designations can impose structured narratives that prioritise economic and aesthetic concerns over local lived experiences, often reframing industrial landscapes for external consumption rather than as sites of memory and identity (Smith, 2006; Hoelscher & Alderman, 2004).

Zukin (1991) and Mitchell (2000) critique the ways heritage institutions reinforce dominant narratives, often sanitising industrial history to promote tourism and economic interests. In doing so, working-class experiences of labour and hardship may be obscured, promoting a curated version of history that emphasises visual appeal over lived experience. Heritage landscapes are not simply relics of the past but contested spaces where multiple narratives intersect. Smith (2006) highlights that heritage is an active process, continually shaped by contemporary needs, political considerations and selective memory, privileging economic and national narratives while obscuring the labour histories and social struggles associated with these landscapes. The framing of Welsh slate sites as heritage assets has facilitated economic regeneration through tourism, but it has also transformed the ways in which these landscapes are perceived and valued. As Hoelscher & Alderman (2004, p.349) note:

> *"Control of a society's memory largely conditions the hierarchy of power. Seen in this light, social memory is inherently instrumental: individuals and groups recall the past not for its own sake, but as a tool to bolster different aims and agendas."*

In this context, the curation of Welsh slate heritage raises questions about whose memory is prioritised and whose histories are excluded. Zukin (1991) highlights how landscapes are shaped to reflect elite interests, meaning that industrial ruins are not simply preserved for historical significance, but are also reconstructed in ways that align with contemporary cultural and economic objectives. The transformation of former slate quarries into heritage attractions and tourist destinations risks repackaging industrial sites as cultural attractions while downplaying their history and social struggle. As Mitchell (2000) argues, landscapes do ideological work, framing certain narratives while obscuring others. While UNESCO recognition secures the historical status of these landscapes, it simultaneously reshapes them for contemporary consumption, often at the expense of working-class narratives and the social struggles embedded in these spaces. This reflects broader tensions in heritage management, where narratives of industrial resilience can obscure past labour struggles and economic decline (Zukin, 1991; Mitchell, 2000).

Beyond shaping memory, landscapes play a fundamental role in constructing national identity. Brace (2003) argues that landscapes are central to this process, acting as more than just physical spaces; they become embedded with symbolic meaning that reinforces collective identity. Similarly, Daniels (1993) explores how landscapes serve as tools for shaping imagined communities, where national histories are constructed and maintained through stories, monuments, and cultural memory. In this context, the Welsh slate quarries function not only as industrial remnants but also as cultural symbols of national pride, reflecting a

broader narrative of resilience and labour. However, landscapes are not passive or neutral; rather, they actively shape and reinforce national identity through selective framing and representation. The heritage designation of slate landscapes exemplifies this process, as such recognitions are not merely about historical preservation but also about shaping public perception and reinforcing particular narratives of the past. While these designations elevate the historical significance of slate quarries within global heritage frameworks, they may also impose structured interpretations that privilege economic and aesthetic considerations over more complex social realities.

While heritage initiatives attempt to frame Welsh slate ruins within structured narratives of industrial significance, the material decay and spectral presence of these sites ensure that they remain dynamic and contested. By integrating these perspectives, this study moves beyond traditional heritage analysis to examine how power, memory, representation, and national identity shape the interpretation of post-industrial landscapes in North Wales. The contested nature of industrial heritage highlights ongoing debates over authenticity, historical erasure, and community engagement in heritage management, emphasising the complexities of preserving and narrating former industrial sites.

2.5 Situating the Research

Existing scholarship on slate mining, industrial landscapes, and heritage geographies provides a foundation for understanding the economic, social, and cultural significance of the Welsh slate industry. Extensive research has examined its 19th-century expansion, technological advancements, and its role in shaping industrial communities (Hughes, 2004; Morris, 2012; Hudson, 2010). Scholars such as Roberts (2015a) and Thomas (2005) highlight the industry's role in economic prosperity and local identity, while others (Barker, 2015; Price, 2019) explore how it influenced industrial communities and social structures. Alongside these contributions, critical perspectives have examined its labour exploitation, health risks, and long-term environmental consequences (Roberts, 2015b; Graham & Howard, 2008).

Despite this substantial body of work, research has primarily focused on major slate sites**,** leaving smaller industrial landscapes understudied. While Edensor (2005) conceptualises industrial ruins as dynamic spaces of memory and renewal, his framework has rarely been applied to lesser-known sites such as Cwmystradllyn and the Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill. Similarly, Wylie (2007) and Ingold (2000) examine landscapes as lived spaces, yet their perspectives remain largely unexplored in post-industrial Welsh heritage studies. This research addresses this gap by interrogating how smaller industrial landscapes are framed, experienced, and contested in contemporary heritage discourse. Additionally, this study

critiques dominant heritage narratives, which, as Mitchell (2000) and Zukin (1991) argue, often privilege economic and aesthetic considerations over lived industrial histories. Heritage frameworks frequently sanitise industrial decline by repackaging sites for tourism and investment, while working-class experiences of labour and hardship remain marginalised. This research examines whose voices are included or excluded in the heritage process and explores how local communities engage with post-industrial landscapes beyond formal designations.

Through this approach, the study makes three key contributions:

1. **Historical Geography** – Moving beyond economic accounts of slate mining to explore how former quarrying sites shape social and cultural identity.
2. **Landscape Studies** – Extending debates on post-industrial ruins by focusing on their ongoing reinterpretation and engagement, rather than just preservation.
3. **Heritage Geographies** – Interrogating the role of power, exclusion, and contested narratives in industrial heritage management.

Building on the work of Edensor (2005), Roberts (2015a), and DeSilvey (2017), this study challenges static interpretations of industrial ruins and reframes them as active sites of heritage negotiation and community engagement. By shifting focus to underexplored, smaller-scale landscapes, it broadens discussions on industrial heritage beyond traditional frameworks of monumental preservation, recognising these sites as spaces where identity and memory continue to evolve.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This research adopted a mixed-methods approach, integrating archival analysis, qualitative interviews, autoethnographic reflection, and photographic documentation to construct a multi-dimensional perspective on how industrial heritage is remembered and interpreted. This chapter details the research strategies, data collection methods, sampling techniques, and analytical frameworks employed, while also critically evaluating their strengths and limitations within the context of this study.

3.1 Mixed-Methods Approach

A predominantly qualitative mixed-methods approach was employed, drawing on diverse sources to construct a nuanced historical and cultural analysis. This approach enabled the triangulation of historical records with lived experiences, enhancing the depth and reliability of analysis (Creswell, 2014). This methodological framework was particularly effective for examining the Welsh slate mining industry through social, historical, and cultural dimensions (Bryman, 2012). Incorporating multiple sources of evidence ensured a more reliable analysis, with findings cross-referenced in the results and discussion sections to enhance interpretative depth. Autoethnographic reflections and photographic documentation offered an embodied perspective, bridging historical narratives with contemporary experiences of the slate mining landscapes. The integration of multiple data sources prevented fragmentation, ensuring a cohesive interpretation (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). By explicitly linking findings across different methodologies, this study strengthened analytical depth and reinforced the validity of the conclusions drawn (Leech et al., 2009).

3.2 Historical Analysis

Historical analysis examined the socio-economic development, labour conditions, and decline of the Welsh slate mining industry in Cwmystradllyn and the Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill. Archival research was the core methodological approach, providing access to primary sources such as government reports, industry records, and personal letters. These records offered valuable insights into the working conditions of quarry labourers, industrial operations, and the broader socio-economic transformations that shaped the region. However, archival materials are not neutral repositories of history; they are socially constructed artefacts shaped by institutional biases, power dynamics, and selective preservation practices (Gilliland & McKemmish, 2004; Stoler, 2002). Therefore, this study adopted a critical archival approach, recognising that archives both reflect and reinforce dominant narratives while often marginalising the perspectives of underrepresented voices (Lynch, 1999; Lorimer, 2010).

Archival materials were identified using a combination of online catalogues, historical society records, and recommendations from archivists at each institution. Searches prioritised sources that offered first-hand accounts of quarry operations, labour struggles, and community life, ensuring a balance between institutional documents and personal testimonies. Government and industry reports provided quantitative data on production outputs and employment patterns, while personal letters revealed subjective experiences of miners and their families. However, official records often privilege elite perspectives, documenting economic efficiency and productivity while omitting or downplaying labour conditions, workplace hazards, and the socio-economic hardships experienced by quarry workers (Joyce, 1999; Hill, 1993). As a result, the selective nature of archival preservation means that histories of resistance, exploitation, and informal labour, are often excluded (Lynch, 1999; Portelli, 1991).

Recognising these limitations, this study engaged in critical archival triangulation, cross-referencing archival data, secondary literature, and visual documentation to reconstruct a more inclusive account of the slate industry. Where possible, notes, transcriptions, and photographs of materials were taken to facilitate in-depth analysis, allowing for comparisons between official narratives and minor's lived experiences.

A summary of the key archival sources consulted is presented in Table 1 below:

Source Name	Date Range	Content Summary	Archive Location
Ynys y Pandy Operational Logs	1856-1866	Production figures, worker lists, equipment orders	Gwynedd Archives (Caernarfon)
Huw Elliot Jones Personal Letters	1870s-1880s	Letters from miner to family about working conditions	Community Archive - Private Collection
Cwmystradllyn Quarry Photographs	1860s-1900s	Images of quarry operations, machinery, and workers	University of Wales Bangor Archives
Local Council Reports	1860-1930	Reports on housing, safety, and economic impact of mining	Gwynedd Archives

Table 1: *An overview of the key sources consulted for this research, including archival records, personal correspondence, photographs, and oral histories.*

Despite the wealth of available archival material, several challenges were encountered. Many records were incomplete, damaged, or inherently biased, reinforcing dominant historical narratives rather than providing an objective account of the past (Stoler, 2002). The absence of certain voices, particularly those of women and children, was a recurring issue, as archives

have traditionally been structured to prioritise economic and administrative records over social histories (Hill, 1993; Lynch, 1999). For example, while operational records meticulously documented productivity and financial costs, they rarely acknowledged the physical toll of mining labour, the psychological impact of hazardous work, or the informal contributions of women in supporting mining communities (Portelli, 1991). To address these archival silences, this study supplemented its findings with oral histories (via semi-structured interviews) and ethnographic reflections, drawing on interviews with descendants of quarry workers and personal site visits. Oral history research has been recognised as a powerful tool for recovering subaltern and marginalised narratives that are absent from official records (Thomson, 1999). By integrating oral testimonies with archival sources, this research constructed a more inclusive and socially grounded account of the slate industry, capturing the lived experiences that industrial records often obscure.

3.3 Ethnographic and Interview Methods

A purposive sampling strategy was used to identify key participants with direct or inherited knowledge of the slate industry, including local residents, descendants of miners, and heritage professionals (Marshall and Rossman, 2014). A total of 10 semi-structured interviews were conducted, each lasting between 45 and 90 minutes (see Table 2, Appendix A). Oral history research has demonstrated that family narratives provide valuable insight into cultural heritage (Thomson, 1999); however, they also pose risks of selective memory and romanticised retellings (Portelli, 1991). To mitigate this, interview findings were cross-checked against archival research and supplemented with discussions with non-family members to ensure a balanced interpretation of historical narratives.

To expand the participant pool and capture a wider diversity of perspectives, snowball sampling was also implemented (Goodman, 1961). Initial interviewees, many of whom were community members with direct ties to the slate industry, referred additional participants, including retired quarry workers, local historians, and individuals involved in heritage preservation. This method was particularly effective in accessing older residents who had first-hand or inherited knowledge of quarry life. Snowball sampling also fostered trust and rapport, as referrals through mutual connections eased participant hesitations. However, this method posed challenges, particularly the risk of homogeneity (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981), as social networks often reinforce dominant narratives. To address this, efforts were made to recruit participants from different demographics, occupations, and geographic locations within Cwmystradllyn, ensuring a more representative dataset.

To maintain consistency, a flexible interview guide was used, allowing structured discussions while also providing space for participants to introduce themes of personal significance. Questions focused on working conditions, labour struggles, community resilience, and the post-industrial transformation of the landscape. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and coded using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The key themes that emerged were cross-referenced with archival materials and autoethnographic reflections to strengthen the validity of the findings. The ethnographic component further enriched this study, enabling direct engagement with landscapes, historical sites, and community practices. The ethnographic approach supported this study by allowing direct engagement with both the physical landscape and the cultural practices surrounding the Welsh slate industry. This approach ensured that the research remained attuned to the complex ways in which industrial heritage is remembered, experienced, and contested in contemporary Cwmystradllyn.

3.4 Autoethnographic Reflection

Beyond observations of others, the research also incorporated an autoethnographic dimension, allowing for a more personal engagement with the industrial landscape. While ethnographic methods focused on capturing community experiences, autoethnography positioned the researcher within the landscape, reflecting on personal encounters, emotions, and embodied interactions with Cwmystradllyn and the Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill. A reflexive research diary was kept throughout the study, documenting emotional responses, sensory experiences, and personal reflections during site visits and engagement with archival materials. This reflective process captures the affective dimensions of the slate mining landscape, recognising that landscapes are not passive spaces, but dynamic sites of memory, loss, and nostalgia (Wylie, 2007; Anderson and Smith, 2001). As part of this process, I conducted several site visits to the Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill and the surrounding landscape in Cwmystradllyn. These visits allowed me to record sensory impressions and observations in a personal diary, capturing the interplay between industrial decay, natural reclamation, and individual reflection.

Photographic documentation complemented these written reflections, serving as a visual extension of the autoethnographic process. These images, alongside **video footage**, provided additional layers of engagement with the site, offering a means to analyse spatial relationships, industrial remnants, and the emotional responses they evoke. An example of this documentation is shown in Figure 3, a drone image taken during a site visit to the Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill, illustrating its spatial relationship with the surrounding landscape. Additionally, **further drone footage** was captured to contextualise the embodied experience

of the site, including my own presence within the landscape, reflecting on its scale, atmosphere, and historical resonance.

Figure 3: *A drone image taken on 04/08/2024, picturing me within one of the open windows of the Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill, Cwmystradllyn (Own Photography, 2024)*

This image, along with selected photographs presented in Appendix C (Figures 6a-g), contributed to the autoethnographic process by documenting visual, spatial, and sensory engagements with the site. Visual analysis techniques were applied to critically examine how the landscape was perceived and experienced during site visits (Rose, 2016). To address potential subjectivity, photographic observations were considered alongside archival data and participant interviews, ensuring that personal impressions were contextualised within broader historical and community narratives. Autoethnography, while offering embodied insight into landscape and memory (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011), is not without limitations. Finlay (2002) warns of the risk of 'self-indulgent introspection,' where personal reflection overshadows broader analytical insights. To mitigate this, reflections were continually cross-referenced with interview data and archival sources, ensuring that individual experiences contributed to, rather than dominated, the wider historical interpretation.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data analysis process integrated thematic analysis, content analysis, and visual analysis to interpret the diverse sources collected in this study. This multi-layered approach ensured a rigorous examination of qualitative data while incorporating numerical insights where relevant. By systematically coding and cross-referencing archival records, interviews, and autoethnographic reflections, the study developed a comprehensive understanding of the historical and cultural significance of the Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill and Cwmystradllyn.

Thematic analysis was applied to qualitative data from semi-structured interviews and autoethnographic reflections. An inductive coding approach was used, allowing themes to emerge naturally from the data without imposing pre-existing categories (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The process began with an initial round of open coding, where recurring concepts were identified across transcripts and diary entries. These codes were then grouped into broader thematic categories aligned with the research objectives. To ensure analytical rigor, codes were reviewed iteratively and cross-checked with archival materials to validate historical narratives. Archival records were analysed using content analysis to identify patterns related to socio-economic structures, labour conditions, and industrial decline. Archival documents were then coded for references to quarry operations, working conditions, and community impact. While numerical data, such as production figures and workforce statistics, was reviewed for historical context, the study did not employ statistical modelling or quantitative analysis. Instead, the numerical data was used to support qualitative insights into the scale and decline of the slate industry.

Photographic documentation, including site visit images and drone footage (see Section 3.4), was analysed using visual analysis techniques. This approach examined how industrial ruins, spatial arrangements, and landscape features contributed to meanings of memory, loss, and industrial heritage (Rose, 2016). Visual data was linked to textual data by integrating observations from reflexive diary entries and participant interviews. Rather than serving as standalone evidence, the photographs functioned as prompts for deeper reflection on the materiality and affective dimensions of the mining landscape. By combining these analytical methods, the study ensured a holistic and critically engaged interpretation of the slate industry’s legacy. Cross-referencing different data sources helped mitigate biases and strengthen the validity of findings, positioning personal narratives and archival records within broader historical and cultural frameworks.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

All participants were provided with a detailed information sheet outlining the purpose and scope of the research, their right to withdraw at any time, and how their data would be stored securely and anonymised in any publications. Given the sensitive nature of personal and community histories in Cwmystradllyn, particular care was taken to respect local traditions, cultural sensitivities, and personal memories, consistent with ethical guidance for community-based research (Smith, 2005; ESRC, 2015). Efforts were made to ensure that participants retained agency over how their narratives were represented, including providing opportunities for clarification and withdrawal at multiple stages of the research process, in line with best practices in qualitative research (BSA, 2017; Bryman, 2012).

Ethical reflexivity was maintained throughout the research process, with open acknowledgment of my familial connection to the area and the inclusion of a family member as an interviewee**.** Including a family member posed ethical considerations regarding potential bias, as familial narratives are often shaped by nostalgia and selective memory (Finlay, 2002). To address this, my positionality was made explicit to all participants, ensuring transparency and allowing them to make informed decisions about their participation. The family member's account was also critically examined alongside archival records, historical documents, and interviews with non-family participants to avoid privileging personal memory over broader community narratives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This commitment to reflexivity and triangulation ensured that my personal connection enhanced, rather than compromised, the rigour of the research (BSA, 2017). The ethical approach adopted in this study aligns with principles outlined by the British Sociological Association (BSA, 2017) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC, 2015), ensuring respect, integrity, and the protection of participants' rights and well-being.

CHATPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction to Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents and critically discusses the key findings of this research, focusing on the historical significance, cultural relevance, and contemporary meaning of the Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill and the surrounding landscape of Cwmystradllyn. The discussion is organised thematically, with each section exploring one of the key themes identified during the research process. These themes provide a framework for understanding how the legacy of the slate industry continues to shape the cultural identity and collective memory of the region. The chapter not only highlights the material and cultural remnants of the slate industry but also critically examines how these legacies are remembered, contested, and reinterpreted by contemporary communities.

4.2 Theme 1: Historical Uses and Lost Histories

The historical significance of the Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill and the broader Cwmystradllyn landscape is closely tied to the development of the Welsh slate industry in the 19th century. Archival records provided valuable insights into the mill's operational history, the working lives of miners, and the broader socio-economic and cultural structures that emerged around the slate industry. However, these records also highlight significant silences, particularly around the lived experiences of marginalised groups and the gradual erosion of community memory as industrial decline took hold.

4.2.1 Archival Findings: A Fragmented Industrial Past

Archival records from Gwynedd Archives (1859) paint a vivid picture of life within and around the Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill. Operational logs document the demanding physical labour involved in processing slate, often conducted under hazardous conditions with rudimentary safety measures. One operational log from 1859 records:

> *"Three injuries sustained this morning in Level 2. Rockfall during afternoon shift – no fatalities reported."* (Gwynedd Archives, 1859)

Further entries reinforce the frequency of accidents and the dangers posed by the working environment:

> *"Worker Thomas E., aged 14, struck by falling slate sheet during morning shift. Attended to by foreman, unable to return to work."* (Gwynedd Archives, 1859)

> *"Severe flooding reported at Level 4 following heavy rain. All work suspended for two days to clear debris and inspect retaining walls."* (Gwynedd Archives, 1859)

These terse operational notes, focused on production and basic safety, offer only fleeting glimpses into the daily realities of slate work, leaving the broader human experiences of fear, injury, and resilience largely unrecorded. The brevity and factual nature of these records reduce complex personal hardships to mere statistics, with little acknowledgment of the long-term physical and psychological toll on workers. They document events, not experiences, prioritising operational continuity over individual suffering. A more comprehensive dataset of recorded injuries, spanning April – June 1859, can be found in Appendix D, Table 3. This expanded record documents not only the frequency and severity of injuries, but also patterns of risk tied to specific environmental hazards and the intergenerational nature of slate labour, where the same family names reappear across incidents.

Such entries, while starkly factual, only hint at the physical toll experienced by workers. Beyond injury reports, personal correspondence preserved within the archives adds a more human dimension. In a letter from a mill worker to his sister, dated 1875, the worker wrote:

> *"The darkness here is complete by the end of shift. We work by the flicker of candles, the wax pooled at our feet by evening. Hands too numb to grip the slate, but we must press on."* (Jones Family Papers, 1875)

This sense of physical hardship was echoed in the oral histories collected from descendants of slate workers. Interviewee 1, whose great-grandfather worked at the mill, described:

> *“They spoke of the cold, the noise of hammers ringing through the stone. But it was the silence at the end of the shift they remembered most – the quiet walk home through the valley, carrying the weight of the day on their backs.”*

These archival fragments and family recollections highlight what Edensor (2005) terms the ‘embodied experience’ of industrial work, where physical labour, environmental conditions, and sensory deprivation coalesce into a distinctive lived experience. The mill itself was not merely a site of production, but a space where the boundaries between body, labour, and landscape blurred.

4.2.2 Intergenerational Memory and Historical Silences

Interviews with descendants revealed how these industrial experiences have been passed down through families, forming part of an enduring cultural memory. Interviewee 3 reflected:

> *"Slate was sort of our identity, we were a slate family. Even when I went to school quite far from Cwmystradllyn, people knew me as one of the slate girls. It wasn't just what my father did for work, it was who I was. Everyone knew we were part of the quarry and slate was my future."*

This intergenerational pride aligns with Roberts' (2015a) observation that industrial heritage is not solely about the physical structures left behind, but also about the narratives, values, and identities embedded within families and communities. The experience of Interviewee 3 also highlights how personal and family identities were shaped by slate work, even for daughters, whose futures were closely tied to the industry, whether directly or through family expectations. At the same time, this oral history process highlights absences. Women's contributions to the slate economy were rarely documented in either archives or family narratives. The experience of Interviewee 3 underscores how these gendered experiences, while present in personal memory, often remain excluded from the formal historical record. This echoes Lorimer's (2010) argument about the selective curation of industrial history where certain voices and experiences are systematically excluded.

4.2.3 Autoethnographic Reflections: Walking the Ruins

My own visits to the Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill provided a visceral connection to these historical fragments. Standing inside the skeletal remains of the mill, the silence felt tangible, a stark contrast to the imagined noise of industry that once filled the space. The absence of machinery, workers, and even archival completeness created what DeSilvey (2017, p.12) calls "the productive tension of ruin", where absence becomes as meaningful as presence. In one diary entry, I wrote:

> *"The silence is overwhelming. The building stands as a forgotten monument, its stories buried deep within the rubble, waiting to be uncovered."* (Appendix E, Figure 7b)

This sensory and emotional experience mirrored what many interviewees described, a sense that the past is not entirely gone but lingers in the materiality of place. Wylie's (2007) notion of landscape as a lived space is particularly apt here. The mill is not just a historical artefact; it is an active participant in how descendants and visitors make sense of the past. Its physical

decay embodies both loss and resilience, a palimpsest where each crack and collapse speaks to cycles of ambition, exploitation, and abandonment.

4.2.4 Lost Histories and the Politics of Memory

While the Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill stands as a visible reminder of industrial ambition, much of its history remains absent from formal records. This absence raises broader questions about whose history gets remembered and whose is forgotten. Archival silences around gender, informal labour, and environmental impact echo what Smith (2006, p.29) terms the “authorised heritage discourse”, where heritage narratives privilege elite and economic perspectives over everyday experiences.

The gap between material ruin and cultural memory also became apparent in community interviews. Interviewee 10, a local archivist, lamented:

> *“The mill is known for its architecture, but not for the people. Tourists marvel at its architectural construction, but no one asks who laid the stone.”*

This tension reflects a common challenge in industrial heritage preservation, the risk that material conservation displaces the more fragile, contested cultural narratives tied to the site (DeSilvey, 2017). For descendants, the mill is both a monument to family pride and a reminder of how quickly labouring lives are erased from official history.

Expanding on Interviewee 10’s recollection, the mill itself acts as both a tangible and symbolic anchor for these cultural identities. Its architectural grandeur, unusual for its rural setting, amplifies its symbolic status. This highlights the ongoing tension between material heritage (the preservation of structures) and cultural heritage (the preservation of community memory). Industrial heritage sites are often celebrated for their aesthetic or technical qualities, while the social and cultural histories embedded within them gradually fade or become sanitised for tourist consumption. This privileging of physical and economic narratives over social memory strongly reflects what Smith (2006, p.29) calls the dominant heritage discourse, where institutional and elite perspectives define the value and meaning of heritage sites.

The cultural significance of the Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill cannot be reduced to its physical remains alone. Its importance persists in the stories shared within families, the sensory memory rooted in the landscape, and the emotional inheritance passed down through generations. These lived experiences, preserved through oral history, personal testimony, and community memory, transform the mill into more than a relic of industrial production, becoming

a cultural node where family, labour, and landscape are inseparably intertwined. However, this deeply personal heritage remains fragile, threatened by both the physical decay of the site itself and the pressures of heritage commodification, which risk privileging aesthetic appeal over complex social histories. Preserving the mill's significance therefore requires not only safeguarding its architectural remains, but actively foregrounding the voices, emotions, and identities of those whose lives were shaped by it. This calls for a critical heritage approach that challenges heritage narratives dominated by institutional and economic priorities, ensuring that the fragmented, everyday experiences of women, families, and workers are recognised as vital components of the site's historical and cultural legacy — voices that, without such intervention, risk being permanently lost beneath the veneer of industrial ruin.

4.3 Theme 2: Cultural Significance and Sense of Identity

The cultural significance of the Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill and the surrounding landscape extends far beyond its physical remnants. For the communities tied to this site, the mill and its associated histories remain embedded within personal identities, family legacies, and collective memory. This section explores how slate heritage continues to shape local and intergenerational identities, how the site acts as a cultural touchstone, and how the affective qualities of the landscape itself contribute to a shared sense of place and belonging.

4.3.1 Cultural Identity Shaped by Slate

Interviews with residents and descendants revealed how slate mining has shaped family identities. For many, slate was not merely an industry, it was the foundation upon which family stories, values, and livelihoods were built. As Interviewee 1 explained:

> *"My grandfather never spoke much about the work itself – just about the pride. Slate wasn't just work; it was who you were. Your family, your name, your home – everything came from that slate."*

This quote highlights how slate work was not just a means of economic survival, but a defining element of family and community identity. Archival records further reinforce this sense of embeddedness, with family names appearing repeatedly in payrolls, accident reports, and cooperative society membership lists from the late 19th century. These documents reveal how generations of the same families worked in the quarries, passing down not only skills but also a strong sense of belonging tied to the landscape itself. These familial ties were reinforced by shared spaces like chapels and cooperative societies, where the stories and values of slate work were embedded into community life. Such personal connections to place align with

Roberts' (2015a) work on industrial heritage as a lived inheritance, where economic roles evolve into cultural identities over generations. Through these interwoven networks of work and community, slate mining became not just an occupation, but a cultural legacy shaping both individual and collective identities.

4.3.2 Landscape as Lived and Felt Space

The cultural significance of Ynys y Pandy is not only embedded in stories and documents but also in the emotional and sensory experiences of the site itself. Wylie (2007) highlights the concept of landscape as lived space, where places are not static backgrounds but are experienced viscerally and emotionally, shaped by memories, sensory engagement, and personal encounters.

This idea was echoed through my own autoethnographic reflections, particularly during visits to the slate mill. In my field diary, I noted:

> *"Walking through the mill's remains, the wind moved freely through the gaps in the walls. With no plaques or formal markers, the silence of the site was sort of deafening, it seemed to hold the weight of its history. Desolate and alone."* (Appendix E, Figure 7b)

The absence of formal commemoration at the mill paradoxically amplifies its cultural weight. Without interpretation boards or tourist narratives to mediate the experience, visitors are left to engage directly with the site's atmosphere. This absence allows personal and communal memories to surface organically, shaped by the site's silence, decay, and natural surroundings. This aligns with Edensor's (2005) analysis of industrial ruins as sensory and affective spaces, where weathering, silence, and material deterioration evoke not just historical processes but emotional responses of loss, pride, and longing.

4.3.3 Emotional Heritage and Generational Storytelling

Emotional heritage in Cwmystradllyn does not pass seamlessly from one generation to the next; it is continually reshaped as family stories adapt to changing social and economic contexts. Interviews revealed that stories about the slate mill were often embedded in everyday life.

Interviewee 7 recalled:

> *"My grandmother would tell us stories about the quarry over Sunday dinner – about the noise, the dust, and how they'd hear the blasts from miles away. It wasn't a history lesson; it was just part of how we understood who we were."*

This blending of memory with everyday family rituals aligns with Jones' (2011) concept of embodied heritage, where cultural memory is carried through repeated practices rather than formal heritage preservation. However, the nature of these stories has shifted across generations. Older interviewees, particularly those who directly experienced the decline of the industry, emphasised hardship and survival. In contrast, younger descendants often framed the slate industry's past with a sense of pride and romanticism, shaped partly by heritage tourism narratives. Interviewee 5 noted:

> *"We grew up hearing how tough it was, but now you see it on TV, and it's all about the beauty of the landscape and the skill of the workers – the hard bits get smoothed over."*

This evolution reflects how emotional heritage is not fixed, but reshaped to fit contemporary identities and expectations, sometimes emphasising pride and nostalgia over the physical realities of labour and danger.

Importantly, several interviewees highlighted that it was often women, mothers, grandmothers, and aunts, who were the primary storytellers, passing down memories informally within families. This challenges the archival silence around women's roles, showing that while their labour may have been invisible in official records, they played a central role in preserving and shaping emotional heritage. Ultimately, emotional heritage in Cwmystradllyn operates in a shifting space between personal memory, family storytelling, and public heritage narratives. It is shaped both by intimate family recollections and by the wider framing of the slate industry within Welsh heritage discourse. Understanding how these processes interact is essential to recognising how industrial heritage functions not just as a record of the past, but as an evolving cultural resource for shaping identity and belonging in the present.

4.4 Theme 3: Loss of Culture and Erosion of Historical Importance

The decline of the slate industry in Cwmystradllyn and the closure of the Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill marked more than just economic collapse, it initiated a gradual erosion of cultural identity and historical significance within the community. As the industrial heartbeat of the region

slowed, so too did the everyday practices, traditions, and stories that once defined life around the mill. This theme draws together archival records, interviews with local residents, and personal reflections to explore how the loss of industrial activity triggered a broader cultural void, with implications for collective memory and the preservation of local heritage.

4.4.1 Historical Decline and the Physical Traces of Loss

Archival records from Gwynedd Archives (1875) capture the mill's initial promise and subsequent decline, with production records showing a peak in the mid-19th century, followed by a steady drop as larger quarries and mills elsewhere outcompeted Ynys y Pandy. One 1890s operational entry reads:

> *"Output reduced by half compared to 1874. Local workforce dispersing to neighbouring quarries; mill operating at minimal capacity."* (Gwynedd Archives, 1892)

This decline was not just economic but profoundly social. Families who had worked in the quarries for generations found themselves uprooted, either migrating to larger industrial centres or facing unemployment and social isolation. Edensor (2005) reminds us that industrial ruins like Ynys y Pandy not only mark the collapse of production but also embody the afterlives of industry, where human presence fades but its traces linger in fragmented material forms.

4.4.2 Intergenerational Loss and Cultural Silence

For those who remained, the mill became a silent witness to these upheavals. Interviewees frequently expressed a sense of cultural loss tied to the site's decline – a void in both physical space and cultural memory. As Interviewee 6 explained:

> *"It wasn't just the work that went – it was the stories, the songs, the way people knew the land. My great-grandfather's letters talk about chapel meetings after shift, the gossip, the songs they sang. That all went."*

This highlights how the intangible cultural heritage associated with slate mining eroded alongside the physical structures of the industry. This erosion echoes DeSilvey's (2017) concept of entropic heritage, where decay and forgetting are not failures of preservation, but processes through which cultural landscapes transition into new forms.

4.4.3 Personal Reflections: Photographing Absence

My own autoethnographic fieldwork reinforced this sense of loss. During a visit to the Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill, the absence of any official memorial or interpretative signage was striking. As the building stood in physical isolation, its grandeur was diminished by time and overgrowth. As I noted in my field diary:

> *"The mill's arches rise above the bracken, elegant and empty. The only signs of human presence are the moss-softened stones and the absence of roofs. It's not a ruin you visit; it's a ruin you stumble upon."* (Appendix E, Figure 7d)

The photographs I took during this visit visually capture this sense of loss, highlighting the contrast between engineered stone and encroaching vegetation, between industrial ambition and natural entropy. When shared with interview participants, these images prompted reflections on how the physical ruin evokes not just the decline of an industry but the disappearance of an entire way of life. Selected examples are presented in Figure 4 and Figure 5, with a complete collection available in Appendix C (Figures 6a-g).

Figure 4: *Photograph of the Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill's entrance (Own Photography, 2024).*

Figure 5: *Photograph of me inside the Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill looking out over the neighbouring landscape (Own Photography, 2024).*

4.4.4 Memory, Heritage, and the Risk of Erasure

Several interviewees voiced concerns that this cultural void was deepening with each generation. Interviewee 3 lamented:

> *"My father's generation still told the stories – about the men, the accidents, the songs they sang. But who will tell those stories now? The mill's just a photo spot on Instagram for most visitors."*

This fear that industrial heritage is being flattened into aesthetic tourism reflects Smith's (2006) critique of the Authorised Heritage Discourse, where heritage sites are often preserved for their architectural or touristic value, but stripped of the complex human stories that gave them meaning. For communities like Cwmystradllyn, the disconnect between formal heritage narratives and lived experience risks further alienates descendants from their own history.

4.4.5 Collective Memory and the Fragility of Local Histories

Despite this erosion, interviewees also expressed a determined commitment to remembrance, even if it occurs outside official channels. Family albums, oral histories, and personal pilgrimages to the mill all form part of an informal heritage process, where local communities preserve memory independently. Interviewee 1 articulated this sense of responsibility:

> *"We don't need plaques to remember them – but it would be nice if someone asked us what the mill means to us."*

This underscores how collective memory operates at a community level, outside the bounds of official heritage management. In these cases, memory is not curated through museums or councils but through family storytelling, commemorative walking, and personal reflection, aligning with Graham et al.'s (2000) argument that heritage is always contested and multi-vocal, shaped by conflicting narratives of progress, loss, and pride.

The loss of the slate industry triggered not only economic decline but also the progressive erosion of cultural practices, intergenerational stories, and local identities tied to sites like Ynys y Pandy. While the physical mill survives as a fragmented symbol, its deeper meanings, tied to work, community, and memory, face the risk of erasure, particularly as heritage narratives prioritise architectural spectacle over lived experience. At the same time, informal community memory persists, maintained through storytelling, personal pilgrimage, and the emotional charge of the landscape itself. This highlights a crucial tension in industrial heritage

preservation: balancing material conservation with the safeguarding of cultural memory, ensuring that sites like Ynys y Pandy are remembered not just for their architectural curiosity, but for the people and cultures that gave them life.

4.5 Theme 4: Contemporary Meaning and Community Resilience

While the decline of the Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill represents a significant cultural and economic rupture, it has also become a focal point for contemporary meaning-making and community resilience. As local residents and heritage groups engage with the mill's physical remains and its historical narratives, they actively reinterpret its significance, blending remembrance, economic renewal, and creative adaptation. This process of making sense of industrial heritage in the present reflects wider theoretical debates on creative destruction, adaptive reuse, and the evolving role of industrial landscapes in post-industrial communities. Archival materials reveal how the economic decline of the slate industry produced long-term socio-economic challenges for Cwmystradllyn. By the early 20th century, population decline and outmigration were recorded in local census data, with families relocating to more prosperous industrial centres or abandoning mining altogether. This economic contraction left behind not only physical ruins but also a fractured sense of community identity. However, contemporary interviews indicate that for many residents, the mill remains a living symbol, not just of the past, but of contemporary struggles over identity, heritage tourism, and rural regeneration.

Interviewee 10 described how the mill was increasingly seen as a potential economic asset, albeit one that requires careful management. They explained:

> *"We're seeing more interest in the mill lately, especially from walkers and heritage tourists. That's good for the village, but we don't want to turn it into just another Instagram backdrop. It should tell a story."*

This tension between economic revitalisation and heritage integrity reflects the complex role of industrial heritage in contemporary rural economies. On one hand, heritage tourism offers a rare opportunity for economic diversification, particularly in areas where traditional industries have collapsed. On the other hand, as DeSilvey (2017) argues, the commodification of heritage can risk flattening the complex and often painful histories embedded within these sites, turning them into aestheticized objects rather than meaningful cultural landscapes. This tension was also visible in my own autoethnographic reflections during a visit to the mill. Standing before its monumental arches, it was easy to see how the site could be packaged as a picturesque ruin, a convenient stop on heritage trails marketed to visitors. However, walking alone through

the structure, surrounded by silence and bracken, the mill felt less like a tourist attraction and more like a site haunted by absence and resilience.

This raw, uncurated presence aligns with DeSilvey's (2017) concept of creative destruction, the idea that heritage value can emerge not through preservation alone, but through allowing sites to decay, fragment, and adapt to new uses. The mill, in its current state, invites creative interpretation from both visitors and locals, fostering what Edensor (2005) describes as a plural, improvised sense of place, where the meanings of the site are negotiated rather than dictated. Several interviewees highlighted grassroots efforts to preserve and reinterpret slate heritage in ways that reflect local priorities. These range from small-scale oral history projects and community-led walking tours to more ambitious plans for interpretive installations that would blend archival materials, personal stories, and contemporary reflections. Interviewee 3, whose father worked in the slate industry, described how these initiatives seek to balance past and present:

> *"We don't want to freeze the mill in time – we want to show how it fits into our story today. It's not just about the slate; it's about the people, the language, the songs. That's what keeps it alive."*

This emphasis on heritage as a living, evolving process resonates with Smith's (2006) concept of intangible heritage, which foregrounds the lived practices, emotions, and memories tied to place, rather than just its physical fabric. In this way, the mill serves as both a historical touchstone and a cultural resource, one that helps shape contemporary community identity even as its physical presence slowly erodes.

Community resilience also emerges in the ways residents link the slate industry's legacy to broader cultural and political narratives. Several participants connected the decline of the industry to broader processes of economic marginalisation in rural Wales, framing the preservation of the mill not just as an act of local pride, but as part of a wider assertion of Welsh cultural and linguistic identity. This reflects wider debates in heritage geographies about how industrial heritage sites become focal points for expressions of regional and national identity, particularly in post-industrial contexts where economic power has shifted elsewhere. Ultimately, the contemporary meaning of the Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill rests not just in its architectural form, but in the ongoing negotiations between memory, place, and future aspirations. The site stands as a symbol of both loss and potential, a reminder of what was, and a resource for imagining what could be. In this way, the mill continues to shape community

identity, not as a static monument to the past, but as a flexible and evolving cultural asset, whose meaning is shaped as much by the present as by the past.

4.6 Reflections and Final Integration

This study has demonstrated the complexity of industrial heritage interpretation, revealing tensions between historical documentation, lived experience, and contemporary memory practices. Rather than producing a single, coherent narrative, the findings underscore how industrial heritage is shaped by contradictions, omissions, and contested perspectives. These complexities were particularly evident when examining the historical conditions of the slate industry, the transformation of landscape and cultural memory, and the contemporary meaning of the Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill.

A key tension in industrial heritage research, as highlighted in this study, is the discrepancy between official archival records and oral histories. Archival sources provided a structured but impersonal account of the mill's operational life, prioritising economic production over workers' lived experiences. However, oral histories and personal testimonies, while invaluable in capturing community perspectives, often romanticise the past or selectively reconstruct narratives through generational memory (Smith, 2006). This reflects wider academic debates on the role of memory in shaping heritage discourse, particularly in post-industrial contexts where historical silences can lead to contested interpretations of the past (Graham & Howard, 2008).

The findings also highlight how industrial ruins function as active cultural landscapes rather than passive remnants of economic activity. Edensor (2005) argues that industrial ruins embody multiple temporalities, where traces of past labour are intertwined with contemporary social and emotional engagements. This study confirms this perspective, demonstrating that Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill remains a meaningful site for descendants of slate workers, even in its state of physical decline. The sensory engagement with the site, through walking its ruins and recalling intergenerational stories, reinforces Wylie's (2007) notion of landscape as lived space. However, this study also found that younger generations, in the absence of direct family connections, increasingly engage with the mill through heritage tourism narratives rather than personal memory, raising questions about the sustainability of intangible heritage transmission.

Another critical issue is the tension between heritage preservation and economic redevelopment. While some interviewees saw potential in using the mill as a heritage tourism asset, others expressed concern that such efforts could commodify local history, reducing lived

experiences to marketable narratives (DeSilvey, 2017). This aligns with broader critiques of industrial heritage tourism, which caution that economic revitalisation can sometimes displace authentic community narratives in favour of a more palatable historical interpretation (Lorimer, 2010). The study suggests that for heritage preservation to be meaningful, it must be led by local voices rather than imposed through external economic interests.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

This dissertation has examined the historical development, cultural impact, and contemporary significance of Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill within the broader industrial landscape of Cwmystradllyn, offering a deeper understanding of how industrial heritage is constructed, remembered, and contested. Through a combination of historical analysis, cultural geography, and heritage studies, this research has revealed the complexities of representing and interpreting industrial ruins within evolving community narratives.

In addressing the first research question, which explored the historical and societal factors that influenced the development of the Welsh slate mining industry in Cwmystradllyn, this study reconstructed the economic and technological conditions that shaped the mill's short-lived operational period. The findings reveal that economic precarity, technological limitations, and competition from larger quarrying operations constrained its viability. While previous literature has primarily focused on major quarrying centres (Roberts, 2015a; Gwyn, 2022), this study has demonstrated that smaller, peripheral sites, despite their economic fragility, played a crucial role in shaping local identity and community resilience.

The second research question considered how the slate industry shaped the physical and cultural landscape of Cwmystradllyn. By integrating landscape analysis and oral histories, this study has shown that the physical remnants of industry are not merely historical artefacts but are embedded within cultural memory. The findings support Wylie's (2007) concept of landscape as lived space and align with Edensor's (2005) argument that industrial ruins are sensory and affective spaces. However, the research also revealed that memory transmission is uneven across generations, with concerns that the cultural significance of these landscapes may erode over time without active preservation efforts (Lorimer, 2010). Without continued storytelling and community engagement, these sites risk becoming disconnected from their historical and cultural roots.

The final research question examined the current significance of the Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill and its contribution to local cultural identity. The findings indicate that while the mill remains a focal point for community memory, its meaning is contested. Some descendants view it as a symbol of resilience and cultural pride, while others express concerns about heritage tourism's potential to commodify local history and reshape community narratives to fit external expectations. This reflects broader debates on the negotiation between heritage authenticity and economic redevelopment (Graham & Howard, 2008). Furthermore, this study highlighted the marginalisation of certain voices, particularly those of women and informal labourers, in

dominant heritage discourses, reinforcing the need for more inclusive and representative narratives.

5.1 Contributions to Scholarship and Industrial Heritage Studies

This dissertation contributes to industrial heritage scholarship by foregrounding the cultural and historical significance of smaller, economically fragile industrial sites. While much of the existing literature prioritises large-scale quarrying centres, this study has demonstrated that smaller sites play a crucial role in shaping industrial communities (Smith, 2006; DeSilvey, 2017). Additionally, the research builds on critical heritage studies by interrogating the constructed nature of industrial memory, highlighting the interplay between selective storytelling, nostalgia, and historical accuracy. By integrating oral histories, archival research, and autoethnographic reflection, this study provides a methodological model for exploring how post-industrial landscapes are interpreted and contested.

5.2 Opportunities for Future Research

While this study has addressed its core research questions, it has also highlighted key gaps that warrant further exploration. One significant area for future research is the gendered division of labour within the slate industry. As discussed throughout this dissertation, archival silences obscure the contributions of women and informal labourers, particularly in peripheral industrial sites like the Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill. While this study has identified these gaps, further research could employ oral histories and ethnographic fieldwork to uncover the lived experiences of women and informal workers within the slate industry, addressing how their roles shaped the social and economic fabric of quarrying communities (Lorimer, 2010; Hill, 1993). Examining personal narratives and domestic economies tied to slate production would provide a more inclusive and nuanced account of industrial heritage that moves beyond dominant narratives of male-dominated labour.

Another critical avenue for research concerns the intersection of heritage tourism and local agency in post-industrial landscapes. At Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill, tensions between preservation, commodification, and community memory emerge as central themes. Future research could investigate how local residents negotiate the pressures of heritage tourism, particularly in sites that, unlike the major quarrying centres, lack formal preservation strategies. Longitudinal studies focusing on community-driven heritage initiatives could offer insights into how former industrial sites are reimagined, contested, or reclaimed by different stakeholders (DeSilvey, 2017; Graham & Howard, 2008). This would contribute to ongoing debates about authenticity, economic sustainability, and the evolving role of industrial ruins in regional

identity. By focusing on these specific gaps, future research could extend the findings of this dissertation, offering a more comprehensive understanding of how marginalised narratives shape the interpretation and experience of industrial heritage at sites like Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill.

5.3 Final Reflections

This dissertation highlights that industrial heritage is not simply about preserving ruins, but about actively engaging with contested histories and evolving cultural identities. Ynys y Pandy stands as a site where historical narratives continue to be reinterpreted, reflecting broader tensions in heritage discourse. By foregrounding community voices and critically examining how memory is shaped over time, this research underscores the importance of inclusive and reflexive approaches to heritage studies. In an era where post-industrial landscapes are increasingly shaped by competing economic, environmental, and cultural agendas, this study serves as a reminder that heritage is not just about the past, it is about how communities understand their present and envision their future.

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APPENDICIES:

APPENDIX A

Interviewee ID	Gender/Age	Location	Link to Mines	Occupation
Interviewee 1	Male - 72	Cwmystradllyn	Grandson of slate miner, grew up near the mill	Retired Quarry Worker
Interviewee 2	Male - 55	Porthmadog	Former slate truck driver	Mechanic
Interviewee 3	Female - 63	Cwmystradllyn	Daughter of miner, now involved in heritage group	Shop Assistant
Interviewee 4	Male - 84	Blaenau Ffestiniog	Worked briefly at the mill before closure	Retired Farmer
Interviewee 5	Female - 44	Cwmystradllyn	No direct link, moved to area recently	Teacher
Interviewee 6	Male - 68	Cwmystradllyn	Great-grandson of Huw Elliot Jones	Retired Civil Servant
Interviewee 7	Male - 60	Caernarfon	Son of slate sorter	Retired Teacher
Interviewee 8	Female - 73	Criccieth	Family member worked in slate transport	Retired Nurse
Interviewee 9	Male - 38	Cwmystradllyn	Descendant of mine engineer	Farmer
Interviewee 10	Female - 44	Porthmadog	Involved in local heritage committee	Volunteer Archivist

Table 2: *Key details about the interview participants, including their age, location, occupation, and personal or family connections to the slate industry.*

APPENDIX B

Example of Interview Transcript
Key Informant Interviews: Interviewee 1, Grandson of a slate worker
Interview Length: 48 minutes

Interviewer (I): Thanks for taking the time to speak with me. To start off, can you tell me a bit about your family's connection to the Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill?
Participant (P): Yeah, of course. My great-grandfather worked there as a cutter, shaping slate into tiles for roofs and such. It was hard work, but it kind of ran in the family. Before him, his dad, my great-great-grandfather, was a quarryman. He was the one who dug the slate out of the ground, and then it would go to places like Ynys y Pandy to be processed. My grandmother used to tell us stories about it all, how much the slate industry shaped their lives and the whole community.

I: Can you tell me more about some of these stories you were told as a child? Maybe relating to the hardship and the working conditions?
P: Yes. They spoke of the cold, the noise of hammers ringing through the stone. But it was the silence at the end of the shift they remembered most – the quiet walk home through the valley, carrying the weight of the day on their backs. It was hard work. Really hard work. But that was their job, and they loved it. It was their identity – however hard it may have been. To be honest, my grandfather never spoke much about the work itself – just about the pride. Slate wasn't just work; it was who you were. Your family, your name, your home – everything came from that slate. So I think my memory of what he did is related to what my parents would tell me. But there was always this sense of pride when he did speak about it and the generations before who were part of the same quarry and the same community.

I: That's amazing. What kinds of things did your grandmother say?
P: Oh, she talked about it a lot when I was growing up. She used to say that the mill was the centre of everything back then. It wasn't just a place where people worked; it brought everyone together. There were chapel meetings, festivals, and sometimes workers would have meals together. She always repeated this saying my great-grandfather had: "Our slate roofs the world." They took real pride in their work, knowing it wasn't just local, it was global.

I: That's such a powerful image. Do you think that sense of pride helped them deal with the tough conditions?

P: Definitely. I mean, from what I've heard, the conditions were rough, cold, damp, and full of slate dust that was bad for their lungs. There were no proper safety measures, so injuries happened all the time, falling slabs, accidents with tools, that sort of thing. But despite all that, there was this sense that what they were doing really mattered. It was more than a job; it was their identity.

I: What happened to the community when the mill closed?

P: It hit them hard. The mill was the backbone of the village, so when it shut down, people started leaving to find work elsewhere. My grandmother said it felt like the life drained out of the place. Shops closed, chapel attendance dropped, and it just wasn't the same anymore.
For those who stayed, it was tough. The mill started falling apart, and nature took over. Even now, when you walk around, it feels like the land remembers what happened, it's quiet but heavy, like the past is still there in the ruins.

I: That's really moving. What do you think the landscape represents now?

P: I think it tells a story. When you see the mill now, it's like a monument to how much the industry meant to people, but also how quickly things can change. Nature has taken back a lot of it, there are ferns and mosses growing everywhere. But the walls are still standing, and they have this kind of dignity. For me, it's not just about the ruins. Walking around the site, you can almost imagine the people who worked there, the sounds, the hard work, the sense of community. It's sad, but it's also kind of beautiful.

I: Do you think it's important to preserve places like Ynys y Pandy?

P: Absolutely. These places hold so many stories. If we lose them, we lose part of who we are. My family passed down so many memories of the mill, what it looked like, what the work was like, even the sounds of the tools. That's why I think it's great that local groups are working to keep the history alive. They do tours, collect stories, and make sure people don't forget.

I: So you mentioned tours and collective stories to make sure people don't forget, but how do you think the Ynys y Pandy should be remembered? What should be done?

P: We don't need plaques to remember them – but it would be nice if someone asked us what the mill means to us. It is so much of my family history, but it is hard to know what the best thing to do is. I don't want the mill to change or be renovated but maybe if there was more

information about the mill for when tourists do visit. That would be nice. But to be honest, I am not really sure.

I: Do you think there's a balance between preserving the ruins and letting nature take its course?

P: Yeah, that's a tricky one. I think nature reclaiming the site is part of the story, it shows how the land heals over time. But at the same time, you don't want the history to be completely buried. There's a balance to be found, I think, letting the ruins age naturally but still sharing the stories behind them.

I: What do you see for the future of places like Ynys y Pandy?

P: I think they have so much potential. Heritage tourism is already bringing people back to these areas, and Ynys y Pandy could definitely become a place for people to learn and reflect. But it's not just about tourism, it has to involve the local community. It's their story, after all.
It'd be great to see workshops or storytelling events, or even art inspired by the mill and its history. That kind of thing could breathe new life into the place while honouring its past.

I: Finally, what's the biggest lesson you think we can learn from the history of the slate industry?

P: Resilience, without a doubt. The people who worked in the industry faced so many challenges, but they kept going. That kind of determination is inspiring.
And I think remembering is just as important. These sites and their stories remind us of where we've come from, and they help us think about the future, how we can build strong communities and work sustainably.

I: Did your family keep any items or tools from the mill?

P: Not from the mill itself, but we do have some old tools from the quarry. There's a hammer and chisel that my grandmother swore belonged to my great-grandfather. They're rusted now, but we keep them as a reminder of what he went through.

I: Were there any traditions or customs tied to the mill?

P: Oh, definitely. My grandmother used to say that on certain holidays, workers would stop early and have a kind of mini festival near the mill. There'd be singing and food, and it was a chance for everyone to unwind. Even though the work was hard, they knew how to celebrate together.

I: What do you think the younger generation knows about the mill?

P: Honestly, I think it's a mixed bag. Some people are really interested, especially because of the heritage groups, but others don't know much about it at all. That's why it's so important to keep talking about it and sharing the history.

I: Do you think the mill has any lessons for today's industries?

P: For sure. I think it shows the importance of balancing progress with people's well-being. The slate industry did amazing things, but it also took a toll on the workers. It's a reminder to think about the human cost of any kind of industry.

I: What's your favourite memory tied to the mill, even if it's second-hand?

P: I think it's the stories my grandmother told us around the fire. She'd talk about how the mill would light up the whole valley at night, with workers still moving around. It's a bittersweet memory, but it's one that sticks with me.

APPENDIX C

Figure 6a: *A closer look at the architectural structure of the mill (Own Photography, 2024).*

Figure 6b: *Interior view of me within the Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill (Own Photography, 2024).*

Figure 6c: *Drone photograph of the Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill offering a view of the mill amongst the landscape (Own Photography, 2024).*

Figure 6d: *Photograph of the steps up to the Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill and vegetation reclaiming the structure (Own Photography, 2024).*

Figure 6e: *Photograph of the Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill's outer wall (Own Photography, 2024).*

Figure 6f: *Photograph inside the Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill looking out over neighbouring landscape (Own Photography, 2024).*

Figure 6g: *Photograph of me inside a window arch of the Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill (Own Photography, 2024).*

APPENDIX D

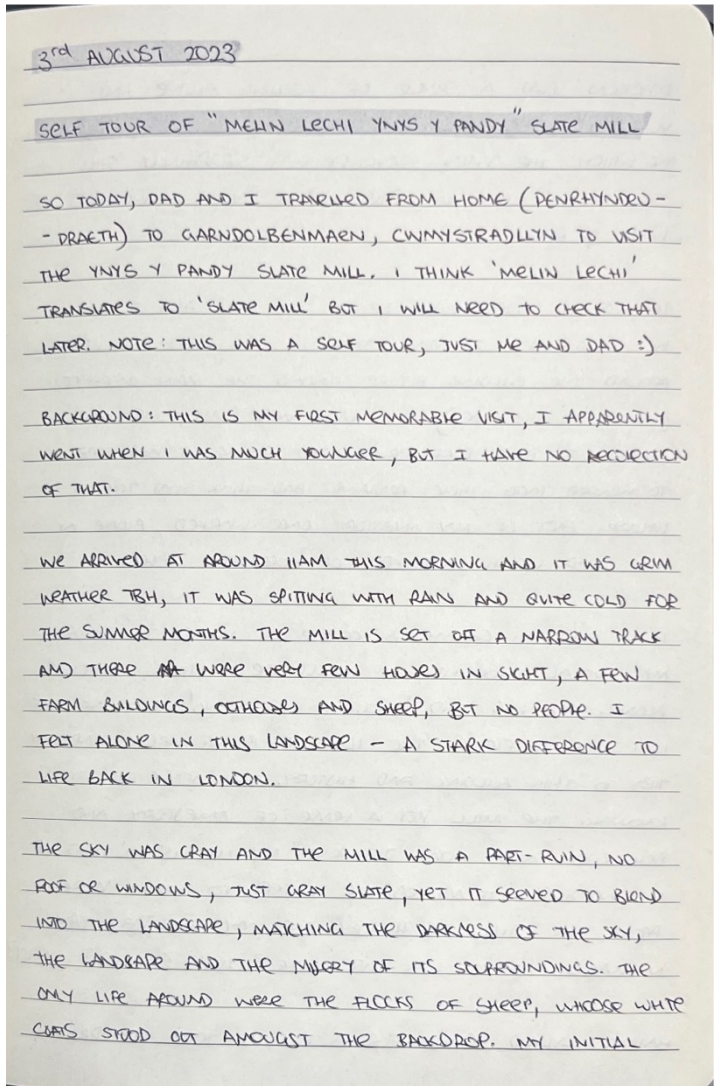
Date	Location	Family Name	Injury Description
3rd May 1859	Ynys y Pandy – Splitting Shed	Jones	Slate splinter to eye, partial loss of vision reported
3rd May 1859	Ynys y Pandy	Evans	Machinery jam resulted in hand fracture, long-term recovery noted
5th May 1859	Gorseddau – Level 7	Roberts	Rockfall, head injury sustained, no fatality reported
7th May 1859	Ynys y Pandy – Sawing Platform	Jones	Arm laceration from cutting machinery, treated on site
7th May 1859	Ynys y Pandy – Loading Bay	Parry	Crushed fingers under slate block
7th May 1859	Ynys y Pandy – Loading Bay	Evans	Crushed foot under slate block, worker sent home
19th May 1859	Gorseddau – Crushing Yard	Williams	Slate block collapse, minor leg injury, worker resumed duties next shift
19th May 1859	Gorseddau – Level 4	Cadwalader	Fall from scaffold, worker unconscious, returned to work after 3 days
20th May 1859	Gorseddau – Blasting Zone	Lewis	Rockfall – minor head injury
21st May 1859	Gorseddau – Level 2	Owen	Three injuries sustained this morning in Level 2. Rockfall during afternoon shift – no fatalities reported
23rd May 1859	Ynys y Pandy	Griffiths	Cut hand on broken slate
25th May 1859	Ynys y Pandy	Bach	Severe flooding, work suspended for two day
26th May 1859	Ynys y Pandy	Owen	Eye injury from flying fragment
29th May 1859	Gorseddau – Level 4	Jones	Fatality – Level 4
1st June 1859	Gorseddau – Loading Bay	Morgan	Slip while loading cart – arm strain
3rd June 1859	Gorseddau – Blasting Zone	Parry	Fatality
3rd June 1859	Ynys y Pandy – Loading Bay	Hughes	Worker’s hand caught in pulley, finger amputation required

4th June 1859	Gorseddau – Level 4	Lloyd	Struck by swinging cable
7th June 1859	Gorseddau – Loading Bay	Roberts	Hand caught between moving pulley and drive belt, severe bruising and lacerations, worker sent home to recover
11th June 1859	Gorseddau – Loading Bay	Ellis	Crushed foot under rail cart
12th June 1859	Gorseddau – Level 4	Owen	Fatality
14th June 1859	Ynys y Pandy	Davies	Slate slab slipped from cutting bench, striking worker's leg – required assistance to exit, no fracture reported
14th June 1859	Gorseddau	Bevan	Scaffolding collapse – leg injury
16th June 1859	Gorseddau	Wyn-Jones	Worker struck on shoulder by falling chain during block hoist
19th June 1859	Gorseddau – Crushing Yard	Evans	Worker Thomas E., aged 14, struck by falling slate sheet during morning shift. Attended to by foreman, unable to return to work
21st June 1859	Gorseddau – Crushing Yard	Wyn-Jones	Fatality
21st June 1859	Gorseddau – Crushing Yard	Wyn-Jones	Fatality
21st June 1859	Gorseddau – Crushing Yard	Wyn-Jones	Fatality
26th June 1859	Gorseddau – Blasting Zone	Roberts	Structural Collapse – fatality
27th June 1859	Gorseddau – Blasting Zone	Lloyd	Slate fragment lodged into left shoulder
27th June 1859	Ynys y Pandy	Awbrey	Loose stone dislodged from roof, narrowly missing worker – site foreman ordered temporary halt
27th June 1859	Gorseddau – Level 4	Evans	Debris fall – head injury
27th June 1859	Ynys y Pandy	Baughan	Young worker caught hand under splitting blade – finger crushed

27th June 1859	Gorseddau – Level 4	Davies	Severe flooding reported at Level 4 following heavy rain. All work suspended for two days to clear debris and inspect retaining walls
28th June 1859	Ynys y Pandy	Beddoe	Burn from machinery friction
29th June 1859	Gorseddau	Jones	Fall from platform – no serious injury
30th June 1859	Gorseddau – Crushing Yard	Parry	Blasting accident – ear damage
30th June 1859	Gorseddau – Crushing Yard	Griffiths	Falling debris – head bruising
30th June 1859	Ynys y Pandy	Davies	Eye injury from slate fragment

Table 3: *Recorded Injuries at Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill and Gorseddau Quarry, April – June 1859*

APPENDIX E



3rd AUGUST 2023

SELF TOUR OF "MELIN LECHI YNYS Y PANDY" SLATE MILL

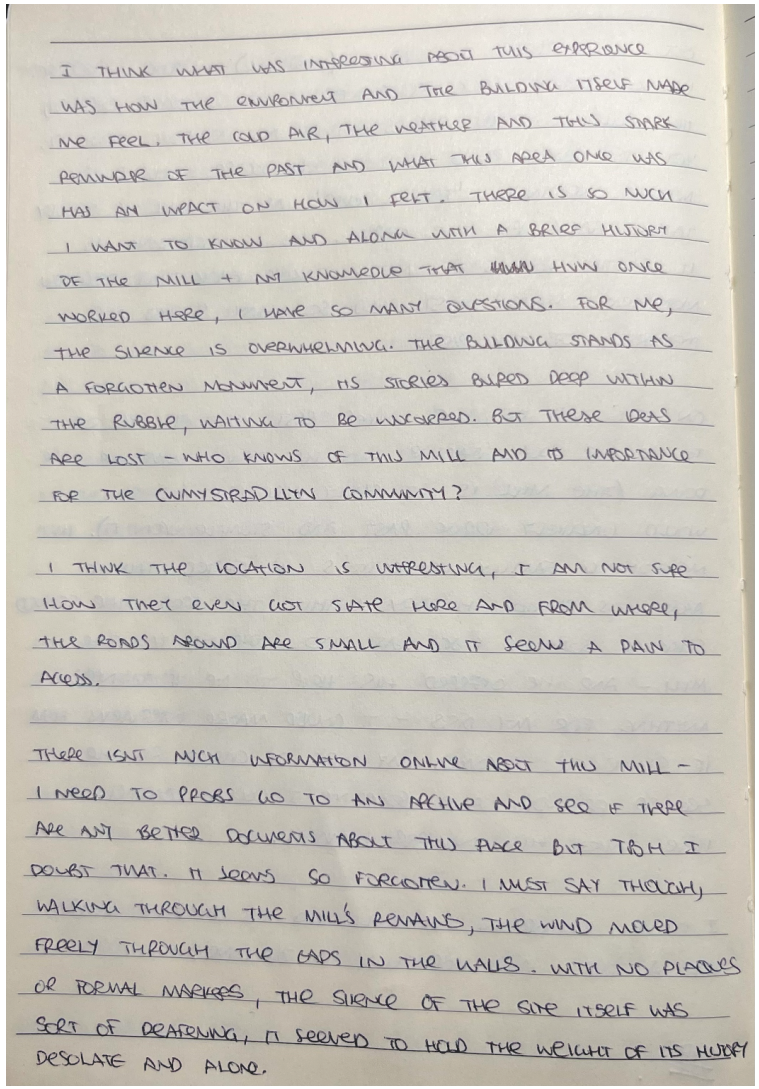
SO TODAY, DAD AND I TRAVELED FROM HOME (PENRHYNDEU-DRAETH) TO GARNDOLBENMAEN, CWMYSTRADLLYN TO VISIT THE YNYS Y PANDY SLATE MILL. I THINK 'MELIN LECHI' TRANSLATES TO 'SLATE MILL' BUT I WILL NEED TO CHECK THAT LATER. NOTE: THIS WAS A SELF TOUR, JUST ME AND DAD :)

BACKGROUND: THIS IS MY FIRST MEMORABLE VISIT, I APPARENTLY WENT WHEN I WAS MUCH YOUNGER, BUT I HAVE NO RECOLLECTION OF THAT.

WE ARRIVED AT AROUND 11AM THIS MORNING AND IT WAS GRIM WEATHER TBH, IT WAS SPITTING WITH RAIN AND QUITE COLD FOR THE SUMMER MONTHS. THE MILL IS SET OFF A NARROW TRACK AND THERE ~~AR~~ WERE VERY FEW HOUSES IN SIGHT, A FEW FARM BUILDINGS, OUTHOUSES AND SHEEP, BUT NO PEOPLE. I FELT ALONE IN THIS LANDSCAPE - A STARK DIFFERENCE TO LIFE BACK IN LONDON.

THE SKY WAS GRAY AND THE MILL WAS A PART-RUIN, NO ROOF OR WINDOWS, JUST GRAY SLATE, YET IT SEEMED TO BLEND INTO THE LANDSCAPE, MATCHING THE DARKNESS OF THE SKY, THE LANDSCAPE AND THE MISERY OF ITS SURROUNDINGS. THE ONLY LIFE AROUND WERE THE FLECKS OF SHEEP, WHOSE WHITE COATS STOOD OUT AMONGST THE BACKDROP. MY INITIAL

Figure 7a: *First page of diary entry from the Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill visit on 03/08/2024 documenting initial reflections (Diary entry, 2024).*

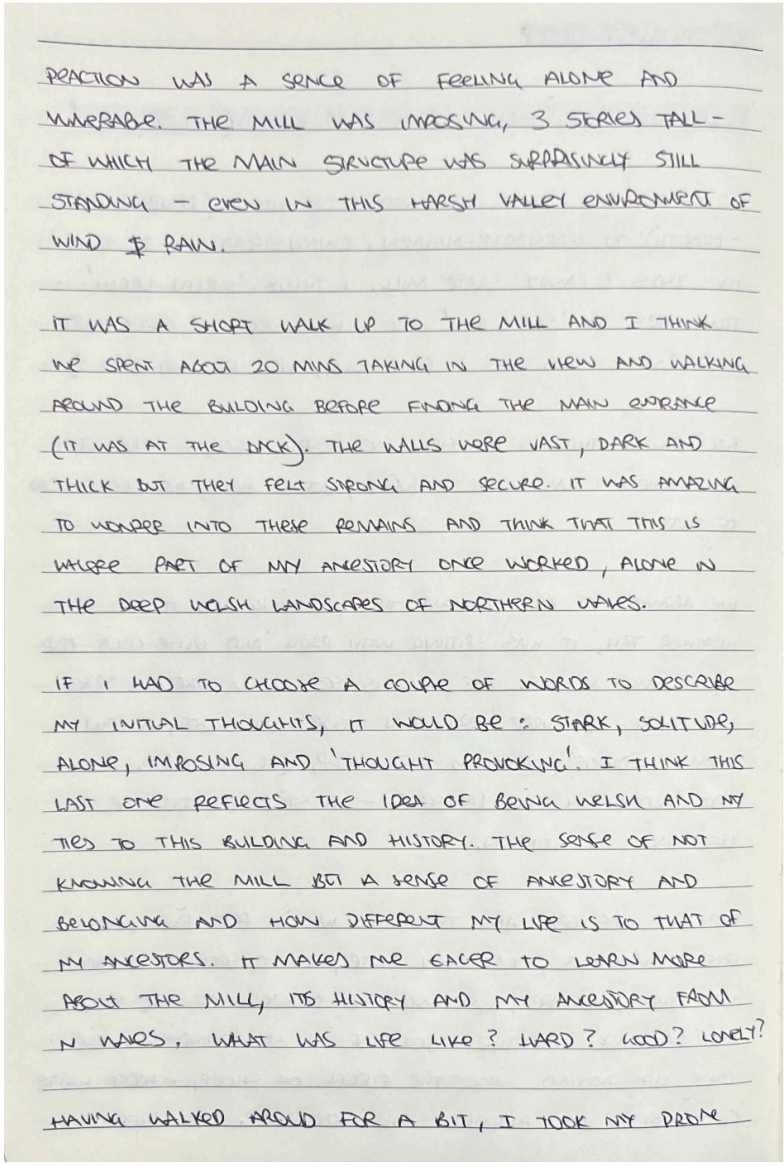


I THINK WHAT WAS INTERESTING ABOUT THIS EXPERIENCE WAS HOW THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE BUILDING ITSELF MADE ME FEEL. THE COLD AIR, THE WEATHER AND THIS STARK REMINDER OF THE PAST AND WHAT THIS AREA ONCE WAS HAD AN IMPACT ON HOW I FELT. THERE IS SO MUCH I WANT TO KNOW AND ALONG WITH A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MILL + ANY KNOWLEDGE THAT ~~WAS~~ HOW ONCE WORKED HERE, I HAVE SO MANY QUESTIONS. FOR ME, THE SILENCE IS OVERWHELMING. THE BUILDING STANDS AS A FORGOTTEN MONUMENT, ITS STORIES BURIED DEEP WITHIN THE RUBBLE, WAITING TO BE UNCOVERED. BUT THESE IDEAS ARE LOST - WHO KNOWS OF THIS MILL AND ITS IMPORTANCE FOR THE CWMYSTRADLLYN COMMUNITY?

I THINK THE LOCATION IS INTERESTING, I AM NOT SURE HOW THEY EVEN GOT SLATE HERE AND FROM WHERE, THE ROADS AROUND ARE SMALL AND IT SEEMS A PAIN TO ACCESS.

THERE ISN'T MUCH INFORMATION ONLINE ABOUT THIS MILL - I NEED TO PROBS GO TO AN ARCHIVE AND SEE IF THERE ARE ANY BETTER DOCUMENTS ABOUT THIS PLACE BUT TBH I DOUBT THAT. IT SEEMS SO FORGOTTEN. I MUST SAY THOUGH, WALKING THROUGH THE MILL'S REMAINS, THE WIND MOVED FREELY THROUGH THE GAPS IN THE WALLS. WITH NO PLAQUES OR FORMAL MARKERS, THE SILENCE OF THE SITE ITSELF WAS SORT OF DEAFENING, IT SEEMED TO HOLD THE WEIGHT OF ITS HUGELY DESOLATE AND ALONE.

Figure 7b: *Second page of diary entry from the Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill visit on 03/08/2024 documenting emotional response and sense of forgotten histories (Diary entry, 2024).*



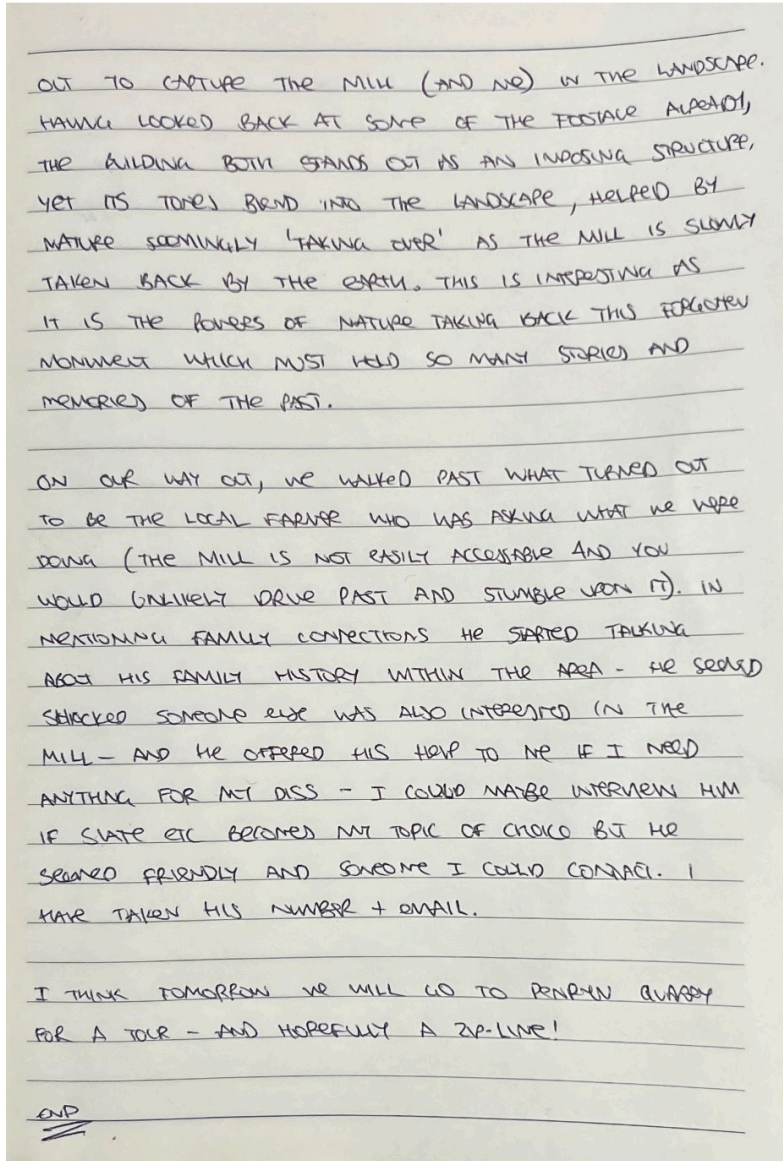
REACTION WAS A SENCE OF FEELING ALONE AND VULNERABLE. THE MILL WAS IMPOSING, 3 STORIES TALL - OF WHICH THE MAIN STRUCTURE WAS SURPRISINGLY STILL STANDING - EVEN IN THIS HARSH VALLEY ENVIRONMENT OF WIND & RAIN.

IT WAS A SHORT WALK UP TO THE MILL AND I THINK WE SPENT ABOUT 20 MINS TAKING IN THE VIEW AND WALKING AROUND THE BUILDING BEFORE FINDING THE MAIN ENTRANCE (IT WAS AT THE BACK). THE WALLS WERE VAST, DARK AND THICK BUT THEY FELT STRONG AND SECURE. IT WAS AMAZING TO WONDER INTO THESE REMAINS AND THINK THAT THIS IS WHERE PART OF MY ANCESTORY ONCE WORKED, ALONE IN THE DEEP WELSH LANDSCAPES OF NORTHERN WALES.

IF I HAD TO CHOOSE A COUPLE OF WORDS TO DESCRIBE MY INITIAL THOUGHTS, IT WOULD BE: STARK, SOLITUDE, ALONE, IMPOSING AND 'THOUGHT PROVOKING'. I THINK THIS LAST ONE REFLECTS THE IDEA OF BEING WELSH AND MY TIES TO THIS BUILDING AND HISTORY. THE SENSE OF NOT KNOWING THE MILL BUT A SENSE OF ANCESTORY AND BELONGING AND HOW DIFFERENT MY LIFE IS TO THAT OF MY ANCESTORS. IT MAKES ME EAGER TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE MILL, ITS HISTORY AND MY ANCESTORY FROM N WALES. WHAT WAS LIFE LIKE? HARD? GOOD? LOVELY?

HAVING WALKED AROUND FOR A BIT, I TOOK MY DRONE

Figure 7c: *Third page of diary entry from the Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill visit on 03/08/2024 documenting interplay between natural reclamation and industrial ruin (Diary entry, 2024).*



OUT TO CAPTURE THE MILL (AND ME) IN THE LANDSCAPE. HAVING LOOKED BACK AT SOME OF THE FOOTAGE ALREADY, THE BUILDING BOTH STANDS OUT AS AN IMPOSING STRUCTURE, YET ITS TONES BLEND INTO THE LANDSCAPE, HELPED BY NATURE SEEMINGLY 'TAKING OVER' AS THE MILL IS SLOWLY TAKEN BACK BY THE EARTH. THIS IS INTERESTING AS IT IS THE POWERS OF NATURE TAKING BACK THIS FORGOTTEN MONUMENT WHICH MUST HOLD SO MANY STORIES AND MEMORIES OF THE PAST.

ON OUR WAY OUT, WE WALKED PAST WHAT TURNED OUT TO BE THE LOCAL FARMER WHO WAS ASKING WHAT WE WERE DOING (THE MILL IS NOT EASILY ACCESSIBLE AND YOU WOULD UNLIKELY DRIVE PAST AND STUMBLE UPON IT). IN MENTIONING FAMILY CONNECTIONS HE STARTED TALKING ABOUT HIS FAMILY HISTORY WITHIN THE AREA - HE SEEMED SHOCKED SOMEONE ELSE WAS ALSO INTERESTED IN THE MILL - AND HE OFFERED HIS HELP TO ME IF I NEED ANYTHING FOR MY DISS - I COULD MAYBE INTERVIEW HIM IF SLATE ETC BECOMES MY TOPIC OF CHOICE BUT HE SEEMED FRIENDLY AND SOMEONE I COULD CONTACT. I HAVE TAKEN HIS NUMBER + EMAIL.

I THINK TOMORROW WE WILL GO TO PENRHYN QUARRY FOR A TOUR - AND HOPEFULLY A ZIP-LINE!

END

Figure 7d: *Final page of diary entry from the Ynys y Pandy Slate Mill visit on 03/08/2024 documenting an interaction with a local farmer (Diary entry, 2024).*