

Not Without You

By Katie Price

Research

“In the scientific world, and beginning with Texas A & M researcher Roger Ulrich’s epochal observation that hospital patients who were able to see some grass and a few trees from their beds recovered more rapidly and required less pain medication than those who could only see bricks and mortar, an avalanche of findings over the past thirty years has bolstered with evidence what most of us feel the truth of in our bones — that nature can soothe, buoy and restore.”

- Ellard, C., (2015), *'The Nature in Space' in Places of the Heart*, Bellevue Literary Press: New York, p 31.

This is what kickstarted my project. It hit the nail on the head as far as to say why I love going home so much – that’s primarily because I find it so relaxing. There are hills and trees directly opposite my street, and the train journey back to Merthyr Tydfil is almost entirely scenic and it’s absolutely beautiful.

The more and more my idea developed, it started to become purely about just taking a moment to stand and think about the place, whilst in it’s environment and what it means to me. It let me practice mindfulness – Mindfulness is the psychological process of bringing one’s attention to experiences occurring in the present moment. I think because I took the time to allow myself to take in the surroundings of each place I visited, I found the walk very peaceful, and that’s what gave my final outcome it’s nostalgic tone.

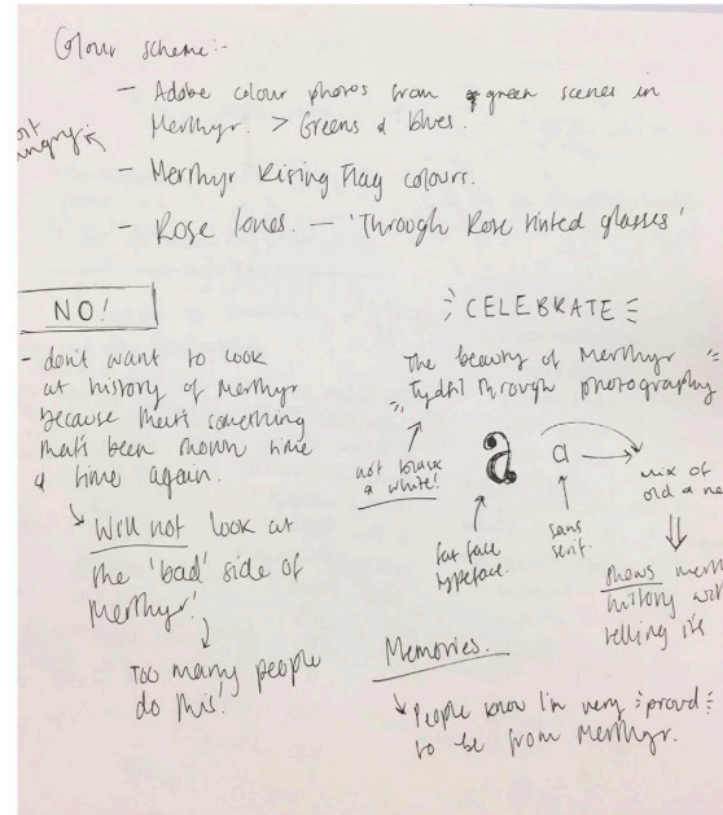
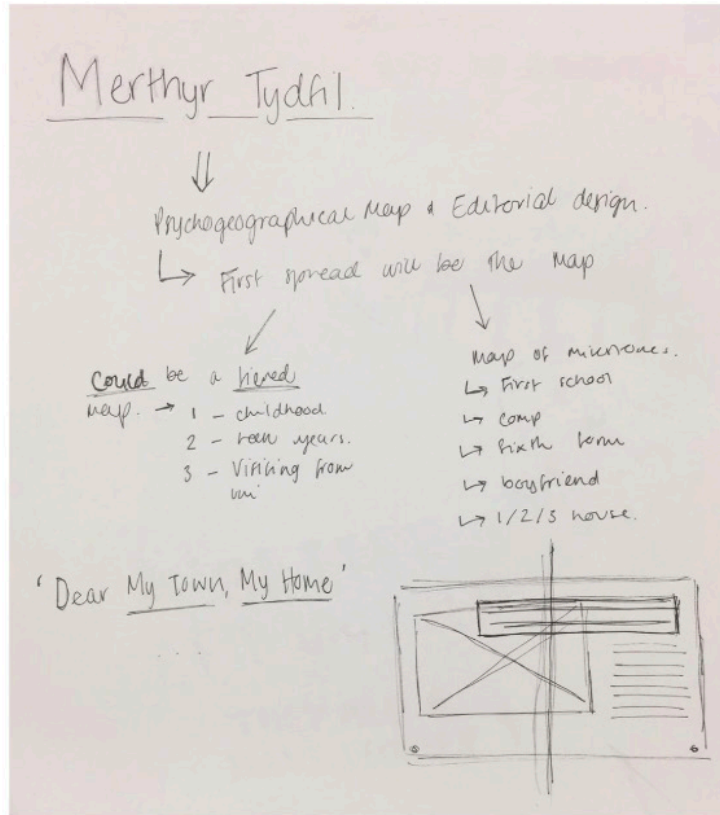
“The pit and the people are one and the same.”

- *Pride*, 2014

The tour guide we had in Rhondda Heritage Park reminded me of Cliff from the movie *Pride*. He spoke so proudly of the Welsh Valleys and their mining communities, and Cliff shows the same passion. The mining strikes took a huge toll on the mining communities all over Britain, but South Wales had some of the purest coal you could find; the purest coal could be found in the dark artery which appeared in three places over the world. Wales was known for it’s coal, and is still proud of it’s history today. This over arching tone of gumption and pride throughout the movie is something I really wanted to capture in the letters I wrote to my hometown.

These are the two main pieces of research that drove the rest of my project in the direction I wanted to take it. It’s basically showing that I’m proud to be from Merthyr, but to also focus on the beautiful landscape. Merthyr is a small town and it’s been given a bad name, but it’s not true at all. I want to show that Merthyr is as good a place as any to grow up. Small mining towns and under-privileged areas do not only hold bad stories and bad people. We’re as good a town as any.

Ideation

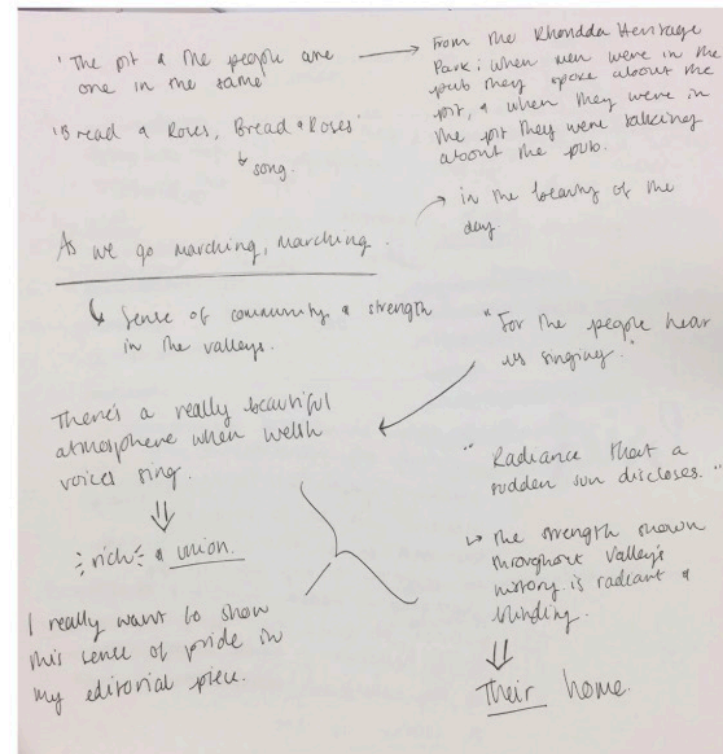
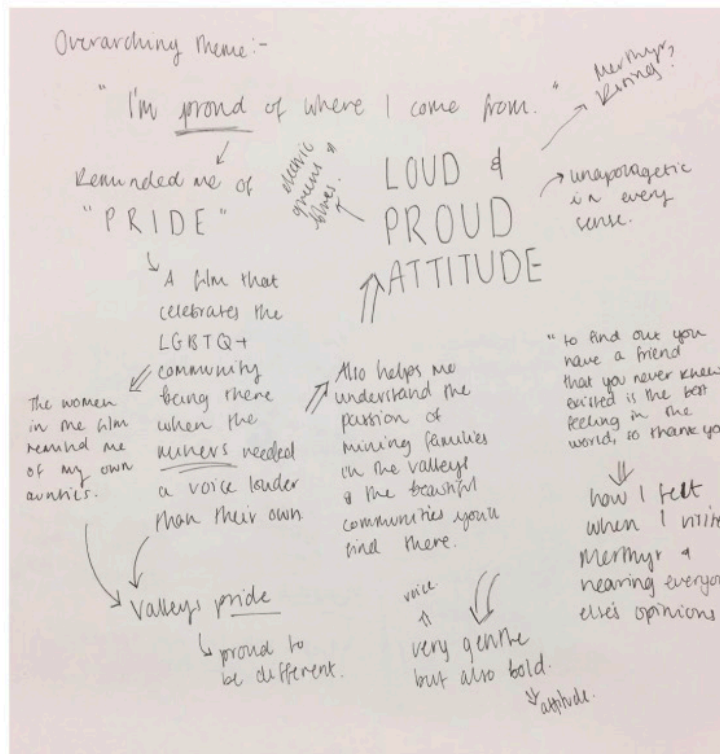


When I found out we were going to Merthyr on our trip, I already knew my destination that I'd explore for the final outcome. I make sure people know I'm proud of where I come from; I've always been told to remember where my roots are, and that's what I wanted to celebrate from the offset.

I had a few different ideas, all of which included editorial design. I wanted to stick with editorial in some shape or form, because I'd be exploring photography. My work is heavily illustration based, and I hadn't so much as picked up a camera for any project until now. I knew that to give myself time to play with photography, I needed to play to my strengths in other areas – editorial design definitely being one of those strengths.

I thought of doing a three tiered map, each tier significant to a section of my life. I thought about doing a tour booklet of Merthyr, but it didn't fit in with my definition on psychogeography. I also played with the idea of the editorial and the tiered map working together, but you don't need to know where the places are to understand the stories that took place there. I settled on the editorial on its own.

I also made a list of things I wanted to stay away from in this project; so things like why Merthyr has a bad name, making the history of the town the focal point – it's a story that's been told so many times, and history doesn't change so it's objective to a certain extent and therefore is a difficult topic to play with.



Problems and Solutions

Imagery disturbing the legibility of text



Dear Tram Road,

Thank you for the 23rd of July 2016.
I walked home from you that day with the biggest smile on my face. I thought it was just young love, but here we are two and a half years later.
I've only visited you twice in that time, once on that day in July, and once two and half years on. It's still as special as it was two years ago. It still holds all of the funny butterflies I felt on that sunny day. You're a very special place to me, and I am grateful for your existence.
You're a big part of my life.
Thank you for existing.



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This was one of the biggest hurdles to overcome just as it's own spread. The colours worked well with a lot of images, but were also key tones in others. Not only did I have to justify where the type was, but why it was inside a box, what the significance of the box was and why it had to be there.

Initially it was just there to dilute the background a little so the text would stand out over the top, but then I realised I could use the box and have the text spilling out of it and still have it relevant, because this place is such a big part of my life to the point where it's spilt over into different pockets of my life – and that's how I've justified the box.



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Problems and Solutions

Key places where photography isn't suitable

Dear 10 Arthur Street,

In loving memory of Eileen Hungerford.

This letter will be different to the rest. I can't ever promise to visit you again. I can't see you again. I can't talk to you again. I can't do any of it again.

10 Arthur Street, you were home to someone very dear to my family, and they left a very big hole in our hearts. There is no way I'll get through this letter without crying.

This is a letter to remember you, Gran.

I've heard so many stories about you since you left, happy ones, sad ones. I often find I get these feelings mixed up when I hear these stories. I'm happy to hear about them, but heartbroken that you're not around to tell me about them yourself.

I spent early mornings eating marmalade on toast on your living room floor, cwtched up in my white baby shawl; I still sleep with it next to me. I'd be clamped between your knees to have my tight ringlets brushed; you knew I was the fidgety type. I'd have Petits Filous and when it was all gone you'd always promise me there would be more tomorrow.

Although I get sad that I can only ever remember these things, I'm so happy I can still remember them.

You had a gold locket, which was passed down to me. I only wear it for the big moments, days that I'm especially proud of, or days where I need a little bit more strength than normal. I wear it on the days I wish you could see, and on the days where I really wish I could see you.

It's no fault of anyone that we no longer see each other, we just can't; but just so you know...

I still can't say goodbye.



This place is too special to me to just screenshot off Google Maps and edit, it's also somebody else's house now, so I didn't feel comfortable taking a photo of it, it just didn't sit right and isn't ethical in my eyes.

This illustration captures the warm feeling I get when I think about the memories I have of my gran's house. Also, when writing this letter, it was the first time processing these feelings, and the illustration just made it easier to cope – like self-preservation really.

A Nod to History

I love secrets, and feeling like I'm part of something exclusive. That's partly why I hid this little nod to Merthyr's history. it's just a nice little thing for the audience to discover for themselves, and feel a sense of pride in a way.

Also, I wanted to have something acknowledging the history of Merthyr without outright talking about it's history. I also used this as an opportunity to play with expressive typography a bit more. I loved using the landscape in company with this song, it feels really warming. I was trying to capture the feeling of listening to a Wwlsh choir.



This was written with an honest heart



I'm very proud to be Welsh, and those that know me are well aware of that. This song has cropped up a few times in my life. I've sung it for the Queen in the school choir. It's something we'd sing in primary school on St. David's Day. It was also a part of a set list I used to perform. It's significant in so many ways, and I thought that because this project is such a labour of love and all the letters are written with an honest heart (calon lân) it just felt like a nice way to tie all of the elements together. This also gave me another opportunity to be more expressive with the typography.

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