

# FINDING CALM IN THE CHAOS

THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF LANDSCAPE  
PHOTOGRAPHY ON MY MENTAL HEALTH



NIGEL THOMAS



# FINDING CALM IN THE CHAOS

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A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON LIFE

NIGEL THOMAS

CHAPTER ONE

THE  
BEGINNING OF  
MY JOURNEY

NIGEL THOMAS

## CHAPTER ONE

March 2015, life had been going well, a few health issues which i considered normal for someone in their fifties, a successful prostate TURP operation which took a while to recover from, but all as was expected.

I had about 6 weeks off work while recovering, and when returning to work realised that there was a lot more pressure than i could sustainably handle at this time.

Home life was good, a very loving and supportive wife who looked after everything at home whilst I was away with work.

Our two wonderful sons, now adults, not living at home and working, about to start their own families.

Me personally, I thought I was doing okay, but deep down inside I was struggling, struggling far more than I was willing to admit. In July 2015 I reached a breaking point which had a breakdown. This resulted in severe depression and anxiety which I still live with today.

I had been fighting with myself, trying to take each week at a time, things would get better I thought. Despite my best efforts, I found it difficult to keep going and felt like I was stuck in a dark hole with no way out.

I felt alone, lonely, isolated, like no one understood what I was going through.

## CHAPTER ONE

For a couple of years I rarely left the house, mainly to attend medical appointments and therapy sessions.

During this time I was put on so many different medications and at one stage just felt like a zombie, existing, but not really being there.

But eventually, with the help of therapy, medication and support from my loving family, there was occasional glimpses of light and hope at the end of a very dark tunnel.

I still don't think I've regained full control over my life, but I've learned to take care of myself as best I can, to keep myself in a safe place.

I now just try to deal with one day at a time, if having a particularly bad time, just to get through that moment.

Acceptance of my mental illness was difficult, for a long time I was embarrassed, in denial, would hide away from the truth, and even hide away from good people, such as friends and neighbours.

I needed something in my life that could give me an occasional escape from this internal battle I had within, no self esteem, self hate, constantly thinking I and everyone else would be better off if I was not around, overdose, thinking that may be the only way out.

CHAPTER TWO

DISCOVERING  
THE POWER OF  
LANDSCAPE  
PHOTOGRAPHY

NIGEL THOMAS

## CHAPTER TWO

Depression and anxiety are common mental health conditions that can have a profound impact on an individual's life. One way to help manage these conditions is through the practice of landscape photography.

This form of photography can help one to connect with the natural world and find peace and tranquility in their surroundings.

Landscape photography is the art of capturing the beauty of the natural world. This can include anything from grand vistas to intimate details. The act of taking photographs requires one to be present in the moment, to pay attention to the details of one's surroundings and to find beauty in the world around them.

In addition to the mental health benefits, landscape photography also provides an opportunity for self-expression and creativity. It allows one to see the world in a new way and to share unique perspective with others.

So it all started and in September 2018, I took my first trip to have a go at landscape photography

To start practicing landscape photography, you will need a camera of some kind, a willingness to get out and explore the natural world around us.

Getting out of the door is the hardest part of it, it was then and still is now, there can be many days and weeks where i just cannot get myself motivated enough to leave the house.

## CHAPTER TWO

It's hard to explain in words but with the depression I feel trapped and isolated and it really does take a massive effort to get out.

I was fortunate that my wife encouraged me and came with me, but it wasn't easy.

The early days, I didn't feel the love for it, I would get home and think it was all a waste of time just going out and looking for something to photograph.

It was to be like this for a couple of months and fortunately I kept going out taking photos during this period.

Slowly but surely landscape photography became my therapy, my escape from the traps created by my mental health. I hope by sharing this, my journey, it may encourage others to give landscape photography an opportunity, a great relaxing and mindful hobby, its not really about the images, but the journey to get them.

Start by going on local walks in your local and take the time to notice the details of the landscape around you. Look for interesting patterns, textures, and light.

Take your time and experiment with different compositions and perspectives. As you become more comfortable with your camera and the landscape around you, you may want to start exploring more remote locations.

## CHAPTER TWO

I am so fortunate to live on the coast in South Wales, we have beaches, coastal paths, and walks to waterfalls and wild remote areas within the Brecon Beacons and Pembrokeshire National Parks only an hour away.

These places offer some of the most stunning landscapes, and many of them are relatively easy to access.

In addition to the act of taking photographs, you may also find that editing and sharing your photos can provide a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction.

You can share your photos with friends and family or even enter them in photography competitions.

In conclusion, landscape photography can be an effective way to manage depression and anxiety. It allows us to connect with the natural world, to find beauty and tranquility in their surroundings, and to express themselves creatively.

With a camera and a willingness to explore, anyone can discover the power of landscape photography and the positive impact it can have on their mental health.

CHAPTER THREE

THE  
CONNECTION  
BETWEEN  
NATURE AND  
MENTAL  
HEALTH

NIGEL THOMAS

## CHAPTER THREE

I am no mental health expert or professional, but I have done some research seeking to find something to help with my recovery process.

Nature has long been associated with good mental health. Spending time in nature can reduce symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression.

The natural environment provides a sense of calm and tranquility, which can help to lower the levels of cortisol, a hormone associated with stress.

Additionally, nature can provide a sense of perspective and remind us of our place in the larger world.

Being in nature can also foster feelings of connectedness and gratitude, which can help to improve our overall sense of well-being.

Engaging with nature through activities such as hiking, photography, or bird watching can also provide a sense of accomplishment and purpose.

Nature can also be a powerful tool for healing. Activities have been shown to have positive effects on physical and mental health.

Overall, there is a strong connection between nature and mental health. Spending time in nature can have a positive impact on our mental well-being and can be used as a tool for healing. It's important to make time to connect with nature and to be mindful of the benefits it can provide to our overall well-being.

CHAPTER FOUR

HEALING  
PROPERTIES OF  
THE GREAT  
OUTDOORS

NIGEL THOMAS

## CHAPTER FOUR

The great outdoors has long been recognised for its healing properties. Being in nature has been shown to have a positive impact on both mental and physical health.

One way that the great outdoors can promote healing is through "nature bathing." This involves spending time in nature and engaging in activities such as walking and simply taking in the sights, sounds, and smells of nature.

Studies have shown that this can lower stress hormone levels, lower blood pressure, and improve overall feelings of well-being.

Another way that the great outdoors can promote healing is through "green exercise." This refers to any physical activity that takes place in a natural environment, such as hiking, running, or cycling. Research has shown that exercising in nature can have a greater impact on mental health than exercising indoors, and can also improve overall physical fitness.

Spending time in nature can also have a positive impact on the immune system. Studies have shown that exposure to natural environments can increase the production of white blood cells, which play a key role in fighting off infections and diseases.

Additionally, being in nature can also improve sleep quality. The natural light and fresh air can help lead to a better overall quality of sleep, which can have a positive impact on mental and physical health.

## CHAPTER FOUR

In conclusion, the great outdoors has numerous healing properties that can promote both mental and physical well-being.

Regularly spending time in nature can be a simple yet effective way to improve overall health and well-being.

Landscape photography for me had become my reason, my excuse to escape to the beauty that surrounds us, it included walking and carrying some gear, an allrounder helping both my physical and mental wellbeing



QUIET MOMENT AT THE CLAERWEN RESERVOIR

CHAPTER FIVE

THE MINDFUL  
PRACTICE OF  
PHOTOGRAPHY

NIGEL THOMAS

Landscape photography is a mindful practice that involves capturing the beauty and majesty of the natural world.

To be a successful landscape photographer, it is important to take a mindful approach to finding locations, setting up, and taking the image.

Finding locations for landscape photography can be a challenging task, but it is important to take the time to research and explore different areas. This can involve looking at google maps, google earth, reading about different locations, and even visiting them in person.

Once you have found a location that you believe will make for a great photograph, it is important to take the time to set up and plan your shot. This can involve scouting the area for the best composition and lighting, as well as deciding on the best time of day to take the photograph.

When it comes to camera settings, there are a few key things to keep in mind. For landscape photography, it is important to use a low ISO to minimise noise and ensure a high-quality image. Aperture should be set to a high number (small aperture) for a large depth of field, and a slow shutter speed can be used to capture movement in the landscape such as moving water.

## CHAPTER FOUR

Once you have set up your camera and found the perfect composition, it is important to take the time to capture the image.

This can involve adjusting your camera settings as needed, fine tuning and taking multiple shots to ensure that you capture the perfect shot.

Overall, landscape photography is a mindful practice that requires patience, planning, and attention to detail.

By taking the time to research and explore different locations, set up and plan your shot, and carefully adjust your camera settings, you can create beautiful and inspiring photographs of the natural world.



ENJOYING THE VIEW ABOVE TARN HOWS

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTIONS  
ON MY  
EXPERIENCES

NIGEL THOMAS

## CHAPTER SIX

Throughout the remaining chapters I will be sharing some of my landscape images from my 'Peaceful Landscapes' collection.

Images that mean something to me, the moments, the memories, sometimes alone sometimes with my wife or photography friends.

I do hope you enjoy viewing my images, they certainly help me through difficult days

'A day's reflections - Landscape Photography'

As I stood on the rugged coast, feeling the biting wind whip against my face, I couldn't help but reflect on my experiences with landscape photography.

The early starts, the late finishes, the countless hours spent trudging through all sorts of weather in search of the perfect shot.

There had been moments of frustration, as I watched a beautiful sunset slip away without getting the shot I had envisioned.

But in those moments of disappointment, I had also found inner peace. The process of photography, the act of capturing a moment in time, had become something of a meditative practice for me.

## CHAPTER SIX

I closed my eyes and took a deep breath, letting the crisp air fill my lungs. In that moment, I felt a deep sense of gratitude for the opportunity to be out here, doing what I loved.

As I opened my eyes and looked out at the breathtaking view before me, I knew that all the early mornings and late nights were worth it. With my camera in hand, I began to shoot, capturing the raw beauty of the landscape in all its glory. And as I looked through the lens, I felt a sense of calmness and peace wash over me.

In that moment, all my frustrations and struggles melted away, and I was left with a deep sense of inner peace



AN EARLY MORNING AT PORTHCAWL

## CHAPTER SIX

It was in those quiet, solitary moments that I found my true passion for landscape photography.

The process of capturing a moment, of freezing a piece of time and beauty forever, was something that brought me a sense of fulfilment that I had never experienced before.

As the sun began to dip below the horizon, signalling the end of another day, I packed up my gear and made my way back to my vehicle.

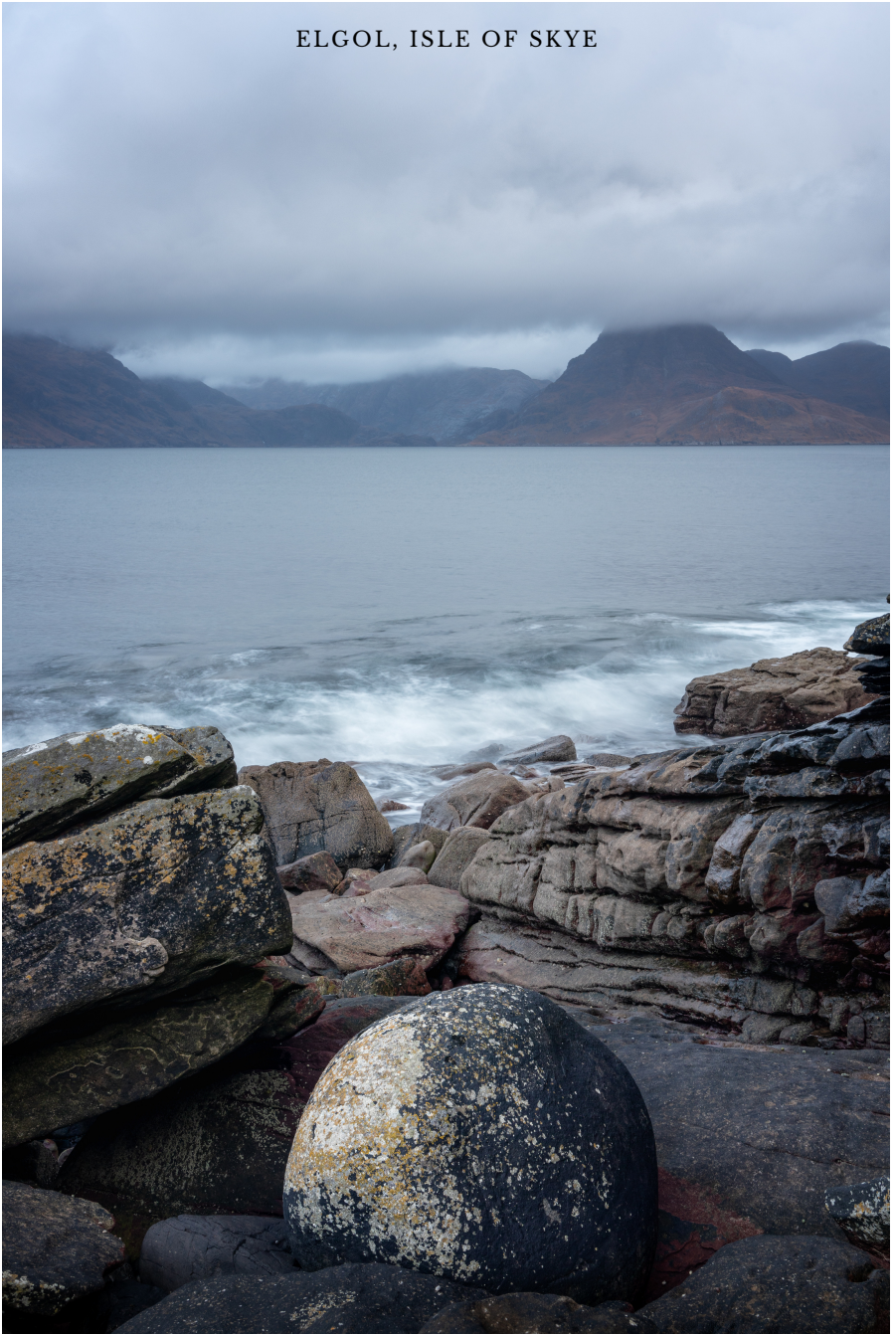
As I drove away, I couldn't help but feel a sense of contentment, knowing that I had found my true passion in life through my experiences with landscape photography.

END OF A BEAUTIFUL DAY AT STRUMBLE HEAD



CHAPTER SIX

ELGOL, ISLE OF SKYE



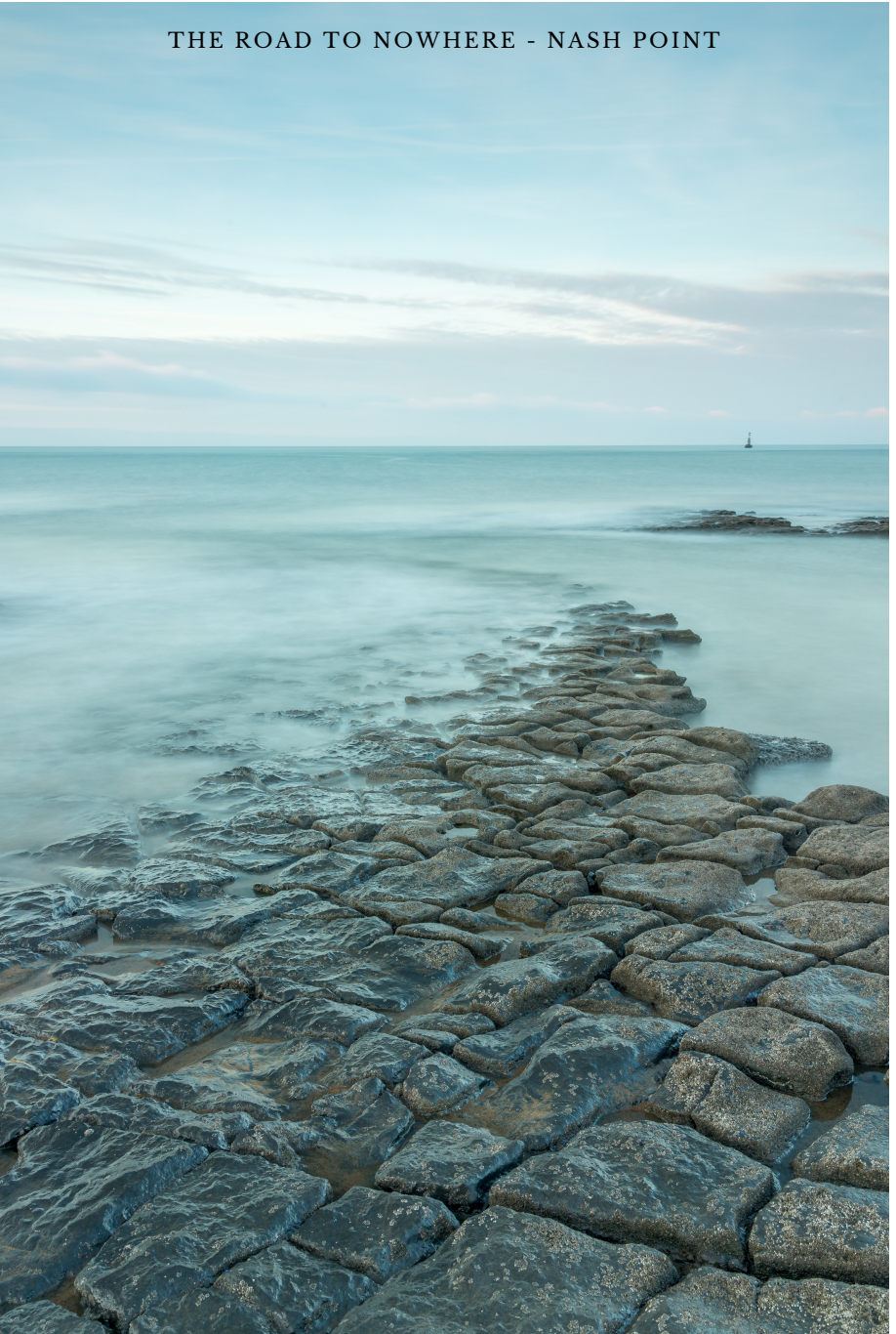
CHAPTER SIX

NASH POINT



CHAPTER SIX

THE ROAD TO NOWHERE - NASH POINT



CHAPTER SIX



ABEREIDDY

NASH POINT SUNSET



CHAPTER SIX

FERRYSIDE



BURRY PORT



CHAPTER SIX

LLYN PADARN, LLANBERIS



THE PARROG, NEWPORT PEMBS

CHAPTER SIX

FRESHWATER WEST



GLENCOE



CHAPTER SIX



LOCH ETIVE



PORHCAWL

CHAPTER SIX

LLYN PADARN, LLANBERIS



BURRY PORT

CHAPTER SIX

GLAMORGAN HERITAGE COAST



THREE CLIFFS BAY



CHAPTER SIX



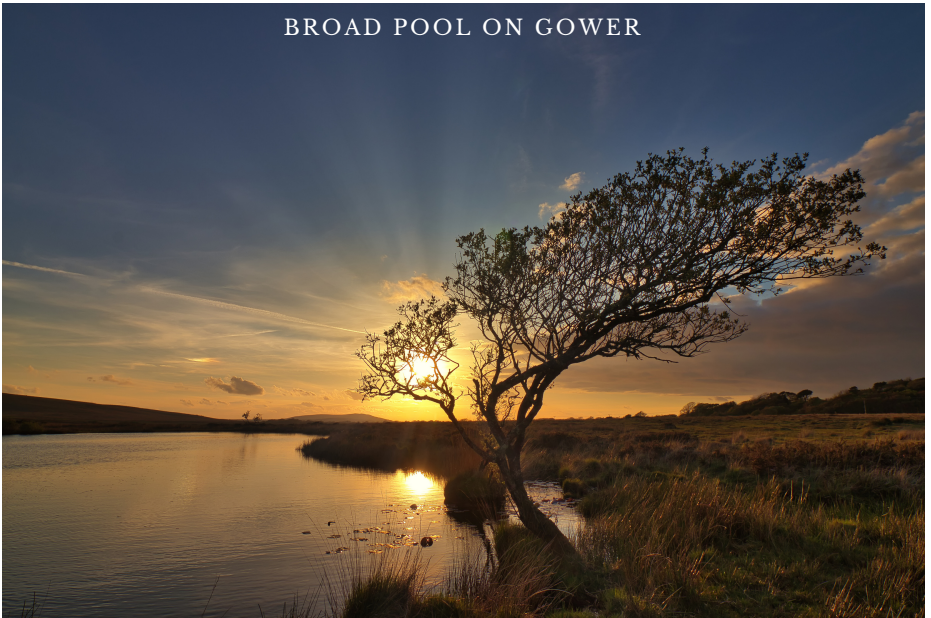
A FREEZING MORNING AT ELAN VALLEY



CHAPTER SIX



LADYBOWER RESERVOIR - FROM BAMFORD EDGE



BROAD POOL ON GOWER

CHAPTER SIX

TY MAWR LIGHTHOUSE - LLANDWYN ISLAND



FERRYSIDE

CHAPTER SIX

LLYN IDWAL



CHAPTER SIX

TRYFAN - OGWEN VALLEY



VIEW ACROSS TO PEN YR OLE WEN

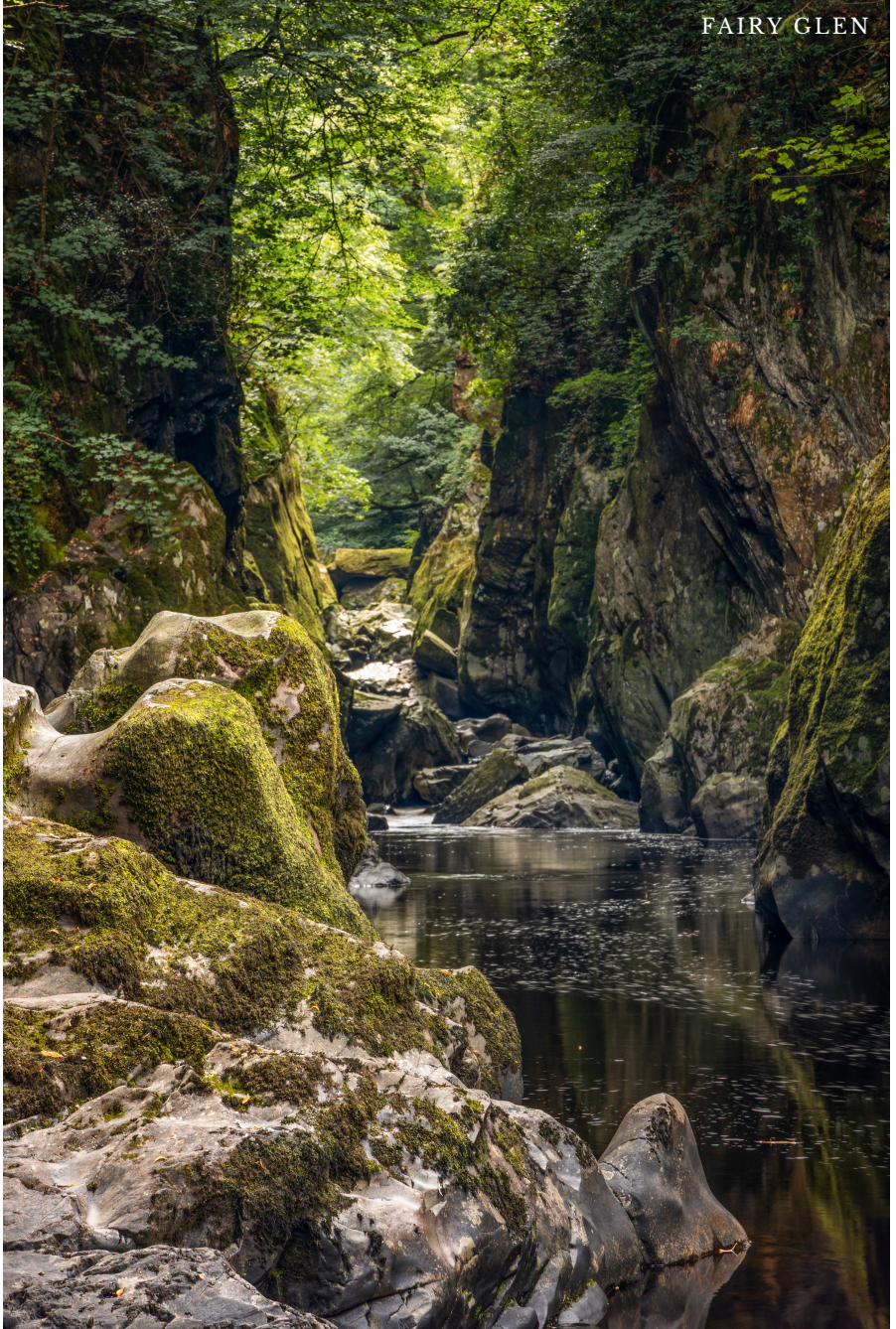


CHAPTER SIX



ROTHERSLADE BAY, GOWER





CHAPTER SIX

AMROTH

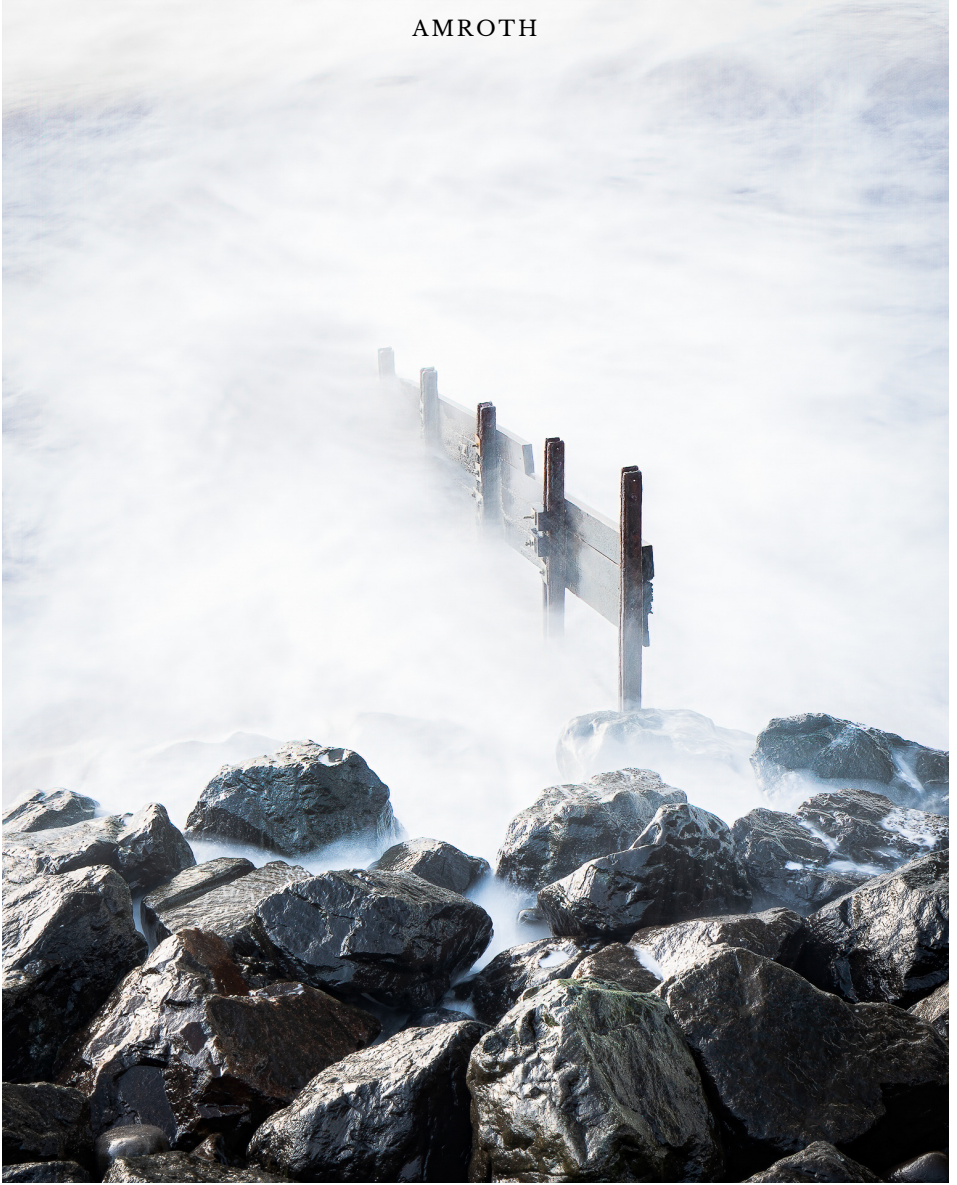


WISEMANS BRIDGE



CHAPTER SIX

AMROTH



CHAPTER SIX

A NEW DAY BEGINS - STRUMBLE HEAD



CHAPTER SIX



CEIBWR BAY



CEIBWR BAY

CHAPTER SIX

WAITING FOR SUNRISE - PORTHCAWL



CHAPTER SEVEN

SHARING  
NATURES  
BEAUTY

THE POSITIVE  
IMPACT OF  
LANDSCAPE  
PHOTOGRAPHY

NIGEL THOMAS

## CHAPTER SEVEN

I enjoy nothing more than capturing the beauty of nature through his lens.

I have spent many hours hiking through forests, climbing hills and wandering along beaches and coastal cliffs, always searching for that perfect shot. Is there such a thing as a perfect shot?

As I continued to hone my photography skills, I began to realise the positive impact that my landscape photography was having on others.

People would often tell me how much they enjoyed viewing my images, and how they felt like they were transported to the places and scenes I had captured.



CRAIG GOCH DAM

## CHAPTER SEVEN

I also noted that the more I photographed nature, the more I appreciated and connected with it.



BLEA TARN

CHAPTER SEVEN

I was learning to see the world through new eyes, and found myself becoming more patient, observant, and mindful.

ETIVE FALLS, GLENCOE



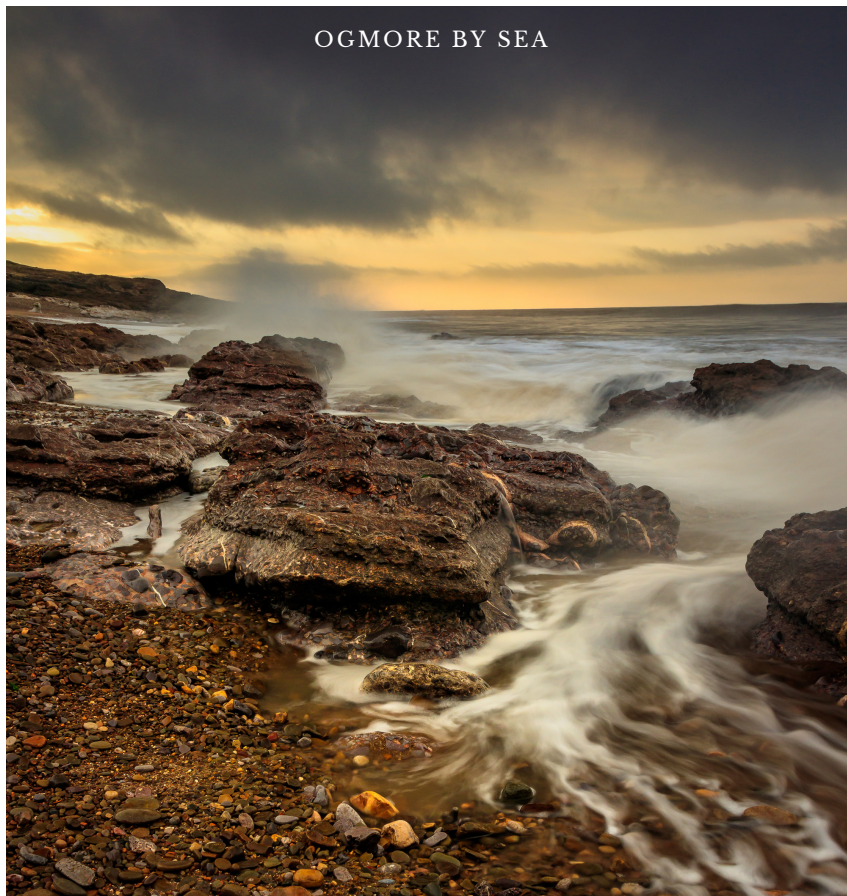
## CHAPTER SEVEN

Over the last couple of years I have shared my love of landscape photography with others, through camera clubs, magazines and online photography groups.

I have also used these platform to finally open up about my mental health, how photography became my therapy.

I now had pride in what I was achieving with the illness instead of the previous embarrassment

### OGMORE BY SEA



## CHAPTER SEVEN

The response has been quite overwhelming, with people from all over the world viewing my images, providing me with great feedback, appreciating the fact that I share my mental health journey.

My images have received many accolades, I've been fortunate to be a featured photographer in two magazines in 2022, and recently awarded 'Photographer of the Year' in the landscape category with both 'NOIR The Best of Black and White Photography' and 'The Universe of Colour Photography' magazines.

Photography is a very subjective art form, what one expert will like another will not. So I've learnt to take images for myself and if they can give myself and others some pleasure then that's a satisfying bonus.

THE CHURCH IN THE SEA - ST CWYFAN'S CHURCH



## CHAPTER SEVEN

Through my images, I was able to bring a little piece of the natural world into people's homes, and I am truly honoured to know that my images have inspired others to explore and appreciate nature for themselves.

I aim to keep getting out as much as I am able, A Heart Attack only Four months ago has made things very challenging at the moment both physically and mentally.

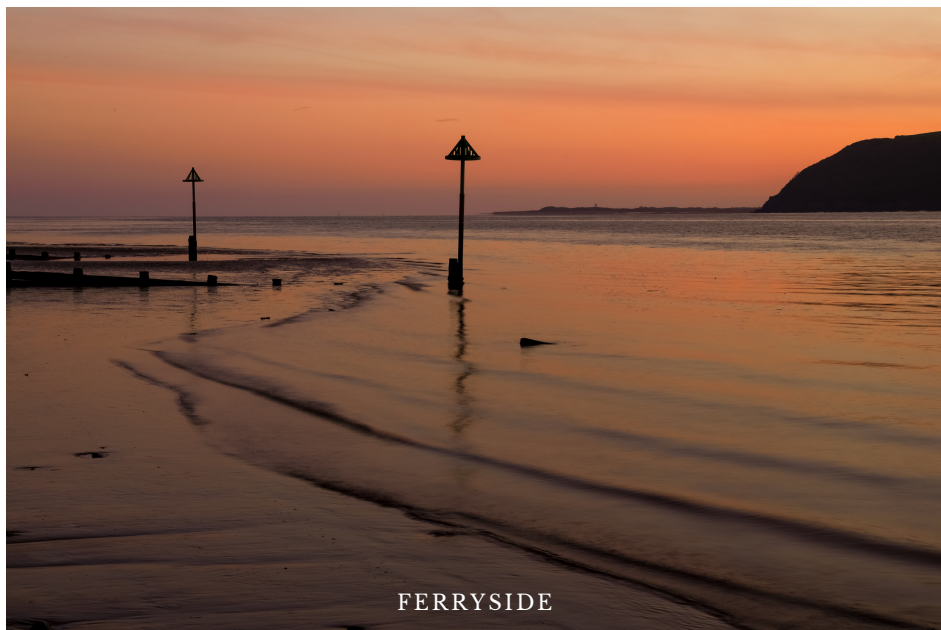
Like I said earlier on getting out of the house is the hardest part of it.

I hope with the support of my family and my small group of amazing photography friends to continue what has become my passion and therapy and that my photographs would continue to inspire others for years to come

VIEWS NEAR INVERGARRY



CHAPTER SEVEN



FERRYSIDE



STARRY SKY ON THREE CLIFFS BAY

CHAPTER SEVEN

ELGOL, ISLE OF SKYE



RIVER COUPALL, GLENCOE

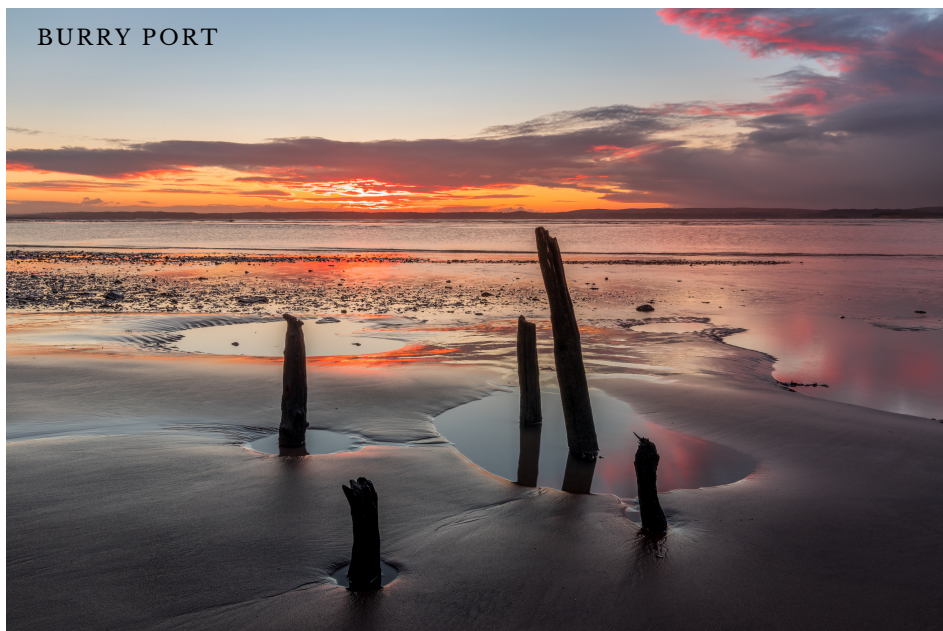


CHAPTER SEVEN

ELGOL, ISLE OF SKYE



BURRY PORT



CHAPTER SEVEN

NASH POINT

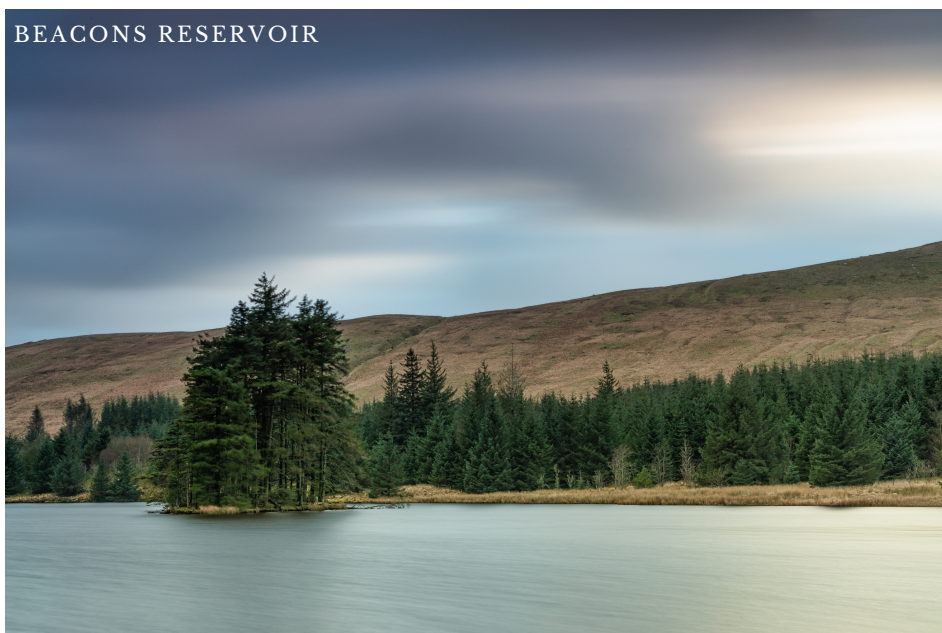


PRESIPE BAY

CHAPTER SEVEN



BEACONS RESERVOIR



## CHAPTER SEVEN

MARLOES SANDS



THREE CLIFFS BAY



CHAPTER SEVEN

ON THE WALK TO LLYN Y FAN FACH



CHAPTER SEVEN



DOLGOCH FALLS



FAIRY GLEN

CHAPTER SEVEN

PENMON, ANGLESEY



CHAPTER SEVEN



LAKE VYRNWY

LLYN Y DYWARCHEN



CHAPTER SEVEN

WHITEFORD LIGHTHOUSE, GOWER



CHAPTER EIGHT

A NEW  
PERSPECTIVE  
ON LIFE

NIGEL THOMAS

## CHAPTER EIGHT

Landscape photography can be a powerful tool for any individuals dealing with mental health issues.

By immersing oneself in nature and the process of capturing its beauty through photography, one can shift their focus away from negative thoughts and emotions and towards the present moment.

This can lead to a decrease in symptoms, which is extremely beneficial even if the relief only lasts a short period.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

Photography can be therapeutic as it allows you to express yourself creatively and to see the world in a new way.

It can provide a sense of accomplishment and purpose, which can be particularly beneficial for those dealing with depression and anxiety.

Landscape photography is a way to combine the benefits of being in nature with the act of creating something beautiful.

MORNING LIGHT ABOVE TARN HOWS



## CHAPTER EIGHT

Landscape photography can provide a sense of perspective and remind us of the beauty and wonder that exist in the world even through difficult times.

It can be a reminder that despite the hardships we may be facing, there is still beauty and positivity to be found in the world.

Overall, landscape photography can serve as a valuable resource for anyone dealing with mental health issues, as it can provide a sense of purpose, a connection to nature, and a shift in perspective.



EARLY MORNING VIEWS ACROSS LLYN PADARN

Well this is the end of this part of my journey, I am where I am, I will get through this - one day at a time

Thank you, I do hope you get something out of my words, if not just enjoy the photos

## A LAST WORD

Be kind out there people, you may not know what someone is going through, how close to the edge they may be

So please be kind, if you ask someone how they are, please really listen, they may be not okay, and you just through being there and listening could save their lives

A special thanks to my wonderful wife Coralie, you have shown undeniable love and support me what has been such an ordeal and painful experience for you to. I am truly grateful  
I love you

Thanks to my sons and their wife / partner and to my amazing grandchildren, who just make everyday worth living for

My close friends Gethin and Ryan, thank you guys you have stuck with me through this all

And my small group of new photography friends, thank you for the times we've shared, the journeys, the experiences, the banter, and importantly looking out for each other

