



NORTH WALES TALES

The Gentle Afanc of Llyn yr Afanc, Betws-y-Coed

Llyn yr Afanc, Betws-y-Coed, North Wales

Long ago, in the woods near Betws-y-Coed, there lay a quiet lake called Llyn yr Afanc.

The lake was named after the creature who lived deep at the bottom of it. The creature was called the Afanc.

Nobody could quite agree what the Afanc looked like. Some said it was like a crocodile, with a long, lazy tail. Some said it was more like a giant beaver, soft and round. Others said it was a small, shy fellow, no bigger than a friendly dwarf.

What everyone *did* agree on was this: when the Afanc rolled over in his sleep, the water sloshed right out of the lake and splashed across the fields.

The farmers near the River Conwy were not cross. They were only worried. "The poor Afanc must be lonely down there," they said, "tossing and turning all night long."

In the village lived a girl named Gwenno. Now, Betws-y-Coed means "prayer-house in the woods," and Gwenno thought it was the kindest name in all of Wales. She believed a kind place ought to do kind things.

So one misty morning she took her little harp and walked down to the edge of Llyn yr Afanc.

She sat upon a smooth grey rock and began to play.

The water bubbled. Two big, round eyes rose up through the ripples. It was the Afanc, blinking at her like a sleepy puppy.

Gwenno did not run. She smiled and played a soft, slow tune, the sort you might hum to a baby.

The Afanc gave a long, happy sigh. He rested his enormous chin on the bank, right beside Gwenno's feet, and his eyes began to close.

"There now," whispered Gwenno. "You only wanted a lullaby."

But Gwenno had an idea. The lake was too small for such a large, sleepy creature. He needed a home as wide as the sky.

So she called the gentlest oxen in the valley, great patient beasts with kind brown eyes. The villagers came too, but nobody pulled or pushed or shouted.

Instead, Gwenno kept playing her harp, and the dozy Afanc followed the music, plodding slowly behind her like a duckling after its mother.

Up the green hills they went, past the old church with its grey stone walls, and on towards a far wider lake high in the mountains of Snowdonia.

When the Afanc saw all that lovely deep water, he gave a wobbly little hop of joy. He waded in, turned three happy circles, and sank down with the biggest, comfiest splash you ever heard.

And this time, when he rolled over in his sleep, the water did not spill. There was plenty of room.

Gwenno waved goodbye. "Sleep well, friend," she said.

Back home in Betws-y-Coed, the fields stayed dry, the farmers were glad, and the lake called Llyn yr Afanc lay calm and clear among the trees.

And on the quietest evenings, if you listen by the water, some folk say you can still hear a faraway harp, playing a soft little lullaby for a gentle lake monster, far up in the hills.

The end.

What's real?

- Llyn yr Afanc is a real lake near Betws-y-Coed in North Wales, and it was named after a creature called the Afanc.
- The Afanc is a lake monster from Welsh mythology, described in different tales as resembling a crocodile, a beaver, a dwarf-like creature, or a platypus.
- Betws-y-Coed is a village in Conwy County Borough, Wales, sitting on the eastern edge of Snowdonia near where the River Conwy meets the River Llugwy.
- The name Betws-y-Coed means 'prayer-house in the woods', and a monastery is known to have existed in the area in the sixth century.
- The oldest parts of St Michael's Church near Betws-y-Coed date to the fourteenth or fifteenth century.

Now colour it in!



Print this page and bring The Gentle Afanc of Llyn yr Afanc, Betws-y-Coed to life with your colours.