



Gwarchodfa Natur
Cwm Clydach
Nature Reserve

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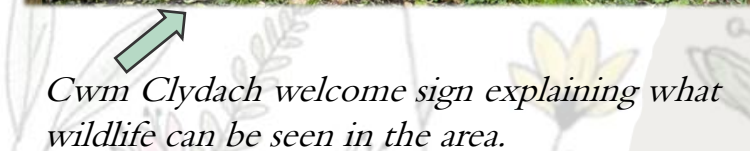
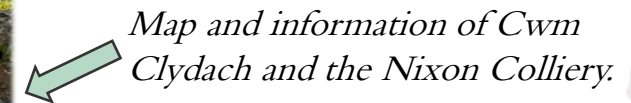
Regaining Paradise

Sustainability in the Early Years

Section A

1902252 - Catrin Jayne Watkins

My earliest memory of Cwm Clydach is walking down there with my Grandfather collecting moss, where my grandfather used to tell of the stories and history of the Nixon Colliery and the surrounding wildlife. I have spent many of summers there swimming in the river, making daisy chains, collecting moss with my grandfather and following butterflies with my sister.

[illegible]

Discover

Cwm Clydach has been defined by the RSPB as a broadleaved sanctuary that is home to birds ranging from Wood Warblers and Gray Wagtails to Buzzards, Red Kites and Ravens in the winter.

While on our walk we noticed a lot of fallen trees from the impact of storm Franklin. I was originally unaware that this was a good thing for the wildlife around, after further research I realised that the fallen trees and dead wood is an important and beneficial aspect for wildlife.

Dead wood provides many sources of food and shelter for wildlife, it adds nutrients to the soil as it decays, and coarse woody debris in rivers and streams help against flooding. Fallen trees and dead wood is also home to many rare invertebrates and fungi, nesting birds such as owls and woodpeckers and bat species that live in cracks and fissures.

(GOV.UK, 2022)

A clip of the birds singing at the start of the walk



↑ Another fallen tree crossing the river.



↑ Another fallen tree landed over a part of the old colliery.



↑ Fallen tree in the river after storm Franklin

The wildlife spotted

Heron



Birds nesting

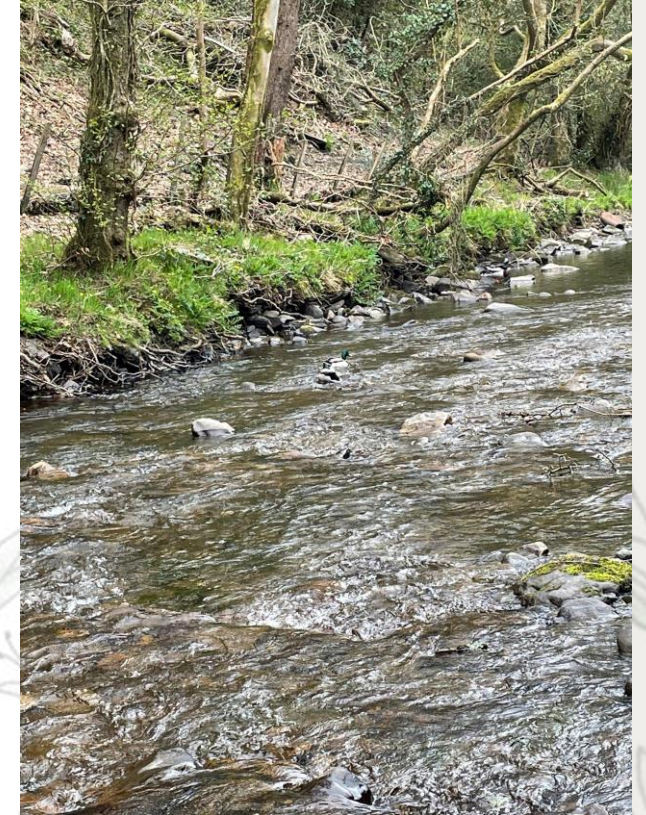


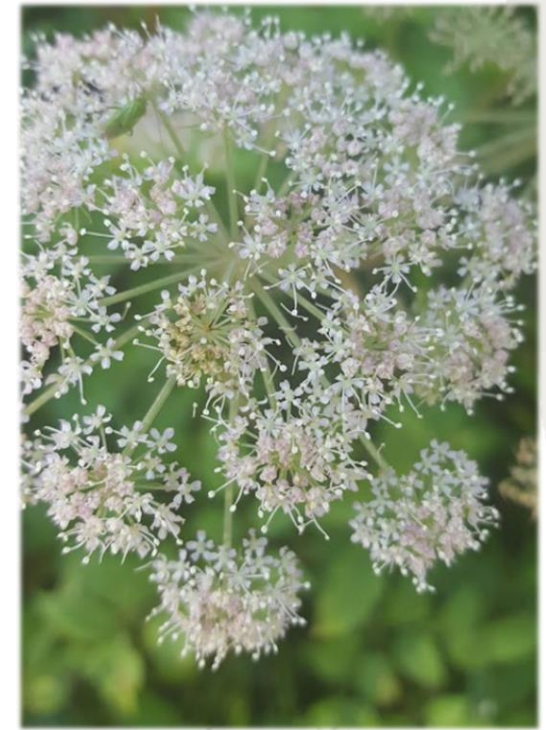
Wood Pidgeon



Mallard ducks and ducklings

Autumn Fly





The flowers
and fungi
spotted



Explore

Whilst exploring the area I was surprised to find more evidence of the old Nixon Colliery than I'd seen before. In the images below you can see the old winding house which has been turned into a residential home. Old pillars that stand as reminders of old man-made structures crossing the river and man-made streams which are common throughout Clydach.



*Man made
stream*



*Old
pillars*



*Signpost to the walking path
that has been names after the
colliery*



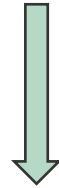
*Old
winding
house*

*Old
pillars*



Old
entrance
to the
colliery

Whilst on the walk a family member pointed to what looked like an uninteresting overgrown patch. Whilst exploring he explained that this is the old entrance to the colliery which is directly opposite the winding house. Unfortunately, I was unable to get close enough to explore deeper and take more pictures due to it being severely overgrown.



I also came across old metal bars which were later explained by a family member that they were the remains of the old tram lines.



Remains
of the
tram
line



Conserve



With Cwm Clydach being protected by the RSPB, conservation is of critical importance here.

According to their website, conservation is at the heart of what the RSPB do, and with constant reminders in the form of signs and birdsong when walking through the reserve you really get a sense of the importance of conservation.

Unfortunately, as it is protected by the RSPB, I was unable to create any bird houses although birds are certainly flourishing in this environment. I was also pleased to see that the sign on the way into the reserve had pictures and described some of the wildlife you could encounter, as I feel that made me more conscious of the fragile ecosystem that depend on this habitat staying the same.

[RSPB.org.uk/our-work](https://www.rspb.org.uk/our-work) (2022)



giving
nature
a home



Fencing put up by the RSPB to protect people from the effects of erosion.



Old water pipe from when the colliery was open

Whilst walking through I also noticed fencing put up. This is to help protect walkers from the effects of erosion, especially following storms.

This shows that the RSPB are also open to managing the landscape to help conserve it.

Old travelers caravan



Gruffalo character carved out of a tree stump



Fairy home carved out of an old tree stump

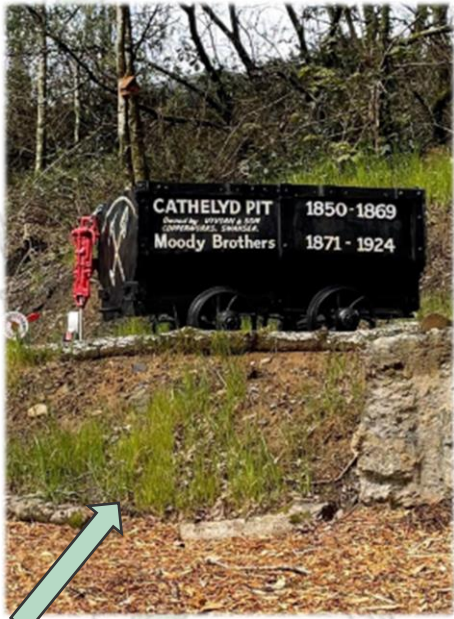


Alongside conservation work done by the RSPB, a local landowner has also decided to celebrate the history of the area by erecting wood carvings of fairytale characters such as the Gruffalo and a wizard.

This is important as it attracts more young children to the area, and it is vital that children learn about the importance of nature and looking after it at a young age.

The landowner has also restored and placed an old mine cart to celebrate the mining history of Cwm Clydach and a traveler's caravan, which when asked was to celebrate the circus coming to Clydach as they would have stayed in this area.

These are things that I did not know at a young age, and so it is vital that children growing up in the area know about their local history and the stories surrounding it by coming to Cwm Clydach and experiencing it.



Old restored mine cart

A wizard carved out of a fallen tree stump



Reflection



Completing the John Muir award was a humbling and fantastic experience. It brought back so many childhood memories and the joy of being and playing outdoors. Following the Covid-19 pandemic, the chance to do this was literally a breath of fresh air.

From a heavy industrialised area to a beautiful nature reserve in under half a century, Cwm Clydach is a stark reminder of the responsibility we have towards nature, and the impact we have on the world around us.

