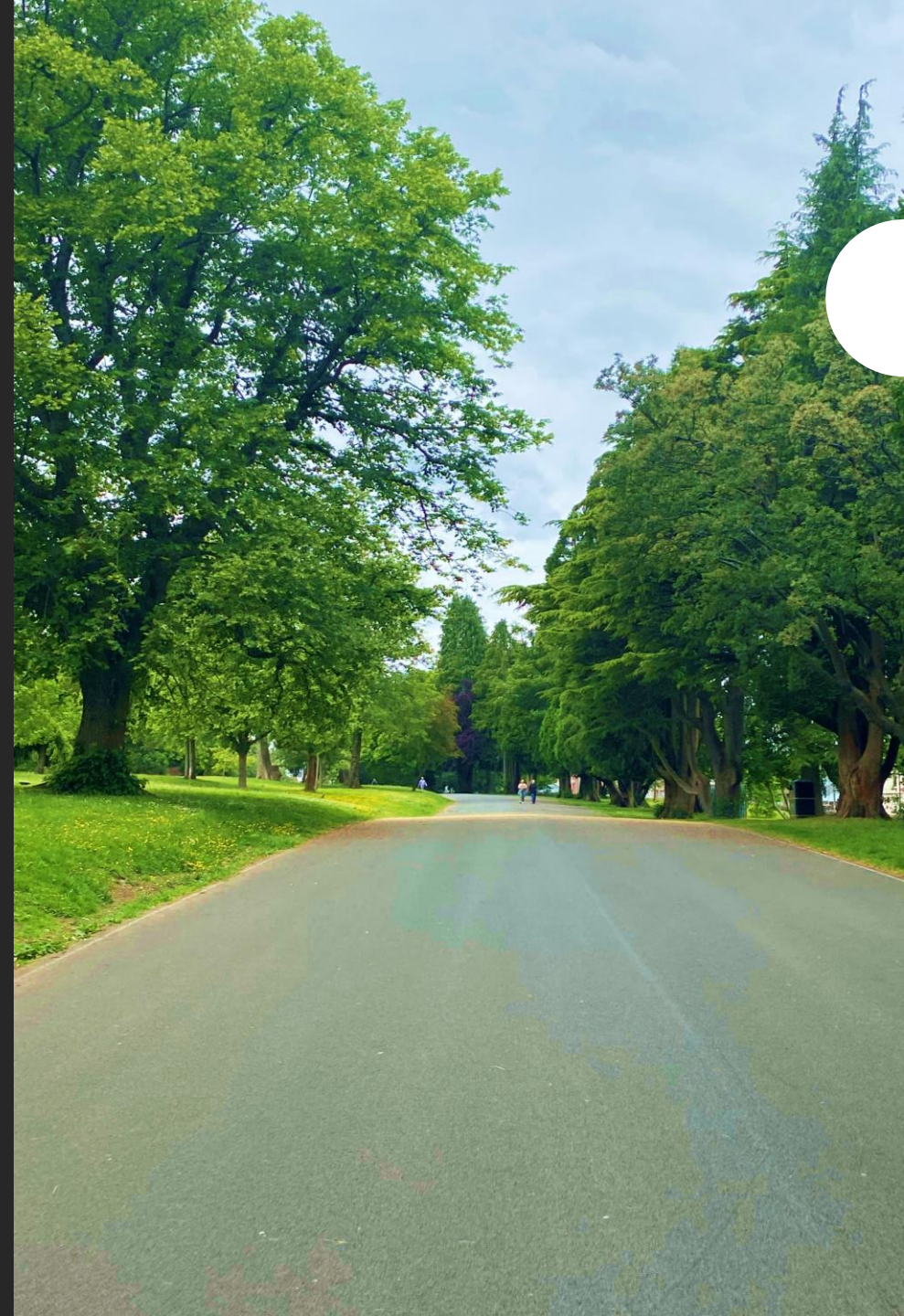


Aberdare Park: Parc Aberdâr.

1904585: Sustainability in the Early Years.





Aberdare Park (Parc Aberdâr)
is a well-preserved Victorian
public park located in the
village of Trecynon, near the
town of Aberdare in South
Wales.

It opened its gates on 27 July 1869. The park occupies
nearly fifty acres (20.25ha). It was landscaped and planted
by William Barron who had laid out many parks in
England and was created at the instigation of Rees Hopkin
Rhys.



DISCOVER

Behind the palace like gates of Aberdare Park lies endless opportunities of discovery and exploration. I discovered the park as a young child as somewhere we would frequently visit as a family for a walk, trip or day out, a safe haven to have picnics, climb trees and play in the adventure playground. Over the years I have never fully appreciated what it had/has to offer. The fact its on my doorstep has meant I have sometimes ignored the natural beauty that lies within. On reflection I can see how much has changed- but with a new appreciation I have again discovered a natural environment which has shown its everlasting beauty, something I now know I have taken for granted for many years.



GRAN



HARI and FREYA

DISCOVER:

I have an abundance of memories of time spent in the park during my childhood. Running carefree in the open grassy plains, watching brass bands play proudly in the open bandstand to cheering my Gran on whilst she played bowls for the local women's team. As a mother I have spent precious hours in the park with my children, watching while they climbed trees, fed ducks and explored the park with imagination, but often too preoccupied to absorb or appreciate its natural beauty for myself. Completing the John Muir award has afforded me the opportunity to explore and discover what the park has to offer bringing priceless childhood memories to life. I have a new-found appreciation and curiosity of surrounding natural areas and what I could be doing to protect the world we live in.

EXPLORE: led me to find out the historical links to statues erected in the park but walked past previously.



The statue of Lord Merthyr was unveiled in 1913 and was sculpted by Thomas Brock RA in 1912.



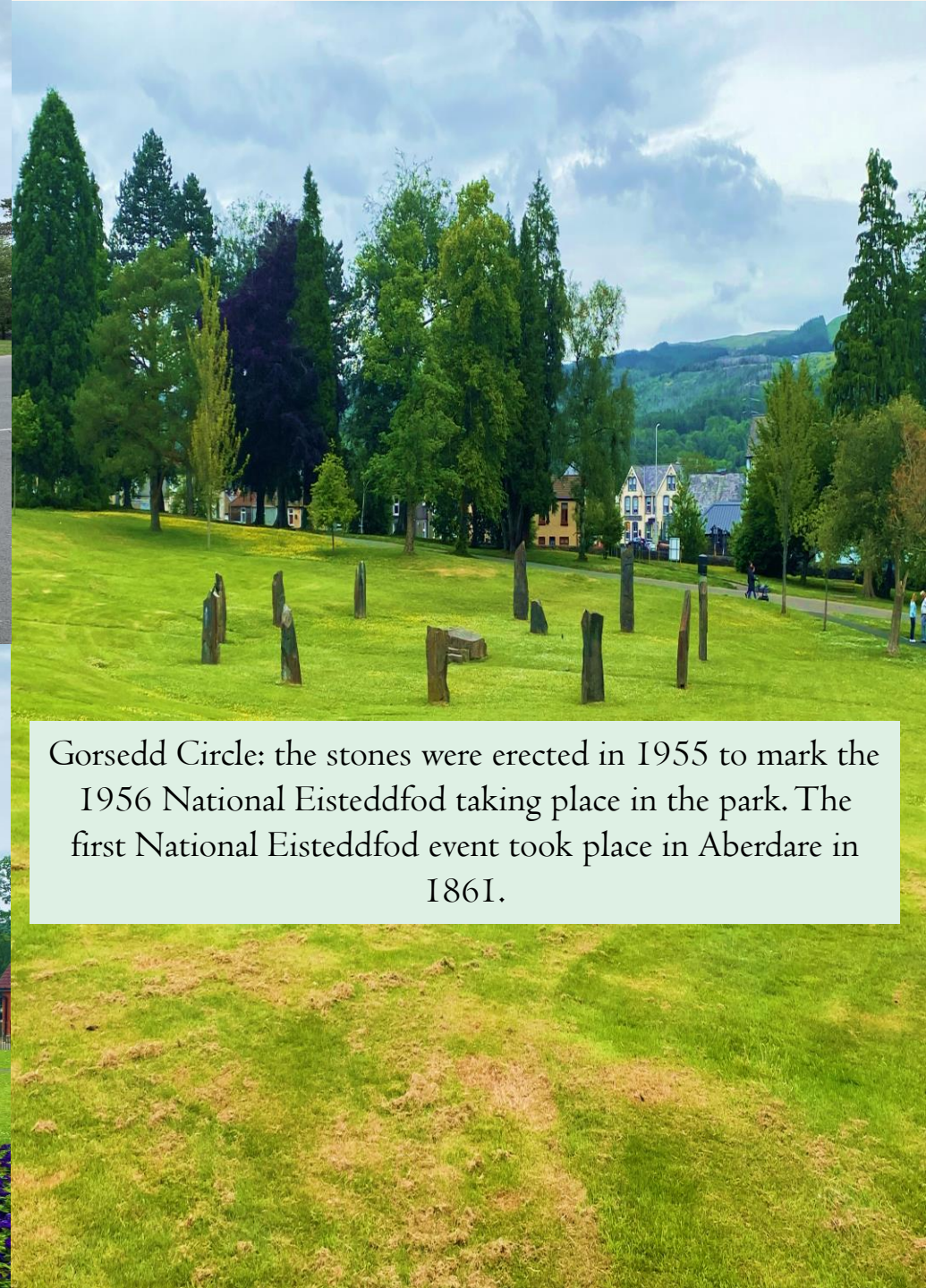
This was sited to commemorate the bus crash in Raglan in 1995 which claimed the lives of 10 people.



Spirit of Industry statue: donated in 1905 by Isaac George

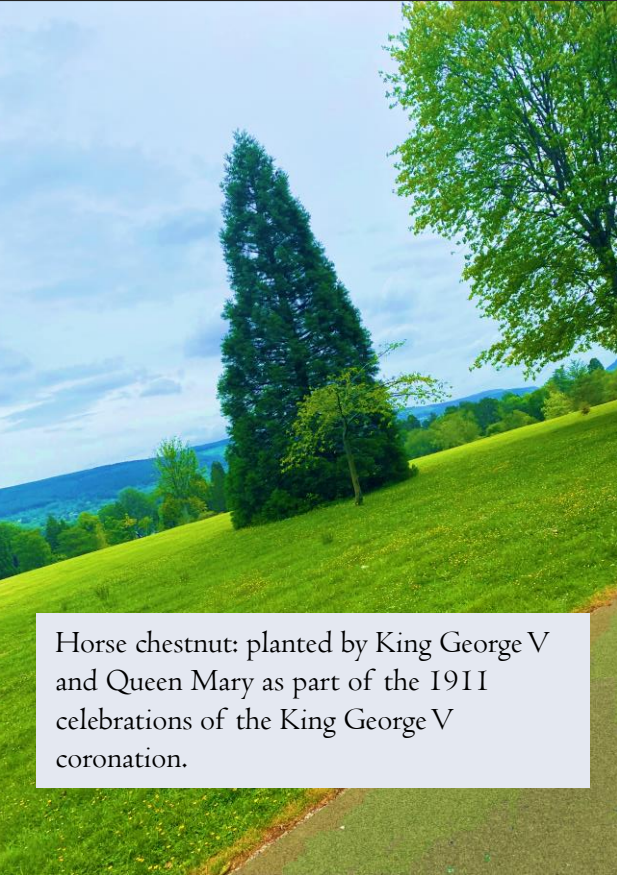


Crowning fountain donated by Lord Merthyr to celebrate the coronation of King George V in 1911. There is only three of its kind in the World- two in the UK (Aberdare and Torquay) and the remaining one situated in Singapore.



Gorsedd Circle: the stones were erected in 1955 to mark the 1956 National Eisteddfod taking place in the park. The first National Eisteddfod event took place in Aberdare in 1861.

EXPLORE: Most of the mature trees I saw I found out were planted in 1867 by William Barron prior to the official opening of the park in 1869. Aberdare Park's richest habitat remains the oak woodland which has been undergoing natural regeneration for the past 10 years. This has enabled the gradual development of an understory made of hazel, ash & holly as well as brambles and mixed grasses. All of this has contributed to providing good structure for bird and bats habitats.



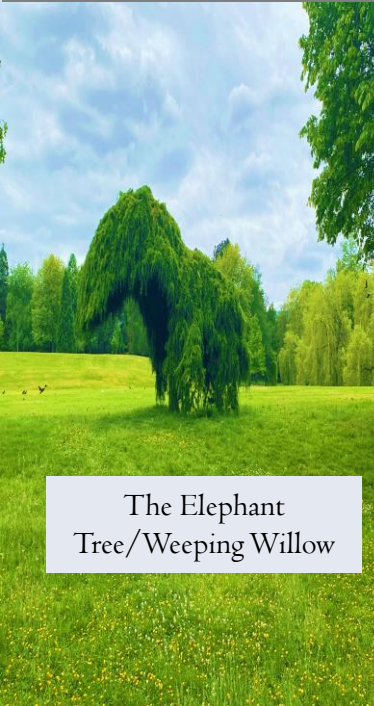
Horse chestnut: planted by King George V and Queen Mary as part of the 1911 celebrations of the King George V coronation.



GIANT REDWOOD



HAZEL TREE



The Elephant Tree/Weeping Willow



Black Pine



EXPLORE: the variation in textures, colours and shapes which spring to life were evident to see in flowers growing in the park. Personally, not being very 'green fingered' allowed me to learn the names of flowers there and in surrounding areas.



EXPLORE: LOOK AND FEEL



EXPLORE: LOOK AND FEEL.





Discover: Aberdare Park is situated central to the location of three primary schools. Upon contacting the schools to question if the park was utilized as an outdoor learning environment- I discovered it is not. The park is only used once a year as a venue for Sports Day due to lack of space in the school grounds by the school situated directly opposite (pictured) and never by two other schools close by.

EXPLORE: WILD ZONES!!

Over the years I have walked around the park, not paying much attention to the overgrown areas or indeed their purpose. Whilst exploring the park, I found these 'wild zones' are purposely created to promote and provide valuable habitat for biodiversity. I discovered the area is monitored throughout the growing season to identify what wild-flower species are growing there, enabling an awareness of a need for planting of crocuses and fritillaries. In addition, monitoring allows understanding of the potential for nature diversification which has a positive impact on local flora (particularly local bees).



Native residents of the park

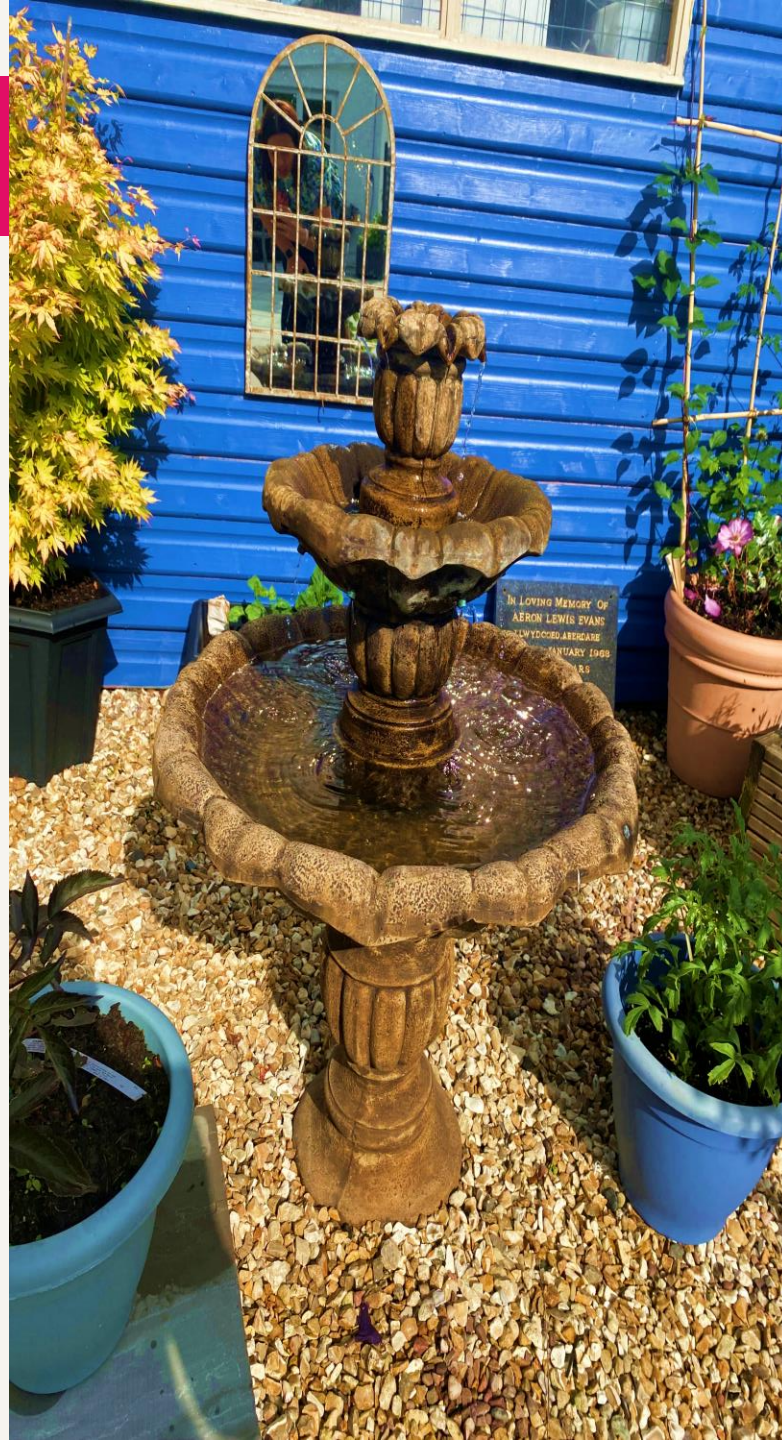
Aside from squirrels and geese/ducks who make their presence known in search of nuts and bread from visitors in the park grounds, a variety of birds and other species of wildlife can be found. Birds including Chaffinch, Robins and the sounds of the Song thrush can be heard echoing amongst the trees in a chorus with the Great tit, Nuthatch and the Common Wren. In the early evening light, pipistrelle and brown long eared bats can be seen flying in open, grassy areas surrounded by trees and bushes feeding upon their favourite diet of moths, beetles, flies and spiders.



CONSERVE:

Although I discovered common types of birds that inhabit the park and could hear them amongst the trees, I was unable to visually observe many of the birds whilst exploring. To further my knowledge, I wanted to encourage birds into my garden. I decided to place a bird box and a water fountain/ bird bath to provide birds with a safe place to visit. Bird tables act as pit stops where birds can drink, eat, and rest as they go about their daily activities. I've learnt from researching RSPB that different types of feeds can attract even more species such as tanagers, sparrows, hummingbirds, woodpeckers, chickadees, among many more.

Bird boxes can be easily built, instructions on next slide!!!



Make a bird box!!!

What you will need:

A plank of FSC wood 15cm x 1.4m long x 1.5-1.8cm thick and not pressure treated

Pencil and tape measure

Saw

Nails

Strip of waterproof rubber

Drill

Optional: a hole saw/cutter for making 3.2cm holes

Ladder

Screws

Camera or smart phone

Water based paint

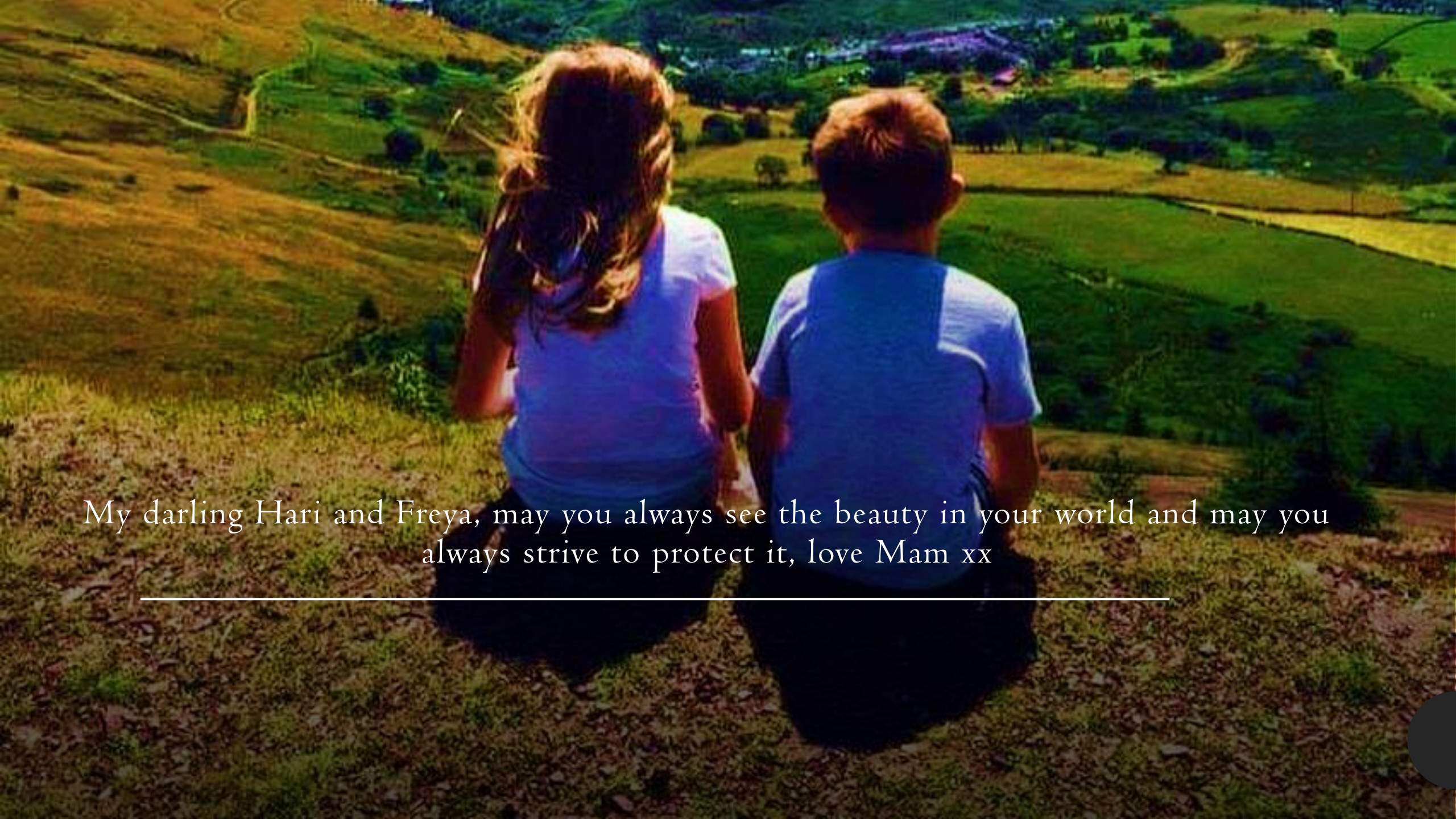


For instructions please visit: <https://www.rspb.org.uk/fun-and-learning/for-families/family-wild-challenge/activities/build-a-birdbox/>



CONSERVE:

Completing the John Muir Award has valuably increased my personal knowledge and understanding of the natural world surrounding me. Additionally, it has created an awareness of a personal responsibility and accountability I have towards the natural environment and ways in which I can live to sustain its beauty. Taking actions in my daily life as a member of society and as a mother, making better choices and adopting the philosophy of sustainable living now may impact the way in which my children view their world and shape the adults they will become. They have explored eagerly with me with a new love of the outdoors and what it has to offer. After discussions, we have decided as a family to do a weekly litter pick/ exploration in surrounding woodland near our home and have even enlisted their friends as helpers!!!



My darling Hari and Freya, may you always see the beauty in your world and may you
always strive to protect it, love Mam xx



Aberdare Park the heart of the town,
Visited by generations all year round,
A haven for wildlife and a home for the ducks
Squirrels run free searching for nuts.

The landscape has changed over the years,
Growing in beauty as it matures,
Trees growing and flowers blooming,
The 'Elephant tree' always drooping.

Sounds of joy and laughter fill the air,
children play without a care,
Families bond and friends reunite,
Against a natural backdrop of pure delight.

Park keepers and communities diligently take care,
of a landscape they believe should always be there,
Rubbish is recycled and litter removed,
to maintain the beauty that is very much loved.

Long may it continue but people must reflect,
how future generations can positively act,
To maintain the beauty, to promote the love,
For past generations looking down from above.