

Waterfall Country

Update Summer 2020

Signs of Summer



Foxglove *Digitalis purpurea*

In summer all over Waterfall Country the tall 'firework' spikes of foxgloves in flower are emerging. This common native brightens up the countryside with its purple bell-like flowers.

Foxgloves provide a plentiful supply of food for bees with the flowers' distinctive spotty petals acting like runway lights leading to the nectar.

It is advisable to avoid handling this plant as it contains a powerful toxic chemical called digoxin. This chemical is used in modern medicine for heart conditions as it slows and strengthens the beat of the heart. This is a very important plant but one to be given a lot of respect.



COVID - 19 Update



Using The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020 the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority will continue to keep footpaths and car parks closed in Waterfall Country at this time.

There are some minor changes to lockdown with people being told they can travel up to 5 miles to meet another household outside. The previous weekends with the good weather illustrated the challenges with people visiting the area, parking inappropriately and attempting to walk on closed footpaths.

It has been a difficult time for residents recently with an increase in pressure from visitors wanting to return. The partnership that has formed during this time (including Natural Resources Wales, Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, Powys CC Highways, National Trust, Dyfed Powys and South Wales Police), will continue to allocate as many resources as possible to the area and work hard to manage these closures.

Thank you for your patience in these challenging times.

(Correct at time of publishing 05/06/20)

For more information: www.beacons-npa.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19

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Double Yellow Lines

The new double yellow lines, at Comin y Rhos and Gwaun Hepste, are so far deterring people from double parking and narrowing the road.

The second part of this solution, to prevent vehicles from driving on to the common, will be the installation of either earth mounds or bollards to act as a physical barrier. This will be discussed with local residents as soon as we can safely bring people together again in person.

Originally this was scheduled to take place in March. All these measures once completed should prevent the parking problems that have previously been an issue.



Get To Know ...Richard Farquhar

Assistant Area Warden, Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (BBNPA)

What is it that you do for the BBNPA?

I cover the central area which is from the north to south boundaries of the National Park and includes the Central Beacons and Waterfall Country. I work to maintain the rights of way network, look after the sites we have responsibility to manage, ensure the protection and conservation of our natural habitats, find solutions to the ever increasing visitor pressures and be a point of contact for all the different people and organisations that live, work and play in the National Park.



This is achieved through a multitude of collaborative working with partnerships, local authorities, Emergency Services, local communities, volunteers and other BBNPA officers.

What made you decide to be a Warden?

I've always wanted to work in wildlife conservation so I studied Conservation Management, then volunteered with the National Trust. I had a brief career as a tree surgeon before starting with the BBNPA.

What is the most enjoyable part of your job?

It's the privilege of meeting so many different people whether they are residents, visitors or other groups enjoying the great outdoors. The National Park is open to all but it's a living landscape. It's balancing the needs of those working in the area with all the other ways people want to access the environment and protecting those natural resources at the same time.

What is the most challenging?

At the moment COVID 19 is making the situation in Waterfall Country very difficult especially trying to keep everyone safe. It's compounded by different peoples' perceptions of risk. Residents understandably want to have as few visitors as possible, yet those from more built up areas have got used to being outside and exercising with other people about and don't feel visiting the area is particularly risky.

Have you any hidden talents?

I am a fire juggler and I can breathe fire, though I might have to trim the beard a bit before doing that again.

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When is a fern bracken?



Bracken

Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* is the largest of our native ferns, but sometimes identifying this ancient plant can be difficult as there are other common ferns that look similar such as the broad buckler fern *Dryopteris erythrosora*.

There are a couple of ways to tell the difference. Bracken needs well drained soil and is happy in full sun such as in fields and meadows. Most ferns prefer shady, damp conditions such as in deep gorges and by waterfalls.

Bracken has a stem and side branches and can reach two meters in height.

Buckler ferns however, grow straight from the ground in a circle and get to about a meter. In mythology, bracken was said to give perpetual youth, possibly because it thrives well and can quickly dominate an area if it has no competition. This quick spreading nature means that bracken needs to be managed in some sites.

In some areas of the Brecon Beacons National Park, dried, dead bracken is cut and baled to be used as a cheap bedding for animals.

Elidir and the Faeries

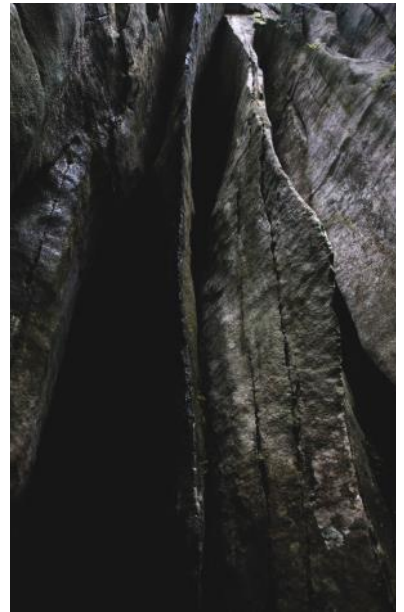
Elidir was a young trainee monk in Neath Abbey who fled the harsh treatment he received there. He ran up the Nedd Fechan river and stopped to hide in a cave. There he met one of the Twlyth Teg, the Fair Ones or the faeries.

The faerie took Elidir through the cave to their beautiful land beyond and everywhere there was of gold. Plates, cups, forks anything that the faeries used was made of gold. Elidir lived with the faeries in luxury for many years. He had permission to leave now and then to see his mother on the condition that he took nothing from the faerie world with him.

Elidir's mother was very poor and when she became ill he could not bear to think of her dying from her poverty.

Passing through faerie to return home he picked up a little golden ball and slipped it into his pocket. He didn't think that it would be missed and small though the ball was it would be riches for his mother.

He went back through the cave and as he left it he heard a sharp snap behind him. The cave had closed and try as he might he never found the entrance to the faerie kingdom again. And what about the little golden ball? As with anything gold taken from the faeries and brought into our world, it probably turned to dust.



Broad Buckler Fern

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