

Mary Gillham
Her life and
times-
the first 80 years

A TRIBUTE to MARY -

compiled on the occasion of a party to celebrate
the 80th birthday of Dr Mary Gillham



Childhood and growing up;
Land Army years;
Academic, researcher and scholar;
Author, artist and photographer;
Conservationist;
World Traveller;
Traveller at home;
Cardiff Naturalists' Society;
Glamorgan Wildlife Trust;
Merthyr Tydfil and District
Naturalists' Society.

*The compilers thank all those who have
contributed photographs and stories*

*-and hope the subject herself will give
retrospective permission for those of her own
pictures to be used!!*



A LIFE WELL LIVED attributed to MS

When Mary was born in London town
She little knew she'd be renown
For writing books and long-haul travel
Her life history I'll now try to unravel.

When war broke out and food was short
She volunteered to do her part
And though her work mates thought her
barmy
She joined the Women's land Army.

She fed the stock and drove the plough
Monitored milk yields of the cow.
When war was over, tired of monotony
She went to 'Aber' to study Botany.

To write her thesis for PhD
She chose Skokholm in the Irish Sea
To study the effects on plants of gulls
guano
A topic dear to her heart as we all know.

Worldwide posts next came her way
She stayed a long time from the UK.
Then five brave lassies of which she was
one
Sailed to Antarctica, the first ever done.

Then Mary felt the call of home
And leisurely back through Africa
roamed
She called at Robben Island on her way
Though with Mandela she couldn't stay

Back now in Wales she joined Extra
Mural
And taught us students all things rural
With an hour of chat plus one of slides
And field trips organized besides.

Aldabra called her when rumours rife
Said a US base site would cause strife
To endemic nature living there
Mary, when asked listed all things rare.



A President and Honorary Member of
Cardiff Nats
On Merthyr's committee she has also sat
And a founder member of the Glam
Trust
On all their deliberations she's a must.

She lectures and also leads field trips
On fungus forays and pond dips
She edits and illustrates our news letter
And no one does these things better.

In Mary's cottage on the Garth
There is always a welcome at her hearth.
In her garden filled with cats and flowers
She whiles away long happy hours.

She draws and paints and writes her
books
She gardens, entertains and cooks.
There seems no limit to her gifts
As through her life she calmly drifts.

I've travelled with her through sun and
gales
Eaten ostrich legs and crocodile tails
But both martyrs now to hips and knees
We choose to cruise gently on the seas.

So we've gathered here to celebrate
The 80th birthday of our mate
Still keen of brain though weak of knee
The multitalented Mary G.

CHILDHOOD

Born to Edith Gertrude and
Charles Gillham on 26th November 1921.

Grew up in Ealing in West London



Proud parents in 1924

Four generations in 1925 :-
Great grandfather - John Parrant
Grandmother - Edith Caroline Husband
Mother - Edith Gertrude Gillham



With mother, grandmother – and brother John in the
background



Mary and John
– it is to John that we
are indebted for
these photographs of
childhood years

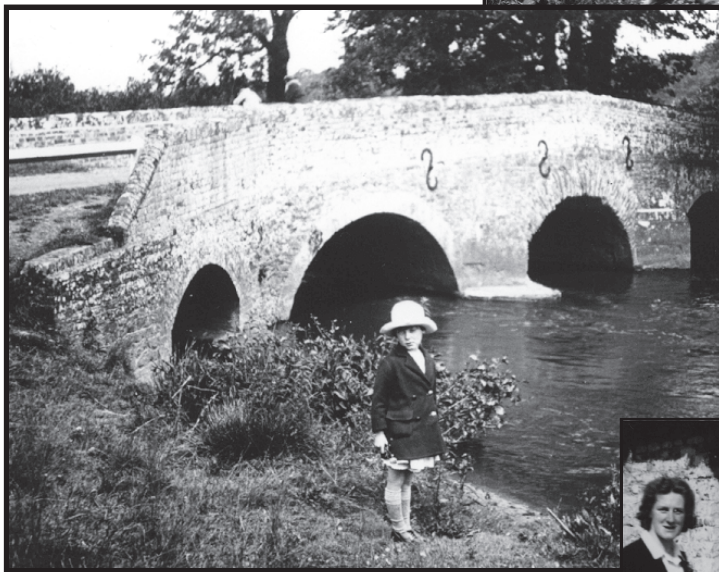


- did love of the feline fraternity start here?

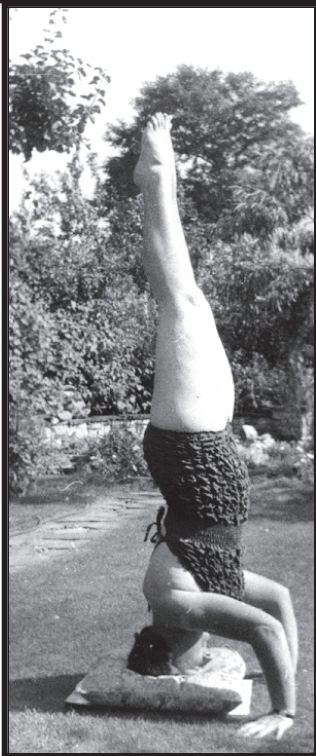
GROWING UP

At an early age – love of the countryside began;

circa 1925 -



- and of animals;



- as well as an attraction to sea and shore - and those rock pools!

Was this a first attempt to visit 'down under'?



LAND ARMY YEARS : 1940 – 1945

Like so many of her generation the onset of the second World War was to drastically change the course of life. Any hope of higher education was postponed and after a spell of hated office work, Mary joined the Land Army.



These years are described in her book ‘Town bred, country nurtured’. The life must have been hard – no gas, electricity or mains water, all for a weekly stipend of thirty six shillings (=£1.80 today), but it did mean that for the first time Mary was living and working in the country environment that she was to make her own.

Despite the hard work she still found time for poetry and to keep records of her natural history sightings and these and her line drawings form the basis of the book.



SONG OF A COW GIRL

To be sung to the tune of IT'S FOOLISH BUT IT'S FUN

I love to be a dairy maid: its good to wield a broom and spade:
I think I like the cattle trade. It's foolish but it's fun.

I like to milk my cows if good, (they'd kick me out though if they could).
They don't stand quietly like they should, unless I give them food.

I do enjoy the mucking out: it's great to throw the dung about.
If one gets hit I'll hear him shout. Of that I have no doubt.

I like to clatter round the yard in hobnailed boots with metal guard
And kid myself I'm working hard. The boss is quite a card.

I love the sun when I'm around, a'tossing hay up *from* the ground.
I'm getting now so nicely browned. My natural bent I've found.

I love to turn the cattle out: the lazy ones I have to clout.
Then I can chuck the straw about and law and order flout.

I like to spend my days outdoors, whether it shines or rains or pours.
As soon as I have done my chores, to work there's no more cause.

And so through all the live-long day, whether I milk or help make hay,
Or merely watch the cats at play, I'm having lots of fun.



The poem and the pictures on this page are taken from ‘Town bred, country nurtured’

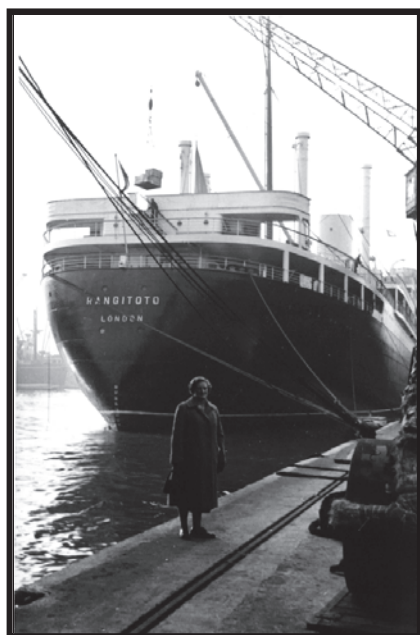
SCHOLAR and ACADEMIC

1949 – First Class Honours Degree in Agriculture in the then University College of Wales, Aberystwyth

- followed by a doctoral thesis on the effects of seabirds on the vegetation of islands based on research carried out on the islands off the Pembroke coast.



1950's – University of Exeter –
Lecturer in the Department of Botany



Mary – en route to sail to a University post in Australia – to study the natural history of remote islands off the coasts of Australia, New Zealand and South Africa - HMS Rangitoto 1956. In 1959 she was to work in Antarctica with the Australian Antarctic Division and later research or teach in the Indian Ocean, the Bahamas and in Nigeria.

AUTHOR

In your adopted land you have shown us the wonders of nature; from being London 'Town Bred and Country Nurtured', your love of wildlife has stretched from being 'A Naturalist in New Zealand' to your home in 'The Garth Countryside- part of Cardiff's Green Mantle', via 'Swansea Bay's Green Mantle'; the 'Natural History of Gower' and 'The Glamorgan Heritage Coast Wildlife Series'.

INSTRUCTIONS TO YOUNG ORNITHOLOGISTS, IV SEA BIRDS
Brompton Library Series, Museum Press, London, 1963

A NATURALIST IN NEW ZEALAND
Museum Press, London, and Reeds, New Zealand, 1966

SUB-ANTARCTIC SANCTUARY. SUMMERTIME ON MACQUARIE ISLAND
Victor Gollancz, London and Reeds, New Zealand, 1967

THE NATURAL HISTORY OF GOWER. First and second editions
D. Brown & Sons, Cowbridge, Glamorgan, 1977 and 1979

SWANSEA BAY'S GREEN MANTLE
D. Brown & Sons, Cowbridge, Glamorgan, 1982

THE GLAMORGAN HERITAGE COAST WILDLIFE SERIES:

- Volume 1. SAND DUNES, Heritage Coast Committee, Bridgend, 1987
- Volume 2. RIVERS. Heritage Coast Committee, Bridgend, 1989
- Volume 3. LIMESTONE DOWNS. Glamorgan Wildlife Trust, Bridgend, 1991
- Volume 4. COASTAL DOWNS. Glamorgan Wildlife Trust, Bridgend, 1993
- Volume 5. SEA CLIFFS. Glamorgan Wildlife Trust, Bridgend, 1994

TOWN BRED, COUNTRY NURTURED. A Naturalist looks back fifty years -
Gillham, Cardiff, 1998

THE GARTH COUNTRYSIDE. Part of Cardiff's Green Mantle
Lazy Cat Publishing, Cardiff 1999

ISLANDS OF THE TRADE WINDS. An Indian Ocean Odyssey
Minerva, Press Ltd., London, 2000

ISLAND HOPPING IN TASMANIA'S ROARING FORTIES
Arthur Stockwell, Elms Court, Ilfracombe, 2000

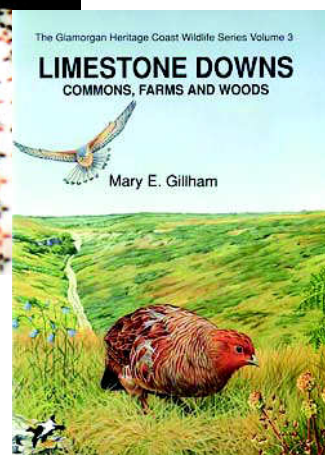
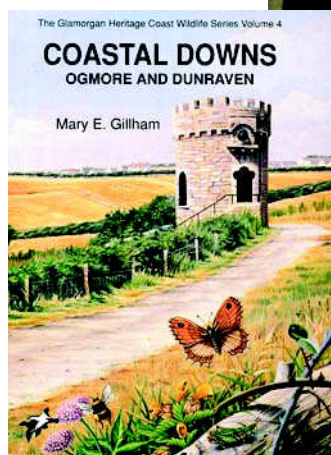
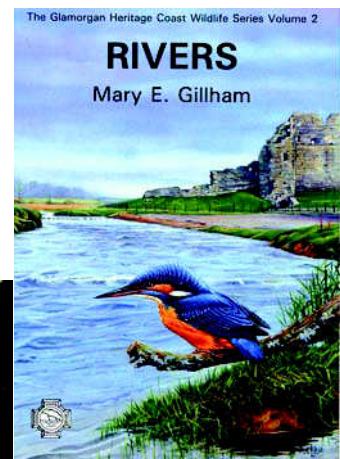
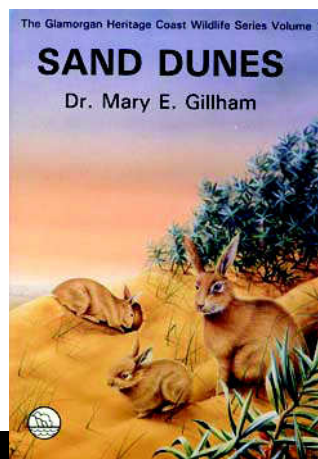
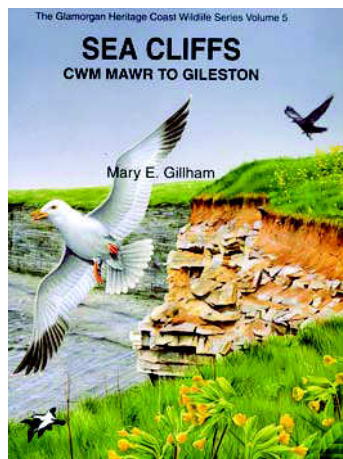
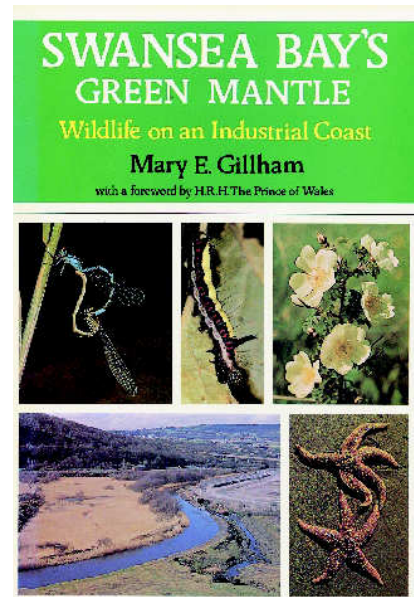
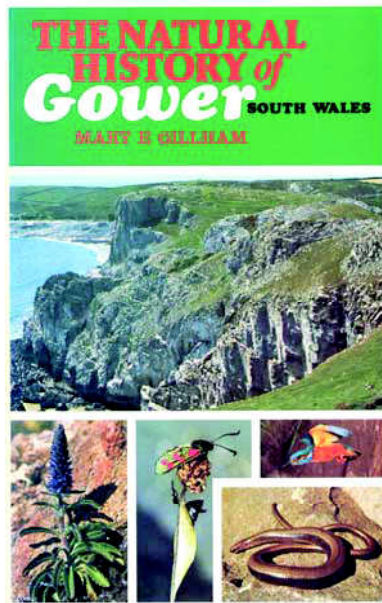
WITH OTHER AUTHORS
THE FLORA OF A CHANGING BRITAIN
Botanical Society of the British Isles, Middlesex, 1970

EVERYMAN'S NATURE RESERVE: IDEAS FOR ACTION
Devon Trust for Nature Conservation, David and Charles, Devon, 1972

DISCOVERING THE COUNTRYSIDE: COASTAL WALKS - with David Bellamy
Hamlyn, London, 1982

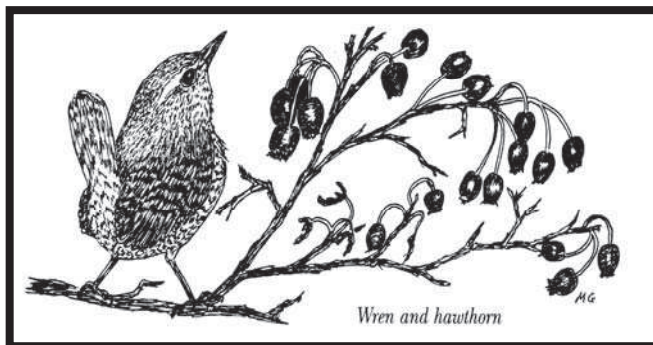
MERTHYR TYDFIL: A VALLEY COMMUNITY
Merthyr Teachers' Centre Group, D, Brown & Son, Cowbridge, 1982

AUTHORITY ON LOCAL WILDLIFE



AN ACCOMPLISHED AND PROLIFIC ARTIST AND ILLUSTRATOR

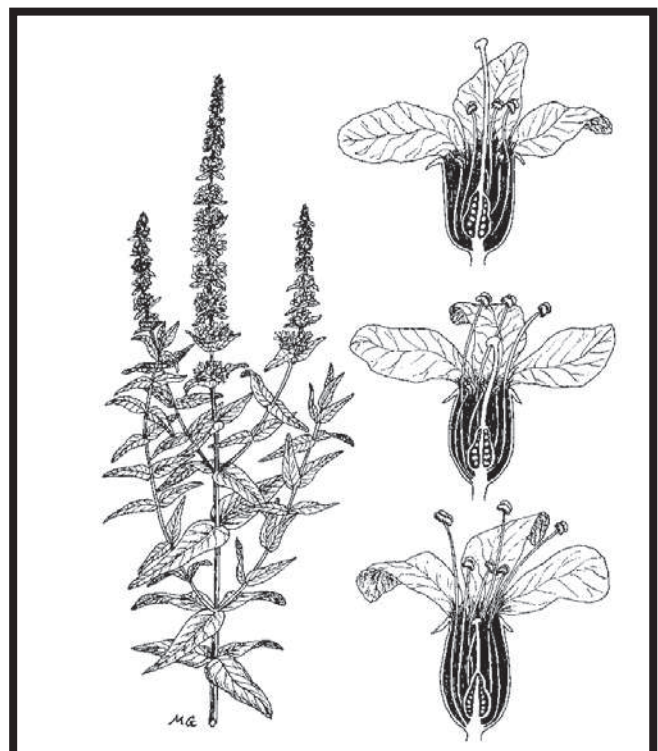
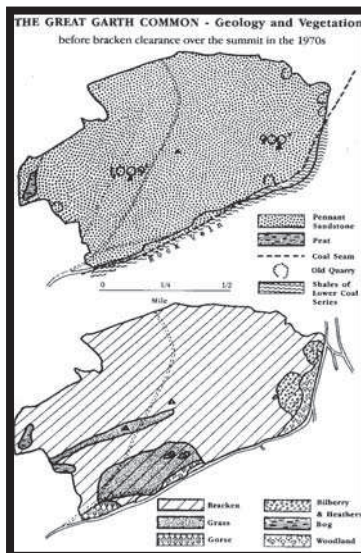
and a close observer of nature's wonders



Wren and hawthorn



Water shrew, water crowfoot and silverweed



Purple loosestrife and three different flower forms

Some examples of Mary's use of different subjects, styles and techniques, taken from her many publications.

MARY as CONSERVATIONIST

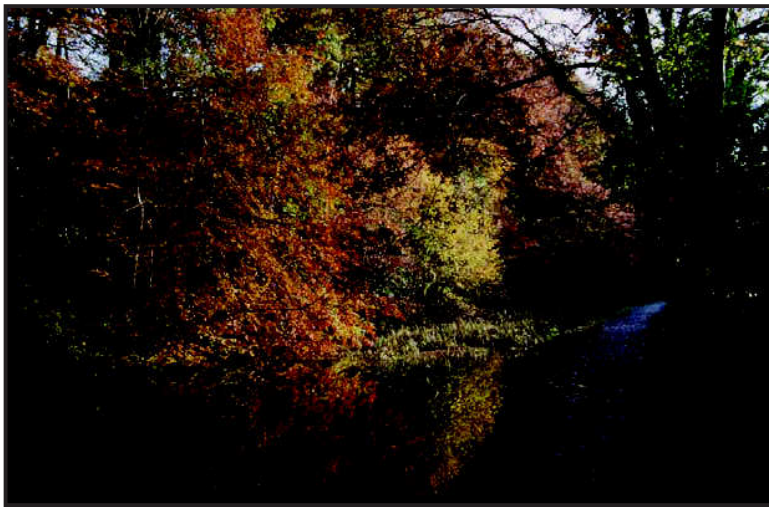
She has been instrumental over many years in helping to conserve areas of special interest and plan for their future development and maintenance. Just two examples are at Cosmeston Country Park and along the Glamorganshire Canal. In this report from the Transactions of the CARDIFF NATURALISTS' SOCIETY Vol XCIV 1966-1968 Mary's scholarly article continues by describing in detail the wealth of plant and animal life she has observed in the reserve.

A New Nature Reserve: Glamorganshire Canal between Tongwynlais and Whitchurch and the adjacent Long Wood

MARY E. GILLHAM, B.Sc., PH.D.

(University College, Cardiff: Department of Extra Mural Studies)

When Robert Drane and his associates founded the Cardiff Naturalists' Society a century ago conservation of the natural environment had none of the urgency which it assumes today. Many changes have taken place since 1867 : some no harder on the eye than the wholesale invasion of the banks of the River Taff and its satellite waterways by tall pink stands of Himalayan balsam, others more offensive.

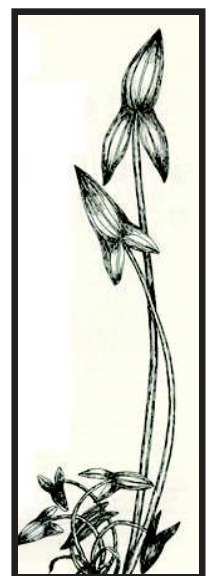


On the outskirts of the city, hard against one of its more populous north-western suburbs, lies a stretch of the old Glamorganshire Canal a little more than a mile long, bordered on the one side by steep woodland and on the other by grassy flats leading westwards to the River Taff. It is a sanctuary for birds and a haven for wild plants, including not a few aquatic rarities and the invertebrate life which goes with them. It can be sanctuary and haven also for the town-weary humans living in close proximity if it is sensibly managed as the reserve all nature lovers would like to see it.

At present it caters for all tastes. The young go there in pursuit of water beetles, the slightly older in pursuit of love, the more mature in pursuit of peace. Their activities are rudely disturbed at times by youths with guns, but many of the younger generation are on our side.

There was, for example, the diminutive freckled urchin who hurtled up on a bicycle when I was collecting algae. 'Watcher doin' Missus?' he demanded, with the urgent interest of the unsophisticated. 'Gathering plants' I said meekly, holding aloft a fingertip draped with mucilagenous blanket weed. He looked pityingly at the dripping mess and tried to deflect my thoughts to higher things. 'Cor Missus, but it's smashin' fer birds. We just see a kingfisher.' Across the canal a big winter flock of siskins dipped in yellowgreen relays to drink and bathe; mistle thrushes mingled their churring calls with the harsher cronk of a moorhen among the alders and a cock blackbird let forth the fullthroated song of spring although it was as yet still January. It was, indeed, 'smashin' fer birds', and, as such, merits our attention as conservationists. Long before another century has passed it will be too late.

Only a couple of decades ago there was a wealth of water plants in adjacent stretches of the canal which are now filled in and partially built over. As trains slipped out of Llandaff North station towards Radyr, passengers were once able to look out to their left on to a golden stretch of fringed water lily where today they see only a waste of gravel and brick. The plants had spilled over into the now defunct canal from a garden pond at Radyr Mill House and formed a magnificent spectacle during the two summers following draining. Our County Trust made a reserve around Broad Pool on Gower to protect this very plant so rare in Western Britain and here were Cardiffians squandering assets on their own city boundaries. We have a duty to the future and, thanks to the combined efforts of Town and Gown, Trust and 'Nats', that duty is being performed.



Sagittaria sagittifolia

WORLD TRAVELLER

Foreign travel began for Mary as a teenager -



here (right) on a family outing to Switzerland in 1939 with the faithful Vauxhall, “**GMT**” - **G**illham’s **M**otor **T**ransport.

Since then, Mary has experienced many different forms of transport, but this one does seem to present a problem -

(just where **do**
you get hold of
it?)



- South Africa 1984.



Enjoying some
stunning scenery

Grenada, 1990
(with Jeffrey
Raum).

Partying in style
with the
irrepressible
Mairead
Sutherland

up the Amazon,
2000.



And memorable trips
to Western Ireland



- AND NEARER HOME

relaxing at Ogof Fynnon Ddu with “Cardiff Nats”



bottoming an identification puzzle?

and
still botanising!



Enjoying
Grangemore
Parc, a new
wildlife site
in Cardiff.

CNS - Cardiff Naturalists' Society

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As Field Meeting Leader (May 1995):





CARDIFF NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

Thanks for all the great days out identifying bugs, slime and weeds!
Andy Kendall & Rhian Hicks

Thanks for all you have taught me over the years - just a pity I never retained it!! If you have no sense now you never will! Make new friends but keep the old, the new are silver, the old are gold
Maircad Sutherland

Octogenarian! You've made it too! Keep going for the next decade. With love- Joyce Lloyd
Thank you for your friendship, tolerance and encouragement to two ignoramuses like us - on botanical forays for so many years
Yvonne & Harold Cairns

Happy birthday Mary - a good friend and patient teacher, to whom we all owe such a lot. Margaret Leishman

Mary Cleaver

Have a great day! Wishing you many more happy and active years ahead of you. Thank you for the knowledge and enjoyment your books have given us.
Rosanne & Brian Bond

Thank you for introducing me to a very interesting world
Sarjit Singhrao

Thank you for sharing your knowledge and enthusiasm for the wonderful wildlife of South Wales - you're an inspiration. Rob Nottage

Ursula Henriques

You and only you opened for me and countless others the door to the natural world. Jennie Tann

Forty years ago, you opened our eyes to a world which we did not know existed, and have been a source of inspiration and enjoyment ever since. Margaret & Elsie Stockwell
D J & M J Lewis
Pen Lewis

I look forward to your 100th celebration as well Mary, if I stay as active as you! Very best wishes.. Cynthia Merrett

Margaret Roberts

Best wishes from all your friends at the 'Extramural Department' at Cardiff University. Madeline Havard

Many thanks for all the education and enjoyment your extramural classes generated and especially for encouraging me to further my career as part time lecturer
Linda Nottage

Best wishes for a healthy happy future. Thank you for sharing with us your vast knowledge and experiences, given with such a sense of humour, especially in your 'Land Army' days. Mil Presdee

Many thanks for all the enjoyment you have given me with your talks and books - for many years. All the best for the future. Mary Thelwell

Thank you for opening my eyes to the wonders of nature and the many happy holidays I've enjoyed with you. You will always be in my thoughts.. Olive Rawsthorne

All good wishes. Delighted to read a good review of your recent Tasmania book in 'Ibis'. Good to see it in print. Be in touch again shortly. R Vernon

Every happiness-Mary
Joan A

Congratulations and best wishes from the grand daughter of Henry Farmer, Past President and Founder Member of Cardiff Naturalists' Society
Rosemary Leach

Fond greetings - you have made a memorable impact in our area. In gratitudeMargery Lewis
Congratulations on reaching your 80th. You have been a great ambassador for natural history, especially in South Wales. Long may it continue.
Stephen Howe

Thank you for the interest and enjoyment you have given me over the 20 years of my retirement by means of field trips, lectures and books bursting with knowledge and enthusiasm. May there be many more productive years - dear Mary.
Harold Boudier

Mr & Mrs R G Hughes

Wishing you many happy returns and a good 80th birthday celebration
Tricia Wood

Thank you so much for all your beautiful and meticulous illustrations, often in the margins of our 'Cardiff Nats' newsletters, for the books you have published for our information and enjoyment, your occasional company and your patience with an occasional contributor and his less than perfect typing..... it was all hugely appreciated. John Blandell



GLAMORGAN WILDLIFE TRUST

Your services to the wildlife of Glamorgan have been, are, and I am sure, will long continue to be, literally incomparable. Please accept our congratulations and our thanks
Murray McLaggan

W Kwantes

All best wishes and many thanks for your great efforts for wildlife over the years. John Zehetmayr

R Douglas Jones

From those who appreciate and applaud your wonderful lifetime's work, many, many thanks and may your birthday be just another milestone towards more wildlife adventures. Roy Nolan

Thank you for all the information and inspiration, and all the places we would never have discovered without you. Diana, Stanley, Ben & Vicky

*Thank you for putting in to print all your knowledge of Glamorgan's vastly diverse environment and wildlife, making it readily available for generations
Penny Pugh*

Best wishes for a very happy birthday and many more to come – from the Trustees and Directors of Glamorgan Wildlife Trust.
Margaret Saunders

Many thanks for a wonderful contribution to conservation
Roy Jones

Winnie Weston

May you tiptoe through the flowers for many years to come
Ron & Jane Williams

Congratulations and best wishes
Gill Barter

Congratulations and good wishes – we are all, especially in Glamorgan, very much in your debt. Long may you continue.
Derek Kingham

Many thanks for all your help and work – as in the establishment of Cosmeston Lakes Country Park
Philip Atkin

We thank you for so many happy times and look forward to many more. Jeffrey & Joan Raum

Happy birthday to our favourite land girl. Many many thanks for sharing your vast knowledge and taking us to so many wonderful places. The Pontyclun Group of GWT send their very best wishes. Pam & Arthur

Thank you for all the pleasure, interest, education and friendship you have given me. Diana Phillips

Many thanks for all your magnificent work on the wildlife of South Wales over so many years
Peter Hatherley

Thanks for inspiring me with your great knowledge of plants and animals in the area. Love
Jean Jones

Greetings Mary – on this very special occasion, and many thanks for your outstanding contributions to natural history over so many years.
Kathryn

While we have't known you very long, we have enjoyed your company and been impressed with your wide-ranging knowledge. Keep up the good work.. Pat & Mike Dean



Merthyr Tydfil and District Naturalists' Society

Thank you for all the wonderful trips
we have had with you.
Audrey & Derek Packer

Many thanks for the pleasure I received over 30 odd
years – from your lectures and very enjoyable holi-
days. You certainly increased my knowledge of the
countryside and wild life. Shirley Hodge

*Our congratulations and best wishes on becoming an octagenarian. May the
next 80 years blossom and be just as fruitful*
Douglas & Mary Thomas

*An extra- happy wish that your eightieth birthday will bring
wonderful surprises and the best of everything. My sister
Muriel, was always so happy in your company and travelled
with you to so many countries*
Marion Williams

*Congratulations in reaching this milestone in your
life*
Betty ?

Best wishes to a very excellent colleague over so
many years; one who has done so much for conserva-
tion in South Wales
John Perkins

*Very many thanks for the guidance and encouragement you have willingly
given to the Merthyr Tydfil branch since its inception*
Ossie Bevan

*We wish you every good fortune and congratulations
on reaching your 80th birthday*
Avel & Eric Davies

Brian Thomas

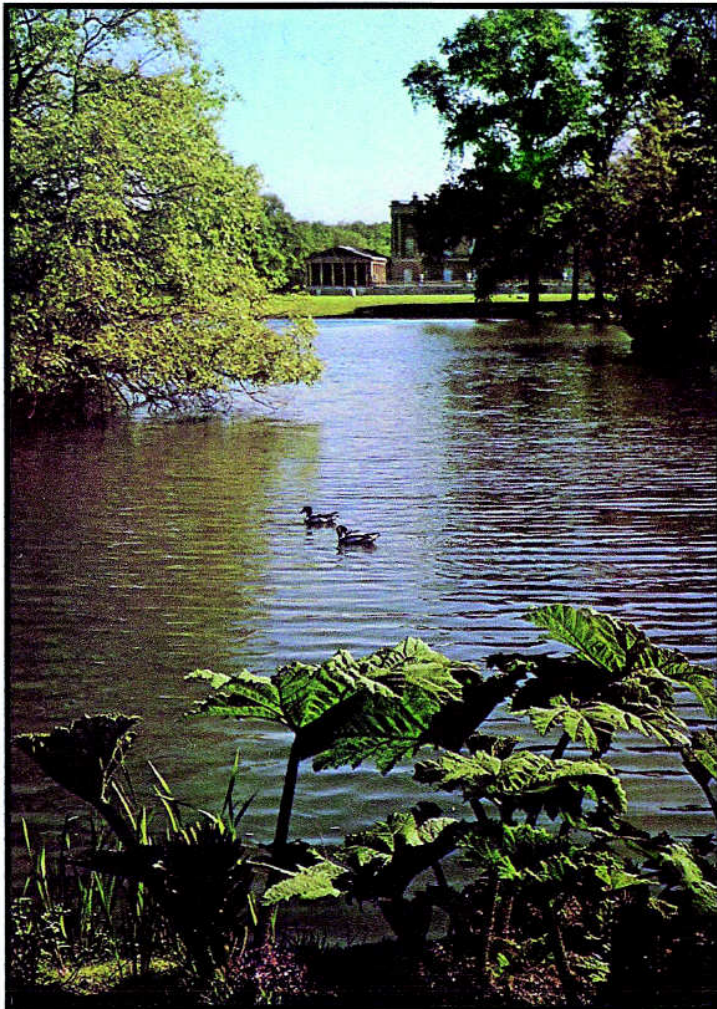
*Congratulations on achieving your 80th birth-
day – you are almost catching me up. Sorry I
am unable to attend the celebrations but feel we
keep in touch when I view the various films we
made together, and evoke memories of many
happy days in the field in pursuit of flora and
fauna. I am mightily impressed that you are
still actively and successfully lecturing and
have not settled for semi-retirement as I have.*
Syd Johnson

THE ROYAL GARDEN PARTY

In the summer of 2001, Mary was astonished and delighted to receive an invitation from Her Majesty the Queen inviting her and a guest to attend a Garden Party at the Palace.

Planning for the great event was quite complicated. Friends persuaded her that her favourite jeans and trainers would not be appropriate apparel and that she must wear "proper" shoes, a pretty dress and, of course, a hat. However, she still insisted on wearing her bum bag which was skilfully concealed under a dark green jacket.

The journey to London was probably more of an adventure than some of her past hair-raising trips around the world. Trains were late, taxis were full and every London street was being dug up but Buckingham Palace was finally entered.



On the camomile lawn, Gentlemen-at-Arms lined the guests in avenues down which the Queen came at the appointed time to give an excellent view of Her Majesty.

After tea, guests were able to stroll in the Palace gardens. Unfortunately it was a very windy day, and, despite an assortment of hair grips and elastic, 'the hat' sailed gracefully over the lake towards some disapproving Canada Geese on the far side.

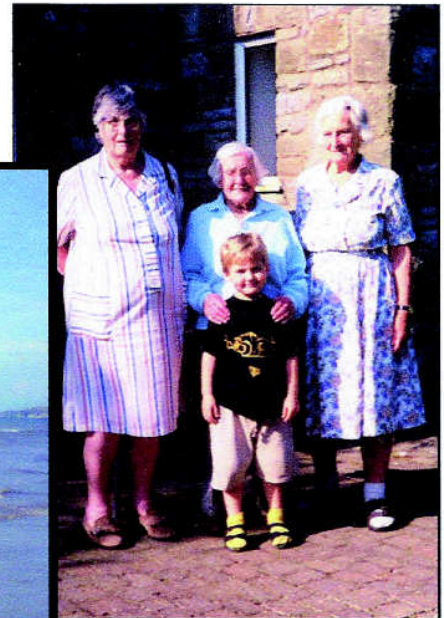
It was a shame that there was not time for serious botanising around the wild areas of the garden - a notebook was at the ready

It was a wonderful, if unusual, day for Mary and for her friends who proudly bathed in the reflected glory.

Sadly photographs were not permitted but the scene is set by a picture taken from 'The garden of Buckingham Palace' by Peter Coats.

May the sunset years be as happy and fruitful as the years that are now but memories

- may you keep old friendships and make yet more



- and visit places loved and new.....



SUNSET over GALWAY BAY

- Cardiff University Extramural Study Course - circa 1980