

Discover the Gwent Levels

*A brief guide to its history,
wildlife and landscapes.*



Welcome to the Gwent Levels. This booklet provides lots of information and suggestions about how to explore the delights of this unique landscape.



DISCOVER THE DELIGHTS OF THIS UNIQUE LANDSCAPE

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Introduction

What and where are the Gwent Levels?

The Gwent Levels are a living, working and evolving landscape extending from Cardiff and the Rhymney River in the west, to Chepstow on the River Wye in Monmouthshire to the east. Reclaimed from the sea and shaped by humans over two millennia, the landscape is a testament to the power of human intervention, the resilience of nature and the passage of time. The Gwent Levels are remarkable for their high skies, low horizons and a geometric network of narrow watercourses. They have provided a place for people to live, work and play since prehistoric times and provide rich archaeological finds that connect us directly with the land and its early inhabitants.

Today the Levels are a predominantly pastoral landscape drained and irrigated to allow productive farming, while also providing a diverse range of semi-natural habitats for rare species. Water is an ever-present element in the landscape, creating fertile fields and presenting challenges to human settlements. Distinctive drainage patterns of canalised rivers, drains, reens and ditches, accentuated by lines of pollarded willows, define a planned and reclaimed landscape. The modern landscape owes much to the

development of the sea wall and this complex drainage system has been evolving since the medieval period. Vibrant cities and towns around the edge of the Levels contrast its strong sense of tranquillity, remoteness and wildness away from human occupation.

Distinct nature – an accidental oasis

Today, parts of the Levels are a hotspot for wildlife and eight locations are Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), known for their distinctive, rare plants and invertebrates such as the great silver water beetles. Tens of thousands of wetland birds visit the coastal mudflats and wetlands attracted by a rich food supply, whilst colonies of water vole and otter are found in the extensive network of ditches and reens. One of the UK's rarest bumblebees, the shrill carder bee, also has a population stronghold on the Levels. In recent years cranes and bitterns have returned here to breed after several hundred years of absence.

“Reclaimed from the sea and shaped by humans, the landscape is a testament to the power of human intervention, the resilience of nature and the passage of time.”

A tumultuous history

The story of how the Gwent Levels have been created and managed is a tale of engineering, ingenuity, creativity, and co-existence with nature. It has not always been harmonious, there have been floods, devastation, land abandonment and extinctions.



▲ Shrill carder
bee © Chris Harris



Putcher rank at Goldcliff
© Chris Harris

Front cover: East Usk Lighthouse at Newport Wetlands © Crown copyright (2021) Cymru Wales



▲ Little egret
© Chris Harris

Many clues from the past are present in today's landscape from the footprints, tools and bones of early Mesolithic hunter gatherers preserved in estuarine mud, to the markers memorialising tragic historic floods in the churchyards of the Levels.

The Gwent Levels formed around 11,500 years ago, when rising sea levels created the Severn Estuary. Along its low-lying edge formed a vast watery wilderness of tidal mud flats, saltmarshes, peat bogs, reed swamps and wet woodland. Humans have been visiting the Levels for thousands of years, first as nomads, hunting game and fishing in the wild coastal marshes, later as farmers, grazing cattle and building trackways and small settlements during the drier summer months.

Roman military engineers were the first to try to reclaim the land for year-round use. To create productive farmland, they built a network of banks, ditches and sluices to control water levels. After the Romans departed, the drainage system failed, and the Levels reverted once more to a wild wetland. Six hundred years later, the Normans made a more lasting attempt to tame the Levels. The monks of Goldcliff Priory and Tintern Abbey repaired and extended the Roman network of sea defences and ditches. They formed the pattern of reed-fringed ditches and reens, small fields and winding lanes that can still be seen on the Levels today.

Following the dissolution of the monasteries, King Henry VIII introduced laws to govern the management of coastal wetlands. He created Commissioners and Courts of Sewers to oversee the maintenance of sea walls and drainage ditches which operated for the next 400 years. Despite great changes over the last 200 years, the Levels retain many of the features that would be familiar to the Benedictine brothers of Goldcliff Priory.



▲ Looking west over Whitson and Goldcliff © Living Levels Partnership

“...many habitats on the Levels are in poor condition and 60% of the SSSIs are estimated to be failing.”



▲ Auroch's horn discovered in 2020 © Black Rock Lave Net Fishermen

Threats and pressures

The modern landscape is at risk of being undervalued and further developed in spite of the vast wealth of natural, semi-natural and man-made treasures that this unique landscape harbours. Despite extensive protection from a range of national and international designations relating to its rich ecology, archaeology and cultural heritage, many habitats on the Levels are in poor condition and 60% of the SSSIs are estimated to be failing. Pressure from new development and intensive agricultural practices, along with climate change, is eroding the biodiversity and cultural heritage, further fragmenting habitats and severing public access.

The Gwent Levels has its own history, language, and wildlife and its rich heritage should be protected and preserved for future generations to enjoy. It is therefore imperative to champion the heritage and assets of this remarkable landscape to help carve out a more sustainable and balanced future for this fragile and hugely important landscape.



▶ Peacock butterfly © Chris Harris/Living Levels Partnership



Map of the Gwent Levels



Remarkable facts

The Gwent Levels are full of remarkable sights, places to explore and history to discover.

HISTORIC HAND-CRAFTED LANDSCAPE

The national importance of the Gwent Levels as an outstanding hand-crafted historic landscape is recognised by its inclusion in 1998 on the Register of Landscapes, Parks and Gardens of Outstanding Historic Interest in Wales.



Aerial view of Magor Marsh (bottom-right) facing south west © Living Levels Partnership

PETERSTONE & SMUGGLING

Peterstone used to be an important port, and channels were used to gain access by smugglers. At several nearby farms there are underground tunnels that were used by these smugglers.

RICH WILDLIFE

The Gwent Levels is home to a rich diversity of wildlife, eight areas are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs); the ditch network, which stretches to 1,500 km, are one of the best locations in Wales for aquatic wildlife such as the rare great silver water beetle.



► Great diving beetle: commonly encountered in ditches and reens © Gemma Bode



Bittern © Ben Andrews

RETURNING SPECIES

The reedbeds and marshes are home to cranes, bitterns and marsh harriers, nesting here for the first time in hundreds of years. Water voles have been successfully reintroduced at Magor Marsh and the shrill carder bee, now nationally rare, thrives in the wetlands in Newport.

THE OLDEST CHURCH BELLS

Undy's church bell dates to the 14th century (1350) and is similar in style to the two oldest bells of Redwick church. These are two of six bells in the central tower and date from the pre-Reformation period (1400 – 1530 AD) and are thought to be some of the oldest working church bells in Wales.

► St Marys Church, Undy



HIGHEST TIDES

The Severn Estuary, which borders the southwest side of the Gwent Levels, has the highest tidal range in Europe. At high tide, the water levels can rise up to 14 metres above the level at low tide. Without sea walls, spring tides would flood onto the land affecting farmland, industry, and people's homes.



Low tide (left) and high tide (right) at Newport Seawall near Whitson © Chris Harris

CARDIFF'S CONNECTING DITCHES

Recreational areas are integral parts of the Gwent Levels drainage systems. Hendre Lake has reens running into it and out of it; at Parc Tredelerch water channels are hidden behind trees and vegetation, connecting to the 1,500 km (932 miles) drainage network.



Windmill reen © Chris Harris

ANCIENT FOOTPRINTS

Mesolithic (7,000 years ago) footprints have been discovered in the mud at Goldcliff and were made when sea levels were lower and dried footprints became preserved under estuarine mud. They were made by people hunting, fishing, foraging, and scavenging along the shoreline at low tide. Not accessible to the public, the tides are uncovering and washing them away.



Mesolithic footprint © Chris Harris

GOLDCLIFF

Goldcliff gets its name from the mineral mica that was once visible in the exposed cliff face at Goldcliff Point, site of Goldcliff Priory, and which sparkled like gold in the sunlight.



Artist impression of Goldcliff Priory © Dextra Visual/Living Levels Partnership

MAGOR MARSH

Magor Marsh is the last remaining fenland on the Gwent Levels and the lowest point on the Caldicot Levels. As you move in land from the sea, the land slopes downwards and the water forms pools and bogs, important for rare plants and animals.

THE GREAT FLOOD

In 1607, flood waters breached the sea defences and covered the lowlands of the Gwent Levels (including parts of Cardiff) and the Somerset Levels on the other side of the Severn Estuary, flooding farmland, low-lying houses, churches and grazing areas for sheep and cows.

GOLDCLIFF STONE

This stone was found in the mud near Goldcliff Pill and records the work of the Romans. Its inscription probably refers to digging ditches and draining the Gwent Levels in the 2nd or 3rd century (1,800 – 1,900 years ago) and is on display at the National Roman Legion Museum, Caerleon. A replica of the stone lays near to the site at Goldcliff on the Wales Coast Path.

► Replica of The Goldcliff Stone



TOP 12 things to do



1

EXPERIENCE MAGOR MARSH:

The marshy relic fenland is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and home to water voles, colourful marsh-living plants and rare pondlife. Look for wooden rafts with apples left out for the voles.

Water vole at Magor Marsh © Norman West



7

VISIT A CASTLE: The magnificent Caldicot Castle has stood guard over the Levels for over 800 years. Now you can spend a day wandering the castle grounds and country park. Or peer out from the walls of Chepstow Castle across the heart of Chepstow and along the River Wye.

Caldicott Castle © MonLife, Monmouthshire County Council



2

RELAX ALONG THE WALES COAST PATH:

The Wales Coast Path offers a breath-taking, scenic route along the coast of Wales. Newport City Council have an online leaflet that highlights the route across the Caldicot and Wentlooge Levels to meet the City of Newport (38km/23 miles).



8

VISIT A ROMAN TOWN: In Caerleon visit the National Roman Legion Museum and discover the impact the Romans had on the Gwent Levels landscape; then look around the town to discover the Roman bath house, amphitheatre, and barracks. Caerwent is another nearby Roman town worth visiting, with the remains of a Roman walled town and foundations of buildings still visible amongst the modern village houses and roads.

Roman amphitheatre, Caerleon © Penny Mayes



3

BIG SKIES: The Gwent Levels offers vast, open-sky views across the flat open landscape of fields, waterways, hedgerows, pylons, and church spires, before it meets the hills inland and the estuary at the sea. Locations with spectacular views include the coastal path at Peterstone Wentlooge, Lighthouse Inn at the end of Beach Road at St Brides, Goldcliff seawall, Newport Wetlands and the Newport Transporter Bridge. Visit scenic lakes at Tredegar House, Hendre Lake and Parc Tredelerch and medieval churches at Redwick, Undy and Nash.



9

CHURCHES AND GREAT FLOOD MARKERS:

Many churches on the Gwent Levels are medieval and have plaques commemorating the 1607 Great Flood. Those at Goldcliff and St Brides were made soon after it happened while Redwick has two flood marks at slightly different heights; the one at the end of the chancel wall is older and thought to relate to the actual height of the 1607 flood.

Flood plaque, Redwick © Living Levels Partnership



4

MARVEL AT A MURMURATION OF STARLINGS:

Be dazzled by over 100,000 starlings flocking over the Gwent Levels before roosting (sleeping) in the reedbeds at Newport Wetlands; their mesmerizing flocks, known as murmurations, can be seen at dusk during the winter months.

Murmuration © Chris Harris



10

ENJOY NATURE AT NEWPORT WETLANDS:

The lagoons, reedbeds, rich-flower grassland and scrub are home to a vast range of wildlife including the nationally rare shrill carder bee, bearded tits, and reed warblers. The popular café and outdoor play area look out across a lagoon and reedbed habitat.

Make your wildlife sightings count by recording them online. Look up Living Levels: Wild Watch online for tips and ideas, and submit sightings through LERC Wales app. Your sightings of wildlife will contribute to nature conservation, planning, research and education.

Bearded Tit, Newport Wetlands © Tony Smith



5

MUSEUMS AND HERITAGE VENUES:

There are many museums and heritage venues across and nearby the Gwent Levels area including Tredegar House, Newport Museum, Newport Transporter Bridge, Chepstow Museum, Museum of Cardiff, the Newport Ship and St Fagans National Museum of History. Newport Museum and National Roman Legion Museum both have interactive displays about the Gwent Levels.



11

CYCLING THE GWENT LEVELS:

Explore the peaceful, secluded areas of the Gwent Levels by bike using the Sustrans National Cycle Network Routes 4 and 88. Route 4 crosses the M48 Severn Bridge before taking in the spectacular views of Chepstow and Caldicot castles and Newport Wetlands. A section of route 88 links Newport and Caerleon and runs alongside the River Usk, another section of this route starts near Tredegar House and heads to Marshfield along a quiet area of the Wentlooge levels.

© David Broadbent



6

VISIT SCULPTURES AND ART INSTALLATIONS:

Celebrating the hand-carved Levels, a series of sculptures representing key figures in the history of the Levels can be found at Black Rock, Magor Marsh, Goldcliff, Parc Tredelerch, Tredegar House, Lighthouse Inn, St Brides, and Newport Wetlands. The figures bring to life the heritage of the Levels and the stories of the people who have lived, worked, worshipped and played here.

The Engineer at Black Rock © Living Levels Partnership



12

LAVE NET FISHING HERITAGE:

Lave net fishing is a traditional way of fishing in the Severn Estuary in which people hold a large net fixed to a frame into the river to catch fish, such as salmon, on a rising tide. On the Gwent Levels, a small group of people, the Lave Net Fishermen, keep the tradition of lave fishing going. They are based near Black Rock and come from the neighbouring villages Sudbrook, Portskewett and Caldicot. They are the last Lave Net Fishermen in Wales.

© Black Rock Lave Net Fishermen's Association



Find out more

FINDING WILDLIFE AND HISTORY

Six short videos online will help you to get top tips on specific things to look for or identify

livinglevels.org.uk/sense-of-place-toolkit

- How to find and identify the rare shrill carder bee
- How to listen for and spot shy, reedbed wildlife
- Identifying fields showing drainage patterns such as grips
- Where and when to look for putcher racks at Goldcliff
- Exploring the sea wall
- Looking for clues that reveal the old railway and pier at Black Rock

MEMORY TREASURE MAPS

Visit and explore seven locations on the Gwent Levels using the memory treasure maps, which include information about what to look for and activities to familiarize yourself about each place.

livinglevels.org.uk/memory-maps

TIME AND TIDE

Look up Time and Tide, a digital story and poetic narration exploring the history of the Gwent Levels over the past 12,000 years, from the Ice Age to the Industrial Age.

For a detailed written timeline look up the unique history on the Living Levels website and the Living Levels Learning resource.



LIFE ON THE LEVELS

Look up 'Life on the Levels' to hear stories from those who live on the Gwent Levels and how it has changed over their lifetimes. The full archive of portraits, transcripts, audio and videos recorded for the Gwent Living Levels Project are at Gwent Archives; a selection of audio files can also be accessed on the People's Collection Wales website.

GWENT ARCHIVES, GLAMORGAN ARCHIVES & MUSEUM OF CARDIFF

All three venues hold photos, maps and documents; these clues and evidence help explore the history and stories associated with the Gwent Levels. You can also volunteer to help archive projects and resources. People's Collection Wales also preserves and celebrates the history of Wales through unique stories collected from people.

- Museum of Cardiff cardiffmuseum.com
- Gwent Archives gwentarchives.gov.uk
- Glamorgan Archives glamarchives.gov.uk

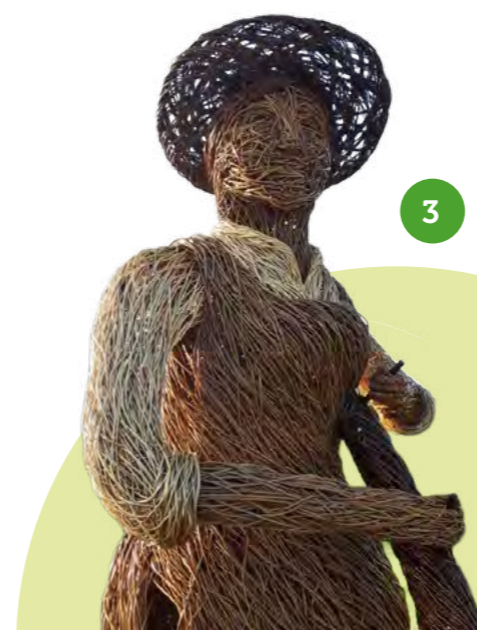
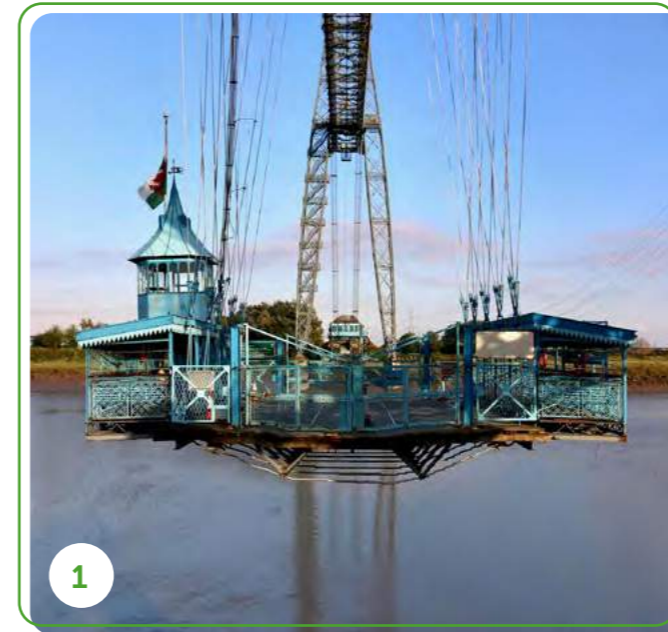
#artsnewydd is a great way to find out about arts in and around Newport.

LOST LANDSCAPES

Look up the words Lost Landscapes Gwent online to find and watch digital reconstructions of how the Levels have changed over 8,000 years from Mesolithic times up to modern day.

OTHER ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED WITH PROMOTING THE GWENT LEVELS

- Living Levels livinglevels.org.uk
- Gwent Wildlife Trust gwentwildlife.org.uk
- Monlife (Monmouthshire County Council) monlife.co.uk
- RSPB Cymru rspb.org.uk/newportwetlands
- Newport City Council newport.gov.uk
- Cardiff City Council cardiff.gov.uk
- Natural Resources Wales naturalresources.wales
- Bumblebee Conservation Trust bumblebeeconservation.org
- National Trust nationaltrust.org.uk/tredegar-house
- Sustrans sustrans.org.uk
- Buglife Cymru buglife.org.uk/get-involved/near-me/buglife-cymru



1. Newport Transporter Bridge © Chris Harris;
2. Water vole © Peter G Trimming;
3. The Brinker sculpture at Magor Marsh © Living Levels Partnership;
4. Tredegar House © Chris Harris;
5. Exploring Newport Wetlands © David Broadbent;
6. Little egret © Chris Harris



Travel tips



Accessible Gwent Levels

Venues across the Gwent Levels, such as Magor Marsh, Tredegar House and the National Roman Legion Museum provide access for wheelchair users where practically possible; Newport Wetlands also has mobility scooters that can be booked. Check websites of individual venues for details. Accessible Countryside for Everyone outlines some of the accessible options along the South Wales coast.



Train travel

Travelling by train between Chepstow and Cardiff gives stunning views of the Severn Estuary and the Gwent Levels that are inaccessible by foot or car. Spot field drainage patterns from the estuary-side of the train between Chepstow and Severn Tunnel Junction. Look up National Railway enquiries for train times and the Newport Bus Fflecsi service for connections to venues.



Getting around the Gwent Levels by bus

The Newport Bus Fflecsi service allows buses to be booked and will pick you up and drop you off anywhere within the service area, not just at a bus stop. A bus picks you up at your request and changes its route so that all passengers can get to where they need to go.



Using the car on the Gwent Levels

Access to many parts of the Gwent Levels are along smaller B roads with space for cars on either side of the road to pass; there are smaller single lane roads when travelling near Peterstone and Redwick. Car parking can be found at most venues where parking is free or there is a small charge. Check websites of venues before visiting.



Horse riding around the Gwent Levels

A fantastic way to enjoy some of the coastline and countryside of the Gwent Levels is on horseback. Blackrock to Sudbrook, and byways near Undy in Monmouthshire, allow riders to use part of the coastal path.

See 'Top 12' on page 10 for cycling and walking ideas.

Fly-tipping

If you spot fly-tipping when exploring the Gwent Levels, report it via the **Fly-tipping Action Wales** website. Many previous fly-tipping spots now have cameras, signs or regular checks; check the council website for details about how to dispose of waste.



Unique levels lingo

The landscape has its own fascinating local 'Levels Lingo' or vocabulary that provides an insight into the origins of the landscape over 1800 years ago and how it continues to be managed today. Many of these words are still used regularly today, such as reen and pill, to describe certain waterways.

Here are 14 examples of ancient words used to describe the unique water drainage system on the Gwent Levels. More can be found at livinglevels.org.uk/unique-levels-lingo

Back-fen: The lower-lying landward edge of the Levels (e.g. at Magor Marsh).

Bungum: Silty clay used to bung up holes in the bank.

Court of sewers: Henry VIII established courts of sewers in 1531. These held jurisdiction over the maintenance and repair of land drainage and flood defence mechanisms in specified areas of coastal lowland. Monmouthshire Court of Sewers eventually became the Caldicot and Wentlooge Levels Internal Drainage Board. Today, Natural Resources Wales fulfil a similar role.

Grip: This is a small open furrow or ditch, originally dug with spades, which carries water off a field.

Gout: Gout can refer to a channel that takes water through a structure to the sea, a sluice or floodgate, or a covered drain or culvert. You can see a gout at Peterstone: near the golf course a freshwater channel flows through the old harbour wall into a collecting lagoon before draining into the Severn Estuary via the tidal flap or gout.

Lave net: A hand-held 'Y' shaped net used to catch salmon. The frame comprises the head board (yoke), rimes (arms) and rock staff (handle). It folds, making it easier for a person to carry as they wade into the estuary to wait for salmon. The net within the frame is hand knitted.

Lynch: A small inland cliff. Lynches is the local name for the mud cliff on Rumney Great Wharf.

Nogger: This is a wooden peg used to plug a hole (nogghole) in a plank in the bottom of a reen. In the summer these would be removed to allow the land to be watered.

Pill: A tidal creek on the coastal side of a gout along which the water flows out to sea, such as Magor Pill and Goldcliff Pill.

Putcheon: A woven fish trap made from willow fitted with constrictions (throats or chales). These prevented an eel, elvers (young eels), lampreys and twaite from turning around and swimming back out. Putcheons were baited with a piece of rabbit or lamprey, weighted with stone, and laid in a river, tethered to the bank.

Putchers: Conical willow and hazel baskets set in ranks facing the ebb tide to catch salmon and other fish. Their funnel shape prevents the fish from escaping. Many hundreds of putchers can be set into the framework of the ranks.

Reens: In the past these have been ditches dug over centuries and carefully maintained to take surface water to the sea. Today reens are the main drainage ditches on the Levels, managed by Natural Resources Wales. These are different to field ditches which are the responsibility of the landowner.

Rotten lands: A name sometimes given to damp, boggy ground, often saturated with rain, where sheep are prone to suffer from the rot. Llanwern Steelworks was built on Bishton's Rotten Lands.

Inspired by the Levels Lingo

The micro-brewery Anglo-Oregon is based on the Gwent Levels. They have produced a trio of ales, which are inspired by the historic 'Levels Lingo'. You can order bottles of 'Stank hen', 'Brinker' (a landowner on the Levels) and 'Putcher' (narrow-headed basket once used for catching salmon).

Stankhen is the common Levels nickname for the waterbird, the moorhen. It comes from 'stank', the Levels word for a weir or dam or ditch of slow-moving water which temporarily holds back the water.



Ridge and vurrow: Flatter-topped corrugations in the surface of a field, created through ploughing, to aid the drainage of pasture or meadow. Different to ridge and furrow (the rounded corrugations in the surface of a field resulting from the use of a non-reversible plough for arable farming, typical of the open field system).

Calendar



JANUARY

During the winter months experience thousands of starlings flocking together in a mesmerising display called a murmuration, as they come together to roost (sleep) in the reedbeds at dusk at Newport Wetlands. Guided visits can be booked with RSPB from the visitor centre.



FEBRUARY

During the colder months, it is a great time to take in a museum – the Roman Legion Museum in Caerleon or Newport Museum are good for a half day visit, or St Fagans National Museum of History for a full day. Newport Museum has a display dedicated to the prehistoric archaeology of the Gwent Levels.

Look for nesting grey herons and little egrets at Magor Marsh.



MARCH

Around Tredegar House, Hendre Lake and Parc Tredelerch listen out for the melodic robins, blackbirds, and wrens during the day, as they sing to defend their mates and nests. Warm sunshine brings out the orange-tip, green-veined white and brimstone butterflies, and the hairy dragonfly.

Enjoy St David's Day Festival at Tredegar House.

APRIL

A visit to one of the Levels two medieval castles, Caldicot or Chepstow is a great family day out.

Spot the first swallows arriving from Africa. They love the Gwent Levels, feeding on the insects attracted to places the cows graze, and nesting in farmyard barns and horse stables.

As spring sunshine returns, a network of routes takes you through some of the picturesque parts of the Gwent Levels; the Levels Loops and Links walks are a mixture of different length walks to enjoy.

At Goldcliff Lagoons, part of Newport Wetlands National Nature Reserve, nationally declining wading birds such as lapwings, redshanks and avocets will be busy hatching chicks on damp meadows and islands, protected by predator-proof fencing.

MAY

Catch a glimpse of apple blossom in Chepstow, Undy, Duffryn or Tredegar House orchards. Look for the orchids in bloom across wildflower meadows.

If you have a day to explore, try a coastal heritage walk along the Wales Coast Path, perhaps using the Newport Bus Fflecsi service to be dropped off and then picked up at the other end.

Sign up to the annual Tredegar House Folk Festival.

May is a great time to spot baby waterbirds; ducklings, goslings, and cygnets (baby swans) in family groups at Magor Marsh, Newport Wetlands, Hendre Lake, Parc Tredelerch and Tredegar House.



JUNE

The oak avenue at Tredegar House will be in leaf, providing a foliage full of invertebrates for birds, bats, and parasitic insects to feast upon.

Visit wildflower meadows at Rogiet Park; over the next few months they will be looking their best.

June is great for marsh plants at Magor Marsh including ragged robin, lesser spearwort, and yellow flag iris. Visit Great Traston Meadows, for its spectacular display of over 5,000 Southern marsh orchids in June and July.



JULY

Pop down to Magor Marsh reserve to enjoy an annual family festival, Life on Marsh.

Look out for the summer high water table with water penned in to irrigate the land.

Adult dragonflies emerge from the water and fly around hawking for insects to eat.



AUGUST

Visit a summer fete or festival in the villages and towns across the Gwent Levels.

Lots of family activities are on offer during the summer holidays at Tredegar House and gardens.

Look for birds such as curlews, dunlin, redshanks and shelducks feeding on the estuary mud off the sea walls at Goldcliff, Newport Wetlands and Peterstone Gout from late summer through to early spring.

SEPTEMBER

Go wassailing – this involves blessing apple trees and asking for a good harvest for the following year through drinking and singing.

Visit orchards to see plump perries (pears) and apples such as a newly planted orchard at Duffryn woodland, a community orchard at Undy which is open to the public and Chepstow's orchard and wildlife trail. Look out for local cider to sample.

Spot one of Britain's rarest and later-emerging bumblebees, the shrill carder bee, at Newport Wetlands and Great Traston Meadows.



OCTOBER

Visit the Newport Ship, the world's only remaining 15th Century ship.

'Chepstow Walkers are Welcome' walking festival – sign up for a guided walk and enjoy autumnal colours along one of the many circular walks around the Levels.

Butterflies such as the red admiral can be seen on sunny afternoons, feeding on late-flowering plants or ripe fruits, sometimes getting 'drunk' on the fermenting fruits!

Berry-laden bushes at Black Rock, Parc Tredelerch and Rogiet Park are good places to look for newly arrived redwings from Scandinavia, and blackcaps preparing to migrate south to the Mediterranean.

NOVEMBER

Try a guided walk on a nature reserve or a skills course such as willow weaving or identifying and recording wildlife.

Balls of mistletoe with white, sticky berries grow up high on tree branches at Magor Marsh and attract the mistle thrush.

Museums conserve historical artefacts including many found on the Gwent Levels. Chepstow Museum and the National Museums of Wales are great places to visit during the wetter, winter months.



DECEMBER

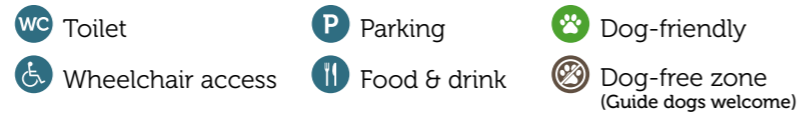
Look out for mallard and tufted ducks on Hendre Lake and Parc Tredelerch amongst the black-headed gulls. If you are quick, you might spot a kingfisher flash past, or a grey heron quietly fishing by itself.

Listen for the 'pinging' calls of the bearded tits at Newport Wetlands; these secretive colourful birds are best found by their calls on calm, bright days. On bright, sunny days robins will be singing, both male and female, to defend small feeding areas.

Look up the Tin Shed Theatre which uses every aspect of theatricality to explore the Gwent Levels.



Directory



This directory lists many of the venues and opportunities available across the Gwent Levels and nearby. It covers many different areas of interest and is not exhaustive.

Museums and archives

Chepstow Museum, Gwy House, Bridge St, Chepstow, NP16 5EZ monlife.co.uk/heritage/chepstow-museum

Museum of Cardiff (Cardiff Story Museum), The Old Library, The Hayes, St Davids Centre, Cardiff, CF10 1BH cardiffmuseum.com

National Museum Cardiff, Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF10 3NP museum.wales/cardiff

National Roman Legion Museum, High Street, Caerleon, Newport, NP18 1AE museum.wales/roman

Newport Museum and Art Gallery, Central Library, 4 John Frost Square, Kingsway Centre, Newport, NP20 1PA newport.gov.uk/heritage/en/Museum-Art-Gallery

St Fagans National Museum of History, Cardiff, CF5 6XB museum.wales/stfagans

Sudbrook Interpretation Centre, Sudbrook Non-Political Club, Camp Road, Sudbrook, Caldicot, NP26 5TE bit.ly/3yJfygp

Tredegar House and Parkland (house managed by the National Trust), Pencarn Way, Newport, NP10 8YW nationaltrust.org.uk/tredegar-house

Gwent Archives gwentarchives.gov.uk

Glamorgan Archives glamarchives.gov.uk

Castles

Caldicot Castle, Church Rd, Caldicot, NP26 4HU visitmonmouthshire.com/caldicot-castle

Chepstow Castle, 1 Bridge St, Chepstow, NP16 5EY cadw.gov.wales/visit/places-to-visit/chepstow-castle

Nature Reserves

Don't forget to use the **LERC Wales app** to record any wildlife you see.



Magor Marsh (managed by Gwent Wildlife Trust), Whitewall Road, Magor, NP26 3DD. Toilets available when the learning centre is open, e.g. for public events

and school groups; donation appreciated. gwentwildlife.org/nature-reserves/magor-marsh

Newport Wetlands (managed by Natural Resources Wales; visitor centre managed by the RSPB), West Nash Road, Nash, Newport, NP18 2BZ. Toilets, mobility scooters available, wheelchair friendly path, chargeable parking. rspb.org.uk/reserves-and-events/reserves-a-z/newport-wetlands

Goldcliff Lagoons, Goldcliff Road, Newport. With bird hides (ramps to hides) – no toilets and limited parking. livinglevels.org.uk/stories/2019/5/3/goldcliff-lagoons

Great Traston Meadows. There is space for two cars in the small car park directly off Nash Road. A circular walk is signposted around Great Traston Meadows – this takes around 30 minutes to complete. The Wales Coastal Path passes through the reserve. gwentwildlife.org/nature-reserves/great-traston-meadows-sssi

Rogiet Poorland. Limited parking for 1-2 cars at reserve entrance. gwentwildlife.org/nature-reserves/rogiet-poorland

Lower Minnetts Field. Parking at Slade Wood. gwentwildlife.org/nature-reserves/lower-minnetts-field

Brockwells Meadows. Parking for two cars opposite entrance. gwentwildlife.org/nature-reserves/brockwells-meadows-sssi

Lakes

Hendre Lake (managed by Cardiff City Council), Water Avens Close, St Mellons, Cardiff, CF3 0RG. Limited parking, no toilets.

Parc Tredelech (managed by Cardiff City Council), Lamby Way, Rumney, Cardiff, CF3 2HP. Limited parking, no toilets.

Parks

Caldicot Country Park at Caldicot Castle, Church Rd, Caldicot, NP26 4HU. Here a cliff edge marks the old edge of the coastal inlet on which the castle was built (and extended to Caerwent). Found at OS grid reference ST489883; what3words: nightlife.craas.youths.

Parc Tredelech (managed by Cardiff City Council), Lamby Way, Rumney, Cardiff, CF3 2HP. Limited parking and no toilets.

Rogiet Countryside Park (managed by MonLife on behalf of Monmouthshire County Council), Rogiet, NP26 3TZ. Limited parking and no toilets.

Rumney Hill Gardens, Rumney Hill, Cardiff, CF3 4BA

Slade Woods woodlandtrust.org.uk/visiting-woods/woods/thicket-and-slade-woods

Walnut Tree Farm Park and Education Centre, St Brides, Newport, NP10 8SQ walnuttreefarm.uk

Warren Slade Wood. Managed by MonLife for Monmouthshire County Council bit.ly/36v8Tuh

Places of Interest

Black Rock Picnic Site, Black Rock Road, Portskewett, NP26 5TP

Black Rock Heritage Lave Net Fishery. (see Facebook page)

Caerwent Roman Town, Caerwent, Caldicot, NP26 5BA cadw.gov.wales/visit/places-to-visit/caerwent-roman-town

Newport Transporter Bridge, Brunel Street, Newport, NP20 2JY newport.gov.uk/heritage/en/Transporter-Bridge

The Newport Ship, 20 Queensway Meadows Industrial Estate, Estuary Rd, Newport, NP19 4SP newportship.org

Medieval churches

St. Mary's, St Mary's Rd, Nash, Newport, NP18 2BZ

St Mary's, Church Road, Undy, NP26 3HH

St Mary Magdalene's, Goldcliff, Newport, NP18 2AU

St Thomas's, Church Row, Redwick, Caldicot, NP26 3DE

St Cadwaladr's Church, Bishton, NP18 2EA

Features on the landscape

East Usk Lighthouse (1893)

West Usk Lighthouse (1821)

Llanwern Steelworks (1962)

Severn Tunnel Pumping Station, Sudbrook (1886)

Sculptures

and at all sites

Black Rock, **The Engineer & The Fisherman**.

Goldcliff, the **Goldcliff Roman stone**.

Lighthouse Inn, St Brides, **The Centurion**.

Magor Marsh, **The Brinker** (a person who owns land on one side of a reen, wall or pill and is responsible for its maintenance).

Newport Wetlands, a **bronze relief** cross-section of the Gwent Levels landscape.

Tredegar House, **The Estate Worker**.

Dog-free zones

Magor Marsh

Newport Wetlands: main footpaths and play area across the reserve of Newport Wetlands (there is one permissive dog walking route on the perimeter of the reserve marked by pawprint signs).

Dog friendly zones

While visiting locations across the Gwent Levels please follow the countryside code, which can be found online. Enjoy the Levels and keep your dogs and wildlife safe and happy by keeping dogs on leads and always clean up after your dogs (and take any bagged dog poo home with you). Be aware that the Gwent Levels is full of special wildlife and livestock that you might not be able to see.

Black Rock

Caldicot Castle Country Park

Hendre Lake

Newport Wetlands: There is one permissive dog walking route on the perimeter of the reserve marked by pawprint signs

Parc Tredelech

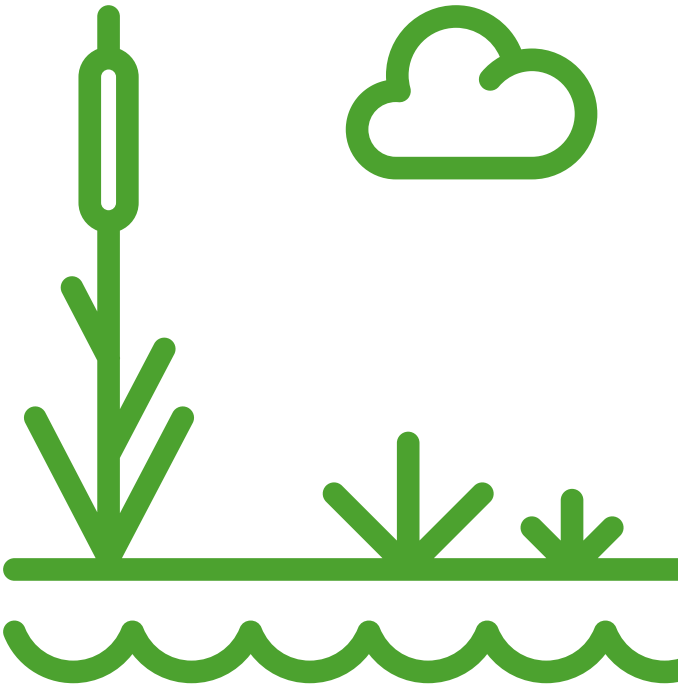
Rogiet Countryside Park

Tredegar House gardens and park

Wales Coast Path and sea wall



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