Living the Levels

@buckvinglevels 🧱 Our Living Levels 🔼 Our Living Levels TV



Welcome to the fifth edition of our **'Living the Levels'** newsletter which will keep everyone who has expressed an interest in the **Living Levels** Landscape Partnership up to date.

The Partnership aims to recapture, enhance and celebrate the unique Gwent Levels and has successfully been awarded a £2.5 million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.



Gwent Levels 'Revealed' by T.V's Miranda!

BBC 'One Show' wildlife reporter and RSPB President Miranda Krestovnikoff will be opening a new tactile timeline relief model sculpture and joining in with some free fun family activities at Newport Wetlands, as part of the launch of the Living Levels 'Gwent Levels Revealed' project - and you're invited!

Miranda will be unveiling a unique bronze relief model and a steel etched timeline created by artist Ruben Eynon, based on a relief model of a typical area of Gwent Levels landscape showing the intricacies of the historic drainage system and sea defences and their key role in maintaining the habitats and landscape which survives today.

This feature is sure to delight visitors to the Wetlands and forms a major part of some exciting new exhibits and features coming to the Environmental Education and Visitor Centre, showcasing the fascinating ways in which the Gwent Levels landscape has been created and maintained throughout the ages, from early occupation through Roman reclamation to modern times. Exhibits include a small exhibition space including an Augmented Reality (AR) interactive map of the Levels by Andy O'Rourke (Malarky Arts) and students from University of South Wales, a poem by famous local poet W H Davies and a range of replica prehistoric bones, tools and artefacts from the Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age for handling.

If you would like to meet a Roman, see a coracle, or even have a go at cave painting come on down and join Miranda at Newport Wetlands on Saturday June 8th 11am - 3pm and enjoy activities and demos celebrating the history and natural heritage of the Gwent Levels.



Getting down and dirty on the foreshore throws up Bronze Age bones!

Over the past four days, a group of archaeology enthusiasts have been taking part in an excavation of Bronze Age paleochannels (2300 BC to 750 BC) on the foreshore of the Severn Estuary at Peterstone, on the Wentlooge Levels.

Led by Professor Martin Bell and his team from the University of Reading, the group have been learning how to search for, excavate and record archaeological artefacts as well as how to interpret the findings and what they can tell us about how people and wildlife lived and interacted during this time.

For two days the group braved the intertidal mud, including some rather inclement weather on the first day and more than a few slips in the sticky mud! Their physical exertions were well worth it as they were able to source a number of important artefacts, which were brought back to Newport Ship on the final day of the course for cleaning, recording and processing. Their finds included worked wooden posts and a large number of animal bones, including a spectacular red deer antler that bore several cut marks and would almost certainly have been used as a tool during the Bronze Age.

The participants feedback about the event was overwhelmingly positive with everybody reporting that they had enjoyed the course and learned more about the heritage of the Gwent Levels. A report of the findings will be published in due course and we'll provide a summary as soon as it is available, so check back for more information.

Living Levels is planning a number of other archaeological activities and events over the next two years including GIS mapping and analysis, building recording, small-scale excavation and test-pitting. If you'd like to find out more, please email info@livinglevels.org.uk.

Long walks, tall tales and big skies!

BioBlitz the Castle! Friday 17th May 10.00am - 3.00pm Join us to explore and record the biodiversity of Caldicot Castle and Country Park. Expert wildlife recorders and resources will be on hand to help with species identification, plus you will be able to learn how to use apps and websites to turn your sightings into records

BioBlitz the Marsh! Tuesday 28th May 11.00am - 4.00pm Magor Marsh Nature Reserve Cost: £2.00 per child An event for all the family. Working alongside wildlife specialists we will identify as many species of plant, trees, bugs, mammals and birds that are present on this day. Wear long sleeves and trousers. Refreshments in Centre. Parking limited, so please park in Magor village

Learn about the
Levels: Black Rock
Picnic Site Wednesday
29th May
10.00am – 12.00pm
A fun family treasure
hunt. Answer riddles
and rhymes in a quest
to find out more about
the wonderful wildlife,
heritage and history of
the Gwent Levels. Why
not bring a picnic to
enjoy after the event?



Coleg Gwent art students warn of 'Alien' threat!

Students at Coleg Gwent, City of Newport Campus have been working to produce 'B-movie' style posters and life-like sculptures with the brief of 'Alien Invasion' as an effective and eye-catching way of raising awareness of possible Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) that could one day be a threat to the Gwent Levels.

The wonderfully detailed and striking art pieces, produced by a class of 33 students, will be showcased at several events in 2019 and available for public view at the Riverfront Theatre, Newport from Friday 15 to Wednesday 26 June 2019. These select images present a tantalising flavour of some of the artwork we hope will raise the profile of Invasive Non-Native Species and appeal to a wide audience.

The interconnected nature of the Levels' 900 miles of reens and ditches leaves it particularly vulnerable to the colonisation and spread of invasive non-native species. The 'Defend the Levels from 'Alien Invasion' project, delivered by Natural Resources Wale, aims to improve awareness, recording and management of INNS to help protect this precious landscape.

For further details of this project and information about Invasive Non-Native Species please contact Nick Sharp (Natural Resources Wales) Nick.Sharp@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk

Long walks, tall tales and big skies!

Stories and songs from the Levels
Friday 31st May 7.30pm
Storyteller Christine
Watkins and musician
Guto Dafis (voice, accordion) bring you an evening of stories, folk legends and music from the Gwent Levels in the cosy surrounds of the Farmers Arms in Goldcliff.
Meet at: The Farmer's
Arms

Gwent Levels Revealed Launch Saturday 8th June 11am-3pm

If you would like to meet a Roman, see a coracle, or even have a go at cave painting come on down and join Miranda at Newport Wetlands on Saturday June 8th 11am – 3pm and enjoy activities and demos celebrating the history and natural heritage of the Gwent Levels. £3 parking

BioBlitz the Lake!
Thursday 13th June
10.00am – 3.00pm Join
us to explore and record
the biodiversity of
Hendre Lake Park. Expert
wildlife recorders and
resources will be on hand
to help with species
identification, plus you
will be able to learn how
to use apps and websites
to turn your sightings
into records.
Meet at: Hendre Lake



Join us on our 'Wild Tour' to BioBlitz the Levels!

We are bringing a series of 'BioBlitz's' at 'The Marsh' 'The Castle' 'The Lake' and 'The House' across the Gwent Levels this May to July at a variety of different venues, some traditional and some brand new!

This is your chance to help us record as many living species as possible by rocking up to your nearest venue (or further afield if you're feeling adventurous!) and learning about the biodiversity of these sites from experts, keen enthusiasts and volunteers in different fields such as plants, insects, birds and mammals.

So why not put some time aside and come on down to learn, discover and contribute to a valuable record for this unique landscape whilst taking in the beauty of Magor Marsh, majesty of Caldicot Castle, grandeur of Tredegar House or the popular parkland of Hendre Lake? We hope you can join us to paint a picture of the biodiversity found at these iconic Living Levels 'hubs', from Cardiff to Caldicot, on the magnificent Gwent Levels!

Caldicot Castle Friday 17th May 10.00 – 3.00pm

Magor Marsh Tuesday 28th May 11.00 – 4.00pm

Hendre Lake, St. Mellons Thursday 13th June 10.00 – 3.00pm

Tredegar House parkland Saturday 6th July 11.00 – 3.00pm

Long walks, tall tales and big skies!

Wild Watch: Training Day Thursday
20th June 10.30pm4.40pm Through talks, field walks and 'handson' practical sessions, we will introduce you to 12 Gwent Levels target species and basic survey skills. Meet at: Newport Wetlands (£3 parking)

Wild Watch: Training Day Thursday
27th June 10.30pm4.00pm Through talks, field walks and 'handson' practical sessions, we will introduce you to 12 Gwent Levels target species and basic survey skills.
Meet at: Magor Marsh Nature Reserve





Bell tower graffiti tells a story we want to hear!

'Life on the Levels' is gathering pace as we start recording our oral histories of the Gwent Levels. We were very lucky to be shown around the delightful and very ancient St Brides Wentlooge ancient church recently, by the parish priest, Father Ross.

A trip up to the tightly winding stone stair case to the bell tower revealed a hidden 'treasure'; Scratched into the plaster and hidden from view was some 'graffiti', complete with names and dates, and even an address. Someone out there must know something about these individuals, have photos even. If you do, please do get in touch. We would love to hear from you.

Pipes of Peterstone...

Oral history volunteer Martin Somerville reveals some fantastic finds:

The picture below shows the pipe bowls which were found in the Marshfield Peterstone area by a Water bailiff who said he had worked on the levels back in the 1960's. He gave them to me as a present, I think because he was grateful for me helping his son, when I worked as a probation Officer in Cardiff (1970-2006)



We're looking for your stories...

We know there's loads of fascinating stories from the Levels as some of you have told us some great ones already— we'd like to share them as they are a great insight to the history of the Levels.

So, if you have any outstanding memories or you would like to help collect these tales, then please get in touch.

This is your chance to be part of this exciting and fascinating project that will create a historical record with a human voice.

Want to find out more about this exciting and fascinating project? Perhaps you have some great Gwent Levels stories to tell or want to be involved in collecting some.

Get in touch now. Marsha O'Mahony marsha.omahony@ gmail.com 07989 733870







We're wild about Wild Watch!

However, don't just take our word for it - we asked Wild Watch volunteer Nikki to give us the WW low-down:

Who are you? I am Nikki Elsom, a relatively new-comer to the area. I moved from Somerset to Undy, in August 2018.

Tell us a bit about yourself. When I saw Magor Marsh on a map, I decided to try to find a house to buy nearby.

What attracted you to taking part in the training and volunteering for Wild Watch? I was interested in the Living Levels project. I previously attended a very interesting, introductory training day and I wanted to know more about what I could do to help.

Have you acquired any new skills and knowledge? Yes! The new skills are around IT and using the App to contribute information that is collated and mapped by SEWBReC. I hadn't known about the mapping of the Gwent Levels and its importance to planning, locally and nationally. There are 12 focus species- barn owls, lapwings, frogs, water-voles, hairy dragonflies, grass-snakes, shrill carder bees, frogbit, red admiral butterflies, alder tongue gall, little egrets and mistletoe. Everyone attending the training day was given a beautiful 2019 calendar, itemising the focus species, for the year, although any contributions (dead or alive) are welcome.

How will you be using any new-found skills? I have decided to start by focussing on treesmistletoe and alder tongue gall, as my photography is not brilliant, especially with moving objects!

What have you enjoyed the most? Being involved in a potentially far-reaching project, to help conserve the Gwent levels. It is exciting to be part of the Living Levels project. It is a good example of collaborative multi-agency working and joined-up thinking, which avoids reduplication and wasting energy and resources.

Now you have completed Wild Watch training, what are you most looking forward too? Seing what difference the information makes, in the future.

Would you recommend the Wild Watch training experience? Yes! It was well worth attending it. I have recommended it to two other people, who I thought would be very good at it. It is accessible for a diverse range of people and submissions can be using IT or by completing a simple A4 form and sending it off by post. I think the training day has something for everyone. The balance between revisiting and revising prior knowledge and new 'in-put' was just right for me. There were opportunities to ask questions and a flexibility to go with individual's interests and develop their lines of inquiry.

If you would like to get involved in the Living Levels Wild Watch project we have three more training days coming up: Newport Wetlands June 20th, Magor Marsh June 27th or Beacon Centre, St. Mellons July 18th. 10.30am – 4.00pm. Check the Living Levels website for details.



Volunteers needed for exciting Big Skies project!

Following on from the hugely successful Big Skies 2018 event, the Living Levels Partnership, in collaboration with Tin Shed Theatre Co. are gearing up for another inclusive community, outdoor performance event celebrating the Gwent Levels.

Big Skies 2019, set to take place at Caldicot Castle on 5 October, will involve an exciting mix of theatre, live performance and storytelling as dusk arrives over the castle. This will be part of the wider Big Skies Community Art Project, which runs for three years and involves creative workshops with local school children, as well as collaborations with other community groups, working towards an annual celebratory 'Big Sky' event.

Big Skies 2018 involved pop-up performances, interactive installation pieces and workshops at the RSPB Newport Wetlands reserve. The hope this year is to create another spectacle involving different generations and communities across the Gwent Levels. Three workshops will be held for schools at different locations across the Levels; Tredegar House, Caldicot Castle and the Beacon Centre in St. Mellons. These will help to shape Big Skies 2019 event and will involve workshops and interactive activities for local schools and community groups to get involved in. The overall aim of these days will be to create and shape some performances to select and take place at the Big Skies event in October. The production will be led by the Tin Shed Theatre Co; a theatre company based in Newport who specialise in outdoor spectacles and performances. Their recent show, Moby Dick, on the Transporter Bridge in Newport captivated audiences with its bold version of the classic tale.

Tin Shed Theatre Co. Co-Director, Georgina Harris said:

"We can't wait to work again on this exciting project, and we're hoping to bring the area together with another mesmerising performance. To make the event as successful as we can, we need all the help that we can get from the local community. We're looking for enthusiastic young people to get involved in a collection of fun and exciting workshops, exploring what the Gwent Levels means to people. Through talking together, making fun things, writing, performing and exploring the great outdoors, together we will begin to create some important ideas for our next big outdoor event! If you are keen to get involved in whatever capacity, Tin Shed would love to hear from you."

To find out how to get involved, get in touch with the Tin Shed Theatre Co. by emailing tinshedtheatre@gmx.com

Construction students learn about dealing with waste responsibly

The 'Black Spots to Bright Spots' fly-tipping project is helping the next generation of tradespeople understand their duty of care when disposing of unwanted materials. So far, 250 first year students from Coleg Gwent have received training via resources incorporated into their curriculum and shows a great ongoing commitment by the college to increase student's awareness.

Included in the student resources is a poster (see below) giving an easy-read explanation with links to additional information relevant to those who need to be registered waste carriers.

With increasing numbers of construction waste being fly-tipped across the Gwent Levels, this is a great opportunity to influence future tradespeople by helping them understand how their actions can ultimately impact on the environment.

The 'Black Spots to Bright Spots' project hopes to achieve a sustained reduction in fly-tipping incidents on the Gwent Levels and we plan to construct, with the help and support of local communities, pollinator gardens near to some of the former fly-tipping hotspots to turn these former black spots into community bright spots. Learn more on the Living Levels website.





CONSTRUCTION TRADES — WASTE INFORMATION

DO YOU MEED TO REGISTER AS A WASTE CARRIER?

As a construction tradesperson, if you transport waste in your vehicle, including waste that you have produced yourself as part of your normal business activities, you must register as a Waste Carrier with Natural Resources Wales.

There are two types of registration, Upper Tier and Lower Tier, based on waste and organisation type, rather than waste quantities. If you carry Construction and Demolition waste, you will need an Upper Tier registration.

The table overleaf gives some examples but for further information see the Natural Resources Wales website:

https://naturalresources.wales/permits-and-permissions/waste/ register-as-a-waste-carrier-broker-or-dealer

WASTE DUTY OF CARE

You will also need to **comply with waste Duty of Care**, which applies to anyone who handles waste.

This means, if you carry waste yourself: register as a waste carrier, take your waste to a suitably permitted site and keep the appropriate paper work. If you give your waste to someone else: ensure they are registered and taking it to a permitted facility and again keep the paperwork.

The Waste Duty of Care: Code of Practice provides further guidance. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/waste-duty-of-care-code-of-practice

FAILURE TO COMPLY

If you carry waste without being registered or fall to comply with your duty of care, you can be prosecuted.

f you suspect someone is disposing of your waste Illegally by fly-tipping or taking it to an unauthorised site, do not give them your waste and alert Natural Resources Wales on 0300 065 3000

If you produce or deal with Hazardous Waste you must comply with the Hazardous Waste Regulations and follow specific requirements for consigning hazardous waste.

GET FURTHER INFORMATION AT:

www.naturalresources.wales/permits-and-permissions/waste

Below is a list (not exhaustive) of work types and the type of register needed:

Who	Activity	Need to register	Upper or Lower Tier
Carpet fitters	Laying new carpet and carrying away the old carpet or removing off cuts	Yes	Lower
Electricians and plumbers	Carrying construction and demolition (see Definitions) that they have removed i.e. sinks, baths etc	Yes	Upper
Electricians and plumbers	Carrying away off-cuts of pipes, etc which are not construction and demolition wastes	Yes	Lower
Chimney sweeps	Carrying ashes they have removed from chimneys	Yes	Lower
Fencing contractors	Carrying fences they have removed	Yes	Upper
Gardeners, landscapers, tree surgeons	Carrying away shrubs and green wastes they have removed	Yes	Lower
Gardeners, landscapers, tree surgeons	Carrying away construction wastes ie walls etc they have removed	Yes	Upper
House clearance	Carrying away wastes removed from houses	Yes	Upper
Rag and bone men	Collecting and carrying away wastes from houses/businesses	Yes	Upper
Householders	Taking their or other people's waste (without profit) to the Local Authority CA site.	No	N/A
lurses and healthcare operatives	Carrying waste produced as a result of their care	Yes	Lower
lurses and healthcare operatives including pharmacies	Providing a service to carry away wastes produced by patients not as a result of their care activities and not as part of the business or for profit	No	N/A
Mobile mechanic	Removing wastes produced as a result of his activity	Yes	Lower
Mobile mechanic	Removing waste that was produced by someone else	Yes	Upper
Police, fire service, ambulances	Removing wastes but not as a business or for profit.	No	N/A
Wheelie bin cleaners	Removing and carrying away wastes from the bin	Yes	Upper
Wheelie bin cleaners	Only carrying waste waters from the washings produced during cleaning	Yes	Lower
Lower tier waste carrier organisations	Carrying construction and demolition wastes	Yes	Lower
Lower tier registrants by virtue of waste types	Carrying waste other than agricultural waste, mines and quarries or animal by-products	Yes	Upper
Anyone carrying samples of a non- waste	For any reason, including to determine whether it is waste	No	N/A - not waste



Pollinating the Levels - Time to get Buzzing!

In order to conserve our wild pollinators on the Gwent Levels we need to know more about what species we have - and we really need your help!

Buglife Cymru and Bumblebee Conservation Trust are running two pollinator identification training days this spring. Attendees will learn more about the ecology and diversity of bumblebees and solitary bees on the Gwent Levels, and how to identify them. These are introduction training days so no prior experience is necessary – just bring your enthusiasm for pollinators.

We hope that attending these courses will inspire you to take part in national citizen science initiatives such as Bumblebee Conservation Trusts' Scheme and the UK Pollinator Monitoring Scheme FIT Counts to help us learn more about our wild pollinators.

Beginner's Bumblebee Identification training course.at Magor Marsh, Friday 17th May, 10am – 3pm (Free)

Beginner's Solitary bee identification at Newport Wetlands, Wednesday 5th June, 10am – 3pm (Free)

So, if you or anyone you know are interested then please get in touch! Details of all our training and events can be found on our website and social media - so keep an eye out as places often need to be booked in advance.





Seawall musings of a RATS volunteer...

I sat on the seawall between Magor Pill and Goldcliff eating my lunch, one of a group enjoying a spring bird walk organised by Gwent Wildlife Trust. We had already spotted a sanderling feeding ahead of the incoming tide, and later we would see four wheatears, but today birding was not my primary concern.

In February, as part of the Living Levels project, I had joined the History RATS (Research and Transcription Service). As I sat in the sun looking across the fields towards Redwick my thoughts were of my burgeoning knowledge of the history of Gwent Levels.

A diverse group with wide interests, the History RATS are exploring the story of this fascinating area of south-east Wales through a variety of research topics including: life on the Levels during the early 1880s, the origins of Caerphilly cheese, the great storm of 1703, the Rumney Bridge incident of 1846, the loss of the Tredegar Boat.

As I continue to sit with my thoughts, and with a skylark competing for my attention, I wonder about my own involvement in the project. Transcribing a survey undertaken in 1720 for the Monmouthshire Court of Sewers has given me a new vocabulary with which to think about the landscape in front of me: brinker, frontager, gout, hollow tree, noghole, shard, stuck, winter sewer and yoak are just a few of the unusual words I learned.

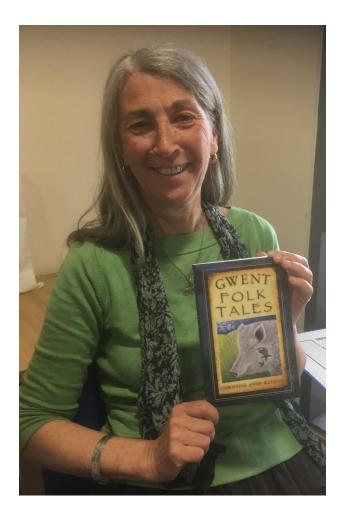
Mike Rees

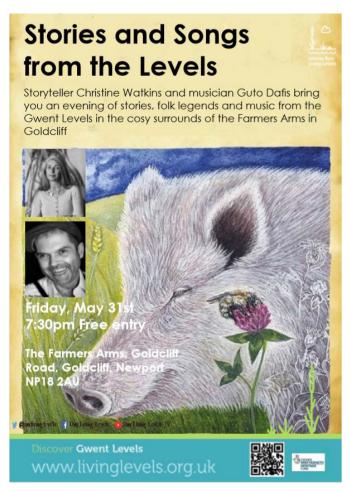
The 'Recapturing the Historic Landscapes' project is targeted at anybody with an interest in the history of the Levels. If this is you, then check out the Living Levels website!

Recipe for a good logo

- 1. Copy one photograph from the Living Levels website.
- 2. Give it to an archivist to re-draw.
- 3. Tell him about the Living Levels history research volunteers.
- 4. Explain they are the RATS the Research and Transcription Service
- 5. Mix with a little artistic license.
- 6. Wait a couple of weeks for a logo to develop.

The late Rick Turner (who was instrumental in developing the **Living Levels project)** thought that our history group should be called the RATS (Research and **Transcription** Service) in recognition of its work using the records of the Monmouthshire **Court of Sewers.**





Popular pub hosts Levels stories and songs!

Friday May 31st will see storyteller Christine Watkins, a regular at Living Levels events and musician Guto Dafis present an evening of stories, folk legends and music in the cosy surrounds of the Farmer's Arms in Goldcliff, all based on Christine's new book; 'Gwent Folk Legends'.

In her own words, Christine explains the inspiration behind her project...

Putting together Gwent Folk Tales, published by The History Press this April, has been a joyful labour of love for my county of birth. The 29 stories in the book come from many different 'corners' of the old land of Gwent, the old county of Monmouthshire - and the Levels are well represented. The book's cover illustrates a real 'Levels star' in the strange story of Hen Wen, the Sacred White Sow, who brought abundance and plenty to Wales by coming from the sea to the shores of Gwent.

Hen Wen is mentioned in the ancient Welsh Triads, which also speak of a time when Portskewett, (near where she came to land) was one of the Three Chief Ports of Britain, along with Porth Gwyddno near Aberystwyth and Porth Wygyr on Anglesey.

Floods, river goddesses and the marvellous story of building the Severn Tunnel also appear in the book, along with many more.

I will be telling selections of these stories in venues across Gwent in the coming months – beginning with The Farmers Arms Goldcliff May 31st, 7.30pm along with musician Guto Dafis. Come and hear some of the stories of your land, (signed copies of the book will be available to buy). Hope to see you there!

Help spread the word

If you think of someone, or a group of people, who might be interested in finding out more about Living Levels and getting involved, please do pass this newsletter on or recommend our website

www.livinglevels.org.uk

If you do not wish to receive further updates about Living Levels, then please let us know to unsubscribe you from this list.

If you no longer wish to receive updates from us, it's easy to do. Please e-mail: info@livinglevels.org.uk

If you would like to know more about your data protection rights please see our privacy policy.

We'd love to hear from you!

If you've any questions about the programme or getting involved, drop us a line on: info@livinglevels.org.uk or call us on: 01633 292982

Follow us on social media: @ourlivinglevels on Facebook and Twitter



Are you a Levels 'walker' or 'talker'?

Do you enjoy strapping on your walking boots and enjoying the stunning landscape of the Levels? Do you have a real interest in the history and heritage of your surroundings and would love to impart that knowledge to local people and visitors alike?

We are looking to recruit some walking quides or leaders to help us bring the Gwent Levels to life, promoting some of the great routes that can be found here. It can be long distance walks or short, interesting circuits – we want to make this an accessible destination for all visitors and enable people to discover hidden walking gems! The Gwent Levels are blessed with fantastic community venues for presentations and talks. We would love to use as many of these as possible and to bring our events into those communities.

So, if you have a passion about history, heritage or anything **Gwent Levels related** then we would love to hear from you – and so would the public!

