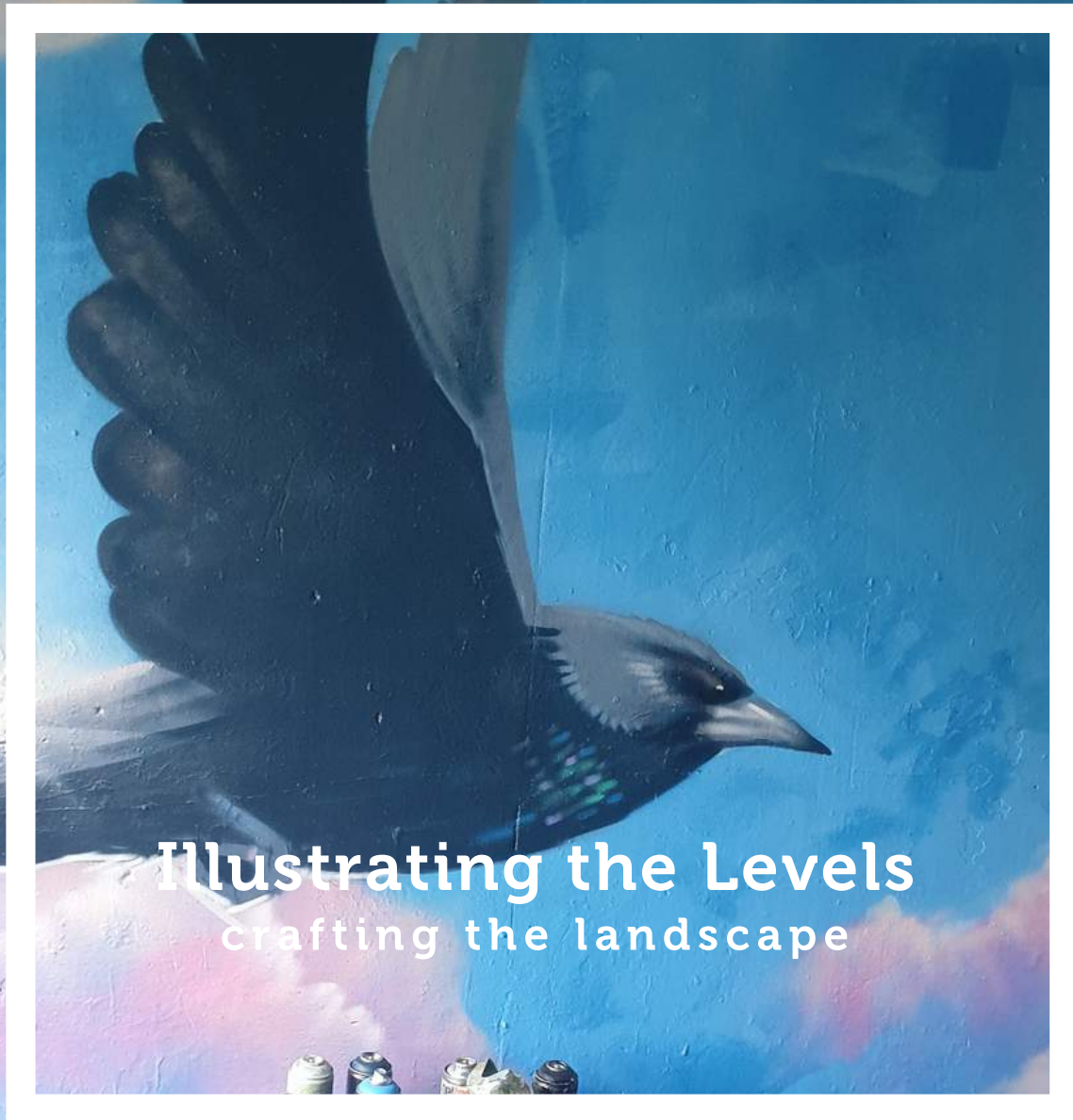


Living the Levels

The quarterly newsletter for the
Living Levels Landscape Partnership



Illustrating the Levels
crafting the landscape

Summer 2021

Murmuration Mural

Big Skies Big Digs

Damsel in Distress

Events coming up - book via our website!



Birds and Our Wellbeing
September 3rd



Chepstow Bridge talk
September 9th



Goldcliff Archaeology walk
September 21st



The Morgans of Tredegar House
October 14th



The Tudor Levels
October 21st



Future Coastline Walk
October 23rd



The Levels Crossing Walk
October 26th



Life and Death in the Iron Age
November 9th



Sea walls defence & responsibility
November 12th



Roman origins of Christmas
December 2nd



CLIMATE MINISTER PLEDGES SUPPORT FOR THE GWENT LEVELS

Living Levels Programme Manager Alison Offord, describes a red-letter day for the Gwent Levels as it receives a stamp of approval from a senior Senedd Minister.

Welsh Climate Minister Julie James MS visited Gwent Wildlife Trust's Magor Marsh Nature Reserve in July to make an important statement about her intentions to take action to better protect and manage the Gwent Levels. The Minister was greeted by representatives from the Living Levels partners who took the opportunity to demonstrate the value of the work we have been doing over several years.

Shortly after the visit the Minister released a statement pledging additional action to maintain and enhance biodiversity and ensure the Levels are a valued recreational asset for locals and visitors alike.

During the visit, the Minister expressed her admiration and support for the continuation of the Living Levels partnership beyond the end of current Lottery funding. She referred to funding streams such as the £9.8M Nature Networks Fund with Heritage Lottery that could support the legacy plan as well as strengthening the planning policy framework to better manage development on the Gwent Levels in future.

This was a very welcome and timely visit following Welsh Government's decision to remove the route corridor protection for the M4 relief road. Living Levels will endeavour to work closely with the Minister in future to flesh out detailed plans in support of this important statement of intent.

JOHN'S BISHTON IN BLOOM!

We took up an invitation from John Davies, a long-time friend of Living Levels and community councillor, to discover how he's been bloomin' marvellous in helping the bees of Bishton!

Like many of us, John has rediscovered the joy of gardening these last months and in particular, creating swathes of rich flower beds for the many pollinators that now visit his garden and borders.

He's been inspired to create planters from timber off-cuts and plant these up with a mix of wildflower seeds not only in these 'boxes for bees' but along his fence line too, where motorists and walkers can enjoy the riot of colour tumbling along John's borders.

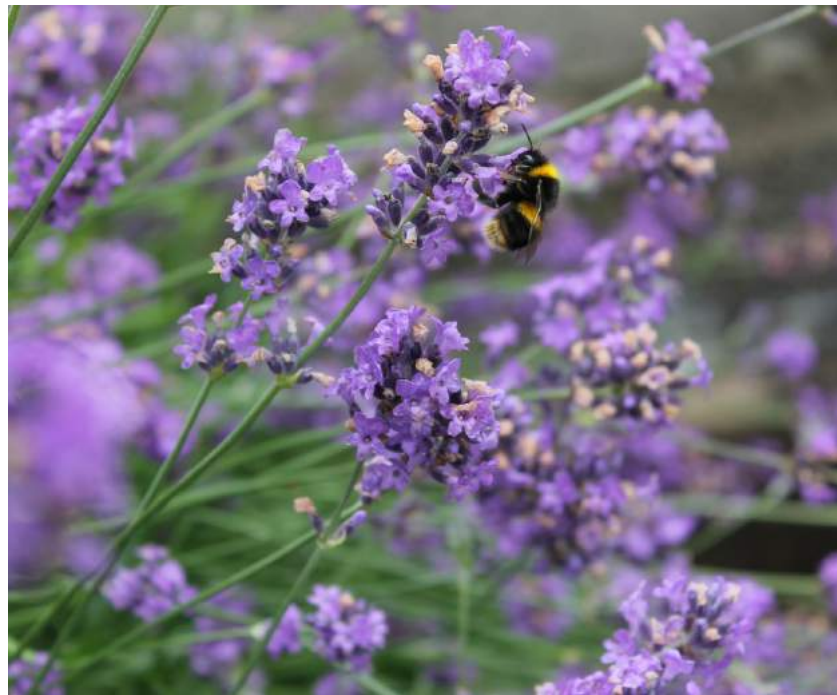
He's happy to share his spoils too; "People pass by and ask for seeds and I always say help yourself!"

Proudly showing off his wildflower mix, which include annual favourites such as poppies and cornflower, John has been amazed at how quickly the flowers have bloomed and the number of insects that seemingly arrived instantly. During our visit the flower heads were alive with hoverflies and bumblebees.

John also helps tend the communal garden bench area and the box planters, built by the Friends of Bishton and funded by the Community Council, which can be seen in glorious technicolour at the entrances to the village. He has also been inspired to become involved with a project to restore the pond in the village.

Always happy to help publicise Living Levels activities in the village, it's no surprise that the pollinators in this particular corner of the Gwent Levels have received a helping hand from John too!

Gavin Jones, Community Engagement Officer





LEVELS UNDERPASS TRANSFORMED WITH MURMURATION ART!

Pupils from the John Frost High School in Duffryn have been helping Newport Artist Andy O'Rourke transform an underpass on a major cycle route on the Gwent Levels.

The dazzling mural artwork by Andy, has transformed the underpass into a flock of hundreds of brightly painted iridescent and colourful starlings as they fly through sunset clouds and clear blue sky to their final destination, introducing the many local walkers and cyclists who use the route to a wildlife phenomenon they can witness at Newport Wetlands.

Andy said: "I wanted the mural to give the impression of being part of a starling murmuration as you go through the underpass. This occurs when tens of thousands flock together, wheeling and darting through the sky in tight, fluid formations. It's an incredible phenomenon that I have seen many times at the Newport Wetlands. Starlings themselves are beautiful birds, sleek and stylish with a magical iridescent sheen to their feathers."

The GCSE Fine Arts students worked with Andy learning new skills and techniques and contributing to the final piece at the underpass which links Duffryn with Maesglas. Head of Art at the John Frost School Jo Lockwood said "A big thank you to Living Levels and Artist Andy O'Rourke for enabling our students to work on the mural."

Layla Powell, Carys Gapper, Natalie Vaughan and Rebecca Arthur were chosen to attend the visit as they had worked extremely well in Art this year. Natalie said "I enjoyed taking part in this unique opportunity to experiment with a new media and to work on such an important mural". Carys added: "I thoroughly enjoyed my experience with Mr O'Rourke and I am honoured to have been chosen by my Art Teacher Miss Lockwood for this amazing opportunity".

Andy continued: "The public response to the mural has been great. Loads of people loved seeing the artwork develop each day, passing positive comments and encouragement or stopping to have a chat. It was a really nice experience."

SEA WALLS: BATTLES OF DEFENCE AND RESPONSIBILITY

The online mini-talks given by our Research and Transcription Service volunteers (RATS) have proved to be very popular and more are on the way. Rose Hewlett gives a sea salty flavour of what to expect...

Manuscript records relating to sea walls reveal extraordinary battles with the tides and storms of the Severn. The Monmouthshire Court of Sewers oversaw repairs and rebuilds, but until the 1880s, it was the landowners or their tenants who directly funded the upkeep of the wall sections assigned to them.

Sometimes, legal disputes arose over responsibility and, occasionally, even the need to undertake maintenance was argued. This could leave lengths of wall in disrepair, and land and property at risk from tidal inundation.

Anyone who has battled against the elements on a sea wall walk might appreciate the harsh working conditions that men faced. Repairing or rebuilding sea walls was an expensive and difficult task, especially given their remote locations.

The ideal time for building an earth embankment was after wet weather or in the winter when the mud could be knocked and rammed more closely than during hot, dry periods. While some materials were sourced locally, stone and lime often had to be brought in by boat.

At 10:30am on Friday 12 November, three RATS will give illustrated short talks on their research via Zoom. The event is supported by Glamorgan Archives. To book your place, please visit the events pages of our [website](#).





HAPPY RETIREMENT PROFESSOR MARTIN BELL!

This year the academic community bids farewell to a giant of intertidal archaeology – Professor Martin Bell who is retiring from the University of Reading after a fabulous 30 year career. Programme Manager Alison Offord pays tribute to the Gwent Levels’ ‘Mud Professor’!

Martin’s discoveries here have greatly heightened our understanding of the Severn Estuary during the Mesolithic period. His academic legacy is immense, but equally impressive is his dedication to public engagement.

Martin has delivered a wide range of activities for Living Levels. His thought-provoking lectures have informed and inspired. His courses have taught people valuable skills for the future. Carefully excavated finds, along with the stories that accompany them, have been added to local public collections.

His expertise has added context and imagination to our interpretative and educational resources for the Levels. And an oral history recounting his experiences over 30 years is the icing on the cake. Adjectives from feedback at his events include being ‘spellbound’ ‘amazed’ and ‘inspired’ by his discoveries.

Martin has left a profound footprint on those he has worked with in the project, aptly echoing those of the shifting sands of the Estuary which he has devoted much of his life to studying.

From everyone at Living Levels, we wish Martin a very long and happy retirement – we have no doubt he will not be hanging his sandals up just yet though!

Watch this space for more activities with Martin later this year.



BIO-BLITZ AT HAZEL FARM

SEWBRc (South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre) have been delivering our Wild Watch project since 2018. Here, Senior Projects and Communications Officer Elaine Wright, reveals the findings from a very different summer survey.

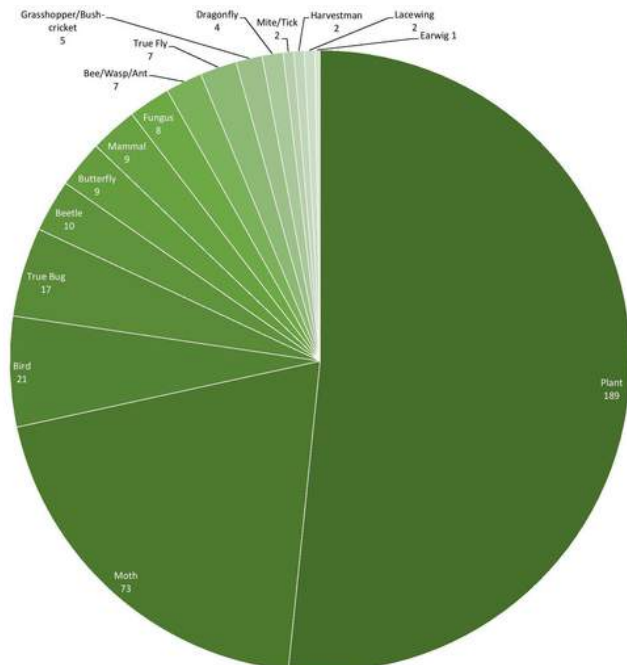
SEWBRc gathered together local wildlife experts at Hazel Farm near Llanwern on 13th July, with the aim of recording as many species as possible on the site. As well as the daytime event, which attracted 13 attendees, some nocturnally inclined recorders also visited the farm at night in search of bats and moths.

In total we found 366 species, with plants being the most prolifically recorded (thanks to the presence of botanical experts Steph Tyler and Elsa Wood!). The pie chart at the bottom shows the breakdown of species group.

One of the star finds of the day was a Shril Carder Bee, spotted by Gavin Jones. This rare species is a speciality of the Gwent Levels, and this sighting is a new location for this endangered bee. Hazel Farm is over 2.5km away from the next nearest Shril Carder Bee record, and is hopefully a sign of the species spreading northwards.

Many thanks to the farmer, Chris Dartnell, for allowing us access to his land, and to all the recorders who joined us on the day.

If you are interested in wildlife recording, or want to know more about [SEWBRc](#), you can find all the relevant links on our [Linktree](#)





EXPLORE, PLAY, CREATE - IT'S BIG SKIES 2021!

A different approach was needed this year for Big Skies, so Newport's [Tin Shed Theatre](#), with customary tenacity, naturally ploughed on. Gavin Jones describes this year's creative journey...

A great source of inspiration for the last event at Caldicot Castle, was Coleg Gwent's Performing Arts students, who this year were restricted to online activities. It was up to us then, to beam a week of creative workshops into their homes.

Beginning with an introduction to the Gwent Levels, the creative juices soon began to flow with poet Ben Ray exploring the landscape with the students and the week rounded off with an inspirational performance session with Tin Shed's Sam Jones, forming ideas for narratives and performances.

Gathering people's experience of reconnecting with nature on the Levels, particularly during lockdown, was key to this year's project with Tin Shed pitching up at Caldicot Castle and Newport Wetlands. The soundbites gathered formed part of an interactive sculpture called 'Sky Vane' built by Pyka and placed in the grounds of Tredegar House for August's 'Big Skies' weekend.

This was three days to 'Explore' via self-guided history, nature and sensory trails featuring Levels artwork by John Phillips. 'Play'; including grooving around the parkland with DJ Clive and the Pylon Appreciation Society silent disco, and the chance to 'Create' #LovingtheLevels willow hearts with [Sero Zero Waste](#).

The weekend events were eventually 'rapped-up' with a fantastic nature-themed sunset performance from local poets and musicians within the Stone Circle under, well, our Gwent Levels' Big Skies (at night) of course!



MAPPING STORIES FROM THE LEVELS; A HOME-BASED VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY!

Do you enjoy listening to people's stories about Life on the Levels? [DigVentures](#) are looking for home-based volunteers to map the fascinating oral histories collected for the Living Levels project.

Participants will access the oral histories recorded, digging into transcripts and locating audio snippets that can be included on an interactive map.

As a participant, you'll be mapping memories from the oral history interviews using our interactive map, making place-based stories available for everyone to enjoy.

We'll provide the tools you need to upload information to the online and interactive map. Each mini project will take around three hours and everything can be done from home at a time that suits you!

Interested? We're holding an introductory workshop at 7PM Thursday 2nd September 2021.



You'll learn the basics of oral history research and online mapping, finding out everything you need to undertake your mapping oral histories project.

All volunteers will be supported throughout, with an active WhatsApp group and mentoring sessions to share findings and hear the stories located. And, if you can't attend the introductory workshop, you can still register to access training resources.

Register to join our mapping mission [here](#)

Listen to some of the Life on the Levels oral histories [here](#)

Search the COS records

Landowner:
Occupier:
Farm or Estate Name:
Parish:
COS Map Number:

Quick Start Guide

Volunteers from the Living Levels project transcribed the records and digitised points relating to each field detailed in the Court of Sewers Map Archive for the Living Levels area. The result is this searchable map of landowners and occupiers on the Level in the early 1830s.

Searching the Map

1. Use the fields above to enter search criteria for landowner, occupier, parish etc. Then click "Search"
2. The results will be displayed in a popup window, in the order Landowner, Occupier, Parish (Where no occupier is Listed in the record we have used the acronym NOL to denote this)

Legend:

- Search Results
- All COS records
- Living Levels Project Area
- COS Map Boundaries
- OS 2nd Edition(1899-1900)
- OS First Edition (1881-2)
- Court of Sewers Maps (1830-31)
- Lidar Relief Model (1m)
- NRW 1m DTM hillshade

Map Labels:

- Map X:256 William Griffiths Esq, Ty Prydd etc
- Map IX:34 Charles Lewis Esq,
- Map IX:35 Charles Lewis Esq,
- Map X:245 William Phillips Esq,
- Map X:288 Charles James,
- Map X:297 Miss Sarah Grainger, Henton
- Map IX:50 Capel Hanbury Leigh Esq, Porton Estate
- Map IX:21 C Leigh Esq, P
- Map IX:67 Capel Hanbury
- Map X:266 Mrs Elizabeth Richards,
- Map X:304 John Edwards,
- Map X:442 Thomas Evans,

RECONNECT WITH NATURE TO RECONNECT WITH YOURSELF!

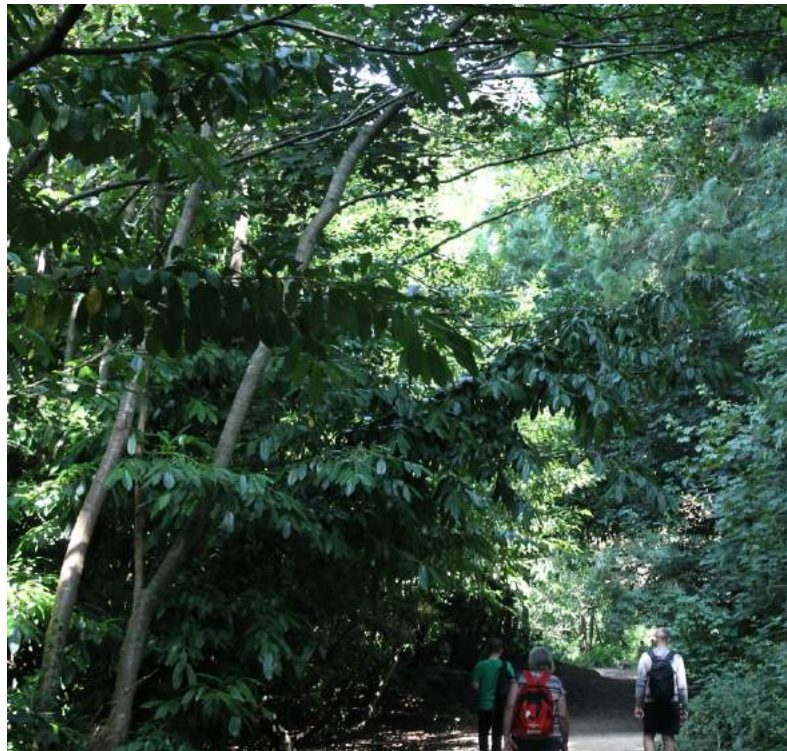
Many of us have used this last two years to discover again the joys of nature on our own doorsteps. Stefan Zitzman of Nature For You, has recently led walks for Living Levels on the theme of wellbeing at Tredegar House and Great Traston Meadows – let him open your mind!

We all are part of nature. Yet, more and more we lose our connection to nature and see nature as something separate. Being in nature not only has scientifically proven health benefits, but also helps to develop better social skills and boosts our mood, creativity and productivity.

Nature can be found everywhere right on our doorstep - be it in a park or even in a garden - we just have to open up our senses to the natural wonders all around us. The Living Levels provide plenty of calming oases amid big cities such as Cardiff and Newport.

There is a difference between spending time in nature and connecting with nature. Natural mindfulness is all about being in the present moment, slowing down, switching off our autopilot and experiencing how powerful the connection to nature can be. When we connect with nature, we often get a sense of wonder and awe. How can birds sing such beautiful melodies? How can butterflies be so delicate and yet so strong? What stories do trees have to tell?

Nature is for us to look after, but nature is also looking after us - just like a good friend. Let us rekindle with this precious friend and it might well bring us closer to who we really are!



KATIE'S MARSHY MUSIC!

'Sound Levels Live regular Katie Batchelor found herself serenading the wildlife on one of the Gwent Levels' key nature reserves, she tells us more...

I had a brilliant time filming for the 'Life on Marsh' festival at Magor Marsh! I am a fiddle player based in South Wales, and I have been doing some research for Living Levels in preparation for an upcoming talk on historical local folk tunes.

It was a great experience to play two tunes regional to Gwent at the marshes; 'Afon Gwy' (the River Wye), a slow and meandering tune, and 'Gwenynen Gwent' (Busy Bee of Gwent), an aptly named upbeat and lively tune with a wildlife theme.

It was fantastic to be able to play these two short tunes with named connections to the landscape on site for Living Levels. It was especially fun climbing into a tree to play one of the pieces!

Read all about 'Life on Marsh' in our next issue.





Image by Neville Davies

A DAMSEL IN DISTRESS!

The Gwent Levels is a landscape of many photographic opportunities. [Neville Davies](#), author and walks leader, provided some great shots for our recent City Nature Challenge and regularly shares his amazing bird shots on social media!

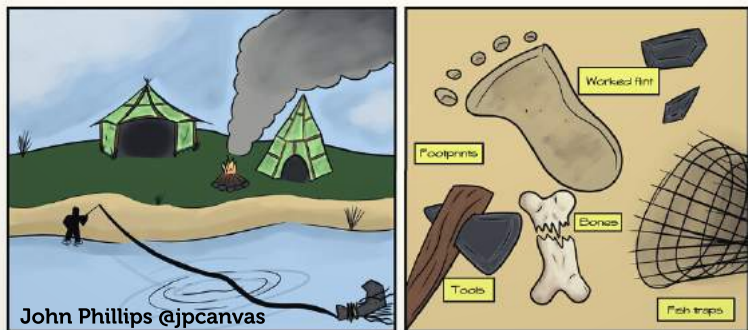
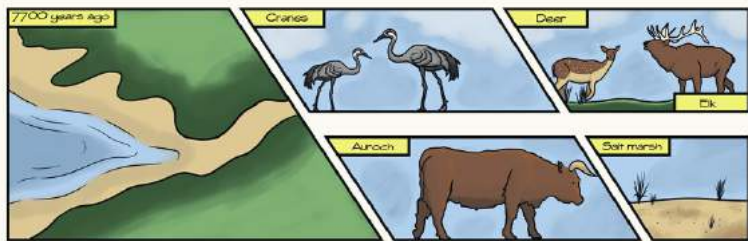
A visit to the Gwent Levels not only ensures I see a good mix of flora and fauna, but it's also good for my wellbeing.

My latest visit was another productive time, with strong sunshine and a gentle breeze. Skylarks were singing overhead; Tufted Vetch was in flower with Large Skippers and Small Tortoiseshell butterflies flitting about on its strong scent and vibrant blue flowers and a Kestrel hovered overhead in search of prey in the long grasses below.

After spending some time scanning for birds from the seawall, I returned back to the car along the reed, in the hope of seeing some dragonflies. Common Blue and Blue-tailed Damselflies were in abundance and several Broad-bodied Chasers were whizzing past here and there. A Four-spotted Chaser put on a fine show but what really caught my eye was the vibrant colours of an Emperor Dragonfly - and this was a female, egg laying too. It was time to sit down and get the camera ready to capture a spectacle of nature.

The main picture shows the female Emperor Dragonfly egg laying and being harassed by a tiny Azure Damselfly. This is simply classic 'mobbing' behaviour, as the Emperor and its larvae are top predators so a big threat to Damselflies and their larvae. Damselflies will try to drive away the mammoth Emperor so that she can't lay her eggs in the same area as theirs. It was an on-going battle that lasted for some time, but what a great time it was seeing nature as it unfolds!

PREHISTORIC GWENT LEVELS



LEVELS LEARNING WITH COLEG GWENT

Through Coleg Gwent we've been able to engage with a young audience bringing fresh perspectives, ideas and creativity to help the partnership.

Kelly Rosser, Course Leader in the Illustration Foundation Degree "This year, our students were excited to study and draw species such as the otter, kestrel, common lizard, bee orchid, brown hare and mink, to name a few. Over the past few years, the outcomes have been diverse and exciting."

John Phillips created 'Stories from the Levels' depicting key moments in Gwent Levels history (pictured). "I wanted the graphic novel to be engaging and aimed to make it appeal to a range of ages so that it would encourage everyone to learn about the Levels."

From performing in the grounds of Caldicot Castle, apple picking in Undy and performing poetry during lockdown, the students of the Level 2 Performing Arts have truly demonstrated their versatility.

Photography Course Leader, Peter Britton says "The students have relished the opportunity to photograph this project and the end results speak for themselves. The work they have produced is varied and offers an insight into the environment and workings of the Gwent Levels."

Sian Dinham, Course Leader in Art and Design added "These collaborations are a valuable experience for our students as it gives them a true insight into what it's like working in the Creative Industries. It gives them a chance to work with a real client and to live briefs.

She adds: "The project also resonates with us as a college due to the Newport Campus being situated on the Gwent Levels."

You can check out the student's amazing contributions to Living Levels on our [website!](#)



Courtney Chick

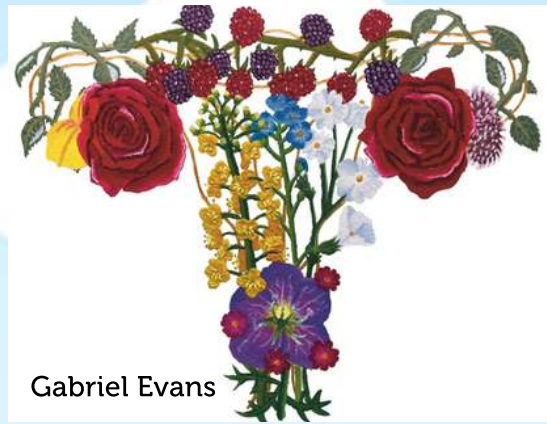
Megan Thomas Stone



Aleksandra Balika



Seren Morris



Gabriel Evans



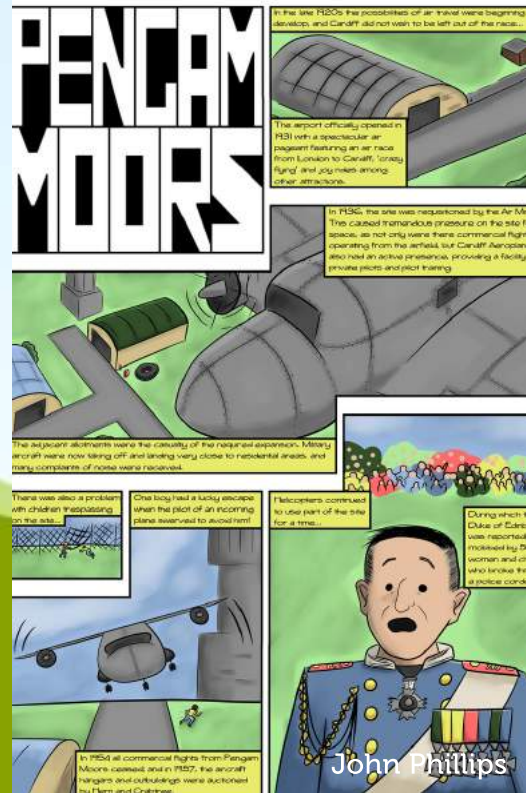
Jordan Smith



Lewis Watkins



Abigail Betty



PENGLAM MOORS

In the late 1820s the possibilities of air travel were beginning to develop, and Cardiff did not seem to be left out of the race...

The airport officially opened in 1920 with a spectacular air pageant featuring an air race from London to Cardiff, 'society flight' and job interviews among other attractions.

In 1936 the site was requisitioned by the Air Ministry. This caused tremendous pressure on the site for business, as not only were there commercial flights operating from the airport, but Cardiff Aerodrome also had an active presence, providing a facility for private pilots and pilot training.

The adjacent allotments were the casualty of the regional expansion. Military aircraft were now taking off and landing very close to residential areas, and many complaints of noise were received.

There was also a problem with children trespassing on the site.

One boy had a lucky escape when the pilot of an incoming plane realised to avoid him!

Helicopters continued to use part of the site for a time.

During which the Duke of Edinburgh was reported to be mobbed by 5000 people and only escaped by a narrow margin.

In 1954 all commercial flights from Penglam Moors ceased and in 1957, the aircraft hangars and buildings were auctioned by Bann and Co. Ltd.



John Phillips

WHAT'S IN THE BELFRY?

Naturally you would expect to find ringers in a church belfry - but Richard Clarke is not necessarily interested in the bells...

Usually the cry is of "bats in the belfry", but at St Cadwaladr's Church, Bishton, we have something else stirring upstairs – Barn Owls. Barn Owls have historically been associated with churches and some people still refer to the species as the Church Owl. St Cadwaladr's is thought to be the only current church breeding site in the Gwent area.

This year, with the help of members of the Goldcliff Ringing Group who have built and installed a nesting box, Barn Owls have not only been roosting in the church tower but have also bred successfully - with at least one owlet having fledged.

The Barn Owl is an iconic, protected species but is also sadly threatened with lack of suitable habitat and nesting sites both major limiting factors.

Living Levels has provided over 50 nest boxes in areas where there is good habitat nearby across the Levels. Numbers of breeding pairs have been increasing since this began in 2019 with ten breeding pairs using nest boxes this year and a further four boxes being used for roosting.

Goldcliff Ringers are still looking for new sites in Gwent where Barn Owls might be encouraged to breed and would be happy to hear from landowners who would be interested in housing a nest box.

Please contact Richard Clarke at chykembro2@aol.com for information.



IT'S ALL REST AND PLAY AT TREDEGAR HOUSE!

After months of being closed, Tredegar House and its magnificent parklands are once again welcoming visitors with open doors. The National Trust's Jess Courtenay flings open the gates and revels in the fun!

We have been in the midst of our 'summer of play' at Tredegar House! Featuring Get Set Go challenge cards to collect from our Visitor Reception with loads of ideas on how to get active in the outdoors, play equipment to borrow, and free facilitated sessions from some of our partner organisations.

In the parkland we also have a new sensory trail, based around Sensory Trust activities, which can be downloaded from our website.

We also have on display in the mansion house a selection of Courtenay Morgan's maritime instruments. Courtenay Morgan purchased the steam yacht called 'Liberty' to travel the world. In World War One, Liberty was transformed into a hospital ship.

The parkland at Tredegar House is once again transformed with the long grass, providing a perfect habitat for all kinds of wildlife. In partnership with Living Levels, we are also introducing the process of green haying, which will encourage even more wildflower and diversity to the area. We have seen nature thrive this summer, including sightings of the rare Brown Banded Carder Bumblebee!

For more details on activities and visiting, please head to our [website](#)



THE BIG GARDEN DIG!

The Gwent Levels is teeming with ancient remains - from Bronze Age footprints and trackways to Roman landscapes and medieval buildings – and those remains may be closer to home than you think, perhaps lurking under your lawn! Community Archaeologists Dig Ventures peel back the turf to reveal all...

During the weekend of 3rd-4th July, DigVentures were joined by folk across the Levels and beyond to take part in a 'Big Garden Dig'.

Participants learnt the basic skills and processes that archaeologists use to undertake a small test pit dig, and started their own digs in the garden. Unfortunately, the skies opened! Hit with heavy rain and showers over much of the weekend, many of our test pits had to be abandoned.

Despite the rain, we did manage to record some new discoveries offering interesting glimpses of the past and the people who lived in the area. Among other things, our garden archaeologists recorded pathways, pottery and pigs (or their bones at least)!

After removing a 1m square of turf, participants excavated their pit layer by layer, learning how to clean, photograph and record their discoveries.

All the evidence will be collected to form part of the project archive and help tell the story of the region.

See on the next page how you can still join in with some test pit archaeology in your own backyard!



FANCY AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIG IN YOUR GARDEN?

Help us discover the hidden history of the Levels!

Have you ever considered what archaeological clues might be hidden in your garden?

To make up for our rainy weekend, the team at DigVentures are hoping that more people from the Levels will be tempted to take up the Big Garden Dig challenge over the coming weeks.

You can work at your leisure, using online tutorials to get started and set up your garden test pit.

To join in, you'll need access to a garden with landowner's permission, some basic garden tools and a day or two to complete the task.

If you're interested in digging your own test pit, just let us know!

You can access all the Big Garden Dig resources and workshops via our webpage, and there's a handy checklist if you are unsure of where to start [here](#)

Our team will be on hand to answer questions via a WhatsApp group, and can provide advice as needed. Before you start, we just ask that you let us know where you are and when you plan to get digging!

Please email bookings@digventures.com to find out more or get in touch with our Community Archaeologist Indie to ask any questions (indie@digventures.com).

FLY-TIP ACTION UPDATE

Tito Lopez from [Fly-Tipping Action Wales](#), tips us off about the latest news from our Black Spots to Bright Spots project and the results of our Community Garden competition!

As the number of fly-tipping offenders caught and fined through the Black Spots to Bright Spots project increases, we have decided to place a new type of sign on the Gwent Levels.

The design will show how many offenders have been fined in the area and so act as an additional deterrent to fly-tipping. The number will be a yellow sticker which can easily be changed as the number of Fixed Penalty Notices and court fines increase.

Included in the total will be fines issued as a result of Natural Resources Wales and Local Authority investigations. Look out for these signs in September!



We are pleased to announce that our 'Bright Spots Competition' is now over with the winning prize going to Caroline Antoniou of Marshfield, Newport.

Caroline is an active member of the 'Marshfield Magpies' community action group who have contributed to many positive community improvements such as organised litter picks.

We look forward to completing Marshfield's new community wildflower garden and we hope its central location helps it become a deterrent to fly-tipping and littering in the area.

**TIPWR
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10

**FLY-TIPPERS
HAVE BEEN
FINED
SINCE 2020**

**AM DIPIO AR LEFELAU GWENT
FOR FLY-TIPPING ON THE GWENT LEVEL**

Ymgyrch Glanhau Traethau Aber Afon Hafren 2021

Severn Estuary Big Beach Clean 2021



THE SEVERN ESTUARY BIG BEACH CLEAN: BACK FOR 2021!

In the shadow of the Gwent Levels, the shores of the Severn are about to be treated to an autumnal spruce up. The Severn Estuary Partnership's Katie Harvard-Smith explains.

We are delighted to be running our third Severn Estuary Big Beach Clean from the 24th - 27th September 2021! Joining forces with the Marine Conservation Society and their national beach cleaning event.

We are calling on all litter picking groups, individuals, community groups or businesses to join us in reducing the flow of litter into our seas.

In 2018 and 2019, we worked together with a huge range of beach cleaners around the Severn Estuary to mark the annual event and managed to record over 1000 volunteer beach cleaning hours via 31 beach cleans all around the estuary.

This year we'd love to do the same thing, with the hope of inspiring even more residents, visitors and businesses to join us as we work collaboratively to #SpruceUpTheSevern!

We're keen to highlight not only the work that goes into cleaning up our coast, but also the work that goes into cleaning up our inland streets and rivers all around the Severn Estuary area.

If you would like to join a clean-up, register your litter picking group for the event, or would like more information, get in touch with us via email at severn@cardiff.ac.uk, or via our social media channels @SevernEstuary.

CHEPSTOW COMMUNITY ORCHARDS

Glyn Parkhouse's passion is orchards, especially those that benefit the community. Crunching the data on Chepstow's Malus marvels, Glyn reveals the pick of the crop!

Chepstow has 12 mini orchards that have been planted for the benefit of the community. These provide important wildlife habitat, nectar and pollen. Residents are encouraged to pick the ripe fruit. The orchards were the initiative of Chepstow Town Council in 2008 and were part-funded for their maintenance. All planting, pruning and care has been provided by local volunteers coordinated by Transition Chepstow through a dedicated Orchard Group. General care and tree-pruning are undertaken during the autumn and winter.

The Group has successfully obtained funding for further trees and from the Welsh Perry and Cider Society to design and create two Orchard and Wildlife trails of about 3 and 6 miles. The longer trail includes part of the Wales Coast Path and some spectacular views.

Trail plans, directions and further information, such as the history and varieties of trees planted, can be found at Our Town - Chepstow Town Council and [here](#)

While the Group does not currently intend planting new orchards, other residents have come forward with proposals to plant new orchards, for example at Bayfields in Chepstow where funding has been obtained for 12 trees and the creation of a wildflower meadow. Hopefully this orchard will be planted out in autumn 2021.





CHEPSTOW WALKING FESTIVAL RETURNS!

Living Levels is a proud supporter of Chepstow Walking Festival and this year we have two walks looking to the future of our coastline and celebrating the past with an iconic Levels' bridge. Steve Jones of organising group, Chepstow Walkers are Welcome, explains more.

After a couple of Covid-related false starts, Chepstow Walking Festival is very much back on the scene with a programme of 22 fantastic walks taking place between Saturday 23 and Tuesday 26 October.

The programme includes walks for all abilities including our very first vertical circular walk in partnership with the Living Levels and Transporter Bridge team. We're also celebrating the 50th anniversaries of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Offa's Dyke Path.

There is also the chance to experience beautiful Autumn colour in the Wye Valley and along the Gwent Levels.

The walks themselves range from a gentle stroll around town with local historians, to a longer distance 'kanter' with the Long Distance Walkers Association, all led by expert guides who can bring to life this wonderful landscape and its heritage.

The Festival is popular and spaces limited so early booking is recommended - adult walk tickets cost £5 and accompanied under 16s walk for free – full details of the programmes can be found at www.walksinchestow.co.uk or our [online booking portal](#)



Kestrel by Courtney Chick

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

CONTACT US

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

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