



## Thank you!

The Living Levels Partnership would like to thank you for all your support over the past year. The programme's success is purely down to you and we can't wait to work with you on some more exciting Gwent Levels projects in the coming year.

**We wish you all the very best for the festive season and 2020!**

## 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](http://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](mailto:info@livinglevels.org.uk)

If you would like to know more about your data protection rights please see our privacy policy ([www.livinglevels.org.uk](http://www.livinglevels.org.uk))

## 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](mailto:info@livinglevels.org.uk) or call us on: 01633 292982

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

## Long walks, tall tales and big skies!

**Rewilding: a view from Archaeology and the Living Levels**  
**Tuesday March 10th**  
**7.00pm – 9.00pm**

Join us for another fascinating evening as Professor Martin Bell from the University of Reading brings to life the Severn Estuary Levels in what is sure to be an entertaining and informative evening.  
**Nash Village Hall**  
**Free – Booking essential**

**A beginner's guide to Gwent Levels birds**  
**March 21st**  
**9.30am – 12.30pm**

With so much bird life to enjoy across the Gwent Levels, join us for a simple way to look and listen for birds including how to tell the difference between bird song and how to identify birds by behaviour and sight. A short presentation at Magor Marsh Education Centre will be followed by a walk around the reserve to put your new learnt skills into practice. The walk will include stops at the bird hide and the different habitats including woodland, reedbed, meadow and marsh.  
**Magor Marsh**  
**Cost: £5 members £7 non-members**  
**Booking essential**

# Living the Levels

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## Tackling Fly-Tipping on the Gwent Levels!

People visit the Gwent Levels to enjoy the quiet setting, watch wildlife, go for a walk or a leisurely bike ride. It's a well-known beauty spot; a place to get away from the bustle of the city. After visiting, most people leave the area clean and tidy, for the next people to be able to enjoy all it has to offer. However, some people do not give the area and the people who live here the respect it deserves. Waste is a problem, with fly tipping being the commonest offence.

That's why we've set-up the Fly-Tipping – 'From Black Spots to Bright Spots' project, which involves a part-time enforcement officer to work with local authorities and partners, to tackle this problem. The project has three ways of working. First, we aim to educate the people living in the area. We visit schools and classrooms, to show children and students the importance of respecting the landscape. Secondly, we raise awareness, and we provide information to the community on how they should be disposing of waste appropriately.

Lastly, we intervene, which involves more direct action. We've installed 'no-fly-tipping' signs, CCTV, operate covert cameras and we organise clean-up operations. The help of volunteers is crucial for this. Thanks to their hard work and dedication, we've been able to remove a huge amount of rubbish from the Gwent Levels. In September, volunteers removed 3.5 tonnes of waste from Duffryn. This was followed by a planting session, where we planted daffodil and wood anemone bulbs on the cleared areas. By doing this, we're removing the 'black spots' of fly-tipping, and replacing with 'bright-spots' of flowers!

Our partners are also playing a key role in preventing further fly-tipping. Recently our partners and project lead, Natural Resources Wales ran a waste carrier stop check operation with South Wales Police, Cardiff Council and Newport Council. They stopped four vans which were carrying waste without a license, and they witnessed rubbish being burned, which will now be investigated. **We hope that this will help to change attitudes and have a long-lasting effect on the area.**

**Welcome to the seventh 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 National Lottery Heritage Fund.





## Big Skies 2019!

To celebrate the Gwent Levels' historical landscape, rich heritage and amazing wildlife, we've partnered up with the Tin Shed Theatre Co. to create Big Skies Community Art Project.

This is a collaboration which aims to bring all of the elements that makes the Gwent Levels special to the public, in a big event filled with performances, stories and live art.

Last year, we held our first Big Skies event at RSPB Newport Wetlands. It was a chance to explore the area and learn more about the wintering migration of birds that live there through the medium of pop-up performances and exhibitions.

This year, our second Big Skies event was held at the beautiful Caldicot Castle, and 270 people turned up to enjoy. In the afternoon, the audience wandered and explored the castle's grounds, enjoyed pop-up performances, interactive installations and crafty workshops. As dusk settled, writer and performer, Christine Watkins, held a special story-telling session in interior of the castle, which was decorated with striking lanterns. The event culminated with a 'twilight picnic' and a spectacular pyrotechnic and light display.

This was part of the wider Big Skies Community Art Project, which runs for three years. It involves creative workshops with local school children, as well as collaborations with other community groups. This year, we collaborated with local primary schools and Coleg Gwent to make Big Skies a success.

**Next year will be the last one for this project, so we'd like to make Big Skies 2020 as amazing as possible. Look out for more information over the coming months.**

## Long walks, tall tales and big skies!

**Dippy on Tour!**  
**Saturday 18th January**  
**11.00am – 1.00pm and**  
**2.00pm – 4.00pm**

Dippy the famous Natural History Museum dinosaur has arrived in Cardiff and we are very excited to be joining him in all things prehistoric! Alongside this Jurassic giant and some fossilised fun, you can experience life as a stone age hunter on the neighbouring Gwent Levels Severn Estuary coastline, making a home and tracking wild beasts across the muddy foreshore. There will be a range of activities at this family-friendly drop-in event.

**National Museum**  
**Cardiff FREE**

**Looking at the historic landscape using lasers**  
**Friday, January 31st**  
**9.30am – 4.30pm**

Love history? Join archaeologists starting a brand new search for historic sites on the Gwent Levels. You'll learn how archaeologists search for sites in the landscape and try finding some for yourself using 3D LiDAR (laser) models and digital maps (GIS -Geographic Information Systems). Join us to help put history back on the map!

**Redwick Village Hall**  
**FREE – Booking essential**



## Gwent Levels Revealed!

**Join our experts on a journey through time exploring 7000 years of history!**

Set in the magnificent ballroom of the iconic Lysaght Institute, this is a fantastic opportunity to discover more about the history and heritage of the Gwent Levels.

We have pulled together five key speakers who have dedicated their lives to studying this unique landscape, in what is sure to be a fascinating and revealing day.

**Light lunch refreshments provided.**

**Saturday 1st February**  
**10.30am – 3.00pm**

**Lysaght Institute**  
**Free**

**Booking Essential: [info@livinglevels.org.uk](mailto:info@livinglevels.org.uk) 01633 292982**



## Long walks, tall tales and big skies!

**St. David's Day Celebrations**  
**Friday 28th February –**  
**Monday March 1st**  
 Join us to celebrate St. David's Day on the Gwent Levels with local heritage, folklore and delicious flavours in the grounds of stunning Tredegar House.  
**Tredegar House**  
**Free**

**Pond Species ID Guided Workshop**  
**Sunday 8th March**  
**10.30am – 12.30pm**  
 A huge network of reens and ditches make up the Gwent Levels, so aquatic life plays an important role. This is a perfect opportunity to develop your fresh water species ID, discuss the importance of biodiversity from a conservation perspective and explore the underwater life at Newport Wetlands.  
**Newport Wetlands**  
**Booking essential**

**Archaeological discoveries on the Severn Estuary Levels**  
**March 9th**  
**7.00pm**

Professor Martin Bell of the University of Reading brings his fascinating talk to Cardiff, demonstrating how archaeological evidence can illustrate the rich record of past human activity and changing environments in the Severn Estuary Levels.

**Glamorgan Archives**  
**Free Booking essential**



## Looking at our historic landscape -using lasers!

### Love history? Join archaeologists starting a brand new search for historic sites on the Gwent Levels

This is the first in a new series of workshops where archaeologists and local history-lovers will work together to locate, investigate and identify the levels landscape.

Using 3D LiDAR (laser) models and digital maps (GIS -Geographic Information Systems), we'll show you how to spot things of historical significance and figure out what they are. Our aim is to use this new technology to reveal more about our historic landscape and to share this via our interactive online map for exploring the Gwent Levels through the ages.

You'll learn how archaeologists search for sites in the landscape, and try finding some for yourself.

Join us to help put history back on the map!

### FAQs

#### Who is this event suitable for?

Anyone aged 12+ who is interested in history, and how archaeologists discover new sites.

#### What do I need to bring?

We'll provide plenty of tea and biscuits, but you will need to bring:

- A tablet or laptop
- Packed lunch

If you are unable to bring your own laptop, please let us know - we may have a couple of spares

#### Who is organising the event?

This event is part of Living Levels, and is being run by DigVentures, together with local residents, historians, archaeologists, archivists, and anyone who is even just a little bit interested in history.

**Through these workshops and community input we're aiming to create an online map together showcasing the area's extraordinary history. Check out the website for details!**

## Long walks, tall tales and big skies!

**Voices and performance poetry Saturday 22nd February 2.00pm – 6.00pm (7.00pm performance)**

Award-winning poet Ben Ray brings together our Gwent Levels oral history testimony and poetry in this afternoon workshop exploring the links between the two, building poetry from raw testimony and culminating in an evening performance featuring Ben with pre-prepared poetry from testimonies recorded from the Gwent Levels. No previous poetry or oral history recording required. Come and have a go or come along to the free evening performance!

**Rumney Methodist Church Booking essential**

**Life on the Levels Exhibition – images, voices, memories February 25th – March 26th**

In the magnificent setting of the Pierhead Building in Cardiff Bay, 'Life on the Levels' is a documentary-like photographic response to a series of oral history interviews conducted across the Gwent Levels by Marsha O'Mahony and her team of volunteers. In their words, and in these images, she hopes to capture voices and memories that are in danger of being lost. **Pierhead Building, Futures Gallery Free entry**



## Rugged Romans and Muddy Monks!

The weather has not been great over the past couple of weeks. We've had blustery and windy days, with plenty of rain to go with it. These were the conditions on Saturday, 28 September at the National Trust's Tredegar House. Fortunately, this did not stop hundreds of people attending the second annual 'Rugged Romans and Muddy Monks' Gwent Levels History Day.

The idea behind the event was to give a wide range of people the opportunity to learn more about the Gwent Levels, from families to the true history buffs. The history of this landscape is remarkable. Way before humans walked this land, the low lying coastal plain was a stomping ground for dinosaurs. Over the following eras, it experienced massive storms and ice ages. During the Mesolithic era, humans started to shape the area, as hunter-gatherers roamed the land looking for prey. The Romans left their mark with their complex system of ditches and reens, which the medieval muddy monks reinstated and since then, people have farmed and made their livelihoods on the Levels, up to today.

This rich past was all on show during the event, and over 600 people got the chance to see some of the ancient remains, artefacts and archaeological finds that helps us understand more about the area's history. There were also re-enactments and the roman soldiers proved to be very popular, especially when they faced off with the massive T-rex dinosaur replica!

The event ran alongside the Cotyledon Food and Craft market, and we were lucky to be in the company of several interesting local groups, each one experts in their own fields. Volunteers of the RATS project were there to share some of their learnings about the 'Recapturing the Historic Landscape' project and 'The Great Flood-1607'. We also had 'Life on the Levels' Oral History Project and Redwick History Group to give a little background on the more recent history of the communities located within the Levels.

Other exhibitors included Gwent Archives, The Coracle Society, Severn Estuary Partnership, Black Rock Lave Net Fishery, Caerleon Museum, Dig Ventures Archaeology, Newport Transporter Bridge, National Museum of Wales, Newport Museum, Newport Medieval Ship. This long list of organisations and societies goes to show the wealth and diversity of history the Gwent Levels has to showcase to the rest of the country.

**It was a brilliant event, with plenty to do and see for all the family. We'd like to thank everyone who came on the day, as well as the exhibitors and all who shared their precious knowledge of this unique landscape... and a special thank you to our partners National Trust for hosting the event at the historic Tredegar House.**

## Long walks, tall tales and big skies!

**Gwent Levels Revealed! Saturday 1st February 10.30am – 3.00pm**

Join our experts on a journey through time exploring 7000 years of history! Set in the magnificent ballroom of the iconic Lysaght's Institute, this is a fantastic opportunity to discover more about the history and heritage of the Gwent Levels. We have pulled together five key speakers who have dedicated their lives to studying this unique landscape, in what is sure to be a fascinating and revealing day. Light lunch refreshments provided.

**Lysaght's Institute Free - Booking essential**

**World Wetlands Day Walk Sunday 2 February 10am – 12pm**

Explore the reedbeds of Newport Wetlands and Severn Estuary on this International Day celebrating the world's wonderful wetlands. The Gwent Levels is a unique historic landscape with examples of ancient drainage systems dating back to the Roman era. This has created a special range of habitats for important wildlife species. Join us to find out more about the heritage and natural history of this amazing landscape.

**Newport Wetlands RSPB member £6.40 / £8.00 non-member Booking essential**



## Restoring nature-rich ditches

**One of the most famous features of the Gwent Levels is the ditches, reens and 'grips' that mosaic the landscape.**

The Romans started digging these waterways to drain the land for farming. Today, they make excellent habitats for an astonishing diversity of wildlife.



Over the years, some of these ditches have been neglected, reducing the ability to drain the land and the unique diversity of aquatic flora and fauna that depend on these habitats to survive. A special project is now underway to restore 21 km of these ditches over three years. Last year 9 km of ditches were restored on the Caldicot Levels with 7 km planned on the Wentlooge Levels this winter.

**These restoration works will certainly be a massive boost to local wildlife, water quality and flood mitigation.**

## Long walks, tall tales and big skies!

### Willow Basket Making Saturday 8th February

Willow weaving was a traditional skill on the Gwent Levels so why not come along and make a traditional and useful willow basket? Join Sarah Hatton from BBC's The Repair Shop in the beautiful surrounds of this popular Nature Reserve. **Magor Marsh Booking essential**

### St. Bride and the February Landscape Sunday 9th February 10.30am – 12.30pm

Discover the seasonal traditions surrounding Brigid/Bride/Ffraid, the time of Imbolc, St. Bride feast day and the first inklings that winter may soon be drawing to an end through linking traditional pagan, Christian and folk stories with Christine Watkins. Then learn how our Gwent Levels birds, plants and wildlife have fared over the winter and what to expect from the coming spring with Andy Karran.

Followed by traditional candle-lighting ceremony and a short walk to the sea wall (weather permitting) with a warm drink! **St. Brides Village Hall Free**



## Reviving ancient orchards

**Orchards were once an important part of life to the communities of the Gwent Levels.** The fruit produced were vital to the economy, and the trees provided an important food source for people and wildlife. However, over the years, many of these historical orchards have been lost to development or fallen into disrepair. With the help of volunteers and communities, these orchards are being restored.

This winter new orchards will be planted in four Gwent Levels schools and a community orchard created in Duffryn. Plans for a community enterprise are underway to bring back some of the orchards into business producing local cider, apple juice and apple cider vinegar.

There's also a network of orchard owners and volunteers being developed, with the different orchards of the Gwent Levels being mapped and some apple varieties DNA tested. This will help people share their knowledge and skills while working together to manage and restore healthy orchards across the Levels landscape.

**There's plenty more going on across the Living Levels programme. If you'd like to learn more, or find out about events and volunteering opportunities, explore our website.**



## Long walks, tall tales and big skies!

### Weaving rush plaited mats 13th and 27th February 10.00am – 4.00pm

Part of our series of discovering traditional Gwent Levels skills, learn how to plait Scirpus lacustris (bulrush) and Typha rushes into nine strand flat plaits to be sewn up into traditional door and bath mats on this 2-day course. You will be taught a variety of plaiting techniques on Day 1 to produce a length of plait which will then be sewn up using jute into durable, attractive mats on Day 2. This is an age old technique which has been used throughout the ages to produce durable, functional floor coverings **Magor Marsh £100 GWT members £110 non-members for both days**

### Marshy Monday – Wildlife Hide 'n' Seek Monday 17th Feb 1.00pm -3.00pm

Banish those mid-winter blues with a fun afternoon for all the family at Magor Marsh Nature Reserve! We'll be finding out about how wildlife plays its very own game of hide 'n' seek here at the Nature Reserve. Plus, we'll be toasting marshmallows, bird watching and making camouflage crafts in the Centre. Children must be accompanied by an adult. **Magor Marsh £2 per child. Adults free**